Thesis Title: Philosophical and Theological Reflection on the Bible as a Significant Body of Non-sectarian Literature in Religious Education.

Name of Candidate: JOHN ARTHUR PAGE

Previous Qualifications: M.B.Ch.B., B.D., ACert.CM., Dip.I.T.

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Philosophical and Theological Reflection on the Bible as a Significant Body of Non-sectarian Literature in Religious Education.

Introduction

Can Religion be Taught Rather than Preached?

The essence of my Thesis is “Religious Education - Can Religion be Taught rather than Indoctrinated”? What aspects of religion can be taught and learned as opposed to inculcated and indoctrinated? As this implies, teaching religion may carry with it an intentional, or incidental, result of inculcating a particular set of values, beliefs or behaviour: My aim is firstly to illustrate the threats posed by exclusive teaching to an equitable educational policy and secondly to show how this can be avoided by presenting a wide and inclusive view of religion in all its variations and objectives and allowing unrestricted discussion of these alternatives. By teaching “about” religion, its morality, spirituality and denominations, in an open and general way the student can experience the notion of a long standing and world-wide sense of a ‘supreme being’, and from receiving teaching about religions he or she can experience the variety of ways of acknowledging or seeking that deity or power. Having learned about the nature of religion and the ways in which it is experienced, the student can be equipped for religious discussion, open mindedness and an understanding of other points of view with regard to religious matters, which is very important in a multi-cultural society like Australia. This approach is referred to as General Religious Education (GRE), Religious Studies or Comparative Religion (as examinable subjects). The difficulties to which I allude mainly arise when considering what is known as Special Religious Education (SRE) which concentrates on one Religious Denomination or Persuasion, often to the purposeful exclusion, and even denigration, of others. Difficulties also arise in this area when historical and scientific accuracy are attributed to texts which, according to reliable scholarly opinion, are clearly mythological, legendary or author generated.

The conceptual framework, within which the central questions about religious education to be addressed in this thesis arise, depends upon an epistemological comprehension of the distinction between education and indoctrination and on an in-depth discussion of the Doctrine of Inerrancy and literalist interpretation of the sacred texts. I intend to
show by evidential argument that the classification of the Biblical Texts in their entirety as ‘inerrant’ appears unsustainable in the light of modern science and Biblical Scholarship. I will trace the history and rise of Inerrancy and show that it has not always or universally been the view of the Christian Church. This thesis is not meant to deprecate the Christian Bible in any way: the Bible is a world best seller and its messages are timeless and valuable. However the Bible was written by human authors who were subject to human errors and to the limitations in knowledge of their times, both scientific and historical. As well as this they were susceptible to myth, magic, legend and cultural influences which surrounded them and for which no one can blame them. I am not questioning their inspiration but I am certainly questioning their alleged absolute inerrancy.

The problems in religious education, as I see it, revolve around the two main areas of Indoctrination and Inerrancy. In the first part of my thesis I shall argue that a significant body of literature exists which shows that there is a clear distinction between education and indoctrination and that the philosophical integrity of pedagogic praxis rests on respecting the boundaries between them. This being so, my initial goal will be to explore critically what is being said in the scholarly and philosophical literature about indoctrination and then to tease out its specific relevance for religious education. An insistence that the Biblical texts are without error of any kind, a doctrine known as Inerrancy, is, in the opinion of many renowned scholars, totally unsustainable in the light of modern science and scholarly study. For example James Orr held a high view of Scripture but nevertheless rejected Inerrancy as - the most suicidal position for any defender of revelation to take because unless we can demonstrate inerrancy of the biblical record down even to its minutest details, the whole edifice of belief in revealed religion falls to the ground (ORR, J. (1909) Revelation and Inspiration, London, Duckworth, p. 217).

The inculcatory and exclusive teaching of this doctrine of inerrancy therefore must itself amount to Indoctrination, as the evidence indicates that the doctrine is questionable. This problem has re-emerged more recently in a new guise in the context of the debate between Conservatives and Liberals over the nature of Scripture and a corollary, what should and should not be taught in our schools. It could have been thought that in the light of modern scientific knowledge and biblical scholarship the insistence on Inerrancy would have faded, but it hasn’t. Indeed it has re-emerged in a new tradition called Fundamentalism, re-packaged as if it was a new thing; new but allegedly founded upon
an invented historical orthodoxy. This new tradition seats these ideas in a political and ideological guise couched in vested interests and becomes an ideological position deeply entrenched in economic, political and theological interests. A huge publicity and publishing centre has been established in Grand Rapids, Michigan from which books pour out trumpeting the Evangelical message, especially from the evangelical publishing houses of Eerdmans and Zondervan. A large part of the Conservative Evangelical platform is evangelism and to aid the world-wide broadcasting of their message every medium, including early morning television and electronic recording methods, has been, and is being, used comprehensively.

Within the context of religious education there is considerable debate among teachers and the religious community about what ought and ought not to be taught in schools and therefore what ought and ought not to be included in religious education. It seems clear, from evidence to be produced in this thesis, that some of the material that is either produced by, or espoused by, certain exclusive Christian groups falls within the category that I will call Indoctrination and is thus unsuitable. I shall begin by defining and discussing Indoctrination, within the current context of the debate, arguing towards what I believe to be the most defensible position on the topic. I intend to show that certain of the fundamentalist teaching and evangelical interpretations should be classed as indoctrination and therefore should not be taught in that way. Despite a so-called Educational Policy, represented by the Rawlinson Report of 1981 and the Education Act of 1990, religious teachers who exclusively espouse Inerrancy and other debatable corollaries are still freely teaching their doctrines to our schoolchildren without, in some cases, any balancing discussion of alternatives.

In the light of this analysis I shall argue that, depending upon what is meant by a religious belief, the teaching of some religious beliefs amounts to indoctrination as opposed to education. I also argue that this realisation should be deeply disturbing for those who are concerned that schooling should open rather than close the minds of the children and young adults we teach. We shall see, however, that the determination of what counts as indoctrination is extremely complex and depends on many subtle factors of analysis and not just one. It is simply naïve, for example, to assume that all religious beliefs have the same logical status and thus represent a single, undifferentiated class of logically homogeneous religious claims. The religious belief that "Jesus was born in the town of Bethlehem" for instance, stands as a very different sort of claim from "Jesus is the Son of God", and are the two claims similarly amenable
to the assignment of a truth value? These are the sort of issues that begin to emerge.

I want, amongst other things, to suggest that there is a tradition of Biblical Inerrancy in the Christian Church which could lead to an interpretation or exegesis of an exclusive kind and which could well count as indoctrination. I will attempt to show that Inerrancy, at least in its literalist and absolute forms, is unsustainable in the light of modern biblical scholarship and scientific advancement and further that it is damaging to attempts at unbiased biblical interpretation. I am not concerned so much with small inconsistencies, such as whether Jesus ‘sat’ (Matthew 5:1) or ‘stood’ (Luke 6:17) to deliver the sermon on the mount, or the conflicting numbers between Samuel/Kings and Chronicles when relating their versions of the same story. If I did so, some would seize on this and say that it was a copying error and that the original documents would have been consistent. However, even small inconsistencies are vital to the Absolute Inerrantists or Literalists such as E.J. Young, who points out - *If the evangelists were guilty of trifling errors and evidences of carelessness in so-called minor matters, we cannot escape the conclusion that they might have been just as careless in more important things*, (YOUNG, E. J. (1963) *Thy Word is Truth*, London, The Banner of Truth Trust., p.131).

Once the semantic issues concerning different kinds of beliefs are sorted out in regard to indoctrination, I shall then consider the extent to which the ways one might teach any belief, independently of its epistemic status as a putative truth capable in principle of being known, will make a difference as to whether the teaching done constitutes an act of indoctrination or not. If scholarly dispute exists on a topic, for example, and the entirety of reading material presented to the learner all says the same thing, because no reference is presented to any opposing views it is clear that the method of teaching has thereby corrupted the act of learning. In this and other such cases we shall see that certain methods of teaching may in themselves be indoctrinatory. Similarly, as White and others have argued, the act of teaching may also be reduced to a form of indoctrination depending upon the intention of the teacher. If the intended goal of teaching is to inculcate uncritically a particular set of beliefs, then not only will the method of the teaching be constructed in biased ways, but so will the authoritative imposition of the teacher’s will upon the validity and value of what is taught. This, I contend, is what is happening in the case of some overzealous religion presenters.

Placing the definition and discussion of Indoctrination first in the thesis will equip us to
detect signs of it in the various presentations and expressed beliefs encountered in our investigation of the two main theologies in the church today, namely Evangelicalism and Liberalism. Detailed classification and definitions of Inerrancy follow in later chapters but for now it must be realized that the group referred to as Evangelicals embraces a range of beliefs from what might be called moderate to what is commonly referred to as fundamentalist. Moderate Evangelicals still adhere to a belief in Inerrancy but may limit it to matters of salvation, eternal life and the Christian lifestyle.

Some Evangelicals are wary of using the actual word “Inerrant”, as was James Orr quoted above: he did however view the Scriptures as *Infallible* as regards:

- *The knowledge of the will of God for our salvation in Jesus Christ*
- *Instruction in the way of Holiness*
- *The hope of Eternal Life*
  

Fundamentalists on the other hand believe Inerrancy to mean total freedom from error in all the biblical texts no matter to what they refer. The terms neo-evangelical and conservative evangelical may be used to describe those groups who are wary of adopting total inerrancy and those who are not, respectively.

In the second part of the thesis I shall argue that some of the pedagogies of fundamentalism are especially vulnerable to the charge of indoctrination. This is particularly so where fundamentalism is engaged in the literalist reading of any sacred text such that the words of the Bible are not only to be construed literally but are also to be construed as incorrigible claims to truth. In essence this dualist disposition to literal meaning and literal truth is what I shall refer to as ‘strong or absolute Inerrancy’ as opposed to Literality which is concerned only with Verbal Inerrancy. Since fundamentalists firmly believe the Bible to be the direct Word of God then God’s attributes of truth and omniscience are attributed to its texts and an exclusive defence of its rectitude follows.

A basic tenet of Fundamentalism is Total, Absolute or Strong Inerrancy, which is the Doctrine claiming that the Bible is free from error in all matters it presents, and this leads to misinterpretation, exclusivism and bitter and bellicose polemics. This simple view of Inerrancy will suffice for now but a more detailed break-down is provided later. It is the most important reason for Fundamentalist exclusivism and must therefore be
fully discussed. So important is Inerrancy in formulating Fundamentalist doctrine and dogma that I have devoted much time to explaining, by historical, cultural and political background investigation, what this exclusive adamancy is, how it is defined and how it came about.

My concern within the thesis is to uphold the integrity of religious education! It is my intention to show that Fundamentalist teaching, based upon the presumption of absolute inerrancy, does not fit the criteria of an acceptable educational format and indeed mostly amounts to Indoctrination. It is important to prevent religious writings from being forced or seduced into one set of dogmas or another and thus being stifled in their interpretation, and in the implementation of their precepts for those wanting to base their lives religiously on them.

All persons who stand up to teach Religious Education to other people have themselves been taught and the slants or areas of emphasis in the teaching they received are embedded in them. Can those persons then teach an interpretation of religion without allowing these germene influences to emerge in their presentations to their students? If not, then there is a real danger of indoctrination. Craig Blessing, a Fundamentalist Dispensationalist, put it this way - The problem is the failure to recognize that all theological thought, including one’s own, is historically conditioned by the tradition to which that theologian belongs, as well as personal and cultural factors such as education and experience. These factors condition an interpreter to think in a certain way (Dispensationalism: The Search for a Definition, 29-30). The stronger and more dogmatic the teacher’s own formation, the more likely this is to emerge when he or she teaches others. Is this prior instruction the foundation for indoctrination and is it a peculiar feature of religion or is it to be found elsewhere? As Ulrich Zwingli said in 1522 - If we come to the Bible with our own opinions and interpretation and seek to force it into that mould, we will not hear its message.

The main obstacle to achieving impartiality of interpretation in Christian religious studies seems to me to be the usage of the Bible and its writings to persuade people to various beliefs and attitudes regarding God and the practice of religion in general. This difficulty is exacerbated by the severity of some denominational dogma, such as transubstantiation or predestination, which may have been present also in the person’s place of training. In addition to some extreme forms of interpretation there are some restrictive man-made lifestyle demands which make the adherence to religion very
demanding and unpleasant; I refer to those sects which forbid amusements such as
dancing and cinema, insist on dress codes and some whose dietary requirements
exclude coffee and alcohol. These isolating and exclusive stances, to which the
adherents attach great and particular importance, stand in the way of any progress
towards church unity and, together with other exclusive beliefs, such as Inerrancy, lead
to much acrimonious and damaging argument featuring some very un-Christian
statements and behaviour. The polemical process is also advanced by various groups
taking verses of the Bible out of context and using them to support their views,
conveniently ignoring any verses to the contrary (Primitive Scriptural Proof). But much
worse still than inaccurate details is the unforgivable practice of many polemicists,
including Harold Lindsell, of quoting only those sources which agree with their own
viewpoint and conveniently omitting those which don’t. For example in Lindsell’s
passage about heretical groups on page 42 of his book *The Battle for the Bible*, I point
out that he conveniently leaves out the case of Marcion (c.140AD) who was so
incensed with the fallibility of the Old Testament and much of the New that he proposed
his own Canon of Scripture consisting of Luke’s Gospel, minus the first 3 chapters, and
10 of the Letters of Saint Paul. These practices prevent Religious Education from
enjoying the same even-handed impartiality which is the due of any responsible
education system or item.

We will look at some traditions of interpretation which have been applied to the Bible,
or at least two primary ones, which would give us sufficient contrast to enable us to
understand how some of our previous discussion would apply, in the educational
context. Some of these interpretations do not respect the expectations placed on
education in the way of impartiality, freedom and even-handedness and nor do they do
justice to the integrity of the biblical text itself from a scholarly point of view. In order to
determine whether certain presentations and interpretations of the Bible come under
the classification of indoctrination and are thus unsuitable, we must first examine the
current discussion about Indoctrination to see where the balance lies and then look
historically at the development of the two quite different Christian traditions and
eventually perceive which of these, or which parts of these, fits better into the mould of
what education should be. John Perry said of this dispute between Conservatives and
Liberals - *Given that one side in this debate doubts the other’s orthodoxy, and the
other side in the debate doubt’s the first’s faithfulness to scholarship, the impasse
Philosophy Shaped the Evangelical View of Scripture*. Quodlibet, Journal, 3

7
I would like to offer three quotations from notable religious writers which set the scene for some of the things I intend to say and point out. I will refer to all of these points in the thesis.

Bishop Spong of New Jersey says that the biblical scholarship of the last 200 years has simply not been made available to the man and woman in the pew. The absurd biblical claims made by television preachers and the like have manipulated audiences without being called to account in the name of truth (SPONG, J. S. (1991) Rescuing the Bible from Fundamentalism, San Francisco HarperCollins Publishers, p.10).

The Theologian Charles Augustus Briggs in 1881 in his bitter dispute with B.B. Warfield over Inerrancy said - if anyone can find any comfort in verbal inspiration and the inerrancy of the Scriptures, we have no desire to disturb him, provided he holds these errors as private opinions and does not seek to impose them on others. (C.A. Briggs The Right, Duty and Limits of Biblical Criticism, Presbyterian Review (July 1881): p.551 from ROGERS, J. B. & MCKIM, D. K. (1979) The Authority and Interpretation of the Bible, San Francisco, Harper & Row, Publishers p.351).

Inerrancy must not be confused with Inspiration because, as Everett Harrison remarks - No view of scripture can indefinitely be sustained if it runs counter to the facts. That the Bible claims inspiration is patent. The problem is to define the nature of that inspiration in the light of the phenomena contained therein (HARRISON, Everett, (1958) Revelation and the Bible, ed. Carl F.H. Henry, Philadelphia; Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., p.239).

Many proponents of Inerrancy have retreated to naming the Autographa (the original documents) only as inerrant, but of course this is a difficulty since none of them are still extant. In any case the processes of passing on an oral tradition, converting it to a written medium, sometimes translating it into another language, producing a final text, copying and preserving that text, adding exegetical comments at any of these stages along the way, and running into one another and forming one total complex of tradition makes the identification of what or where the original document was, from which inerrancy can be said to have begun, difficult.

Is there a way of presenting religion in such a way as to escape the label of indoctrination? Michael Hand maintains - Given that religious beliefs are not known to be true and therefore cannot be rationally demonstrated, how can they be imparted
without by-passing reason? There appear to be only two ways of imparting a belief - by proving it to the person or by indoctrinating them. Since no religious belief is known categorically to be true then the only option is indoctrination – (HAND, M. (2002) Religious Upbringing Reconsidered. Journal of Philosophy of Education Society of Great Britain, 36, 545-557). A good example is the deep-seated Roman Catholic belief in Transubstantiation, that is that at the words of consecration the bread and wine on the altar actually become the flesh and blood of Christ; there is no proof whatsoever that this does or does not occur but all deep-rooted Catholics apparently believe in it.

Seemingly then, the adamant and exclusive teaching of religious beliefs is not the way to go. At present some groups are interpreting the Bible in an exclusive way and presenting their viewpoint as the only one and, in some cases, ignoring, denying or denigrating other possible expositions. How exactly could one utilise the Bible in a way which reflects its capacity to say something to people who are not fundamentalists or fanatical followers of some other tradition or religion and does not prevent them from seeing its value as literature. I will investigate what conditions should be placed on the teaching of anything in the educational context such that what is taught is not regarded as indoctrination in the negative sense. It should not be authoritarian, doctrinal or simply illogical in a way which does not provide evidence or an opportunity for argument and in fact does not encourage it. It should not represent a literature which is essentially based on authority which states this is the truth, this is how it is, and even to ask a question would, at least in some religious traditions, be regarded as a sin.

The Bible should be looked at in a more reflective and scholarly fashion rather than treating it as a given scientific truth or textbook of some kind, often rendered with emotional disregard for the facts; as Augustine said on this matter - The Bible was not a textbook of science or an academic tract – God desired us to become Christians, not astronomers (Proceedings with Felix the Manichee, 1, 10, cited in Polman, p.59) (Rogers & McKim; p.26). The truth in the Bible however can be metaphorical, akin to the apocryphal Pilgrim’s Progress by John Bunyan where we clearly know that it is not meant to be an historical rendering of a state of affairs, but nevertheless the story can provide moral education and give a deeper understanding of the human psyche and human relationships. However it must be acknowledged that a story is just that, not to be adamantly and polemically put forward as historical truth as the Inerrantists do. We must penetrate the shield around the scriptures created by faith, sanctification and religiosity if we are to take an honest look at the Biblical texts. What is important about
what I am doing is that educators and policy makers have a responsibility to be mindful that certain materials and teachings fall within the definition of indoctrination and are therefore misguided in educational terms and should not be included. Strong material which is peculiar to a specific religious group should only be offered by that denomination itself outside of a public educational system, and then only to those who knowingly and willingly submit themselves to such teaching, not to immature and impressionable young minds in schools.

To consolidate my position I am arguing in this thesis that:

- The unopposed and exclusive teaching of the Doctrine of Inerrancy should not be accepted, as modern biblical scholarship and scientific knowledge clearly show it to be misguided and unsustainable.
- Any form of indoctrinational teaching should not be included in the school curriculum as it is a betrayal of a good and equitable educational policy.
- Indoctrination thrives on exclusivity.
- In as much as the exclusive teaching of the doctrine of inerrancy is a form of indoctrination, it, and the exclusive modality of religious belief it sustains, should be disallowed, or, at the very least, only be presented in a debating situation.

My thesis will give evidential proofs of the unsustainability of strong inerrancy and suggest how religion can be taught in a less confrontational and exclusive way and how a new non-polemical curriculum might look. I think it is important that our school children should benefit from the morality, ethics and spirituality offered by religion without the dogma, ritual and man-made regulations which many denominations put forward as essential.
CHAPTER 1

OVERVIEW WITH MAIN SOURCES
(Literature Review)

As the title indicates, I am using the Literature Review to identify the major contributors to the information discovered and investigated in my research and thus to acknowledge them as main sources in the various sections of the Thesis. This review also includes the objectives of my study, what gap my research fills and why it is important.

Throughout the thesis those sections placed in italics are either titles or direct quotations.

Indoctrination

Rather startling in annunciation is Michael Hand’s statement that no religious beliefs can be categorically proved to be true – HAND, M. Journal of Philosophy of Education Society of Great Britain, 36,545-557), but nevertheless many people adamantly believe them. Because of this we are faced with the real danger of indoctrination if we attempt to teach religion beliefs, rather than teach about religion or from religion. In order to investigate and determine what features or content of Conservative Evangelicalism and Liberal presentations may be classed as indoctrination we need to fully define Indoctrination and then trace the history of the two sides to see how they arrived at the content of their present positions, which can then be examined as to the makeup of their output. I have placed the definition and discussion of Indoctrination first so that features of it may be intelligently appreciated in some of the interpretations we will be examining in the thesis.

The History and Development of the Concept of Inerrancy in the Early Church

The History and Development of the Concept of Inerrancy in the Early Church

The Heritage of Biblical Interpretation - with special emphasis on inerrancy.


- The Early Church
- Pre-Scholasticism (7th -11th Century)
- Early Scholasticism (11th-13th Century)
- The Aristotelian Dominicans
- The Neoplatonic Franciscans
- Summary of Early Church Beliefs

The German Reformation

- The Reformers’ Confessions
- Summary of Reformed Beliefs
- Changes in the Post-Reformation period
The Development of the Doctrine of Inerrancy.

The second major topic to be discussed is Inerrancy, as it forms such a basic bastion of Conservative Evangelicalism and thus influences all its presentations; it is also a topic which causes considerable friction between the evangelical and the liberal sides. The first recorded use of the word *Inerrant* had occurred in 1652 in a treatise on Astronomy. None of the early major Catholic or Protestant persuasions had discussed the notion of biblical inerrancy openly. It was only from the nineteenth century that this question featured prominently in the religious scene, after mutterings born in the enlightenment.

Many Theologians, including Rogers and McKim, argued that the Doctrine of Inerrancy of Scripture was developed in the 19th century by the Princeton Theologians because of two main factors:

- The use of Turretin's *Institutio Theologiae Elencticae* as their textbook in systematic theology, and
- Scottish Common Sense Realism as the philosophical basis for their theology.

Others, such as Dr. Ligon Duncan, maintain that Common Sense Philosophy’s contribution was in terms of language, epistemology, apologetics and methodology, not in theology or a view of Scripture. Many however accept that inerrancy requires a base in Common Sense Realism.


Before focusing our attention on the two main Theological positions of Conservative Evangelicalism and Liberalism, a brief history of Biblical Interpretation up to the end of the 17th century gives a good basis from which to observe and interpret the parting of the ways leading to the two very different approaches we have today. Conservatives understand the bible as the inerrant Word of God, authoritative to the life of believers and containing sufficient and exclusive truth for salvation. For Liberals the Bible is inspired truth about God, important in the life of believers but not necessarily authoritative in all matters. These and other differences and characteristics will be investigated in more detail in the Thesis, referring frequently to the work of Harriet A. Harris and James Barr - HARRIS, H. (1998) *Fundamentalism and Evangelicals*, Oxford, Clarendon Press and BARR, J., The Westminster Press, 1978 , and also
Gleason Archer and Harold Lindsell on several occasions.

In order to understand how these two main theological approaches arose, their particular historical development must be briefly traced. The writing of Rogers, J.B. & McKim, D.K., Harper & Rowe, 1979, again gives a very lucid and organized descriptive timeline of biblical interpretation some of which I have paraphrased as the framework of my journey from the Pre-scholasticism of the 7th century to the Reformation. Many other books and papers were consulted including The Penguin History of the Church in its first three volumes and BROWN, R. E., FITZMYER, J. A. & MURPHY, R. E. (1993) The New Jerome Biblical Commentary, London, Geoffrey Chapman.

The Development of Reformed Scholasticism in America

The main impetus for this event or events revolves around the Princeton Theologians whose careers, views and contributions are fully described later in the Thesis. Material for this section was gleaned from Rogers and McKim's excellent 1979 book - The Authority and Interpretation of the Bible, San Francisco, Harper & Row, Publishers.

Criticisms of Rogers & McKim

Because of my extensive use of Rogers & McKim's book, The Authority and Interpretation of the Bible, at least in the early stages, it is only fair to acknowledge some criticisms of their work. The most significant volume published in response to Rogers & McKim came from John Woodbridge, (1982), Biblical Authority: A Critique of the Rogers/McKim Proposal, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, who argued that Rogers & McKim had partly misunderstood and partly misinterpreted the history of the doctrine of biblical authority and were proponents of the theology of Berkouwer.

The International Council on Biblical Inerrancy was set up in October 1978 in response to Rogers & McKim’s proposal as to the influence of Common Sense Philosophy on Princeton theology in general and the doctrine of inerrancy in particular. The Council drafted the Chicago Statement which is still adhered to by many today (see page 143).

The History of the Establishment of Conservative Evangelical Characteristics

A series of booklets called The Fundamentals was commissioned by the Stewart
brothers in 1909 by 1928 the term “fundamentals” had become common usage, but “fundamentalist” and “fundamentalism” were coined in 1920 by Curtis Lee Laws, Baptist editor of the Watchman-Examiner, (Shelley, Bruce (1974), Fundamentalism, in J.D. Douglas (ed.), The New International Dictionary of the Christian Church, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, pp. 396-397). At this stage ‘fundamentalist’ was a positive identification of the fundamentals of the faith, not a pejorative term applied to them by others, as it would later become.

Fundamentalism, as we know it today, was launched, in my opinion, by the Princeton Theologians, B.B. Warfield in particular, who in turn found their inspiration in the work of Francis Turretin. The information for this section was drawn from - ROGERS, J. B. & MCKIM, D. K. (1979), The Authority and Interpretation of the Bible, San Francisco, Harper & Row, Publishers.


B.B. Warfield is generally speaking the best-known of the Princeton Fundamentalist Theologians and he took a hard stand on the Doctrine of Inerrancy and the Inspiration of the Bible. Objections to this position were vociferous and a famous well-publicized confrontation between Warfield and Charles Augustus Briggs shows some of the main points of contention and is well documented in this thesis. Other objections from Scotland, England and the Netherlands have been presented under their proposers’ names.

The Scriptural stance of the Evangelicals was intensified when the Enlightenment spawned Liberalism. McGowan said, of the Enlightenment - At the heart of it were two key elements, an affirmation of human autonomy and an affirmation of the final authority of reason, both of which militated against the orthodox Christian doctrine of revelation. If reason is the final authority then no appeal can be made to a divine being and if human beings are autonomous then they must decide for themselves without any interference from God, church or Bible, (MCGOWAN, S.B. & MCGOWAN, A.T.B., Apollos branch of Inter-Varsity Press, 2007, , p.51).
General Fundamentalists’ Beliefs today:

The publication of *The Fundamentals*, commissioned by the Stewart Brothers in 1909, was followed by the World Conference on Christian Fundamentals in 1919 in Philadelphia which in turn gave birth to *The World's Christian Fundamentals Association* which required of its members that they adhered to nine points of doctrine:

1. *The inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture*
2. *The Trinity*
3. *The deity and virgin birth of Christ*
4. *The creation and fall of man*
5. *A substitutionary atonement*
6. *The bodily resurrection*
7. *The regeneration of believers*
8. *The personal and imminent return of Christ*
9. *The resurrection and final assignment of all men to eternal blessedness or eternal woe.*


The Fundamentalism Project, which was sponsored by the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, was an international scholarly investigation of conservative religious movements throughout the world. The project, which began in 1987 and concluded in 1995, was directed by Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby.

The study concluded that, regardless of the religion, fundamentalism has several commonalities:

- Men are to lead and women and children follow. Wives are to be subservient to their husbands. Often, this subservience applies to sisters toward their brothers.
- A woman's role in life is to be a homemaker.
- The rules of their religion are complex and rigid and must be followed. Therefore, to avoid any confusion, children of fundamentalists must be sequestered in an environment of like-minded adherents to the corresponding fundamentalist religion. Especially so in their schooling.
- There is no pluralism. Their rules apply to everyone everywhere.
- There is a distinct group of insiders and all others are outsiders. Insiders are nurtured and cared for. Outsiders are cast off and fought.
- They pine for an older age and long for a past time when their religion was
pure, as, largely, they no longer see it as such. Perhaps this time period never truly existed, but they have a nostalgic view of a Utopian past and they yearn to acquire this past.


**Tenets of Fundamental Christianity, Conservative Evangelicalism:**

This roundup of characteristics was again gleaned from the writings of Prof. James Barr and Harriet A. Harris and from the excellent Dictionary Series from SCM Press. Professor Barr refined the main characteristics to:

- A strong emphasis on biblical inerrancy
- A strong hostility to modern theology and to the methods, results and implications of modern critical biblical study
- An assurance that those of other religious viewpoints are not really ‘true’ Christians

See also the table on page 6 of Harris’ *Fundamentalism and Evangelicals*.

Books like WHITCOMB, J. & MORRIS, H. (1980) *The Genesis Flood*, Grand Rapids, Michigan, Baker Book House and GEISLER, N. L., Victor Books, 1992, , have been used for specific topics: although these books were written a while ago and, in the
opinion of many express out-moded ideas, many Fundamentalists still hold to these expressed beliefs.

**Criticisms of Fundamentalism; a Summary of these Criticisms:**


Professor James Barr wrote a very comprehensive review of Fundamentalism and why it holds the fixed and exclusive views that it does. Having traced the history of the discipline earlier I have included quotations from Professor Barr’s book both there and elsewhere in the thesis. He gives valuable information as to how the group positions itself at the time of writing and what tenets have relaxed somewhat since Warfield’s day and thus what areas may hold some hope of dialogue or even unity with other churches.

More recently some evangelical authors, whilst still believing themselves to be Conservative, have begun to criticize certain aspects of Fundamentalism, in particular absolute inerrancy and the historicity of some Bible passages. Modern authors who have written along these lines include -


**The Place of Philosophy:**

Several authors, among them MURPHY, N. (1996) *Beyond Liberalism and Fundamentalism*, Valley Forge, Trinity Press International, have proposed a role for Philosophy in the shaping of religious positions and these will be discussed later in the thesis.

**The Development of Liberalism**

I have divided this topic into -
1. The development of the Historical-Critical Method
2. The Synoptic Problem, and
3. The Foundation Members of 20th century theology

The Historical-critical method of Biblical Criticism -

**The Foundation Members of 20th century theology**

Press International. Bishop Spong, although not a recognized professional theologian, has been prolific in making statements in writing and speech which have rocked the establishment and are occasionally worthy of a mention and certainly worthy of discussion - SPONG, J.S., HarperCollins, 1991.

Opinions Contrary to Higher Criticism


Examples of the Work of Both Sides

In order to better establish the stance of both sides and the nature of their presentations to the outside world and to aid in our later decisions about indoctrination, examples of the output of each side are given below. The Liberal theologians are very engaged with critical biblical study and the best examples of their work lie in this area. Consequently the examples I have chosen are perhaps their two outstanding contributions to the understanding of the provenance of the Pentateuch and the Gospels and will be detailed more fully later on. Both these scholarly achievements are damaging to the cause of the Inerrantists and anathema to those who propose absolute, total, verbal or strong Inerrancy.

Liberal-Critical Study:

The Documentary Hypothesis:

Originally gathered and presented by Julius Wellhausen in 1876, this is a well-known and widely accepted explanation of the contents, provenance and arrangement of the Pentateuch. Although it has been subjected to several modifications and additions, it

Arguments against the Documentary Hypothesis:
These arguments are quite well represented by a gleaning of the statements of Gleason Archer on the matter from his A Survey of Old Testament. Gleason Archer has plenty to say about the Documentary Hypothesis as he defends Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch (ARCHER, G.L., Moody Press, 1975 pp.105-118).

The Synoptic Problem:
The Synoptic Problem attempts to account for the differences and similarities in the texts of the first three canonical gospels and has become the most accepted basis from which to consider the solutions to the problem. Several more solutions have been proposed recently but usually along the same basic lines and all are challenging to the cause of the Inerrantists. No matter who copied whom and in what order, or who altered whom to suit their own requirements, these manoeuvres undoubtedly took place and clearly show that the inspired gospel writers did not consider the work of other inspired gospel writers to be inerrant or inviolate since they freely copied, corrected, altered or omitted the work of others. Work on this problem represents a major area of liberal output and is vital in the discussion of inerrancy as detailed elsewhere.

Criticisms of the Synoptic Solution:
There really are not many reputable scholars who deny outright the findings of the Synoptic Solution; the disagreements which do occur are over the detail of who wrote first and what other documents were involved in the copying or compiling process. http://catholic-resources.org/Bible/Synoptic_Problem.htm.

Conservative Evangelicalism
For examples of Evangelical work I have chosen two giants in the world of Conservative Evangelical literature, Harold Lindsell and Gleason Archer. Conservatives tend to descry biblical scholarship and are actively hostile to critical study in particular and so their output is mostly apologetic writing intended to reinforce and shore up their fixed position. The two examples chosen of this output are
presented in the form of my critiques of the relevant sections of two of the most quoted and read Conservative Evangelical works – *A Survey of Old Testament* by Gleason L Archer and *The Battle for the Bible* by Harold Lindsell.

ARCHER, G. L. (1975) *A Survey of Old Testament*, Chicago, Moody Press - in this book Dr. Archer devotes no less than the first 13 chapters to a discussion of the Conservative position including some objective criticism of the Liberal view which will be presented later in the thesis. However in looking at Dr. Archer’s own fundamentalist views I have included the liberal objections to them at the same place so as to relate directly to his statements rather than as a later section when it may be difficult to recall what the details of his original statements were. This method has also been employed in the critique of my second source of Conservative Evangelical representative output, namely Harold Lindsell.

LINDSELL, H. (1979) *The Battle for the Bible*, Grand Rapids, Mich., Zondervan Publishing House, . In this case the whole book is a presentation of the Evangelical case and so the whole book has been critiqued and liberal objections placed alongside. This book is particularly important because of its universal use as the epitome of the Conservative Evangelical defence; although too rich for the blood of some evangelicals, such as Carl Henry.

**Biblical Examples**

Discussion and Information for these sections resulted from my own reading over many years and relevant commentaries and their introductions which I have read and perused in relevance to:

- Biblical Texts in General
- The Creation
- The Flood
- The Virgin Birth
- Harmonisation
- Archaeology
- Mosaic Authorship of the Pentateuch
- The Book of Daniel
- The Book of Isaiah
• The Writings of Paul
• The Birth of Jesus
• The Sayings of Jesus
• Some anomalies from the Gospels
• Discussions of the interpretations of this foundation material from both Testaments by each persuasion.

WHITCOMB, J. & MORRIS, H. (1980) *The Genesis Flood*, Grand Rapids, Michigan, Baker Book House provides a book full of fundamentalist explanations of the great biblical saga of the deluge. Since the authors are of the fixed opinion that – ‘people could read and write long before the Sumerians and thus wrote a credible direct account of Noah and the Flood’, and also that ‘the descendants of Noah’s sons spread out from Asia to populate the world, acquiring the differing racial characteristics from their inbuilt genes as they went’, (p.45) then the general credence of the book must come under serious question. I have cited the work of the Leakey family in this connection (see pp.234, 367).

**Limitations of the Doctrines of Inerrancy v Liberalism**

Is the Doctrine of Inerrancy the best explanation and expression of Biblical interpretation as it stands today?

The following authors were quoted in this discussion, showing that many evangelical authors were beginning to doubt that inerrancy was the best stance to take or even that inerrancy was the right word to use.

MCGOWAN, S.B. & MCGOWAN, A.T.B., Apollos branch of Inter-Varsity Press, 2007,
NOLL, M. (1994) *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*, Grand Rapids, Michigan,
William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company
ORR, J. Duckworth,(1909),
Where Does the Matter of Religious Education in our Schools Rest Now?

What is the present state of Religious Education?

- A discussion of the Rawlinson Report and some of its recommendations.
- Religion as a Facet of Education in NSW Government Schools.
- Problems in implementation of policy requirements.

Can We Suggest a Schema That May Be Acceptable to All?

What hope is there for an ecumenical future? Are there any new ways to present the Biblical texts in a less polemical way? An interesting exchange between the writings of Professors Paul Hirst and D.Z. Phillips concerning the suitability of religious matters for inclusion in the educational curriculum of our state schools brought out many of the characteristics of religious education which need to be considered when thinking of acceptable ways of presenting religion – (Phillips, D. Z. (1971). Faith and Philosophical Enquiry. New York, Shucken Books Inc. Chapter 8). Scott McGowan also offered some suggestions in the form of a moderation of the language used in the discussions pointing out that scientific matters could only be described in a form acceptable at the time of writing, otherwise these statements would have taken centre stage.

Objectives of the Study

I admit to using the findings of biblical scholarship already established but I intend to assemble them, together with some newer insights, in a unique manner to present a total and evidentially conclusive condemnation of absolute or total Inerrancy and its teaching in our schools. Although I am using mostly accepted scholarly findings, and it is essential for my argument that they are accepted in scholarly circles, there are some newish notions introduced such as the Creation Narrative in Genesis being a polemic against polytheism and not having been able to be written before the Exile, the method of introduction of YHWH new views about Yahweh and the Jonah and Ruth stories being protest literature. Others have written against Inerrancy citing one or two examples but I have endeavoured to encompass all the main areas of opposition to this concept in the hope of achieving the verdict of unsustainability against it on account of the collective weight of the evidence provided. Fundamentalists can deal with isolated difficulties in the biblical texts by alternative explanations, allegations of incorrect transmission, ignoring those verses which disagree with their viewpoint and other
twistings and turnings, but the cumulative weight of a multitude of anomalies, such as I am presenting in this Thesis is, I maintain, overwhelming in denying the veracity of the Doctrine of Inerrancy.

The particular aims and objectives of this thesis are:

1. To discuss and define Indoctrination.
2. To describe the history and development of the concept of Inerrancy.
3. To trace establishment of the major groups and their views.
4. To understand their current positions and characteristics.
5. To examine how their stances and beliefs may affect their teaching in our schools including Indoctrination and exclusivity.
6. To present opinions against the more extreme groups.
7. To describe the main policies, recommendations and structure involved in Religious Education (RE) in NSW.
8. To investigate methods of reducing the tension, polemics and divisions between the groups, e.g. a change of vocabulary, the acknowledgment of the use of myth, an acceptance of the cultural and scientific limitations of the human biblical authors no matter how inspired they may have been.
9. To suggest guidelines for a curriculum for RE acceptable to all groups in an attempt to avoid some schoolchildren receiving no religious knowledge at all.

After a discussion of Indoctrination, we must attempt to identify what aspects and tenets or doctrines may be indoctrinational and thus may not fulfill the expectations of education, namely fair and equitable presentation of the truth and the allowing of a presentation of each side of any dispute.

Augustine wrote in c.400 AD. - If they (the unbelievers) find a Christian mistaken in a field which they themselves know well and hear him maintaining his foolish opinions about our books, how are they going to believe those books in matters concerning the resurrection of the dead, the hope of eternal life, and the kingdom of heaven, when they think their pages full of falsehoods on facts which they themselves have learned from experience and the light of reason? Reckless and incompetent expounders of Holy Scripture bring untold trouble and sorrow on their wiser brethren when they are caught in one of their mischievous false opinions and are taken to task by those who
are not bound by the authority of our sacred books. For them to defend their utterly foolish and obviously untrue statements, they will try to call upon the Holy Scripture for proof and support and even recite from memory many passages which they think support their position. (The Literal Meaning of Genesis, New York; Newman (1982), Vol.1, p.42-43). Augustine thought we should take all means to prevent such an embarrassing situation in which other people show up vast ignorance in Christians and laugh them to scorn. These hallowed statements emphasise the importance of accurate biblical interpretation and the education of congregations as the influence and implications of any alternative are damaging to the cause in this age of intelligent readership.

The research of some authors has overlapped similar areas to my questionings regarding the best way to present Religious Education whilst avoiding indoctrination and prejudice. However Michael Hand in his paper Religious Upbringing Reconsidered has gone so far as to say that, no religious belief is known to be true. Therefore religious beliefs can only be imparted by indoctrination. However, Dr. Hand does believe that there is a third way of imparting beliefs and that is by the exercise of perceived intellectual authority. An Intellectual Authority in this context, is someone who has personally carried out the observations, collected the evidence and sifted the arguments and thus provides the evidential basis necessary for the ‘rational holding’ of these communicated beliefs. Hand says that if the belief does not strike one as implausible, or if one does not have independent grounds for believing it to be false, or if one does not feel teased or misled, then this testimony of a perceived intellectual authority constitutes a sufficient reason for the adoption of a belief’ (Barr p.551).

G.B. Askarova in his paper The Religious and Ethical Education of Students in a Secular School, has presented an interesting way to present some of the advantages of a religious outlook for the young in their educational program without offending secular authorities - Religion not only harmoniously synthesized in itself the culture of the world and universal human values, it also served to mitigate the harsh influence of many social doctrines on the spiritual and moral upbringing of the rising generation. (ASKAROVA, G. B. (2007) The Religious and Ethical Education of Students in a Secular School. Russian Education and Society, 49, 34-46),(see Appendix 2).

After a thorough and comprehensive discussion of the history of the concept of inerrancy and the development of the doctrine, I proceed to investigate its limits and its
suitability or otherwise for inclusion in a platform of publicly funded school religious education.

This study will attempt to show that to maintain that the Bible is inerrant may be questionable with present day knowledge and biblical scholarship available. A study of history will show that there have been doubts about the absolute accuracy of scripture for many centuries and that the church has not always held to total inerrancy as the Ultra-conservatives assert. There is sufficient evidence out there, one way or another, for there to be significant agreement on some major parts of the Bible and any move towards lessening the areas of bitter dispute among church factions will surely be most welcome. Moderation of the language used in Inerrancy/Errancy discussions and an admission that early biblical writers did legitimately use borrowed myth and legend to illustrate some of their points and messages would go a long way towards ecumenism.

What Gap Does My Research Fill?

Whilst much research has been undertaken into Biblical History and the veracity of its texts severally, no real use has been made of these findings collectively to actively discourage indoctrination of misguided or exclusive beliefs, which are contrary to modern scientific findings, scholarly biblical study and the open-mindedness of good education. Only when the large body of evidence against Inerrancy is accumulated in one presentation, as it is in this thesis, can the overwhelming case against it be appreciated. Presenting objections one at a time, or piecemeal, allows opponents to specifically tackle each statement individually taking no cognizance of its context or the effects of its error, whereas presentation of the whole case allows the true situation to emerge much more forcibly.

We must encourage a reduction in the damaging and bitter disagreements between religious factions and thus achieve at least partial consensus. Some of the instances of religious dissent are -

- Adamant statements by some religious groups, such as the world is only 6000 years old, which seem, in the light of modern knowledge, to be unreasonable and bring religion as a whole into disrepute.
- Bitter disagreements between denominations about the meanings of texts causing ill feeling, schism and un-Christian behaviour.
- Misrepresentation of what the Bible means to say, resulting in mistaken lifestyles, such as those in extreme cults or puritanical organisations and their
restrictive and punishing rules.

- Flagrant misuse of texts taken out of context to support extreme views, such as the Jehovah’s Witnesses’ shunning and condemning of all non-accepting people as being incapable of ever being saved; only a limited number will enjoy salvation or the Calvinist doctrine of Predestination.

- Disputes with science where there should be mutual support, such as in the issue of Evolution. The support of the instant creation of unique humans, as in the biblical story of Adam and Eve, would not seem to fit the facts of the fossil record and African archaeology.

- Discouragement of seekers after religion who are deterred by these disagreements and are bewildered by the multiplicity of church claims and opinions all purporting to be right. Even Augustine in the early 400’s AD wrote - *Reckless and incompetent expounders of Holy Scripture bring untold trouble and sorrow on their wiser brethren when they are caught in one of their mischievous false opinions and are taken to task by those who are not bound by the authority of our sacred books.* (The Literal Meaning of Genesis, New York; Newman, 1982; Vol.1. p.42-43) - how very true even today.

- There is enormous interest in church circles in Ecumenism but, like the crisis in the Middle East, attempts at resolution are limited to tinkering around the edges and not going to the core issues. These central issues must be tackled head on or the house of resolution is being built upon the sand. The central issue in ecumenism is, in my opinion, Biblical Interpretation. Whilst religious factions and denominations hold widely varied views on the meanings of core biblical texts then harmony between them can only be superficial and false. Divisive issues of ritual and church order often flow from interpretation differences.

Because of this interest and these difficulties I consider my study to be an important first step in bringing about some consensus and reducing the areas of contention and misrepresentation by consideration of the whole picture.

Some work has been done in the area of showing that a view of the Bible as the Inerrant Word of God is questionable. More prominent, urgent and fiery work has been done in the area of Apologetic Rhetoric and publications by the Fundamentalists to try and shore up their crumbling position or simply to continue in-your-face indoctrination, as exemplified by the early morning Television Evangelists. Nothing, however, seems to have been done, or suggested, in the area of reducing the serious, bitter and damaging conflict between the Liberal Theologians and the Conservative Evangelicals,
whose supporters cannot and will not countenance Ecumenism whilst these conflicts are alive and well.

Regarding the reduction of angry inter-denominational argument - what can be done and how can we do it? In my opinion a very good place to start would be in the area of Religious Education. If we can put that on a reliable and truthful footing then surely that will flow through to the general public in time. The gap in the present research is that few people have applied themselves to these problems. The reason for this is that some consider the job too hard. The Universities shy away from absolute criticism of any group on the grounds of fair representation and that perhaps contrary information may come to light later, and the Clergy are fearful of losing part of their congregation if they advocate new and, to some, alarming new findings about the biblical writings. Nevertheless Religious Education needs to be relieved of misleading and indoctrinating presentations of the Bible’s content and messages. Few people have confronted the Fundamentalists’ statements directly as to their veracity and their acceptability in modern times nor challenged their suitability as Religious Education. This thesis intends to do both. As Bishop Spong has commented elsewhere in this thesis, they must be held to account for their views.

Flaws in some present research mostly stem from an earnest desire to prove or present one point of view at the expense of another and not to present a reasonable, scholastically sound view which can be communicated to the church-going public. Archaeology has been guilty of severe bending of the results to support some biblical position - as a well-known saying goes, I have no reference for it – “it is no good entering a trench with a spade in one hand and a Bible in the other”. So prevalent was the shortcoming implied by that saying that Biblical Archaeology became called Palestinian Archaeology, perhaps by common agreement and usage. In this study I have attempted to give both sides in any interpretation made but it must be said that some extremist views are so unreasonable as to justify little space being devoted to their expression and many have no real evidence to support them. I am also presenting “in-your-face” instances where strong inerrancy is clearly and incontrovertibly inappropriate. It has become more acceptable in academic circles and in academic language to present both sides of an argument equally so that the presentation would be pronounced satisfactory by each side. However, in this thesis, where decisions have to be made, then a stand has to be taken to enable these decisions.
My research tries to explain and understand how Western Christian Churches have gotten themselves into the position of having two distinct, damaging and hostile approaches to biblical interpretation. The deep divide between the two sides prevents the attainment of the ideal of Christian church unity and produces some very bitter and unhealthy polemical exchanges.

I hope from the investigation of the two approaches to be able to find:
1. Some areas of agreement or softening of adamancy which may help to lower or abolish some of the fences between the camps.
2. Devise some way of presenting the timeless and valuable biblical material and messages in a modern and non-confrontational way acceptable to both sides, or at least to moderates on both sides.
3. To decide which aspects of Religious Educational material now available do not fit with recognized guidelines for equitable public education and are thus unsuitable.
4. Achievement of these goals may allow an acceptable form of Religious Education to be offered to children in our schools, some of whom do not now get the benefits that religious studies have to offer and are subjected to what amounts to secular indoctrination.
5. A curriculum of Religious Education that will enable young students to enjoy the spiritual and moral benefits of learning about religion without the indoctrination of learning the specifics, limitations and dogma of one religion or group.
6. A view of Ethics which includes spirituality, morality and divinity which are such an important part of religion.

Various authors have suggested some partial answers to the questions I have raised, some of which I have incorporated into my suggestions. The main contributors to an ecumenical move whom I have discovered in my research are:

Scott McGowan - *The Divine Spiration of Scripture*
John Barton - *People of the Book*
Mark Noll - *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*
Nancey Murphy - *Beyond Liberalism and Fundamentalism*
Harriet Harris - *Fundamentalism and Evangelicals*
James Perry - *Dissolving the Inerrancy Debate*
Michael Hand - *Religious Upbringing Reconsidered*
James Barr - *Fundamentalism*
John Spong - *Rescuing the Bible from Fundamentalism*
G.B. Askarova - *The Religious and Ethical Education of Students in a Secular School.*
Conclusion

My intention in this Thesis is to show how Inerrancy arose and how and why it hardened as a Doctrine and to question its accuracy both as a belief and as a word. To my knowledge this is the first time that an attempt has been made to collect most of the major objections to Inerrancy, and the supporters’ comments, together in one presentation, rather than just cite one or two outstanding ones or one side of the argument only. Looked at collectively, from a distance the God of the Old Testament is not the same God as the New Testament portrays, even as Marcion thought long ago. The God of the Old Testament is, at times vengeful and bloodthirsty showing little or no mercy to Israel’s enemies and, at times, insisting on ruthless punishments and genocide, e.g. the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Deut. 29:22), the death of Uzzah for touching the Ark of God (2 Sam. 6:7), the destruction of the people of Jerusalem (Jer. 13:14). Marcion in the early Church refused to accept the allegorical explanations which some others used to overcome difficulties in the biblical texts and this caused him to produce his own Canon of Scripture recognizing only the Gospel of Luke (minus the first 3 chapters) and 10 letters of Paul.

I shall argue that the only way to produce such exclusive insistence on the Doctrine of Inerrancy as exists in the Fundamentalist persuasion, is by the mechanism of Indoctrination. I have therefore started with a discussion of that mechanism. Even though I am calling the present major scholastic findings, ‘givens’ for the Liberal side, despite what future research may uncover, that gives us a basis from which to legitimately expose some misguided and fruitless beliefs, according to present knowledge, which can have little expectation of future denial. We are dealing with present beliefs using present knowledge, which is all we can do and which is all the biblical writers and redactors did in their time.
CHAPTER 2

INDOCTRINATION

In the previous chapter I provided an outline of the layout of my Thesis showing how it progresses from a discussion of Indoctrination, through the development of Inerrancy as a Concept and then as a Doctrine. A discussion of the establishment of a Liberal position after the Enlightenment shows how this, in turn, produced a hardening in the attitude of the orthodox establishment. Finally I discuss how all this impacts on Religious Education in this country. Indoctrination is a vital topic in that, as a method of teaching or instruction, it contravenes several key requirements for a sound educational policy. If we are clear on what indoctrination is and can clearly identify its presence or use in any religious presentations, then those presentations should be discouraged as they inhibit the formation of good critical apparatus in young students. In order to enable indoctrination to be identified I have placed the discussion of it here at the start.

Introduction

Doctrines are the defined tenets, usually of a sect or religion, and in its basic sense indoctrination is simply the communication of those doctrines. In some views indoctrination is simply only the communication of doctrine, such as its admitted use by the US Navy in the Second World War to refer to the basic rules and discipline for naval personnel. However when particular beliefs and values are instilled into the unwilling or the unaware, then it becomes morally questionable (COPLEY, T. (2008) Non-indoctrinatory Religious Education in Secular Cultures, The Religious Education Association, Vol.103). Atheism also has its doctrines - ‘that there is no God, that this life is all there is’, etc. The contents of religious beliefs as doctrines are in a different class from a belief, for example ‘that the milkman will come in the morning’, because the latter has such a limited response, such as putting an extra bottle out, whereas the religious doctrine can change whole lives and behaviour (Gregory and Woods - SNOOK, I. A. (1972) Concepts of Indoctrination, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd: 162f.).

Indoctrination must be distinguished from conditioning and force. Along with the attempts to define indoctrination go the disputes about whether it is necessarily always
a bad thing or whether there may be occasions where it is ethically or educationally justifiable, such as the indoctrination of democracy for example. In the days and in the countries where Christianity was universal, the teaching of Christian dogma was not then considered Indoctrination. Michael Hand maintains - *Given that religious beliefs are not known to be true and therefore cannot be rationally demonstrated, how can they be imparted without by-passing reason?* HAND, M. Journal of Philosophy of Education Society of Great Britain, 36, 545-557). Ivan Snook writes, *Christian teachers of all persuasions are expected to teach for belief in certain propositions, the propositions varying from sect to sect. It is clear that such teaching is indoctrination because whatever the particular proposition the evidence for it is inconclusive: it is rejected by other competent authorities. That all religious propositions are doubtful in this sense is sufficient to indicate that teaching for belief in them is always indoctrination* (SNOOK, I. A. (1972) Concepts of Indoctrination, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd: 152f).

**Suggested Definitions:**

In the past when the concepts of education were more fixed and doctrine meant Christian doctrine then indoctrination was indistinguishable from education and raised no doubts or questions in the usual case: however one must recall considerable disturbances of the status quo such as the Spanish Inquisition or the Puritan claims after the English Civil War. In America, after the restrictions of nationalistic ardour on anything disturbing to patriotism during the First World War, there was a reaction at its conclusion to absolutism, and progressive voices were raised among American educators focusing on Authoritarianism and Indoctrination.

William Kilpatrick described Indoctrination in 1919 as - *fundamentally and essentially undemocratic. It tends to anticipate choice. It inherently uses the individual as a means to an end, and this danger is present wherever any type of authoritarianism prevails.*


Antony Flew in his article *Indoctrination and Doctrines* said - *Indoctrination, where it is a bad thing, is a matter of trying to implant firm convictions of the truth of doctrines which are false, or at least not known to be true; usually the indoctrinator himself believes that the doctrines in question are both true and known to be true. In a*
secondary sense indoctrination would be to implant beliefs, even those which are known to be true, by certain disfavoured methods. Presumably such methods are in some way incompatible with the proper understanding of what is taught and of critical appreciation of its logical and epistemological status. (Snook, Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd. 1972: 67f).

Thomas F. Green in Indoctrination and Beliefs - Snook Page 38-40 - states that Indoctrination is successful only if people think they hold their beliefs evidentially but in fact do not, only when they use reason as a weapon of defence under the illusion that they are seriously inquiring”. Indoctrination aims at establishing certain beliefs so that they will be held quite apart from their truth, their explanation or their foundation in evidence. When does teaching or instruction become indoctrination - this is like asking at what stage does a man losing his hair become classifiable as bald? The one blends imperceptibly into the other….. From a university prospective the result can be disastrous making further teaching all but impossible to the bound and restricted minds. … There must be some degree of psychic freedom … for instruction to proceed it must, in effect, find some foothold from which to push back the darkness and let in the light.

The FARE Report (Copley, T. et al. 1991, 19) stated that indoctrination occurs when a person is given one view of the world in such a way that they cannot see any other. This seems to me to describe what has happened in the case of strong Inerrancy. The non-destruction of the free will but the feeding of partial information resulting in partial judgments and the deprivation of choice is what separates it from conditioning where the will of a person is over-ridden. Incidentally is this not also what is happening with Secular Indoctrination outside of institutional religion where people who are the products of a secular world view, disguised as impartiality by some governments, have a real difficulty understanding the claims of religions (Copley, 2008).

Many areas must suffer from the phenomenon of indoctrination to a certain extent and, in fact, some have even viewed it as a desirable feature of education (e.g. Professor B. F. Pittenger, 1941, Indoctrination for American Democracy), but seldom has there been such fierce and emotional feeling as has been seen in opposing sides in religious matters. We are all aware of incidents in history where wars have been fought and massacres perpetrated in the name of religion. These matters are also of great importance when one considers questions related to Theological instruction, such as
“Should there be a Chair of Theology in a Modern University”. Among the meanings of the Latin ‘universus’ is “all without exception” and indeed the expectation from a modern university is unbiased presentation of knowledge. In the light of what has been said in the Introduction can a person be found who can teach Theology, and Biblical Studies in particular, in an impartial manner satisfactory to the University’s platform? Would not every teacher incline, howbeit slightly, to the Conservative or to the Liberal side?

If indoctrination consists of insisting on the truth of contentious and unsupported doctrines, as has been suggested already as a definition, then perhaps religion lends itself especially to this phenomenon under the guise of noble pretensions to “blind faith” or “unswerving belief”. If indoctrination results in the closed and blinkered holding of debatable beliefs without the willingness to debate them calmly, then some religious denominations certainly qualify. I know personally of a son who called his mother an adulteress because she divorced his father after a marriage breakdown, and divorce was anathema to his religious beliefs; he refused to let “such a woman” see her own grandchild. Again we had a long-standing friend who became a Jehovah’s Witness and was then not allowed to visit our house because we were not of that persuasion. Both of these actions were approved of, and indeed encouraged, by so-called Christian Groups. In the name of common reason are these actions Christian or even reasonable? The majority of writers, such as those in Snook’s book already quoted, insist that indoctrination must involve the handing on of beliefs, as distinct from skills, attitudes or ways of behaving, which distinguishes it from conditioning; in other words we indoctrinate people to believe certain things but we condition them to do certain things; and some go further and argue that only false or doubtful beliefs are applicable or even only doctrinal beliefs qualify.

**How does Indoctrination develop?**

Can indoctrination start with a sort of pre-indoctrination, such as, for example, the singing of hymns or a youngster saying Amen after a prayer, or even the very common usage of the expression “My God” as an expletive of surprise or awe; do these presuppose the existence of a God and therefore pre-dispose that person to accepting further beliefs concerning God? (WHITE, J. P. (1972) *Indoctrination and Intentions*. (in SNOOK, I. A. (Ed.) *Concepts of Indoctrination*. 1st ed. London and Boston, Routledge and Kegan Paul: 117f).
If the child’s education cannot wait until he or she is mature enough to think for themselves, does this not force indoctrination upon us (KILPATRICK, W. H. (1972) *Indoctrination and Respect for Persons* in SNOOK, I. A. (Ed.) *Concepts of Indoctrination*. London and Boston, Routledge & Kegan Paul: 47f).

The intention to create unshakeable faith in God on the part of many religious teachers is the ultimate indoctrination in religious matters and furthermore, according to White again, the notion of faith is surrounded by an aura of sanctity which effectively prevents one from analyzing what it involves (White, Routledge and Kegan Paul1972:117-130). Many Priests, Ministers and Pastors today, who are familiar with the more recent scholarly findings, are reluctant to use them because they are afraid of alienating their congregation members by presenting what may at first be alarming truths to persons steeped in old myths and legends. These priests continue the old ways and retain the old problems of interpretation and the person in the pew never benefits from new inspiration. An appropriate quotation from Dryden in 1687 spoke -

*By education most have been mis-led;
So they believe, because they were so bred.
The Priest confirms what the nursery began,
And thus the child imposes on the man.*

The priests are perpetuating a religion which will inevitably in time be questioned out of existence as it stands. When individually and privately shown new insights, many priests describe them as “old hat” but they still do not present them to their congregations to whom they would undoubtedly be exciting “new hat”. The New Dictionary of Christian Theology states “the findings of modern biblical criticism have been little understood and accepted outside specialist academic circles and are in fact virtually unknown to the majority of Christians, who in practice adhere to mild forms of fundamentalism”. Scholars are now writing just for other scholars as they shake their heads at the anachronous inclusion of the shepherds and the wise men in the same nativity scene whereas liberal scholarship would place them at least 2 years apart. As Bishop Spong says, “only the Christmas card industry can blend these two accounts together adequately, and they do so by falsifying what they do understand and ignoring what they do not understand” SPONG, J. S. (1991) *Rescuing the Bible from Fundamentalism*, San Francisco, HarperCollins Publishers (p.167).

The basic reason that this situation has not been dealt with, that is to try and bridge the
gap in knowledge between the lay person and the scholar, is that statements too blunt or insensitive about new scholarly findings would undoubtedly alarm and deter some people from seeking any further information. Seriously religious church goers may feel their very faith to be threatened by such new notions and close their minds to any further “heresy”, or ‘tampering with the Word of God’, as they may see it. Most liberal theology students go through a period of concern when some of their pre-conceived concepts about the Bible are either ‘shaken and stirred’ or frankly destroyed. They, however, are usually committed to the full course of exposition and explanation and soon learn that adopting new ideas actually enhances their beliefs and increases their respect and love for the library that we call the Bible. This cannot be achieved by ten minute sermons on Sundays.

As two recognized teachers of religion have commented -

There is the educational problem of making the inexhaustible riches of the Bible readily available to religious instruction (Mary C Boys, Religious Education and Contemporary Biblical Scholarship, Religious Education LXXIV (March-April 1979, p.183).

The wealth of knowledge currently available in the realm of Biblical Scholarship has somehow tragically failed to flow out into the lives and minds of adults, (Eugene F Trester, Adult Biblical Learning in Community, Religious Education, LXXVII, (September-October 1982), p. 540)

If a religious teacher denies indoctrination what other intention could he have? This depends in turn on one’s definition of a religious teacher. I myself want to educate people about the true and original meaning and provenance of the writings in the Bible as presented by modern scholarship and I am struggling manfully to avoid any prejudice or slant in presenting the facts, which I have gleaned from a large number of respected and non-denominational theologians. Does this qualify as Religious Teaching and does it escape the label of indoctrination? I think it does provided that I, and other like-minded teachers, can discourage their pupils from absorbing beliefs and attitudes akin to the teacher’s own but instead encourage them to form their own independent opinions by looking at both sides. Even though I intend to teach Literary Criticism and the Historical-critical method as the basis of my presentation, am I also teaching religion and furthermore am I indoctrinating? If I do not also present views contrary to the methods I advocate then yes I am guilty of consciously or unconsciously
persuading my hearers to my point of view. It is certainly difficult, if one is passionate about one's subject, not to inspire to some extent the same enthusiasm in one's hearers: it is also difficult to present with any conviction a view which one considers at best ill-informed and at worst completely wrong.

Is indoctrination essential to faith or is indoctrination in fact what faith is? There seems no doubt that indoctrination takes care of the unprovable tenets of a religion but does that indoctrination form a firm enough springboard to leap upwards and relate to God directly or to know that God is there? Alternatively does the epistemological basis, followed by the indoctrinational, provide fertile ground for an extra ingredient called Faith to ‘come in’ and bridge the gap to firm belief in the presence of God and the interaction with Him that follows. If this is so, how does faith “come in”? What is the Holy Spirit and does it have a role to play in ‘inspiring’ faith? Can the Holy Spirit be invoked or is the faith we would like it (him) to provide in fact necessary before we can access the Holy Spirit’s help? The seeker is trapped in a Catch 22 situation where the Holy Spirit could certainly help to generate faith but faith is necessary to invoke that help?

**The Steps in Indoctrination:**

To classify something as indoctrination one must recall a well-held view that it consists of content, aims and method as its component parts in its task of inculcating doctrine (I.M.M. Gregory and R.G. Woods - (Snook, Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd.1972: 162f). Contributors often disagree as to the relevant importance of these parts in the matter of indoctrination but all are agreed that it becomes damaging when it stops the person’s capacity to think for themselves. Some writers attempt to bring out the meaning of indoctrination by comparing it to conditioning or propaganda whilst others try to define it purely in terms of its method, content and/or intention.

Its Method depends on the circumstances, in that deliberate falsification, suppression of evidence, theoretical argument, emotive terminology or forceful presentation of doctrine may severally be appropriate on certain occasions. According to Professor Copley indoctrination can occur in four major ways;

- By planning and intention, such as the school curriculum of Nazi Germany,
- By omission or exclusion - such as not presenting a certain set of religious beliefs. Omitting religion altogether sends a clear message to students that it is
unimportant. Omitting aspects of news gives a false impression, such as the media manipulation in China and North Korea.

- By positioning / relegating a subject to the periphery with minimum time and resources, often allocated to be taught by non-specialist teachers
- Asking religious questions in a slanted way - such as “Was Darwin really right?” as opposed to “was Darwin right?” where the question contains a hidden answer.

Dr. Brian Crittenden describes indoctrination as *mis-education where violence is done to the criteria of inquiry* (SNOOK, I. A. (1972) *Concepts of Indoctrination*, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd. P.131-151). As a method this can be done regardless of the teacher’s intention.

Regarding content, the education and sophistication of the general and church going public has advanced enormously since the 1800’s but sadly public theological knowledge has not. Theology was the foundation subject of the early universities but it has now faded to a shadow and is even avoided in some educational institutions. Some teachers of Theology and Bible Study announce themselves as Catholic or Anglican or other persuasions and proceed to interpret the writings in the Bible accordingly. In schools, children’s parents, who adhere to a particular denomination, often voice their objections to what they see as indoctrination if the teaching of their children doesn’t accord with their own beliefs and so Scripture and Bible Study is ‘out the window’ as the easiest way of solving this issue. In her article in the English Journal, Maridella Carter cites the focus on personal liberties, including the right to conceive of and worship God in whatever way a person chooses, as the main reason why teachers avoid incorporating the Bible into their literature curricula. *Whatever perspective teachers bring to the teaching of this book they are likely to encounter some resistance*, she says. She also makes the very important point that before teaching the Bible a person should identify their own particular slant at the outset and remember that all textual interpretations are based on both individual and cultural experience. *One should look to one’s own previous relevant training to see how it affects the way you approach the text before inviting students to do the same* (CARTER, M. (2002) *The Bible: Still a Classic Worldwide Bestseller* *The English Journal*, 91, 33-39). These views, and other similar ones, support my contention that the Bible can and should be taught without bias or slant with no attempt to indoctrinate. If the Bible were presented as Theological Literature perhaps there would be less
“perspective” and thus perhaps less rejection, although some people would probably object to that, saying that we were not teaching ‘the Word of God’ properly. A scholarly, literary interpretation of the biblical texts, leaving readers themselves to attribute religiosity to it, would be the way to impartiality.

In his article *Non-Indoctrinatory Religious Education in Secular Cultures* Professor Terence Copley, of Oxford University cites the questions - How should education deal with religion, what are the consequences of exiling religion from education and how can it be handled in public schools without being liable to a charge of attempted indoctrination? It is worth considering that in attempting to be thoroughly impartial some governments have become thoroughly secular in their education policy thus denying the case of the overwhelming majority in Western Democracies which is not entirely secular - *minority values are therefore driving the education policy*, Professor Copley states, and, *maybe because the secular is seen as the common denominator to which religions are optional extras*. The Professor gives an amusing quotation from Groome’s interpretation of the American first amendment - *In God we trust, except in education*. Are we here looking at *Secular Indoctrination*? (Groome, T. 1998. *Educating for Life*. New York: Thomas Moore).

In their article *Indoctrination: inculcating doctrines*, (SNOOK, I. A. (1972) Concepts of Indoctrination, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd. p.162) Gregory and Woods, take as paradigm cases the communist system of political education and the teaching of religion in Catholic Schools. It is customary to refer to these two entities as ‘Doctrines”. The Pope himself, in the London Times on 7 January 1969 referred to Catholic teaching as “orthodox doctrine”. “Acceptance of a religious doctrine commits a person to act in a particular way, to profess and act out a particular value and way of life”. In the Times article the Pope used phrases like “Heirs to the treasure of revealed truths” and “custodians of the deposit of faith” which are over-riding claims made for Catholic doctrine.

Thomas Green says about intent - *Indoctrination simply aims at establishing certain beliefs so that they will be held quite apart from their truth, their explanation or their foundation in evidence*. ….. indoctrination is to conditioning as beliefs are to habits. He holds that indoctrination results in beliefs being held non-evidentially and therefore not known to be true but believed to be correct. In the indoctrination process questions and discussion are carried on for the purpose of informing and persuasion, not for
arriving at conclusions. The conversation of instruction is employed only in order that fairly specific and pre-determined beliefs may be set; conflicting and troublesome evidence and objections may be withheld; the intent is to lead people to hold beliefs as though they were arrived at by inquiry but in fact held non-evidentially. When a belief is held evidentially, always in relation to its grounds in reasons or evidence, then this is instruction and not indoctrination; this is the most important distinction between the two. Although an indoctrinated person may appear to use reason and argument, he or she will:

• Use argument, criticism and evidence not as an instrument of inquiry, but as an instrument establishing what he already believes
• Display a marked incapacity to seriously consider conflicting evidence or entertain contrary reasons
• Hold his views as matters of ideology using reason and argument for defence not inquiry
• Use reason as a weapon for defence which is not required for a belief held evidentially.


In his paper, To Educate or to Indoctrinate: That is Still the Question, Professor Ron Laura examined definitions of Indoctrination based on method of teaching, content of the teaching and intention. In regard to the former he pointed out that the inculcation of beliefs without understanding the grounds for those beliefs is indeed a part of education in general, especially the education of children, and cannot be used to define indoctrination particularly. Nor can a method such as hypnosis, which can instill beliefs without foundation, be used in the definition because beliefs not regarded as indoctrinational can also be imparted by this method.

Turning his attention to the content of the teaching which in the case of indoctrination would usually be regarded as ‘a doctrine, if not false then at least not known to be true, or a disputatious area of belief, both of these must be constituents of a wider ideological system’. Whether it is possible to delimit the subject matter in this way and whether it is possible to teach it in a non-indoctrinatory way are still matters of debate.

For those not convinced by either the method or content accounts of indoctrination there remains the alternative of intention. The intention account defines indoctrination
as a process of influencing the mental state of an individual such that a particular belief disposition is ensured; put in another way an individual endorses a belief or set of beliefs, ‘P’, in such a way that, despite compelling evidence otherwise, the individual is unable to endorse ‘Not P’. Professor Laura argues that indoctrination is tantamount to a paralysis of intellectual imagination in which the mind becomes closed on those issues which are fundamentally open. Certainly intention, viewed in this way, comes nearer to explaining what indoctrination is but how can the teacher’s intention be articulated? And can that intention necessarily result in actions as described above?

The Avoidance of Indoctrination:

Often we have presumed the intention of religious education to be the education or induction into a specific religion, its way of thinking and behaviour, with a view to persuading a person to join that group. What about “Learning from Religion” or “Learning about Religion”, meaning teaching religion with the aim of learning about the values, principles, rules and ways of thinking of major religions to deepen the student’s understanding of human issues and choices and what is available out there. If the intention were merely to present a religious doctrine - take it or leave it - that would not constitute indoctrination, but when the intention is to inculcate the doctrine, or when inculcation occurs anyway, then the title of indoctrination is appropriate. Gregory and Woods describe intention in this context as:

(a) specific - when the indoctrinator admits that he intends to get his charges to believe,
(b) The indoctrinator refuses to admit quite honestly that he has any intention of getting beliefs over. However his presentations, even though he does not admit to his own beliefs, lead the class to adopt the views presented.
(c) The teacher who presents a format in which he does not himself believe but which is required by the organisation for which he works, may well indoctrinate pupils with that format by dint of his authority as teacher.
Other writers say that the presentation of contentious beliefs constitutes indoctrination regardless of what the teacher intends.

Largely because of Indoctrinational considerations the aims of high-school religious education have changed in some countries from pure assimilation of a specific religion, as in Jordan, to learning about religion and from religion, as in English and Welsh schools. Globally Professor Copley cites four main categories of Religious Education:

1. Education about Religion - a curriculum subject learning about religion without persuasion into or out of a particular way of thinking. In this category students are
inducted into a debate rather than being told what to conclude.

2. Education into a specific religion - embracing catechetics, faith nurture and spiritual development.

3. Education rooted within a faith community - how people behave in community together with general education and possible induction into a specific religion, e.g. the Catholic and Anglican schools which generally welcome students of all religions but whose ethos is Christian.

4. Learning from Religion - to derive some generic benefits, such as deepening one’s understanding of commitment, sacrifice, and use of silence.

Choices 2 and 3 above are clearly voluntary choices but should 1 and 4 be part of the curriculum enabling an informed choice to be made even between the religion of their family and upbringing, the main religion of the host country or a non-religious position. It is better to make informed choices than to live in ignorance.

In his discussion of these matters Professor Copley advocates Religious Education to be educational rather than religious and the teacher’s role to promote awareness and understanding, not to promote belief. He states that neutrality is humanly impossible but skilled training in knowledge and understanding of the religious and secular values being presented in each case should enable the teachers to present the material in a manner satisfactory to each code.

How is education about religion then to proceed? The answer is that religious education must at least dare to teach the possibility of God and the individual student then be invited to engage with evidence and experience to reach his or her own conclusion (COPLEY, T. (2008) Non-indoctrinatory Religious Education in Secular Cultures. The Religious Education Association, p103).

Michael Hand in his 2002 paper in the Journal of Philosophy of Education, set out to answer the question - can one consistently ascribe to parents both a right to give their children a religious upbringing and a duty to avoid indoctrinating them? He defined indoctrinating a child as to impart beliefs in such a way that the child holds them non-rationally, or without regard for the evidence HAND, M. Journal of Philosophy of Education Society of Great Britain, 36,545-557). A further necessary definition was that of “Religious Upbringing”, which Hand described as 1. Imparting to children a set of religious beliefs, and 2. Initiating them into an associated range of religious activities.
The original research question posed is really a practical difficulty of giving children a religious upbringing without indoctrinating them. Some researchers (cf. Terence McLaughlin) have acknowledged the risk of indoctrination but have not considered it so great as to restrict the right of parents to raise their children as they see fit. Others (cf. Eamonn Callan and Peter Gardiner) think the danger of omission is severe enough to justify such a restriction. Hand seeks to solve this dilemma by setting out a coherent logical account of a non-indoctrinatory religious upbringing; by showing that there is a way of imparting not-known-to-be-true beliefs with the result that they are rationally held.

Dr. Hand believes there is a third way of imparting beliefs and that is by the exercise of perceived intellectual authority. An Intellectual Authority in this context is someone who has personally performed the observations, collected the evidence and sifted the arguments and thus provides the evidential basis necessary for the ‘rational holding’ of these communicated beliefs. Hand says that if the belief does not strike one as implausible, or if one does not have independent grounds for believing it to be false, or if one does not feel teased or misled, then this testimony of a perceived intellectual authority constitutes a sufficient reason for the adoption of a belief (ibid. p.551). This type of testimony is not indoctrination, he says, since reason has not been by-passed. However there is one formidable objection and that is - if no religious proposition is known to be true how can there be an intellectual authority on such matters? In the case of bringing up children, the parents are naturally perceived as intellectual authorities and so are not guilty of imparting this belief and thus of indoctrinating. Are they guilty though of a misuse of the power attributed to them by the children and using it to impart controversial beliefs? Certainly the parent is guilty of not correcting the child’s perception of him or her as an authority on religious matters and also of using this misapprehension of the child to impart not-known-to-be-true beliefs. Any damage done here is surely less than indoctrination where the improperly founded beliefs are immune to rational appraisal. The abuse of perceived intellectual authority is the lesser crime and is often used anyway, such as telling the child that the tooth fairy will come for the tooth or that Santa Claus will bring presents to good children. Children are not permanently damaged by such falsehoods which bring excitement or pleasure to the child and so, can a case be made out for excepting religious beliefs such as a loving God or a God controlling the sky as heaven, which may have previously frightened the child who looked up at the night sky? Family ties are strengthened by agreement on
matters of religion which may be a further justification for abuse of perceived intellectual authority by the parents to achieve comfort and security in the family home where there are religiously committed parents. When this argument is extended to adults however the perceived benefits which justified the imparting of known falsehoods are much less and an adult has a right not to be deceived by those fairly regarded as authorities or else the impartation of those beliefs is indeed indoctrinatory.

Criticisms of Hand’s paper and theories have centred on his conception of indoctrination being - a) held without regard for evidence and b) impervious to change and unshakeable (TAN, C. (2004) Michael Hand, Indoctrination and the Inculcation of Belief. The Journal of the Philosophy of Education Society of Great Britain). In the first place evidence relies on the senses being themselves reliable and there is no other way, apart from our sensory experience itself, of verifying this. Also what we refer to as evidence is determined by the belief system we subscribe to. On the second point Dr. Hand presupposes that an indoctrinated person cannot return to the evidence and rethink his or her beliefs at a later stage, this is a concept rejected by Drs. Tan, Callan and Gardner in their papers on the subject of Religious Upbringing. Many philosophers talk about a Primary Culture (Ackerman, 1980; Hobson, 1984: Runzo, 1989; Toon Tarris and Gun Semin, 1997) which is a set of beliefs about the world and values, such as fairness, caring and honesty against which individual children can develop their own views. Many of the constituents of the Primary Culture will of necessity be indoctrinations, in that they are not known to be true, but starting off with some sort of framework of reference or set of standards guides children in regard to important decisions as they grow towards maturity (Tan, 2004). William Galston asserts that the greatest threat to children now is not that they will believe in something too deeply but that they will believe in nothing very deeply at all (Galston; 1998). He opines that parents should foster strong convictions in their children so that rational deliberation among the ways of life is more meaningful.

Indoctrination and Faith

Many say that the element of Faith is needed to bridge the gap between the more factual or less metaphysical aspects of religion and its final goal. Is Faith then a kind of indoctrination or is Faith the end point of a bigger indoctrination process? If so how early does this process start? Does that child saying ‘Amen’ in church, or the youngster singing a hymn, signal the start of a process reinforced in Sunday school
and carried on in church? It could be that children were being indoctrinated with their parent’s religion and thus being called ‘Catholic children’ or ‘Jewish children’ having been given no choice in the matter. This brings to mind a Jesuit saying ‘give me the child until he is 7 and I will show you the man’.

Feminist Theologian Patricia Wilson-Kastner says Religious faith constitutes a fundamental personal relationship to the sacred. It springs from a primary, suprarational acceptance of the divine, rooted in a sense of the presence of the Ultimate to the self. Theology is the rational spelling out and explaining of one’s faith.

If we were to gather together all the personal accounts of prayer being answered, often in ways very hard or impossible to explain in hard practical terms, we would have a formidable list of what should surely amount to strong indications of the existence and effectiveness of something beyond our ken which we can call the activity of God or his Holy Spirit. Let us not attempt to go into the logistics of how God acts but suffice it to see if we can bring enough other evidence to bear to convince us that God does.

- Based on the old anecdote that a visitor from another planet on finding a watch on the ground knows that there must be a watch-maker somewhere then one of the main supports called upon for there being a God is the complex organisation of the creation we see around us.
- One may think that this somewhat hierarchical system of life on earth could not have occurred without an organizer, and so far no one has proved that it could. The Reverend Sir John Polkinghorne, an eminent particle physicist, is of this opinion pointing out that the chemical and physical organisation required to originate carbon-based life on this planet is much more complex than could be accounted for by chance. However no proofs either way yet exist.
- Many mighty men of the past have entertained a firm and unshakable belief in the presence of God and many have endured tremendous hardship in defence of that belief, such as the Christian Martyrs and the Desert Fathers.
- Paul, in one of his acknowledged genuine letters, 1 Corinthians, in Chapter 15 verses 3 to10, tells of 500 witnesses to Christ’s post-resurrection appearances, as well as other named persons who saw the risen Christ.

Admittedly it seems that it was easier in past times to concentrate and focus on God and on matters spiritual when there were infinitely less distractions and where the
support for religious views was very prevalent, and in times long past, universal. Even though the times of the Church Fathers are long gone there are still many highly respected, educated and sensible persons who harbour an unshakeable belief in God and have faith in Him and in their respective churches. Once a firm, reliable and satisfying relationship with God is established the steps which brought one to that point become irrelevant it seems - cf. Gal. 3:24f and statements that ‘the Law was only a schoolmaster to bring one to Christ' seem appropriate (Hebrews 1:1-2). If teaching the certainty of God constitutes attempted indoctrination then teaching the impossibility of God, actively or by suppression, also constitutes indoctrination.

Conclusion

Philosophers in the past, like Dewey, White and Green have argued that indoctrination is either inevitable or even desirable. Some regard the lack of indoctrination as criminal and depriving the child of the gift of language and linguistic sharing as well as rational power. It seems to me though that these men did not regard indoctrination as a one-way street from which there was no return. Because there is a derogatory and injurious meaning of indoctrination in the eyes of some, such as Michael Hand, there is a need for a clearer understanding of what indoctrination entails. All seem to agree that indoctrination involves the imparting of beliefs not known to be true or for which decisive evidence cannot be provided. What is not settled is whether there can be a recovery from this position once solid evidence to the contrary is produced? Tan thinks that rather than defining indoctrination strictly in terms of rationality and evidence, it is appropriate to see it as a paralysis of the mind, both in form and substance. Both Laura and Harvey see indoctrination as paralyzing the intellectual imagination such that only those values and beliefs that others impose on us are accepted. The mere teaching of religious beliefs is not an indication that indoctrination has taken place. According to Neiman, 1987, any educational system that prohibits, or severely diminishes, the ability to imagine alternatives and the willingness to consider their point and worth, indoctrinates.

In summary then, I think that Religious Teaching, with the undoubted aim of inculcating belief in the existence of God, of his Righteousness, his interaction with humankind and his provision of a life hereafter, is clearly indoctrination since there exists no evidential proof of these tenets. Following through on these beliefs in the form of worship, lifestyle, prayer and expectations constitutes what we call Faith. On the other hand, teaching about the Bible itself, based on clear literary or historical evidence regarding
its texts, is not, by definition, indoctrination as these facts can be proved, or disproved, by existing evidence, but when it comes to the interpretation of the meanings of those texts then once again we are in danger of indoctrination. In this latter category I include such things as the story of Noah and the flood being interpreted as historical truth by the Conservatives when it seems clearly based on, and/or adapted from, earlier versions, such as the Babylonian story of Utnapishtim as seen on tablets 11 and 12 of the Gilgamesh Epic of c. 1700 BCE, or even earlier versions, and the sacking of Jericho and Ai by Joshua, whereas the Archaeologists contend that both sites were uninhabited at the proposed time of Joshua (ANDERSON, B. W. (1991) The Living World of the Old Testament, London, Prentice-Hall; p.136/7).

The only way to hold such false interpretations, ignoring the clear evidence of scholarship or blindly denying its findings, is by unrelenting indoctrination. The whole key to teaching religion in an unbiased way is to teach about religion and about its content and to treat the Bible as literature. In the example of the flood, the story of Noah should be explored as a piece of illustrative writing in the Bible and not as historical fact. The previous existence of many other versions of the same story in Babylon and as far afield as African and the Americas, should be investigated (see page 316) and the conclusions about copying, mythology, widespread floods in the Middle East and other related matters should be left to the individual student. The problems occur when a person gets up to teach the flood as an actual historical happening with no ifs or buts and no presentation of alternative views. This mythological literature then becomes indoctrination.
CHAPTER 3
THE HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE ‘CONCEPT OF INERRANCY’ IN THE EARLY CHURCH

Having discussed Indoctrination and seen its potential damaging effect on the openness and equitability of a good educational policy, we are now better enabled to detect it in future material. I shall now turn my attention to the other vital topic in my thesis, namely Inerrancy.

By tracing how the church arrived at having two distinct approaches to Biblical Interpretation, namely Conservative and Liberal, we can perhaps better understand their positions and hopefully find ways to remove some fences which separate them or learn how to present the Bible in a non-confrontational way. The history of the concept of Inerrancy is presented from the early Church Fathers to the Reformation and is to be followed by the parting of the ways as Inerrancy is forcibly developed by the Princeton Theologians, on the one hand and Liberalism is spawned by the Enlightenment writers on the other. Scott McGowan maintains any discussion of the idea of ‘inerrancy’ must be set in the context of the Enlightenment and the resulting liberal theology, since it was liberal theology’s rejection of the older orthodoxy that prompted an evangelical response and the development of the inerrantist position (MCGOWAN, S.B. & MCGOWAN, A.T.B., Apollos branch of Inter-Varsity Press, 2007, ; p.50/51).

Quotations from two of the foremost advocates of ‘the Bible being free of all error’ will suffice to set the scene –

B.B. Warfield, a Princeton Theologian and leading proponent of Inerrancy in the 19th century, stated - ‘the church, then has held from the beginning that the Bible is the Word of God in such sense that its words, though written by men and bearing indelibly impressed upon them the marks of their human origin, were written, nevertheless, under such an influence of the Holy Ghost as to be also the words of God, the adequate expression of his mind and will (Warfield, B.B., (1893) The Real Problem of Inspiration, PRR, 4, p.193).

A stronger view of Inerrancy was presented by Harold Lindsell, whose book became almost a necessity for Conservative Evangelicals to possess in the late 1970’s.
- for two thousand years the Christian church has agreed that the Bible is completely trustworthy; it is infallible or inerrant (LINDSELL, H., Zondervan Publishing House, 1979, p. 18).

Whether these statements are true or not will be discussed in an informed look at the historical development of the concept of inerrancy, later to become the Doctrine of Inerrancy. The former is virtually identical to Verbal Inerrancy but the latter term also includes the veracity of the statements made.

The Heritage of Biblical Interpretation
(With special emphasis on inerrancy).

Today there is a multiplicity of exegetical methods, such as textual, source, form, redaction, canonical, structuralist, narrative, rhetorical, social and advocacy criticisms (Raymond E. Brown, An Introduction to the New Testament (1997), p.20-29), and some dispute as to preference exists. Historical study of the political, social, cultural and theological milieu in which the biblical texts were written is needed to form the necessary frame of reference for an adequate understanding of the scripture. Even between persons in close chronological proximity confusion can occur, let alone over the vast distances in time and space over which a Biblical exegete is looking. The texts were further shaped by the personal interests, experiences and problems of the individual authors; this will be evidentially demonstrated in the case of the canonical Gospels.

Presuppositions are important in exegesis, for example one exegete may consider divine inspiration inappropriate to scholarly study whereas another may consider it the dominant factor (ODENDAAL, J. (2004) Biblical Interpretation. Quodlibet, Journal, 6).

It is worth remembering that - A modern concept of inerrancy involving scientific, precise language was, of course, unknown prior to the rise of modern science with its knowledge and methodology and so when the Church fathers claim that the Bible is without error, it did not mean for them what it means for us today (JOHNSTON, R. K. (1979) Evangelicals at an Impasse: Biblical Authority in Practice, Atlanta, John Knox, p.21).

Even theologians who allegedly supported an inerrancy position throughout the history of the Church often exercised in their exegesis much greater freedom than Lindsell’s
adamant interpretation of their views would seem to allow. The type of close argumentation that occurred in the 1970’s over Inerrancy was only possible after scientific accuracy was universally known and accepted and biblical scholarship had progressed. Certainly prior to the Enlightenment the issue was not at the forefront and nor did it have the tools and ammunition to create a bitter dispute. We can however notice the emergence of elements of biblical interpretation which later gave rise to such controversy. We will now look at some early church notables who did not wholly support Inerrancy as such, despite what the Evangelicals claim.

The Early Church

Origen (185-254) was one of the earliest Christian writers to tackle seriously the matters of Inspiration and inerrancy in respect of the Scriptures (Peri Archon; De principis was Origen’s major theological work to refute those who interpreted the Bible literally). He believed many ‘testimonies’ to be divine but he conceded that the authors, in relating the word that came to them or the revelation they had experienced, sometimes expressed their own opinions and used literary devices to enhance readership and even made errors in the transmission process. He believed that Genesis 1:3 alleging the presence of “light” before the Sun and the Moon had been created (verse 1:14-18) was wrong. In achieving the purpose of bringing persons to salvation, God had ‘accommodated’ himself to human forms of thought and speech - it was the saving message and not the form of the words that was wholly from God. He acknowledged that the New Testament evangelists and Paul expressed their own opinions and that they could have erred when speaking on their own authority. He distinguished between the revealed message and the commentary on it by the scriptural authors. Philo in Alexandria before him had used ‘accommodation’ to explain anthropomorphism in the Old Testament and allegory to explain away the more unsavoury aspects of the Hebrew scriptures in order to make them palatable to Hellenistic sensibilities. Origen used anthropomorphism, based on the Incarnation principle, to explain human language forms as “baby talk” by God, as a Father to his child, for our greater understanding. He rejected any idea of a mechanical mode of inspiration whether of the prophets or of the biblical writers and developed the notion of ‘allegory’ to interpret “wrong understandings resulting from interpreting the Bible according to the ‘bare letter’ (ROGERS, J. B. & MCKIM, D. K. (1979), The Authority and Interpretation of the Bible, San Francisco, Harper & Row, Publishers. p.11-14). Origen could be thought of as ‘saving Scripture’ because he – insisted that the allegorical reading is necessitated by the problematic content of the conquest
narratives, in which Yahweh commands Israel to engage in the wholesale slaughter of the inhabitants of the land of Canaan (STARK, T. (2011) The Human Faces of God, Eugene, Or., Wipf and Stock Publishers; p.34). Using allegory or spiritual interpretation, such as Gregory of Nyssa did to describe the murderous events on the night of the first Passover as “typology” of virtue completely destroying evil, means the abandoning of any historical-grammatical considerations (ibid;35). Rabbi Akiva pronounced a curse upon anyone who did not read the book of ‘Song of Songs’ allegorically (ibid; 33).

Dionysius, Bishop of Alexandria from 247-264 A.D., stated, regarding the Book of Revelation, - I agree that it is from the pen of a holy and inspired writer, but I am not prepared to admit that he was the apostle, the son of Zebedee and brother of James, who wrote the gospel entitled ‘According to John’ and the general epistle. On the character of each, on the linguistic style, and on the general tone, as it is called, of Revelation, I base my opinion that the author was not the same. The evangelist nowhere includes his name or announces himself in either the gospel or the epistle ... whereas the writer of the Revelation puts himself forward at the very beginning. (EUSEBIUS (1989), The History of the Church, London, Penguin Books Ltd pp. 241-243).

Jerome (331-419), called Sophronius Eusebius Hieronymus, was an ascetic and scholar whose Latin translation of the Bible was a vast improvement on earlier ones. The Greek Septuagint contained other books than the Hebrew Bible and the content of the Old Testament was at that time unsure. Jerome translated direct from the Hebrew only those books considered canonical by the Jews themselves. His Bible, the Vulgate, was declared the only official one by the Roman Catholic Council of Trent (1546-1563). In his Commentary on Galatians he accused Paul of having deliberately lied about his confrontation with Peter for the sake of expediency (J.N.D. Kelly, (1975) Jerome: His Life, Writings and Controversies New York: Harper & Row, pp. 217-220, 268-272).

John Chrysostom (345-407) was based in Antioch, which was the oldest Christian community after Jerusalem, and vied with the Alexandrian school for dominance. In Antioch the search for the natural author in the historical setting took precedence over any hidden spiritual meaning of the text, such as Origen in Alexandria had advocated, and in their search the Antiochene school was critical, perceiving that some parts of the Bible were of more value than others. Following the Jewish Rabbis and Aristotle,
rather than Philo and Plato, the Antiochenes preferred to begin with the natural historical meaning of the text rejecting the excesses of allegorism although using Typology. Chrysostom himself learned the method of grammatical-historical interpretation. He affirmed that Faith stands as the enemy of rationalism (Anselm, Translation of Ian W. Robertson (1960), London, SCM Press – Homily 33, 3 in Hebrews, pp.63, 229). For him theology was a practical discipline judged by its effect on human life. God did not stand on his dignity but rather humbled himself for our benefit both in the Incarnation and in Scripture, both supreme examples of accommodation. The concept of accommodation was also necessary to interpret such biblical sections as God walked in the garden in the cool of the day otherwise a literal interpretation resulted in utter absurdity. (Homily 17 on Genesis 3, pp. 53, 135). He allowed that the human authors occasionally expressed their thoughts in metaphor and hyperbole or in such a way as to gain a favourable reception from their readers; thus denying collusion and evidencing concentration on the message rather than the words (Rogers, J.B. & McKim, D.K., Harper & Rowe, 1979, ; pp.16-22) (Pelikan, Chrysostom, p.27).

Augustine (354-430) believed that the Holy Spirit dictated to human authors who used all figures of speech (On Christian Doctrine) and who may have made an addition of their own or who may not have been entirely successful in calling to mind and reciting anew with the most literal accuracy the very words which they heard. The Bible was not a textbook of science or an academic tract; it was a book of life whose purpose was to bring the Good News of salvation and guidance in the Christian way of life (Rogers, J.B. & McKim, D.K., Harper & Rowe, 1979, p.26). Augustine warned Christians not to take their “science” from the Bible as such appeals would expose the Bible to ridicule - It is deplorable that Christians, even though they ostensibly base their dicta on the Bible, should utter so much nonsense that they expose themselves to ridicule. While ridicule is all they deserve, they also give the impression that the Bible authors are responsible for their mutterings, thus discrediting Christianity before the world, which is led to assume that the authors of the Scriptures were ignorant fools also (POLMAN, A. D. R. (1961) The Word of God According to Saint Augustine, Grand Rapids, Michigan, Eerdmans, p.61) (Barth, Karl, Church Dogmatics, Vol.1, part 2, p.525. He went on to point out that the purpose of Scripture was not to bring people information in general but to bring the Good News of salvation and guidance in the Christian way of life. The Bible was not a textbook of science or an academic tract – God desired us to become Christians, not astronomers (Proceedings with Felix the Manichee, 1,10, cited in
According to Augustine, the activity of the Holy Spirit governed the outcome but not the methods of the biblical writers, each giving an account according to his recollection of the event and his judgment as to how to present it. Differences in accounts were to whet peoples' spiritual appetites for understanding and were not problems for Christian faith as the truth resided in the writers' thoughts not in the form of words - *the sentiment (and the intention of the speakers) and not the jots and tittles of letters ought to be looked at* (The Harmony of the Gospels, II, xxviii, 67). When Augustine used the phrase - *free from error* - he meant ‘free from deliberate and deceitful telling of that which the author knew to be untrue’, not to problems that arose from the human limitations of knowledge or various perspectives in reporting events of historical or cultural conditioning of the writers, which he knew to exist. These problems belonged to the area of understanding the Scripture with the tools of research but the integrity of the biblical authors’ intentions was a matter of faith. A famous maxim of his theological method was – *I believe in order that I may understand* (Isaiah 7:9) (Treatise On Free Will – Augustine: Earlier Writings, trans. John H.S. Burleigh, LCC., vol. 6, (1953) Philadelphia, Westminster Press, p.137). He felt that too much literalism led to heresy, as in the case of the Manichees and Satan tempting Christ with Scripture (Rogers, J.B. & McKim, D.K., Harper & Rowe, 1979, 22f).

The Cappadocian Father Gregory of Nyssa concluded in 372 AD that the only legitimate recourse in interpreting the murderous events on the night of the first Passover was to regard them typologically as a lesson for believers. According to Gregory the lesson is this - *when through virtue one comes to grips with any evil, he must completely destroy the first beginnings of the evil.* (Mahlerbe and Ferguson, Life of Moses pp.138-140).

**Pre-Scholasticism (7th - 11th Centuries)**

Bede (673-735), called ‘The Venerable’ Bede, continued the moralizing and allegorizing methodology saying - *if we seek to follow the letter of Scripture only, in the Jewish way, what shall we find to correct our sins, to console or instruct us?* (Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages, (1970), Notre Dame Press, Notre Dame, Indiana; p.36). He also wrote the Ecclesiastical History of the English People in 731 and numerous books, commentaries, hymns, verse and a new calendar dating from the birth of Christ.
Early Scholasticism (11th - 13th Centuries)

Peter Abelard (1079-1142) is considered one of the pioneers of scholasticism as expressed in his *Theologia Summi Boni* and he produced a juxtaposed list of passages from the Bible which contradicted each other (*Sic et Non* - 1122). He symbolized the intellectual movement for reform having a theological method opposite to that of Anselm, *I know in order that I may believe*. He declared, *it was ridiculous for some to preach to others on matters that neither they nor their listeners could understand*, (Rogers, J.B. & McKim, D.K., Harper & Rowe, 1979, ; p.41). He introduced theology as a body of doctrine that could be analysed and achieved a synthesis by grouping all doctrines under faith and love of sacrament. The Prophets and Apostles were not free of error in the sense that they spoke in a popular language. He sought to understand Christian doctrine in order to know what to believe - a reversal of Augustine and Anselm (Isaiah 7:9). *The way to reach the truth is to doubt, to ask questions, and thus to find the answer ..... doubt is not so much a sin as the necessary beginning of all knowledge. Nothing can be believed unless it is first understood*. This pointed forward to the modern scientific methods (ibid; 41f).

The Aristotelian Dominicans

Early church theologians, like Augustine, had understood error in the biblical sense to be ‘willful intent to deceive’, and in that sense they were quick to affirm that the Bible never erred in the canonical books. Augustine did not apply the concept of error to limited scientific knowledge on the part of the biblical writers but to ethical Christian living whereas Thomas Aquinas, (c.1225-1274) concept of error was one of logical science. Aquinas turned to grammatical-historical Antiochean tradition and held that the natural sense, that intended by the human author, was the basis for the other senses and that scholars should deal with the literal sense because it could be more definitely ascertained (than that of the allegorical or spiritual) and more easily controlled.

The Neoplatonic Franciscans

William of Ockham (c.1290-1349/50) stated that evidence was used to validate science, and faith was used to validate theology. *Neither God's existence, nor unity, nor infinity could be rationally demonstrated. The Bible had credibility because it was inspired, written and asserted by the Holy Spirit and therefore its truths, which might*
even be contradictory to reason, should be believed, (JONES, W. T. (1969) *The Medieval Mind*, New York, Harcourt, Brace & World; p.317 (Rogers & McKim, 1979, p.49). Reason confines itself to the study of nature, faith to the things of God. His stress on empirical knowledge, e.g. look to see if the planets move in circles, and God’s freedom, e.g. the planets do not have to move in any particular orbit, paved the way for the rise of modern science in the 17th century. William revived semi-Pelagianism in that man could, by doing his very best by his unaided strength, merit Grace. Ockham’s position became known as the Modern Way, *via moderna*, as opposed to the Old Way, *via antiqua*, of Thomas Aquinas and Duns Scotus. (Rogers, J.B. & McKim, D.K., Harper & Rowe, 1979, ; p.50).

Erasmus (1469-1536) was a Renaissance humanist of renown who urged a return to the sources of Christianity and the Bible and the Early Church fathers. These sources he equated as classics with the Greek and Roman literature of antiquity. He opined that - *Scripture would seem to fight with itself in many places* and even Luther himself had said, *the languages are the sheath in which the sword of the Spirit is contained.* (Charles Trinkaus; *Erasmus, Augustine and the Nomalists*, The Archive for Reformation History 67 (1976); p.31).

Martin Luther (1483-1546), during his translation of the Bible in 1521, noted that *there are contradictions in the biblical text*. Luther also expressed doubt that Moses wrote the Pentateuch, that Jude wrote the book bearing his name and that some of the Old Testament battle accounts did not contain exaggerations (PERRY, J. (2001) *Dissolving the Inerrancy Debate: How Modern Philosophy Shaped the Evangelical View of Scripture*. Quodlibet Journal, 4, pp.1, 4. According to J.K.S. Reid, Luther stands at the cross-roads and from the point he occupied at least two paths lead forward. One is that which he himself and also Calvin followed, according to which the Bible is a living authority making itself felt and heard in religious experience. The other is the path followed by Protestant Scholasticism, which, holding no less than that the Bible is an inspired book, regarded it as a fixed and external standard and text book of what may be believed (*The Authority of Scripture*, London: Methuen, 1957, p.51).

John Calvin (1509-1564) when commenting on Acts 7:16, compared with the original Genesis 23:9 admitted that Luke had *made a manifest error* (*Calvin’s Commentary on Acts 7:16*, as quoted in Rogers and McKim pg.110). For Calvin errors, such as Matthew calling a comet a star, were the result of human slips of memory, limited
knowledge and the use of texts for different purposes than the original, but that they did not call into question the divine character of the scripture’s message. That may be so but they are certainly deadly to the Literalists’ or Ultra-conservatives’ false claims of Biblical Inerrancy. To acknowledge ‘errors’ such as Paul’s misquoting of Psalm 51:4 in his Romans 3:4’, Calvin opines In quoting Scripture the apostles often used freer language than the original, since they were content if what they quoted applied to their subject, and they were not over-careful in their use of words (Calvin’s New Testament Commentaries, Grand Rapids, William B. Eermans (1971), Commentaries on Romans 3:4, p.61 and Hebrews 10:6, p.136. Many so questioned the inerrancy of Scripture that they produced concepts like Accommodation (Luther and Calvin), Progressive Revelation (Warfield and Orr) and Organic Inspiration (Bavinck) to explain the anomalies. J.K.S. Reid writes refuting the view that Calvin believed in verbal inspiration – The refutation rests rather on Calvin’s express view that there is no identity of spirit and word, and on his statement that the Word must be supplemented by the operation of the Spirit before becoming effective for faith and salvation (Reid 48). If this separation be recognized, it is impossible to impose upon Calvin a doctrine of verbal infallibility and inerrancy (Reid, J.K.S. (1937), (The Authority of Scripture: A study of the Reformation and Post-Reformation Understanding of the Bible, London; Methuen. p.47).

High church Anglicans

Richard Hooker (1553-1600), acknowledged that only the doctrinal principles of Scriptures were authoritative: theologians should be left free to accept or reject the details - True it is concerning the word of God, whether it be by mis-construction of the sense or by falsification of the words, wittingly to endeavor that anything may seem divine which is not, or anything not seem which is, were plainly to abuse, and even to falsify divine evidence; which injury offered but unto men, is most worthily counted heinous. Which point I wish they did well observe, with whom nothing is more familiar than to plead in these causes, ‘the law of God’, ‘the word of the Lord’, who notwithstanding when they come to allege what word and what law they mean, their common ordinary practice is to quote by-speeches in some historical narration or other, and to urge them as if they were written in most exact form of law. What is to add to the law of God if this be not? When that which the word of God doth but deliver historically, we construe without any warrant as if it were legally meant, and so urge it further than we can prove it was intended; do we not add to the laws of God and make them in number seem more than they are? (quoted in BARTON, J. (1988) People of the Book, London, SPCK; p.73).
The evidence is thus overwhelming to refute the notion that “the church had always accepted the doctrine of inerrancy”, which has become a false pillar of the Evangelical case.

**Summary of Medieval Church Beliefs**

- Accepted the Hebrew Scriptures as authoritative but had to interpret them as teaching that Jesus was the Messiah
- Used categories of Greek philosophy to communicate their faith to Greek culture
- Fought against excesses from within caused by literalism and legalism
- Fought against excesses from without caused by spiritualism and sectarianism
- Platonism, modified by biblical meanings, could communicate early theology to Greek Culture
- The Bible was at first accepted as authoritative by the working of the Holy Spirit in human hearts freeing Christians to an understanding of theology as a practical rather than a theoretical discipline
- The purpose of Scripture was to instruct people concerning God’s salvation and guide them in living the Christian life of faith
- The Bible was not to be used as a book of science
- Aids to Biblical Interpretation:
  - God’s accommodated style of communication was affirmed in the incarnation model- God’s willingness to humble himself - a parent speaking in the language of children for their benefit in bringing them to salvation
  - Typology, inherited from rabbinic Judaism, enabled the linking of promises made in the Old Testament to historical fulfillments in the New
  - Allegory, emanating from the Platonic Alexandrian centre, sought spiritual meanings to solve problems posed by literalism. Origen and Augustine propagated this method.
  - Grammatical-historical system from the Aristotelian centre at Antioch propagated by John Chrysostom sought the natural meaning of the author in its historical context. Protestants followed Augustine’s theological method of ‘faith then reason’ but Chrysostom’s method in exegesis.
- The Bible was free of deliberate deception - human limitations of thought and
speech were matters for scholarly study

- A consciousness of the *kerygma*, the central saving message of Scripture preached in the church and summarized in the creed, helped to modify excessive misuses of exegetical methods
- *I believe in order that I may understand* (Augustine) was carried by John Scotus Erigena and Anselm of Canterbury down to the 12th century
- *I know in order that I may believe* (Aristotle) began with Peter Abelard and by the 13th century became Classical Scholasticism which brought with it a return to the grammatical-historical interpretation of Scripture
- The Franciscans continued Neoplatonic-Augustinian tradition whereas the Dominicans adopted the Aristotelian-Thomist innovations
- Reactions against Scholasticism included the Franciscans Duns Scotus and William of Occam’s denials that Christianity could be rationally demonstrated; the will rather than the intellect was given primacy in human actions. John Duns Scotus (c.1266-1308), the ‘Subtle Doctor’, was very skeptical of Aristotelian-Thomist claims to certain knowledge; Scotus and Occam probed those assertions. God was properly approached only by theological thought; philosophical arguments for God’s existence offered only probable persuasions. He reverted to the notion that *theology was a practical and not a theoretical science; theology presupposed revelation. Scripture was wholly trustworthy in its accomplishing saving purpose, and Scripture and church were the main authorities for his faith.* (Ordinatio, “Prologue”, pars 5, q.1-2).
- Authority was to be found in Scripture and the church not in demonstrations of reason. The most extreme reaction was that of Bernard of Clairvaux’s Monastic Theology – *I believe in order that I may experience*, by this he mostly meant ‘mystical experience by contemplation of Scripture’s significance.'
CHAPTER 4

THE REFORMATION; SOME OF ITS CONSEQUENCES

In Chapter 3 we saw evidentially that the early church was by no means entirely convinced of the freedom from error of the biblical texts. Before the Enlightenment scientific rectitude was not prominent and had no real effect on biblical interpretation. After the resurgence of science in the 1700’s however, the Bible’s statements of a scientific or historical nature came under informed scrutiny.

To continue the story of the development of Inerrancy as a Doctrine, however, we must mark the Reformation as a major milestone in that it heralded a breaking down of ‘catholicism’ in the Western world, by this I mean the most commonly held Christian religion and theology, and paved the way for new views to be released, voiced and in some cases acted upon. After Luther there was more than one kind of Christianity in the Western world.

Following Martin Luther’s sensational statements in 1517 (the 95 theses), a revolution of thought about scriptural and liturgical matters was released. Among the consequences of this liberation were the release of new ideas and the hardening of some old ones. By ‘new ideas’ I have in mind principally those relating to the autonomy of man and his free will and the provisions and limitations of church liturgy in its ability to involve the congregations. The opening up of biblical interpretation, beyond the edicts of the church, and the reduction of the constraints of the Latin language, enabled the layperson to participate more fully and to have theological opinions of their own. These freedoms spawned new sects with new forms of worship, and rules and rituals for doing so and, in some cases, a reaction against the sanctity of the clergy and the holiness of the Scriptures. The consequences will have a bearing on the emergence of the doctrine of inerrancy and the historical claims made for it by certain groups, although the real impetus for inerrancy came as a reaction to the inroads made by the liberal attitude generated in the Enlightenment.
The German Reformation

The notion of ‘Dictation’, either from God directly or through the Holy Spirit, persisted in some writers through to Calvin, but even he admitted that scriptural authors were affected by the obscurity of the times (Institutes 2.11.6) and that even Paul did not cite the scriptures without error (the alleged statement by Eliphaz in 1 Cor. 3:19 is in fact plagiarized from Job 5:13). In his commentary on Romans 3:4 (Calvin’s New Testament Commentaries, p.61) Calvin noted that – In quoting Scripture the apostles often used freer language than the original, since they were content if what they quoted applied to their subject, and therefore they were not over-careful in their use of words. The Catholics at the Council of Trent (1546-1563) affirmed divine dictation (Spiritu Sancto dictante) citing The Vulgate as the version to be held authentic and that no one should dare to reject it under any pretext (CALVIN, J. (1970) Institutes II, Grand Rapids, Michigan, Eerdmans Publishing Company, p.11.2). The Council decreed that only the infallible church could interpret the Bible. In the reaction against this Counter-Reformation some splinter groups, like the Soccinians, and some new philosophers, like Descartes, began to question the absolute inerrancy of the Scriptures and with the Enlightenment the Historical-Critical Method was born.

The starting point for understanding the change of perspective brought about by the Reformation resides with Martin Luther (1483-1546). He had inadvertently launched the Reformation but he had not thought he was founding a new church, he believed he was engaged in purifying the Catholic Church from certain abuses, notably those connected with Indulgences. When he posted his ‘Ninety-five Theses upon Indulgences’ on the door of the castle church at Wittenberg, he claimed to suppose that the Pope would disapprove the iniquitous trade if he knew of it (CHADWICK, O. (1990) The Reformation, London, Penguin Books; p.43).

In practical terms what Luther wanted was:

- The power of the pope removed
- Monks and nuns freed from burdensome vows
- Stopping the sale of church offices or sacraments
- Endowments diverted to the support of pastoral needs
- People to be educated and taught the Bible
- Priests turned into teachers and preachers
- The mass simplified and rendered intelligible
• Unscriptural recent doctrines and unintelligible rites removed
• Reduction in ceremony and ritual generally
• Priests were allowed to marry
• A German Bible was to be placed in the pulpit
• People were taught to worship with German hymns.

Luther’s gradual reforms left much to local reforming initiative but had the effects of:
• Turning the services from Latin into German, where the congregation was ignorant, but continuing in Latin where it was educated
• Increasing the occasions for preaching
• Confining the celebrations to Sundays and Holy Days
• Suggesting that Communion to be delivered in both kinds but elevation of the host still tolerated
• Still accepting Traditional vestments
• Preserving ornamentation of churches, such as the Reredos
• Reducing of the number of sacraments from 7 to 3 - Baptism, Eucharist and private confession.
• Suggesting that Transubstantiation, a late and irrational doctrine, was not warranted by Scripture.
• Stating that Scripture demanded a belief in the Real Presence at the Eucharist.


Luther certainly believed in the inspiration and authority of the Bible but rejected the Aristotelian-Scholastic Method of interpretation by reaching back to a Neoplatonic-Augustinian acceptance of the Bible in faith (Chadwick, O. (1990). The Reformation. London, Penguin Books, p.46). To reiterate, the Aristotelian-Thomistic approach put reason before faith whereas the Platonic-Augustinian theological method put faith before understanding. He knew that the writers were human and that what they wrote had been recorded in human fashion (A. Skevington Wood, Captive to the Word, (1969), Exeter; Paternoster Press, p.176). He embraced the Grammatical-historic critical appraisal thus uniting the faith of simple believers and the scholarship of trained theologians. Faith was the beginning and basis of sound theology, and careful study was the means of growing into Christian maturity (Rogers, J.B. & McKim, D.K., Harper & Rowe, 1979, ; p.76). The Pastor-teacher was to give guidance rather than an ecclesiastical authority. This denial of Popes and Councils as the exclusive interpreters of the Bible was the revolutionary part of Luther’s pronouncements and a parting of the
ways from Aristotelian Scholastics and Nominalists (Shelton, Raymond, (1974) Martin Luther's Concept of Biblical Interpretation in Historical Perspective, Ph.D. dissertation, Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena; p.146). The Bible's authority took precedence over the authority of the church. As the divinity and power of God are embedded in the vessel of Christ's incarnate body, so the same divinity and power of God are embedded in Scripture, a vessel made of letters (Wood, A. Skevington (1969), Captive to the Word, Exeter: Paternoster Press, p.175). Luther was far from attributing scientific and technical accuracy to the Bible (ibid;176) and yet through an incarnational, accommodated medium human beings received God's saving message. He relied on the Holy Spirit as authenticator and interpreter, inspirer in the past and interpreter in the present, to guide him in faith rather than reason.

With the Nominalists, Luther held that theology could not properly be classed as a science since its assertions rested on statements of faith. Luther called philosophy and Aristotle many names including - a mere sophist and quibbler, an inventor of fable, a pagan beast and a destroyer of pious doctrine, amongst others (Gerrish, Brian A. Grace and Reason: A Study in the Theology of Luther (1962), Oxford, Clarendon Press; p.2 and Chapter 2). Philosophy and objects of sensory perception were quite distinct from the knowledge of Himself that God had implanted in human hearts which, when awakened by the spirit, generated faith. Whilst going along with the Nominalist's stress on the priority of faith Luther rejected Occam's optimism regarding the powers of the human will as being unwarranted from Scripture. The order of Salvation over theoretical knowledge distinguished Reformation Theology from the medieval scholasticism that preceded it and from the Post-Reformation Scholasticism that followed it. Luther’s hermeneutic principles were that each passage was to be interpreted in the light of the whole message of the Bible and that doubtful or obscure passages should be explained by a clear and certain passage, i.e. one passage of scripture must be clarified by other passages. Allegories were empty speculations and the froth, as it were, of the Holy Scriptures. It is the historical sense alone which supplies the true and sound doctrine. (Luther's Works – 56 Volumes (1953), St. Louis, Concordia Publishing House, pp. 9:21, 1:283).

There is a slight dichotomy in that whilst Luther held firmly to the authority of Scripture at the same time he exercised scholarly criticism of the human form of the words in which the divine message came. He escaped accusations by fully accepting the
concept of incarnational accommodation as being adequate to communicate God’s saving message leaving him free to deal with scholarly problems without their becoming barriers to faith in the Bible’s authority - *When discrepancies occur in the Holy Scriptures and we cannot harmonise them, let them pass, it does not endanger the articles of the Christian faith* (Weimarer Ausgabe XLVI, 727). When Luther says *there is no falsehood* he was not talking about factual errors, which he had already admitted occurred, but he was affirming the reliability of God’s Word in accomplishing righteousness in the believer. Neither Augustine nor Luther predicated the trustworthiness of Scripture in communication its saving message on the technical accuracy of its human accommodated form, but on its divine function and its success in accomplishing it.

Erasmus (1469-1536), mentioned earlier, was a humanist who pioneered the use of ancient Greek manuscripts to achieve accuracy. He also began the practice of elevating reason above faith and published an edition of the Greek New Testament in 1516 with a Latin translation but used poor MSS of the 14th century for the Gospels. He wanted everyone to have access to a vernacular Bible in conjunction with a simpler Theology, more primitive and biblical and less tangled in logical subtlety. He discarded the commentaries of the Schoolmen and supported the Church Fathers, such as Jerome, Athanasius and Chrysostom. He was impatient, angry and contemptuous of superstitions, cults and external substitutes like pilgrimages, indulgences and veneration of relics rather than a genuine change of heart and life style. He made textual criticism and mastery of the Biblical languages necessary for exegesis with the needs of hearers and readers in mind otherwise - *Scripture would seem to fight with itself in many places, when nothing fights less with itself than Scripture with Scripture* (CHADWICK, O. (1990) *The Reformation*, London, Penguin Books: p.31f) and even Luther himself had said that the languages are *the sheath in which the sword of the Spirit is contained* (Kerr, H.T. *Works of Martin Luther*, IV, 114f, in Kerr, p.17).

Predestination was a pillar, and later a stumbling block, of Calvin’s theology. He saw even our faith as a gift from God to those whom he had pre-ordained to faith and eternal life, leaving others unredeemed from their sins to die an eternal death (Romans 8:28-29, 9:23, 11:2). According to Calvin a Christian’s fearless assurance came from this knowledge (see Romans 8:37-39) (Institutes 1. ix.3 and III. ii.14). Christ died therefore not for everyone (cf.1 Timothy 2:4) but only for the elect (John 17:9) and how this ‘justice’ works is ‘beyond our sight in this life’ (cf. Romans 9:15-16) (CHADWICK, O. (1990) The Reformation, London, Penguin Books; pp.94-96).

Renaissance Humanism was a literary and scholarly approach pursued by Christians and non-Christians alike, a cultural and educational approach to the Humanities. Christian Humanists were those who dealt with religious or theological issues in a historical approach to the classical texts of the Christian faith. What did Christ and the Apostles really teach and what was Christianity originally intended to be like? (Linder, Robert D. Calvinism and Humanism: The First Generation, Church History 44, No.2, July 1975, pp.168ff). Once again the Scholastic method came under attack in the humanist emphasis on a return to a study of the classical sources of the Bible and Church Fathers. Leading this charge were Erasmus, Colet, Reuchlin and d’Etaples. The Humanists were primarily rhetorical and considered Scholasticism - dialectics associated with sophistry and pride expecting to find God at the end of a string of logical distinctions (Partee, Charles (1977), Calvin and Classical Philosophy, Leiden, E.J. Brill, p.6). Once again theology as science was rejected in favour of theology as a practical discipline concerned with salvation and the life of faith not scientia but sapientia, not a systematically ordered body of certain knowledge but a sacred doctrine derived directly from the pages of sacred Scripture.

Abelard’s Yes and No and Lombard’s Sentences were the theological texts of the day during Calvin’s training and both were Dialectical, but as a humanist scholar Calvin adopted contextual exegesis, concerned with the circumstances and culture in which the biblical message was set (Rogers & McKim, Harper & Row, 1979, 97). It was crucial, he said, for a full understanding of the biblical texts that its context be taken into account (Inst. IV xvi 18, 23). He also accepted ‘accommodation’ which had originally been a legal term for adaptation of the verbal message to the makeup of the persons being addressed and, like Augustine, he was able to see beyond the crudity of language (form) to the grandeur of the subjects (function) and the force of the truth of Sacred Scripture … too powerful to need the art of words (ibid;1.viii.1). In Jesus
Christ’s taking on human form we see God’s divine condescension par excellence and human, imperfect language was the divinely chosen vehicle by which God had revealed the knowledge of himself out of love for his children. Calvin concentrated on the intent of the author and the cultural context of the message. He rejected a narrow literalism, calling it “syllable-snatching” (Inst. IV. xvii. 23).

As John Calvin expressed, *There is within the human mind, and indeed by natural instinct, an awareness of divinity (Institutes1:iii.1)* This we take to be beyond controversy and to prevent anyone from taking refuge in the pretence of ignorance (MCGOWAN, S.B. & MCGOWAN, A.T.B., Apollos branch of Inter-Varsity Press, 2007, p.19). As well as this general revelation there is a ‘special revelation’ used to describe those ways in which God makes Himself known more directly and more personally. The inner awareness was suppressed by some, leaving them responsible for their sinful condition. Because man had become “bleary eyed” through suppression of innate knowledge, the “spectacles” of Scripture were needed to see clearly (Inst. I vi 1). To acknowledge ‘errors” such as Paul’s misquoting of Psalm 51:4 in his Romans 3:4 Calvin opines *In quoting Scripture the apostles often used freer language than the original, since they were content if what they quoted applied to their subject, and they were not over-careful in their use of words* (Commentary on Romans 3:4, Calvin’s New Testament Commentaries (CNTC) p.61). Whatever may be said about this, and similar quotations, they certainly aver that the biblical text is not inerrant. Again of the misuse of the phrase *a little lower than the angels* in Hebrews 2:7, Calvin says, *It was not the purpose of the apostle to give an accurate exposition of the words. There is nothing improper if he looks for allusions in the words to embellish the case he is presenting* (Commentary on Hebrews 2:7 CNTC p.22). It may not have been improper in those days but it certainly does not support Inerrancy of the Scriptures. To the misapplying of the phrase *Say not in thy heart, who shall ascend* from Deuteronomy 30:12 to the death and resurrection of Christ, Calvin replied, *the object of the apostle was not to explain this passage exactly, but only to apply it to his treatment of the subject in hand. He does not, therefore, repeat what Moses has said syllable by syllable, but employs a gloss, by which he applies the testimony of Moses more closely to his own purpose* (Commentary on Genesis1:16) - so much for the sanctity and inviolate assertions of the Scriptures. At least when commenting on Acts 7:16 compared with the original Genesis 23:9 Calvin admitted that Luke had made a manifest error in the details of Abraham’s purchase of a tomb. For Calvin, errors were the result of human slips of memory, limited knowledge and the use of texts for different purposes than the original

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but that they did not call into question the divine character of the Scripture’s message. That may be so but they are certainly deadly to the Literalists’ or Ultra-conservatives’ false claims of Biblical Inerrancy. As to Calvin’s claim that these human errors made the message more persuasive to human beings I think that is mere ‘closing the door after the horse has bolted’. When Calvin used phrases like *under the Holy Spirit’s dictation* and *sure and genuine scribes of the Holy Spirit* he was referring to the divine content of the message rather than that the means of transmission had been lifted above the possibility of human error. He used Augustine in theology and Chrysostom for biblical exegesis, who refused to engage in flights of fanciful, allegorical exegesis and kept to the straight-forward meaning of the text in its immediate context - *brevitas et facilitas*. (Rogers, J.B. & McKim, D.K., Harper & Rowe, 1979, p.115).

The Reformers’ Confessions

Zwingli’s Sixty-Seven Articles (1523) rejected the Roman Catholic decree that church tradition was equally as authoritative as Scripture. *The Word of God teaches of itself, makes itself plain and illumines the human soul with all salvation and grace.*  (Cited in Davies, p.69, from *von der Klarheit und Gewissheit usw* (1552), I, 382 (from Zwingli’s *Werke*), whilst the Geneva Confession (1536) identified faithful pastors as those who preached the Word of God without mixing the pure doctrine of the Scriptures with their dreams or their foolish imaginings (The Lausanne Articles (1536), Art. XX).

The Belgic Confession of Faith (1561) averred that the Holy Scriptures are totally sufficient for salvation, were complete and needed no elaborations by men or tradition. The Scriptures carried the evidence in themselves - *autopiston*. The Canonical Books derive their authority from themselves. Scripture was the Word of God - when lawfully called ministers preached, they proclaimed the very Word of God. In 1566 the Second Helvetic Confession was published to support the defence of the Reformed faith. None of the Reformed Confessions delved into the intricacies of inspiration or how inspired Scriptures came to be such, and the only references to Inerrancy came in the form of ‘Infallibility in achieving its saving purpose’, no suggestion anywhere as to the provision of technically inerrant information on worldly matters. The authority of Scripture resided in its saving function not in the form of words used (Rogers, J.B. & McKim, D.K., Harper & Rowe, 1979, p.125).
Summary of Reformed Beliefs

Many authors were found to be of the opinion that Martin Luther and John Calvin both had their doubts about the accuracy of some sections of the Bible but they discounted them as not altering the sense of the meaning, or else they explained them as a form of Accommodation where God ‘talked down’ to his followers using human language and thought, but they acknowledged them nevertheless.

*Luther and Calvin had both adopted the Augustinian theological method that faith led to understanding as opposed to scholastic logical systems. Scripture was the spectacles to bring the innate knowledge of God the Creator back into focus. They rejected the excesses of allegory and embraced the grammatical-historic exegesis of Chrysostom. Theology was a practical discipline teaching about the life of faith and not meant to be the ‘Queen of Sciences’ laying the foundation for systems of speculation. Incarnation and accommodation accomplished the divine purpose of bringing salvation to people in understandable form and in this it was infallible. Scripture was self-authenticating with the persuasion of the Holy Spirit in inner testimony by faith and not by proofs. External arguments were only of use after persons had accepted Scripture in faith. Rational Scholasticism, which demanded proof before faith, was refuted as were those who claimed leadings from the Holy Spirit apart from the Word. The Word and the Spirit together were the hallmark of the Reformation. No biblical writer deliberately set out to deceive but normal human flaws and failings occurred and could be sorted out by scholarly study but the Bible never erred by leading people into unrighteousness* (Rogers & McKim, Harper & Row, 1979, pp.126/7).

Changes in the Post-Reformation Period

By the time that Calvin had died in 1564 the Roman Catholic Counter-Reformation was well under way with its repudiation of Protestant doctrines at the Council of Trent (1545-1563), the founding of the Jesuits (1540) and the Inquisition. This called forth a strong response from the second generation of Reformers who tried to use the Roman Catholic weapons against themselves to prove the authority of the Bible using Aristotelian arguments. These reformers were also fighting on a second front against the Socinians and Unitarians who claimed that human beings could know God by reason which did not lead to orthodox Trinitarian doctrines. As difficult were the internecine disputes where all sides claimed scriptural support.
These challenges forced a response of rigid defence falling back on the philosophy of Aristotle and the theology of Thomas Aquinas. Theology was no longer viewed as a practical, moral discipline but instead an abstract, speculative, technical science. Importantly the concept of “accommodation” was now discarded and God was now the supplier, through revelation, of up-to-date scientific information. Precision replaced Piety (ibid; 148).

**Systematising Luther**

Philipp Melanchthon (1497-1560) saw as his first task the giving of an exact form to Luther’s theology by setting it out as an integrated, scientific system - *Loci Communes Rerum Theologicarum* of 1521; this influential document started the transition to the more philosophical, systematized, post-Reformation Lutheranism. Philipp Melanchthon moved Lutherism away from the Christological concentration of Luther to a more scholastic, philosophical system of theology. John Gerhard (1582-1637) took things further away from the doctrine of Scripture as an article of faith and nearer to it as the foundation for other articles of faith that promised philosophical certainty. The movement from Reformational (Luther and Calvin) to Scholastic Method can be traced through the Italian Aristotelians who influenced Calvin’s successor in Geneva, Theodore Beza (Steinmetz, David C., *Reformers in the Wings* (1971), Philadelphia; Fortress Press p.74).

**Scholasticising Calvin**

*Theodore Beza (1519-1605) was another transitional figure between Calvin, whose successor in Geneva he was, and later Reformed Orthodoxy; he was in sympathy with Peter Vermigli and Girolami Zanchi. Again a staunch proponent of Predestination he referred to it as the principal ground and foundation of our salvation. In his theology two earlier elements were lost, namely theology was to be regarded as a scholastic science instead of a practical discipline, and the concept of accommodation was discarded, as theology now claimed to view reality from God’s perspective. Beza felt able to justify God’s activities through logical argument; God the Father was replaced by God as the highest cause. God was now “all-causality” and the Holy Spirit was given a logical function (Bray, John S. Theodore Beza’s Doctrine of Predestination (1975), Neiuwkoop, The Netherlands, pp. 9, 29 ff.).*
Analogising Aquinas

Girolami Zanchi (1516-1590) was taught by both Vermigli and Calvin and worked with the former in Strasburg. He produced a 4 volume *Opera theologica* using formal deductive syllogisms and combating the anti-Trinitarians. He contended that whilst one could be a Christian without philosophy, one could not be a theologian without it: logic and dialectic were indispensable tools for the theologian and physics worthy of high praise and study as the science of creation and the creature. In the use of science and in his interest in God’s attributes, Zanchi differed from his former teacher, Calvin.

Zanchi’s doctrine of analogy concerning God’s being was that God possessed, in an eminent degree, all the perfections found in his creatures - created things were the “effects” of God the creator. The analogy was one in which the creature imitated God, since every effect resembled its cause. Zanchi staunchly defended Aristotle against all criticisms *the best of all authors after God* and he read Scripture through Aristotelian eyes. He was Calvinist in dogmatics, such as Absolute Predestination, and he heavily emphasised Metaphysics and Causality, the hallmarks of Protestant Scholasticism as he largely followed the Aristotelian-Thomist tradition. He defined faith as ‘assent to the propositions of the entire body of Scripture’ and its nature as ‘the virtue or power by which we receive the Word of God with undoubted assent’. Zanchi contributed to the shift from the biblical faith of the Reformers to the philosophical orthodoxy of their followers (Zanchi, G, *Opera theologica* (1605–1619), Vol.1-4 (vol.1 – the Trinity, vol.2 – the Divine Attributes, vol.3 – Creation, vol.4 – Adam’s fall, sin and the law of God), Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag).

Both Peter Martyr Vermigli (1499-1562) at Oxford and Martin Bucer at Cambridge, as Professors of Divinity, were influential in the formation of the English Prayer Book through Thomas Cranmer (1489-1556). Vermigli represented a transitional stage, a Neo-Scholastic, between Augustinian orientation to Scripture (*I believe so that I may understand*) to the full-blown Protestant scholasticism (*I understand so that I may believe*). He saw theology as an argumentative and deductive science borrowing its principles from revelation. He tried to use as much of Aristotle as was consistent with Scripture. He was wary of excessive rationalism and still held to the principle of accommodation - because sin has broken human communication with God, Scripture must be in accommodated language for us to understand and to bring salvation and union with Christ. Martyr’s system of interpretation was to:

- Interpret according to the natural, historical sense
- Seek the meaning of obscure passages on the basis of clearer ones
• Support with citations from the church fathers
• Use very occasional and brief allegories, most often borrowed from the fathers.
• Line by line exegesis broken up by special subject (loci) digressions (scholia) which used either an individual discussion of Aristotle’s four causes as applied to that section or a quaestio disputata format. (Rogers, J.B. & McKim, D.K., Harper & Rowe, 1979, p.152f and John Patrick DONNELLY (1976), ed. Heiko AL OBERNAM et al; Leiden; E.J.Brill.p.60-62).

He quoted Aristotle, Aquinas, Cicero and Virgil more than Augustine and Lombard and never allowed reason to equal faith and revelation.

Concerning the views of the early church fathers and the reformers regarding Inerrancy, Scott McGowan wrote –

there could be traced a 'Central Christian Tradition' concerning the doctrine of Scripture that all major theologians held, including the early church fathers and the reformers which was contrary to the notion of inerrancy. In this tradition the Bible is to be accepted by faith and not by rational proofs; it is not to be regarded as authoritative in matters of science or on other subjects, but rather as a means of salvation.  

As John Barton explained - For early Christians, what had happened in Christ was not an exegesis of Scripture, but a completely new, unprecedented and irreversible event in the external world. It was not primarily something that had happened inside a tradition of textual interpretation. BARTON, J. (1988) People of the Book, London, SPCK,p.7. Conservative evangelicals delight to call themselves “orthodox” and frequently cite the early church and its fathers as having held views identical to their own. History has categorically shown that many in the early church did not hold to total inerrancy of the Scriptures and in fact had grave doubts about its truth and accuracy in many cases, (Both Luther and Calvin acknowledged that, and others - in certain places, the Bible is not entirely factual - PERRY, J. (2001) Dissolving the Inerrancy Debate: How Modern Philosophy Shaped the Evangelical View of Scripture. Quodlibet Journal, 3, No.4. p.1). Calvin himself noted - In quoting Scripture the apostles often used freer language than the original, since they were content if what they quoted applied to their subject, and they were not over-careful in their use of words (Commentary on Romans 3:4, Calvin’s New Testament Commentaries (CNTC) p.61).
CHAPTER 5

THE DEVELOPMENT OF INERRANCY FROM
CONCEPT TO DOCTRINE

Earlier chapters have shown that, contrary to the frequently purported evangelical insistence that the church had always adhered to a doctrine of inerrancy, (From the historical perspective it can be said that for two thousand years the Christian Church has agreed that the Bible is completely trustworthy; it is infallible or inerrant (LINDSELL, H., The Battle for the Bible, Zondervan Publishing House, 1979, ; page 234), many notable early church identities, such as Luther, Calvin and Erasmus, and even back to Origen who had had to use allegory to make sense of some of the more problematic passages, had harboured doubts and questions about the text of the Holy Scriptures. Subsequent chapters will illustrate how tenaciously fundamentalists still cling to their notions of the rectitude of the Scriptures, despite the suggested modifications of modern biblical scholarship. We will now consider the further progress of the topic of inerrancy as it was heralded by Turretin and advanced by the mighty Princeton Theologians. Although the concept of inerrancy was touched upon earlier, the Doctrine as we know it today did not fully form until the Princeton Theologians developed it in the 19th century to form the most central and exclusive bastion of Fundamentalist theology.

We saw in the previous chapter several posturings and suggestions regarding the interpretation of Scripture which all dealt with matters of salvation and theology, not science and history. Despite there being discrepancies in the biblical texts (see Chapter 3) no one considered them important enough to detract from the meaning of the messages and so not worthy of scrutiny or correction in their own right. Nothing was done about this for a further 200 years or so after Luther’s protests by which time Science and Biblical scholarship had advanced far enough to challenge earlier beliefs.

Although there had been positional statements and claims for and against various biblical interpretations, as we have seen, the absolute and systematic format of the Conservative Evangelical stance as we know it today did not have its real origins until the writings of the Princeton Theologians, who in turn looked to Francis Turretin as their basis and inspiration (acknowledgment and extensive reference in this and what

**From Calvin to the Princeton Theologians**

Calvin (1509-1564) had been an Augustinian-humanist Reformer relying on the inner workings of the Holy Spirit in the believer to authenticate and authorize itself. He recognized difficulties in the form (wording) of the Scriptures in places but he rationalized these according to the concept of ‘accommodation’ and was content to leave further investigation to the scholars as the Scriptures’ purposes of instruction on living the Christian life and for salvation were adequately achieved.

In order to meet the challenges as outlined earlier on page 71, the Reformed Scholastics developed methods of describing and defending the Bible that had been borrowed from Roman Catholicism and Socinianism (Rogers & McKim, Harper & Row, 1979, p147). Their Scholastic Doctrine of Scripture showed significant shifts away from Calvin's own approach and more towards Thomas Aquinas’ medieval approach, as per:

- Structured theology as a logical system of belief relying on Aristotelian syllogistic reasoning - rational defence of a settled deposit to doctrines
- Renewed interest in Thomism - the will of God and the notion that ultimate reality could be known by tracing effects back to their causes (i.e. a shift from the Neoplatonic presuppositions of the Reformers to the Aristotelian assumptions of the Reformers’ medieval opponents)
- Reason had at least an equal standing with faith so that revelation was relegated to a secondary position
- Accommodation was dropped and Western logic was assumed to reflect the working of God's mind because it was fitted to do so - God was no longer ‘a parent speaking to his children’ but a supplier, through revelation, of up-to-date scientific information - precision replaced piety.
- Theology was no longer viewed as a practical, moral discipline exclusively directed toward the salvation of people and their guidance in the life of faith but as an abstract, speculative, technical science that attempted to lay the foundations for philosophical mastery of all areas of thought and life.
- A total system of knowledge was required with Theology being the Queen of the Sciences and philosophical speculation substituted for growth in the Christian life.
Scholasticism defined faith as an act of assent by the mind to the deposit of truths in Scripture and only secondary as a relationship of personal trust in Christ wrought by the Holy Spirit.

Interpreted Scripture as a non-historical body of propositions that offered a base of inerrant information on which to construct a universal philosophy. Atomistic units of scripture could be arranged into a logical system without reference to the kerygma.


The Synod of Dort (1618-1619) had fixed Reformed theology in Europe into a scholastic mould at the beginning of the 17th century -

1. Election is the unchangeable purpose of God whereby of his own will he has chosen from the whole fallen human race a certain number of persons to redemption in Christ and from eternity he appointed Christ to be the mediator and hearer of the elect.
2. The Resurrection’s salvation should extend to all the elect by bestowing upon them alone the gift of justifying faith to bring them infallibly to salvation.
3. Without the regenerating grace of the Holy Spirit all men, conceived in sin and by nature children of wrath, are neither able, or willing, to return to God.
4. By the efficacy of the same regenerating spirit he infuses new qualities into the will of the elect rendering it good, obedient and pliable to bring forth the fruits of good actions.
5. Persevering grace is given to the elect who, by reason of the remains of indwelling sin and the temptation of the world, could not persevere in a state of grace.

Key figures in the movement from Reformation Theology to Reformed Orthodoxy had been Peter Martyr Vermigli, Girolami Zanchi and Theodore Beza, all committed to Aristotelian logic as the means of clarifying and systematizing theology. They intended to follow the doctrines of Calvin but sometimes the scholastic method of Thomas Aquinas distorted Calvin’s doctrine of Scripture resulting in New Tendencies (Rogers & McKim, Harper & Row, 1979:p.188)

- To subject scriptural material to inappropriate modes of presentation, such as Cartesian
- To subordinate the inner witness of the Holy Spirit to arguments based on
external and internal evidence

- To press the notion of verbal inspiration to an unnecessary extreme, e.g. that the Hebrew Vowel Points were inspired even though they did not exist in the original MSS.
- To treat human authors as mere scribes recording divine words, even where it was explicitly denied as dictation.
- To give false importance to a doctrine of inerrancy as inspiration was dependent on the theologian's assertion that the Bible was correct in every detail.


Many reformers moved over to England, including Peter Martyr Vermigli who became a Professor of Divinity at Oxford and Martin Bucer the same at Cambridge.

**From Concentration on Function to Concern for Form in Great Britain**

Henry VIII in England (1527-1547), although he had broken away from the Pope, remained Catholic despite alarming news from Europe regarding the Reformation, the breakaway groups, and inevitable infiltrators from these. Queen Elizabeth (1558-1603), at one time the great hope of the Protestants, wanted a compromise between Roman Catholicism, which had been suppressed under Edward and resurged under Mary, and Calvinism, which was hoping to see the last of the Bishops, as were some of the ungodly, land-hungry lay lords. The middle-of-the-road school supported the final form of the 39 articles in 1571 whose main teachings seemed to be those of Protestantism -

- Men are justified by faith alone
- The grace of the sacraments is received only by men of faith
- The church can teach nothing which Scripture does not contain.

The Church of England of the Elizabethan Settlement, represented by the string of Prayer Books from 1549 to 1662, stood between Puritans, wanting a Calvinist theology and a Presbyterian polity, and the Roman Catholics. The controlling High Church Anglicans maintained an Aristotelian-Thomist theology and a hierarchical Episcopal form of church government. By the middle of the 17th century the Puritans, backed by Parliament, had turned to Scotland for military aid in the civil war which erupted with the King's High Church party in 1643: the Westminster Confession of 1646 laid out the Presbyterian viewpoint.
The Westminster Confession - 1646

In the Elizabethan period episcope was tolerated but under James, her successor, many began to argue that it was, in fact, the divinely ordained form of church government. The divisions between Puritans and the establishment, which had been over church government and ceremony in the early 17th century, then became a more serious theological divide under Charles I and the insistence on high-church ways, especially for Scotland, resulted in civil war. In 1646 the Presbyterians produced the Westminster Confession, a statement of 17th century reformed belief (comparable to the Augsburg Confession,) which was intended to replace the Elizabethan Thirty-nine Articles. The moderate Calvinism of the Articles gave way to a much stricter Calvinism but differing in a number of ways from the teaching of Calvin himself. The Confession t

- Covenant theology - the first covenant was of works with Adam and the second, a covenant of grace offering to sinners life and salvation by Jesus Christ. Both covenants required faith and obedience, man having failed in the first case.
- Limited atonement - the intention of the cross is the salvation of the elect alone. Jesus Christ purchased salvation for all those whom the Father had given under Him (John 17:9).
- Personal assurance of salvation is only possible not assured.

The Confession was adopted by Scotland in 1647, by parliament in 1648 with modifications in church government and discipline, but not adopted by England as a whole which soon reverted to Anglicanism.

The Westminster Divines adhered to theology as a practical discipline that aimed at reform of life rather than a scientific discipline and the old arguments between those alternatives and between the relative standing of reason and faith flared up again. The Westminster Confession spoke in Platonic-Augustinian fashion of humans suppressing their innate sense of the divine but did not accept the Thomist notion of Natural Theology allowing persons to know God by reason before experiencing God’s revelation. For the Westminster Divines there was only one source of revelation, God’s word, not two - Nature and Scripture (as in scholastic theology), but the clearly recorded revelation of God in the person of Jesus Christ; both Christ and Scripture bore the designation of the Word of God as did preaching about Christ as presented in Scripture - a three-fold designation.

The Westminster Confession omitted disputed authorship books and carefully left such
questions open to scholarly debate, unlike the Protestant Scholastics who had made the defence of traditional authorship of the biblical books a necessary concomitant of the Bible’s inspiration (N.B. the Epistle to the Hebrews was not listed as one of Paul’s letters in the Confession). The Apocrypha was excluded and inspiration claimed just for Scripture’s divine message leaving the critical questions to scholarship.

There was no recourse to rationally demonstrable external evidences as to the authority of Scripture, as in Aristotelian scholasticism, but merely an affirmation that God was the author. The High Church Anglicans acknowledged only the general doctrinal principles of Scripture to be authoritative. Richard Hooker felt that theologians should be left free to accept or reject details but Samuel Rutherford objected loudly to the High Church introducing ceremonies, policies, procedures, practices and forms of government which were not commended in scripture and were thus illegitimate. He opposed any suggestion that some parts of Scripture were the Word of God and some parts not - all of Scripture was from God. Samuel Rutherford was clear that Scripture was not to be used as a source of information in the sciences as its purpose was to mediate salvation not scientific information. The Westminster Divines stood with Calvin in asserting that only the witness of the Holy Spirit in a person’s heart could persuade that person that Scripture is the Word of God, resisting appeals for private interpretations of the Spirit on the one hand and external evidences, proof texts and reason on the other. In accomplishing salvation and instructing believers in the Christian life the Divines affirmed Scripture to be sufficient but they would allow that valid Christian truth could be deduced from Scripture but only if made with reference to the norm of scripture with no separate source. The Mission Statement of the Westminster Divines might be expressed as - the whole counsel of God as expressly set down in Scripture or by good and necessary consequence which may be deduced from Scripture. Despite Sectarian claims of direct personal revelations by the Spirit and High Church Arminians insisting on reason alone, the Divines did not overreact as later Protestant Scholastics did in banishing all illumination by the Spirit in interpretation of Scripture but they did acknowledge the inward illumination of the Spirit to be necessary for the saving understanding of the Word. Not all of Scripture was alike as the essentials of salvation were plainly available to the simplest people but some deeper levels required scholarly interpretation by study in the original languages. Many of the Divines were outstanding scholars very concerned with correct translation unlike later Protestant Scholastics who strove to harmonise every text. This consideration of the text in the original language as the final source of reference for understanding went
against the findings of the Council of Trent which insisted that the Latin Vulgate was the authentic text from which to derive Christian teaching and also against the High Church Anglicans who favoured the Septuagint above the Hebrew text of the Old Testament. The Divines wanted Scripture to be available in the common language of all persons so that everyone could study the word and compare it with the exposition of the preachers trained to use the original languages (Rogers, J.B. & McKim, D.K., Harper & Rowe, 1979, (p.203-213)

John Owen (1616-1683) was Vice-Chancellor of Oxford University and Cromwell’s chief advisor in church matters from 1652 to 1657 but lost his positions by opposing the monarchy and being involved in the political interests of the Independence movement. In 1658 he was active in the Savoy Synod, writing the preface, in harmony with the Westminster Confession except in church polity. He wrote against those he saw as unorthodox - Arminians, Socinians, Roman Catholics, Quakers and others. He believed that the authority of Scripture stemmed from its function - it infallibly shows itself to be the Word of God - its divine origin was the sole foundation of its authority. His approach contained some features of the Westminster Divines but also some of the tendencies of scholasticism, as already mentioned on page 75 above.

This last tendency meant that scholastic theologians made the inspiration of the Bible dependent in every detail on its inerrancy. Although Owen believed every part of Scripture was given by divine inspiration, its authority stemmed not from its form but from its function - that God spoke through it.

The second emphasis of the emerging 17th century Scholastics was the subordination of the inner witness of the Holy Spirit as the authority and authenticity of Scripture to external and internal evidences - continental influences against Westminster. Owen upheld the Reformation emphasis on the inspiration of Scripture and the internal witness of the Holy Spirit.

The third tendency was to subject scriptural material to inappropriate Aristotelian or Cartesian modes of presentation and this Owen did as his argument progressed through the Cartesian emphasis on human ability to know eternal truth to the innate principles of reason and natural knowledge to scripture as the Word of God thus reversing the Augustinian order of faith seeking understanding.
Fourthly Owen regarded the biblical writers as passive instruments for recording God’s word and, incorporating the fifth tendency, even the smallest grammatical details of Scripture were the products of God’s direct inspiration. The Bible writers themselves produced no change or alteration to the least iota or syllable. By not making inerrancy the basis of inspiration nor severing the connection of the Word and Spirit by rationality, he was a transitional figure between Reformation Calvinism and post-Reformation Scholastic Orthodoxy.

Protestant Scholasticism from Turretin through the Helvetic Consensus Formula of 1675 to the Princeton Theologians had overreacted to the Roman Catholic position and insisted that the letter of Scripture alone was rule and judge and relied on their own logic, rejecting any illumination of the Holy Spirit in interpreting Scripture, whereas the Roman Catholic position was that the judge needed to be a living person.

A century after Calvin’s death, the chair of Theology in Geneva was occupied by Francis Turretin (1648-1734) and in 1674 he produced a scholastic theology with precise definitions and systematic scientific statements (Institutio Theologiae Elencticae - 355 pages) in reaction to Catholic criticism and the New Science. Turretin, whose motto was Garde le bon depot, was a monumental influence in the matter of inerrancy, especially because of his great influence on the Princeton Theologians. He was a staunch opponent of Amyraldianism, an earnest defender of Calvinist orthodoxy as represented by the Synod of Dort and of Verbal Inerrancy. He was one of the authors of the Helvitic Consensus which defended the formulation of double predestination. He solidified the shift from the content to the form of Scripture as the source of its authority. Turretin asserted the complete inerrancy of Scripture and the supernatural form of the Bible quoting 175 authorities and using external and internal arguments to prove that the Bible had not erred in the slightest particular with no trace left of Calvin’s ‘accommodation’. His use of almost thirty proof texts to justify each of his 21 questions resulted in atomistic use of texts from one specific part, as if they applied to the whole Bible, making the texts serve his proof. This style of Reformed Scholasticism was embodied in the Helvetic Consensus Formula of 1675. However this extreme position lasted barely a generation but was to form the foundation of the Old Princeton Theology of the 19th and early 20th centuries. In the century following Calvin’s death the Reformed Theology had to meet challenges from:

- The Roman Catholicism of the Counter Reformation (1546-1563)
• Socinianism (Arians, Unitarians) which denied the Trinity, original sin, baptismal regeneration, predestination, vicarious satisfaction and justification by faith alone.

• Anabaptist spiritualism (1527) who supported adult baptism, separation from the world, anti-Popism, no attendance at parish churches or taverns, pacifism, anti-legalism.

• Revolutions in natural science

• New philosophies of Descartes and Hobbes - no divine right of kings, metaphysical materialism, doubting everything except thought

• Grotius - natural theologian,

• Competing faiths like Dutch Arminianism and French Amyraldianism - Christ died for all

• Enthusiasts and Libertines denying the inerrancy of the Bible.


These challenges forced a response of rigid defence falling back on the philosophy of Aristotle and the theology of Thomas Aquinas. Turretin’s pattern of treating topics was that of Thomas Aquinas in his own Summa. It had a strongly polemical and apologetic character and 13 of the 21 questions were directed against Roman Catholics but he also attacked Anabaptists for discrediting the authority of the Old Testament and relying upon immediate revelations from the Holy Spirit, the Libertines for denying the inerrancy of the Bible and the Socinians and Reformed Theologians for critically examining the text of the Bible (ALLISON, L. M. (1958) The Doctrine of Scripture in the Theology of John Calvin and Francis Turretin. Seminary. Princeton, pp.89/90).

Turretin believed that even fallen humans had sufficient light to direct them in worldly things and to some knowledge of God, but God’s saving grace and mercy had to be discovered in Scripture. The Holy Spirit had been given, not to introduce new revelations but to impress the Written Word in our hearts. This was to counter the Papists’ discounting of the written Word and their insistence on the Holy Spirit working through oral tradition. This selective narrowing of the role of the Holy Spirit was furthered by the Princeton Theologians who allowed the work of the Spirit only to inspire the original authors of Scripture and not at all in enabling modern readers to understand. Turretin’s proclamation that the authority of the sacred text is the primary foundation of faith is born out in the twofold question he posed at the start of his
Institutio- Is the Bible truly credible of itself and divine? and How do we know that it is such? (Institutes II,4,1, cited in Allison p.59). He did not rely on internal witness as Calvin had done to persuade people of the authority of the Bible’s content, but turned to an assertion of inerrancy - the human writers were so acted upon and inspired by the Holy Spirit, both as to the things themselves, and as to the words, as to be kept free from all error, (Institutes II,4,5). Turretin therefore predicated the authority of the Bible on its verbal inerrancy resting the whole weight of Scripture in that one point; his statement was that the prophets did not make mistakes in even the smallest particulars .... To say that they did would render doubtful the whole of Scripture still echoes hollowly around the corridors of the Ultra-conservative groups (Institutes II,5,3). The information regarding Turretin was sourced from Reformed Dogmatics by Beardslee, Leon McDill Allison, The Doctrine of Scripture in the Theology of John Calvin and Francis Turretin, Th.M thesis, Princeton Theological Seminary 1958, Gerrit Keizer, Francois Turrettini, Sa Vie et Oeuvres et le Consensus, Lausanne: Georges Bridel, 1900.

Turretin refused to admit errors of any kind and spent a long chapter of his Institutio trying to harmonise 23 inconsistent passages: he treated the language and thought forms of the Bible as supernatural entities dictated directly by God. Roman Catholic theologians contended that some mistakes in the original manuscripts had been corrected in the Vulgate. To this Turretin took the stance that the inconsistencies in the original were not real but only apparent. This is another notion produced by present day fundamentalists, as Gleason Archer again kindly demonstrates - any discrepancies which appear must be dealt with as only apparent, not real. When all the facts are in, the charges of error will prove to be unsubstantiated (ARCHER, G.L., Moody Press, 1975; p.33). Turretin acknowledged that some passages were hard to understand but insisted that they were explainable - the spirit of illumination is necessary to make them intelligible to believers (Institutio II,17,2 cited in Allison p.80) this was the closest Turretin came to Calvin’s concept of the internal testimony of the Holy Spirit and here he only meant intellectual clarity - Any discrepancies between certain editions and the original were so minor as not to hinder persons .... and that through textual research the true original could be known. The negligence of copyists or printers could be restored and corrected by any collation of various copies, or of Scripture itself and of parallel passages (Institutio, II,5,5. cited in Allison p.63).

As a good example of Turretin’s questionable use of proof texts, he quoted Matthew
5:8 - Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law till all be fulfilled (KJV) as proof that no canonical books had been lost but all had been preserved by the providence of God and the internal testimony and persuasion of the Holy Spirit (Allison p.73). Unlike Calvin, whose thrust was Scripture’s saving function, leaving critical textual questions to the scholars, for Turretin an authentic and technically correct edition was essential. The Council of Trent had decreed that the Vulgate was and should be held as authentic - so that no one should dare to reject it under any pretext (Allison p.65) whereas Turretin insisted that the original Hebrew and Greek texts should be consulted. He asserted that the Holy Spirit had dictated the words as well as the matter of the originals and that God had preserved their integrity in the best available copies – the infallible saving message had now become an inerrant and technically perfect form.


The Reformers felt that the Roman Catholics were denigrating the Bible by giving such prominence to unwritten traditions and Turretin took up the word “sufficient” to describe Scripture’s complete adequateness, without the help of any traditions or ecclesiastical authority, and this word he eventually substituted for "perfection" in his own work. There was no satisfactory reason for tradition, the church fathers had testified that Scripture was perfect and its usefulness implied its sufficiency. Turretin was at least with Calvin in affirming that the purpose of Scripture was the salvation of people and it was not until the 19th century Princeton Theologians that the Bible was expressly asserted to teach about matters of science and history. He affirmed that Scripture was sufficiently clear that all Christians should be able to read it; he was, like the Reformers, offended by the Roman Catholic decree at the Council of Trent forbidding lay persons to read the Bible, although this was later modified by Pope Pius IV to leaving this up to individual pastors and bishops (ibid. II, 18,3, cited in Allison, p.81).

Louis Capel, a Reformed biblical scholar at Saumar had, in 1624 and 1650 published Arcanum punctationis revelatum and Critica sacra, respectively, in which he demonstrated that the Hebrew Vowel Points had been added sometime after the completion of the Babylonian Talmud and further that the received Masoretic Text was not completely accurate. Being a reformed adherent, Capel did make clear that the essential message was still a clear enough authority for faith and morals. Turretin acknowledged that Scribes might have brought into the sacred text many errors, yet they have not done so, or not in all the copies, nor in such a way as that they cannot be
corrected and restored by a collation of the various manuscripts and of Scripture itself (Institutio II, 11-14, cited in Allison p.76). Later on Turretin was forced to admit that translations and versions were authentic as to doctrine but not as to words and so the words of translations could be corrected because they were not authentic, but the words of the originals were inspired and inerrant.

The Development of Reformed Scholasticism in America

We are now in a position to examine in greater detail the way in which Conservative Evangelicalism evolved in America as a form of Reformed Scholasticism. In this present chapter I will provide an account of this powerhouse development by considering the theological views of the distinguished scholars whose writings did much to shape the expression of American Evangelism and later, of Fundamentalism. The memorable work of the Princeton Theologians in America built on and extended the work of Francis Turretin which was detailed above.

John Locke had enjoyed popularity in America from about 1714 but in the early 1800’s Scottish Common Sense Philosophy began its ascendency. It provided a bulwark against the deviations of Hume and Berkeley and the infidelity fostered by the French Revolution, as most American colleges were church-sponsored at this time, and introducing Philosophy into their curricula (p.243). This system, together with the scientific method of Francis Bacon, became known as Baconianism to which many benefits were attributed both in the academic sphere and in life in general. True science and true religion were seen as harmonious in the mid-1800’s and the combination of Newtonian science and Protestant religion formed an American ethos applying this system to every area of life.

The publication of Darwin’s On the Origin of the Species in 1859 could well be taken as the turning point when the static nature of Baconian philosophy could not bend to the turn new science was taking. The Doctrine of Inerrancy, so promising in the 17th century, was now seriously challenged by new discoveries and ideas so that people had to choose between Genesis and Geology (Bozeman, Dwight (1977), Protestants in the Age of Science: The Baconian Ideal and Antebellum American Religious Thought, Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, p.167-168).

J.K. Reid’s “common sense” epistemology, together with Francis Bacon’s inductive-empirical method, were formative in the so-called Old Princeton Theology espoused by
Charles and A. A. Hodge and B. B. Warfield. The work of the Hodges family and Warfield was, in many ways, the starting-point of the inerrancy debate among American Christians. The Princeton theologians were among the first to engage and criticize the Protestant liberalism that developed in America in the nineteenth and twentieth century (PERRY, J. Quodlibet, Journal 3, 2001.No.4 section 3).

Reformed theology moved from Britain to the New World in several streams as Independents, Presbyterians, Puritans and Calvinists occupied various parts of the colonies. A certain amount of merging formed the first Presbyterian church presbytery in 1706 (Rogers, J.B. & McKim, D.K., Harper & Rowe, 1979, p.265).

In 1768 John Witherspoon (1723-1794) came to take the Presidency of the College of New Jersey (later Princeton College) and it became a defender of the orthodox Calvinistic faith supported by Scottish Common Sense Philosophy. The whole of Scripture is perfectly agreeable to sound philosophy; yet certainly it was never intended to teach us everything (ibid; 242-247).

The Princeton Theologians

Archibald Alexander (1772-1851)

Until the founding of the Princeton Seminary in 1812 the Presbyterian church’s ordinands studied with tutors prior to examination by the presbytery. After studying with many tutors in many places Alexander received his Doctorate of Divinity from the College of New Jersey in 1810 and in 1812 he was elected the first Professor of Princeton’s new Theological Seminary (ALEXANDER, J. W. (1854) The Life of Archibald Alexander, New York, Charles Scribner’s Sons, pp. 328-329). He set about planning the courses of instruction that were to have such a strong influence in the years to come (Rogers, J.B. & McKim, D.K., Harper & Rowe, 1979, p.268). He based the seminary studies on the works of Turretin and Witherspoon despite the works of Calvin and the Westminster Divines being available. The philosophical thought of Thomas Reid and Dugald Stewart was followed and a single standard of knowing - that of Baconian empiricism. This made reason prior to faith and he concluded - unless the Christian religion is attended with sufficient evidence, we cannot believe it, even if we would. He believed Christ had urged his disciples rationally to weigh the empirical evidence of his divinity, (Archibald Alexander, Evidences of the Authenticity, Inspiration

The Deists held that the only revelation needed was the moral law evident in nature and discovered by reason but the Princeton Theologians wanted to show the right use of reason in religion and the need for biblical revelation – without special revelation, general revelation would be for sinful man incomplete and ineffective ….. without general revelation, special revelation would lack that basis in the fundamental knowledge of God as the mighty and wise, righteous and good, maker and ruler of all things (WARFIELD, B. (1870) The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible, Philadelphia, Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, p.75). Taking a leaf from Witherspoon’s book they used reason itself to combat the Deists, holding that both reason and religious experience were valid ways of knowing truth – from reason, sentiment and tradition, the being and infinite perfection and excellence of God may be deduced (Witherspoon, J, (1851), The Works of John Witherspoon, Edinburgh, J. Ogle, p.3:388). The anti-deism stance gave rise to an apologetic defence based in ‘evidences’ to prove an unshakeable reasonable religion with a certain basis for authority in the Bible. In his Evidences of Christianity in 1825, enlarged in 1836, Alexander devoted considerable space to Miracles and Prophecy. David Hume had attacked miracles in particular calling them “improbable” and so Alexander attacked his work saying; The truth of Christianity then, rests on this single point, is this testimony of these miracles true, or mere fable? (Archibald Alexander, A Brief Compend of Bible Truth,(1846), Philadelphia, Presbyterian Board of Publication, p.15).

Alexander believed that more instances of skeptics being converted had occurred through internal evidences than through external ones. These were vital “props” as they also held firm against the Deist position. Study the book itself and let its own evidence speak to the heart, he said (Archibald Alexander, (1836), Evidences of the Authenticity, Inspiration and Canonical Authority of the Holy Scriptures, Philadelphia, Presbyterian Board of Publication, p. 189). In incorporating the internal work of the Spirit into a framework of philosophical apologetic Alexander moved away from the Reformers and towards the Scholastics. Inspiration, Alexander maintained, was confined to the biblical writers but illumination was available to all. He divided Inspiration into:

- Superintendence - guidance but no new revelation of facts
- Suggestion - communication of new information suggesting it to the writers
• Elevation - a writer speaking in ways or words far more excellent than they could have attained by their own faculties. (ibid; p.224).

This brought him to the position of deciding whether the ideas alone were inspired or whether the words were as well. He argued that both positions were right in that for the narration of well-known facts no ‘suggestion’ was needed but only supervision to prevent error, whereas with the revealing of new truths full inspiration was required. In this way each writer’s characteristic style could be accounted for. For the early ‘accommodation’ theologians God had entered the world of the ‘child’ and accepted the child’s limitations whereas for Alexander the parent hovered over the child and guided it along the parent’s path.

Alexander held fast to Turretin’s postulate of the Bible being inerrant in all things; he wrote - and could it be shown that the evangelists had fallen into palpable mistakes in facts of minor importance, it would be impossible to demonstrate that they wrote anything by inspiration, and again concerning plenary inspiration - Such a divine influence upon the minds of the sacred writers as rendered them exempt from error, both in regard to the ideas and the words; (ibid; pp. 225ff). And so the die was cast.

The Princeton Theologians took a vow of subscription to the Westminster Confession of Faith but they never studied it in its historical context, studying instead the theology of Francis Turretin assuming it to be the same as that of Calvin and the Confession. Turretin was hailed as among the giants of Protestant Theology (Hodge, C. Protestant Review, 20 (July 1848):452) and all students were steeped in his work in a very partisan way until the re-organisation of 1929.

Charles Hodge (1797-1878)

Hodge attended the Princeton Seminary (founded in 1812) from 1815-1819 and after a year away studying, remained on the faculty for 58 years, being given the Chair of Didactic Theology in 1840. He trained around 3000 students and wrote countless articles for magazines, papers and books (Rogers, J.B. & McKim, D.K., Harper & Rowe, 1979, ; p.277). His attitude of unchanged commitment to a particular system of theology is manifested in his remarks at the celebration of his 50th year as a Professor at Princeton - I am not afraid to say that a new idea never originated in this Seminary. The Theological method was very simple. The Bible is the Word of God … if granted, then it follows that what the Bible says, God says. That ends the matter. (HODGE, A.A., (1880) The Life of Charles Hodge, New York, p. 521).
The developmental approach of natural science was also being adapted to the study of historical documents in the 19th century. Textual Criticism (Lower Criticism) was the attempt to determine the original state of the biblical text and its content by a comparison of all the available manuscript evidence: *this had been known and resisted by Turretin and the Reformed Scholastics of the 17th century* (Loetscher, L.A., (1940) *The Broadening Church*, Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, p.20) but not by Hodge. However, the advent of Higher Criticism, which recommended the application to the Bible of the same methods of literary and historical analyses as those applied to other ancient books, was another matter. Questions concerning the authorship, location, date, intent and environmental influences of the writings, which had been spurred on by the Enlightenment, appalled Professor Hodge by its “rationalist” and “pantheist” approach. Although the full flowering of this method did not come until after Hodge’s tenure, he opposed its suggestions all his life - *The Latest Form of Infidelity* published in 1840.

The real conflicts between the Princeton Theologians came with the next generation of Hodge’s son A.A. Hodge and his colleague B.B. Warfield.

Hodge, in his views on Inspiration, aired in his 1871 *Systematic Theology*, New York, Charles Scribner’s Sons, erroneously asserted that the whole church held to a position that was actually peculiar to Protestant Scholasticism, as he did to Inspiration, and he seemed entirely unaware of the concept of Accommodation which had allowed earlier theologians to accept the divine messages of Scripture whilst acknowledging the human fallibility of the words bearing those messages. Not so for Hodge for whom the purpose of Inspiration was to produce a carbon copy of God’s language. He said of the Biblical writers - *They were in such sense the organs of God, that what they said God said* (A. A. Hodge, (1880), *The Life of Charles Hodge*, New York, p.521). For Charles Hodge the object of revelation was to communicate knowledge to make that person wiser; the intent of illumination was to enable persons to understand revelation, but the purpose of inspiration was purely mechanical, applied to the biblical writer to “preserve him from error in teaching” - what they taught, God taught. Hodge asserted again wrongly that the accepted formula to express the doctrine of the church in all ages towards inspiration was *dictante Spiritu Dei* – with the Spirit of God dictating. The Scripture writer wrote errorlessly even if the opposite may have been his own conviction. The total insistence on Verbal Inspiration which produced a scholastic concentration on form, precluded the finding of authority in Scripture’s saving function, as had been the formula for the Reformers, and for Hodge complete verbal inspiration (God chose the exact words) was absolutely necessary for the doctrine of inspiration.
When the New Science raised questions about the Old Science he had trusted, Hodge felt obliged to claim that Scripture gave valid information about science as well as salvation; he said *If the Bible be the word of God, all the great questions which for ages have agitated the minds of men are settled with infallible certainty* (HODGE, C. (1871) *Systematic Theology*, New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, p. 171). The developmental theories of Darwin went against Hodge's notion of static design and so biologists as well as geologists were targets of his wrath. In his *Systematic Theology* of 1871 Hodge summarised his position by saying - *All the books of Scripture are equally inspired. All alike are infallible in what they teach. And secondly, that inspiration extends to all the contents of these several books. It is not confined to moral and religious truths, but extends to statements of facts, whether scientific, historical, or geographical. It is not confined to those facts the importance of which is obvious or which are involved in matters of doctrine. It extends to everything which any sacred writer asserts to be true* (ibid; 1,163). He also claimed incorrectly that this was the church doctrine on this subject *the common doctrine of the church is, and ever has been, that inspiration was an influence of the Holy Spirit on the minds of certain select men, which rendered them the organs of God for the infallible communication of his mind and will*, (ibid; 154). This claim is made by some other conservative evangelicals such as Dr. Harold Lindsell – *The view of the fundamentalist is indeed the historic view that has been the view of the Christian church through the ages*, (LINDSELL, H., Zondervan Publishing House, 1979, , p.19). The static world of Scottish Common Sense philosophy and Turretin's theology was crumbling as Higher Critics increasingly raised questions about the validity of that view and, under pressure from critics, Hodge began to retreat back to the original autographs alone as being inerrant. Towards the end of his life Hodges admitted that *there may be discrepancies between one part of the Scripture and another, arising from errors of transcribers. Far more numerous and important difficulties have their origin in erroneous interpretations*. (letter to Marcus Dods). Hodge's son A.A. Hodge, together with B.B. Warfield, authored an article entitled “Inspiration” in 1881 to plug the gaps in Hodge's view of inspiration.

Hodge outlined in his *Systematic Theology* his inductive method of forming a scientific system by *first making the assumptions of Scottish Realism* (HODGE, C. (1871) *Systematic Theology*, New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, I, p.10) and second ascertaining, collecting and combining all the facts which God has revealed concerning himself and our relation to him and then the integration of all knowledge could be accomplished on the basis of data in the Bible (ibid; p.11). In his insistence that reason
had to precede faith Hodge defined faith as assent to the truth, a conviction of truth found in testimony, a repeated rationalistic formula, whereas the Reformers’ sense of faith was as a trustful commitment of the whole person to God and the Scriptures taught that faith is the reception of truth on the ground of testimony or on the authority of God. Following Thomism rather than Augustinianism Hodge declared that first one knew that Scripture was the Word of God by rational evidences, then one came to trust in Christ as one who was demonstrably the Son of God and then the Holy Spirit worked with this evidence to renew the soul.

The inevitable conflict with a hitherto supportive science came when biologists and geologists came to different conclusions from Hodge’s and were then called “crude and hasty”. Hodge’s concept of the verbal propositions of Scripture as true, static objects caused a conflict between the facts of the new science and the facts of the Bible with Hodge classing the former as false and unphilosophical; Baconian induction required both the data from the Bible and the results of the field or laboratory to be correlated, with the former to be given a priori acceptance. Hodge’s life came to an end as this conflict was rising and with his death went a period of reverent agreement with the conclusions of the Princeton Theology.

The Princeton Theologians held to two main systems of theology and philosophy –

1. **The Thomistic procedure of Theology** which was -
   - A question was asked
   - The master’s answer was given
   - An opponent was named
   - The relevance of the question was discussed
   - The state of the question was examined
   - A negative approach was taken
   - A positive approach was taken
   - Further definitions and distinctions if any
   - The Master’s proofs and sources for his position

2. **The Scottish Common Sense Philosophy** which was -
   - Our sense perceptions and our rational deductions are valid
   - The design of the universe and the dictates of conscience were indelibly inscribed by God in the nature of reality, and common sense and inductive
reasoning were adequate instruments for knowing them.

- Certain truths are not learned from experience but given in the constitution of our nature
- Initially science and religion were thought to be harmonious
- Intuition provided the principles lacking in empiricism
- Words were like things and were directly knowable
- Memory brought one into direct contact with past occurrences
- Through the testimony of others we could have direct access to what they had experienced.

Sin had made the emotions unreliable but the mind had been unaffected. Each effect must have a cause and that cause contains within itself the reason why the effect occurs. Ignoring Hume they invoked intuition to provide those principles not provable on empirical grounds. Hodge believed, like Reid, that people could not think without words and extrapolating this to the Bible he taught that the biblical writers perfectly portrayed what they saw and experienced and that human testimony is adequate to produce absolute certainty. The Princeton Theologians in interpreting the Bible showed no concern to investigate the thought world or the sources of their targets, (Rogers, J.B. & McKim, D.K., Harper & Rowe, 1979, p.289f – citing Hodges view on Baconism and the work of Reid and Stewart).

**Archibald Alexander Hodge (1823-1886)**

Archibald was one of Charles Hodge's two sons who followed him and his ideas into the next generation of Princeton Theology. He succeeded his father as Professor of Theology at Princeton Seminary in 1878 (Loetscher, L.A., (1940) *The Broadening Church*, Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, p.24) and believed he was carrying on an unbroken tradition but in fact Princeton's output began to change from an acceptance to an apologetic of their theological position. The scientific tools of the Enlightenment were being used for the critical study of the Bible and after the Civil War their effects impacted on America. The Princeton doctrine of static design was challenged by Darwin's 1859 publication of *On the Origin of Species* and the view of the Universe was changing from 'a proclamation of the glory of God' to one where God's governance was no longer necessary. *The Princeton Theologians were unable to separate either their observance of the world or their exegesis of the Bible from the 18th century theories that had determined their interpretation*, (Rogers, J.B. & McKim, D.K., Harper & Rowe,
Modern dynamistic view of historical development clashed with their Newtonian view of nature and Scottish realist philosophy resulting in an inflexible unacceptance and open warfare.

However in the interval between A. A. Hodge’s 1860 and 1879 editions of Outlines in Theology, his position on absolute inerrancy, in every part, as a record of fact and doctrine both in thought and verbal expression, God’s word to us, was now preceded by a statement that - the original autographs which are absolutely infallible when interpreted in the sense intended. (Outlines (1879), p.66) Hodge had now backed away from plenary inspiration referring to the present text of Scripture, to its referring only to the original documents. Also he insisted that the Church had always considered the original documents to be inspired and infallible in the way he did, which was not strictly true. He went on to maintain that the church has never held the verbal infallibility of our translations, nor the perfect accuracy of the copies of the original Hebrew and Greek Scriptures now possessed by us … the unanimous testimony of Christian Scholars is that no essential fact or doctrine of Christianity is lost or abated by these variations (Outlines (1879), p.75).

Hodge defined a ‘discrepancy’ as a form of statement existing in the original text of the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures evidently designed to assert as true that which is in plain irreconcilable contradiction to other statements existing in some other portions of the same original text of Scripture, or to some other certainly ascertained element of human knowledge (Outlines (1879), p.75-76). To insist that this must be proved to exist, or plenary verbal inspiration remains intact, was to call for the production of unavailable autographs. Hodge laid down the severest of criteria to be acceptable to prove the discrepancy and declared that such proof was a violent improbability and a very difficult task to perform, one in any instance indeed hardly possible, (Outlines (1879), p.76-77) (Rogers, J.B. & McKim, D.K., Harper & Rowe, 1979, , p.306). This constituted Hodge’s ‘unassailable case’ to show that no discrepancy could be proved to exist.

In the period preceding the 1879 Outlines natural science had ceased to support the Princeton theology which seemed to have occasioned Hodge to say - The sacred writers having for their design to teach moral and religious truth, and not physical science, use on all subjects the common language of their contemporaries , always speaking of natural phenomena as they appear, and not as they really are (Outlines
In 1860 Hodge had asserted that there were no biblical contradictions to known scientific facts and further that any clear and direct contradiction would clearly disprove the doctrine we maintain. By 1879 Hodge was not so bold but he did say - Difficulties in interpretation and apparently irreconcilable statements exist, but no discrepancy has been proved and it is in the highest degree probable that perfect knowledge would remove all (Outlines (1879), p. 77). This was his case for scientific errorlessness in the original autographs but gone was the earlier unbridled confidence in the support of contemporary science.

Since no discrepancy measuring up to Hodge’s severe definition could ever be proved to be present in non-existent autographs, the doctrine of inspiration seemed secure and for good measure he added that this newly developed view had always been the position of the church universal.

**Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield (1851-1921)**

After the unexpected death at age 63 of A. A. Hodge, Warfield was selected as his successor and fourth occupant of the chair. He saw his role as that of defender of all of the principal doctrines of Christianity (Craig, Samuel G., (1952) Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield, Philadelphia, Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, p. xliii) which were under severe attack and his technique was apologetics. The traditional commitments of Princeton theology which Warfield set out to defend were:

- The scholastic methodology of Thomas Aquinas and Turretin
- Scottish Common Sense Philosophy
- The interpretation of Scripture based on Baconian induction
- The priority of reason over faith - Although both Hodges and Warfield aspired to teach only traditionally Calvinist doctrine, the high authority accorded to reason marked it off from preceding doctrinal understandings in the same tradition.
- The necessity for factual evidences of the Bible’s authenticity.

None of these needed developing but Warfield insisted that he was merely defending what Scripture plainly taught and what the church had always believed. His emphasis shifted from inducing facts to deducing conclusions (induction = a general rule or conclusion is drawn from particular facts or examples; deduction = a general rule or
principle is used to draw a particular conclusion): conclusions were drawn on the basis of technical definitions, minute word studies and scholastic refinements of language. Warfield then accepted Charles Hodge’s theology but added technical expertise, skill in logic and argumentation and polemical power as the Princeton tradition moved from the 19th to the 20th century; his first line of defence was the Bible and the enemy was Higher Criticism (ibid; 326).

Warfield opined that:

- **Thomistic proofs of the divine existence had been traditional in the church from its first age**, overlooking Calvin’s antipathy to Aristotle and Aquinas and the reversal in theological method from the first to the second generation of Reformers (WARFIELD, B. (1870) *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible*, (IAB) Philadelphia, Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, p.173).


- Calvin’s view that knowledge of God was innate and naturally engraved on the hearts of men and that ‘this light had been smothered and all but extinguished by their iniquity’ and that ‘regeneration by the Holy Spirit could remove these effects of sin’ was a correct belief (CALVIN, J. (1970) *Institutes 1*, Grand Rapids, Michigan, Eerdmans Publishing Company; iii.3).

These views formed the basis of his apologetics, which he described as the first, and the most fundamental, activity for the Christian Scholar - the establishment…. of that knowledge of God which Christianity professes to embody and seeks to make efficient in the world and which it is the business of theology scientifically to explicate (WARFIELD, B. (1932) *Studies in Theology*, New York, Oxford University Press, p.3). The objective of apologetics was to establish the truth of Christianity as the absolute religion, (ibid; p13). The requirements of human reason had to be met before God could give faith, following Thomas Aquinas who said, *He who believes would not believe unless he saw that what he believes is worthy of belief* (ibid; pp.49-87).

Herman Bavinck and Abraham Kuyper, in Amsterdam, saw apologetics as the last of the theological disciplines to be used only after the theology was complete to answer philosophical objections to Christianity. *Faith*, Warfield argued, *is conviction passing into confidence and like all convictions must rest on evidence as the ground and ‘that systematic evidence was best that we call Apologetics to assist Christianity to reason*
its way to its dominion (Warfield, B.B. (1888), The Idea of Systematic Theology Considered as Science; New York, Anson Rudolph & Co.). Warfield held, with the medieval scholastics that theology was the Queen of the Sciences and that apologetics was the ruling consort of the Queen. (Rogers, J.B. & McKim, D.K., Harper & Rowe, 1979, p.330).

Warfield had no room for the personal knowledge of God wrought by the Spirit which Augustine and the Reformers held, yet he claimed his position was that of the Reformed Tradition. For him the Spirit did not produce faith but only made the faith that was already produced in the mind by reason into ‘saving faith’ (Warfield, B.B. (1954) Calvin and Augustine, Presbyterian & Reformed Pub Co, p.151). Calvin had already said that those who wish to prove to unbelievers that Scripture is the Word of God are acting foolishly for only by faith can this be known (Calvin, John; Institutes 1.vii,13). From his Scottish realist philosophy Warfield conceived of faith as primarily a mental assent to rational propositions that were logically compelling to the individual based on reasons or evidences and not on volitions; that evidence needed to be subjectively sufficient not necessarily objectively adequate. This maintained the theory of primacy of the intellect but also encouraged apologists only to use evidence that was sufficient for their particular audience, and later followers claimed proof even when the evidence was simply psychologically appealing to the audience. Despite Calvin’s clear statement as to the secondary place of evidence - arguments are secondary aids to our feebleness, (Institutes 1, viii, 13), Warfield maintained that he taught when the soul is renewed by the Holy Spirit to a sense for the divinity of Scripture, it is through the evidences (indicia) of that divinity that it is brought into its proper confidence in the divinity of Scripture (Rogers, J.B. & McKim, D.K., Harper & Rowe, 1979, p.333). This reflected a persistent Princeton practice of reinterpreting Calvin in the light of Aristotelian assumptions that would have been alien to the Reformer. Again - we must accredit Calvin as thinking of the newly implanted spiritual sense discerning the divinity of Scripture only through the mediation of the evidences divinely manifested in Scripture (Warfield, B.B., Calvin & Augustine, pp. 87, 90). Thus the Bible became authoritative not because of the Holy Spirit’s witness to Jesus Christ and his message of salvation (Neoplatonic) but because a person was convinced rationally of the proofs of Scripture’s divinity (Aristotelian). The Holy Spirit was relegated to the secondary role of moving the will to follow the mind.

It was apostolicity that determined the authority of Scripture for Warfield - the church

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existed because the apostles founded it on the authority of Christ. *The Scriptures are simply the law-code which the law-givers of the church gave it,* (WARFIELD, B. (1970) *Selected Shorter Works of Benjamin B. Warfield II*, Nutley, N.J., Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, p.537). This concept did two things, 1) it introduced the Bible as a law book rather than as saving good news, and 2) it predicated the authority of the Bible on Warfield’s ability to prove the traditional apostolic authorship or sanction of each book which set him in opposition to the Higher Critics. After investigating the evidence for canonicity among second-century writings Warfield concluded that every one of the twenty seven books which now constitute our New Testament is assuredly genuine and authentic (IAB, p.429).

Warfield’s perception of God’s revelation in Scripture was of a three-stage ‘Progressive Revelation’, as:

1) External manifestations - the patriarchal age in which God spoke in outward manifestations, symbols and theophanies,
2) Internal suggestion - the prophetic age when God spoke by inward prophetic inspiration by movements of the Holy Spirit in their hearts,
3) Concursive operation - through the medium of the written word by apostolic inspiration.

(ibid; 82-83).

These stages traced the steady advance of revelation from its first faint beginnings to its glorious completion in Jesus Christ - a redemptive act of God. Warfield defined inspiration as a prevailing superintending grace from the Holy Spirit, (WARFIELD, B. (1970) *Selected Shorter Works of Benjamin B. Warfield II*, Nutley, N.J., Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, p.540) in the case of the apostles, and *extraordinary, supernatural influence exerted by the Holy Spirit on the writers of our Sacred Books by which their words were rendered also the words of God and therefore perfectly infallible* (IAB, p.420). He continued the Princeton policy of asserting that the implications of inspiration developed in post-Reformation Scholasticism had always been held in the church - *it (the church) has always recognized that this conception of co-authorship implies that the Spirit’s superintendence extends to the choice of words by the human authors (verbal inspiration) and preserves its product from everything inconsistent with a divine authorship - thus securing, among other things, that entire truthfulness which is everywhere presupposed in and asserted for Scripture by the Biblical writers (inerrancy)* (ibid; pp. 107-112,173).
What the Scriptures taught about themselves, Internal Evidence

Warfield distinguished between revelation, as the communication of information to the writers, and inspiration, which was God’s superintendence of the writer’s communication of that information. He maintained that the trustworthiness of the writings must be proved before their inspiration. The whole case rested on facts, he said, a case built on historical and empirical data could never attain the status of strictest certainty but it may be contended that it is about as great in amount and weight as ‘probable evidence’ can be made, and that the strength of conviction which it is adapted to produce may be and should be practically equal to that produced by demonstration itself, (IAB pp.218-219). However he went from there to presume his evidence was fact. He used the term ‘θεοπνευστος’ in the sense of “God breathed” as the ‘essential nature’ of Scripture not how it originated (Paul’s Doctrine of The Old Testament, Presbyterian Quarterly, 3 July 1889: 389-406) but in a second article (IAB, 296) he said the opposite, that the term was primarily expressive of the origin of scripture, not of its nature and much less of its effects. The Scriptures originated from the creative breath of God and therefore of the highest value for all holy purposes, he said (IAB, 133/4), which seemed to connect with function which had been denied in the second article. In the verses from 2 Peter, Warfield deduced the Holy Spirit took up the men who spoke from God and brought them by his power to a goal of his choosing - the things which they spoke were therefore the Spirit’s things and not their things. In the more circumspect John 10:35 he used the phrase - scripture cannot be broken to signify irrefragable authority, the strongest possible assertion of the indefectible authority of Scripture and its inviolable authority even in the very form of its expression in its most casual clauses .. down to its most minute particulars. He maintained that Jesus and the New Testament writers appealed to Scripture as an indefectible authority whose determination is final (IAB 140/40). In attributing to Jesus 19th century attitudes that had been questioned in an apologetic context, Warfield believed that: The writers of the New Testament books looked upon what they called Scripture as divinely safeguarded in even its verbal expression, and as divinely trustworthy in all its parts, in all its small elements, and in all its affirmations of whatever kind. (IAB; p.115). He strongly believed that the Spirit’s superintendence extended to the choice of words (verbal inspiration) and preserved its product from everything inconsistent with a divine authorship (inerrancy) (The Present Problem of Inspiration, Homiletic Review 21, May1891:411).
At this time, in 1891-3, two Theology Professors, Henry Smith (1847-1927) and Charles Augustus Briggs (1841-1913) were tried for heresy by various committees and Assemblies of the Presbyterean Church for implying ‘non-infallibility’ of the Bible because of the findings of Textual Criticism and Julius Wellhausen’s work in particular. Smith pointed out that *it is written* refers to an Old Testament reading which can well be part of a speech from an ordinary person such as Eliphaz in Job whose words are by no means guaranteed to be infallible. Smith found many other conflicting ‘facts’ between the books of Samuel/Kings and Chronicles and pointed out that if Scripture is thus shown to be fallible in one part then it can be in all its utterances. Warfield countered with accusations of Smith making himself the judge over history rather than submitting to the authority of the biblical record. - he said it boiled down to *infallible Scripture versus Infallible Science*. Science was now no longer viewed as a support. In 1893 Briggs and Smith were suspended from the ministry (Rogers & McKim, Harper Row, 1979, pp.348-369).

As more Christians came to question the Princeton stance, Warfield:

- Believed that God had providentially preserved enough text that a nearer approximation of the original (the *autographa*) was within reach of textual criticism (WARFIELD, B. (1970) *Selected Shorter Works of Benjamin B. Warfield II*, Nutley, N.J., Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, p.584)
- Continually attributed his position to the New Testament writers - *they declared it* (Scripture) *to be a God-breathed document … authoritative in all its declarations, and down to the last particular*. (IAB 150).
- claimed that his earlier emphasis on interpretation by induction from the facts was *a human view of inspiration rather than a scriptural view*.
- continually claimed that his position was that of the church - *the church has more confidence in the scriptural statements than in his* (Smith’s) *historical opinions* (Presbyterian and Reformed Review (PRR) 5 (1894); 646.
- allowed no practical manifestation of the human element in Scripture, even the minutest form of expression was attributed directly to God. Scripture included in its accuracy and correctness matters of history and science (Inspiration with A.A. Hodge, the Presbyterian Review 2 (April 1881):238.)

He treated any questioning of the Princeton apologetic position as an attack on the Bible itself linking any denial that the purpose of the Bible was to speak with technical accuracy on science and history with a wholesale denial of the Bible’s authority and
trustworthiness for salvation. Warfield held that it was the original autographs of Scripture that were inspired and without error - it is the Bible that God gave us, not the corruptions and slips which scribes and printers have given us, some of which are in every copy and as we do not hold the author responsible for these in an ordinary book, neither ought we to hold God responsible for them in this extraordinary book which we call the Bible (WARFIELD, B. (1970) Selected Shorter Works of Benjamin B. Warfield II, Nutley, N.J., Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, p.582).

Warfield’s demand for proof of discrepancies and errors in the Bible was completely biased in a conservative direction: the position of inerrancy required no proof at all; it was merely quoted from the Bible. The onus of proof of errancy on the other hand became so demanding as to require proof that each such erroneous statement occurred in the autographa, i.e. the original document written by the hand of Moses or Paul and that the interpretation is the one which the passage was intended to bear and further that this was irreconcilable with other known truth or facts. Warfield stiffened the conditions for possible demonstration of error to the point where it becomes impossible to attempt it. When it all boils down, authentification of inspiration of the Biblical Texts from the Biblical Texts themselves requires an absolute belief in the inerrancy of the texts; in other words you have to be a Fundamentalist in the first place for the proof to have any effective meaning.

One of the most famous and seminal Princeton works concerning the inspiration of the Bible was a journal article jointly written by A. A. Hodge and B. B. Warfield: this article has become the “definition” of the Princeton doctrine of inspiration. It defends the autographs as being without error of any kind, when properly interpreted, as the authors intended (Hodge, A.A. and Warfield, B.B., Presbyterian Review 2, 1881; Inspiration; p.238). Hodge and Warfield recognized that the Scriptures had to be defended and interpreted in a normal manner. An error could be proved only if three conditions were met: (1) the original text of the passage is certain, (2) the interpretation of the passage is certainly the intended one, and (3) the passage is contrary to known truth or to another certainly preserved and interpreted passage of Scripture. They conclude, we believe that it can be shown that this has never yet been successfully done in the case of one single alleged instance of error in the Word of God. (Inspiration: p.242).

Whilst not being bothered by the fact that the autographa were now lost, Warfield believed that God had providentially preserved enough texts that a near approximation
of the original was within reach of textual criticism and went as far as to say that - in the best texts in circulation practically the whole of it is in its autographic text (SWW II.584). He continued to express the belief that ‘apparent difficulties’ may be removed in time by earnest study. Warfield and Hodge defied anyone to bring forth evidence apparently from nonexistent autographs and thus felt secure in their unassailable though manufactured position. Princeton theologians argued from their pre-established doctrine rather than from the data, moving from inductive investigation to deductive apologetics.

The Warfield-Briggs Controversy (1881-1883)

Briggs et al. were of the opinion that the great majority of professional biblical scholars in the various universities and theological halls of the world, embracing those of greatest learning, industry and piety, demanded a revision of traditional theories of the Bible on account of a large induction of new facts from the Bible and history.

This conflict within the Presbyterian Church set the terms for the fundamentalist-modernist controversy of decades to come. Charles Augustus Briggs (1841-1913), after studying in Germany, saw as his chief mission the introduction of German Higher Criticism into the Presbyterian Church. A.A. Hodge and Briggs were chosen as co-editors of a new theological journal called The Presbyterian Review but soon became hostile defenders of their opposing views. Each editor was appointed to choose four contributors to put their points of view about biblical criticism. The first contribution in April 1881 was a renowned joint article by Hodge and Warfield entitled Inspiration.

Hodge, in his portion of the jointly authored “Inspiration” with Warfield, contended that -the superintendence of God of the writers in the entire process of their writing, which accounts for nothing whatever but the absolute infallibility of the record in which the revelation, once generated, appears in the original autograph (Inspiration; pp. 225-226).

Briggs criticised the Princeton Divines for risking the inspiration and authority of the Bible upon a single proven error - a proven error in Scripture contradicts not only our doctrine but the Scriptural claims, and therefore the inspiration in making those claims - no more dangerous doctrine has ever come from the pen of men. (Presbyterian Review 2, p.551).
After admitting some fallibility of the human language, Hodge went on - *The historical faith of the church has always been, that all the affirmations of Scripture of all kinds, whether of spiritual doctrine or duty or of physical or historical fact, or of psychological or philosophical principle are without error when the ipsissima verba of the original autographs are ascertained and interpreted on their natural and intended sense* (Inspiration; p.238).

Both Warfield and Hodge shifted the burden of proof from the affirmative proposal, which was usual, to the critics of their position, and set up conditions which were impossible to fulfill; they begged the question by assuming as proven the very points of interpretation which their opponents were challenging. Again they asserted the historically false claim that their position was that held in the beginning and continually by the Church. *Although starting out as not a principle fundamental to the truth of the Christian religion, by the end of the article it had emerged as the absolutely crucial centre of their apologetic argument* (Rogers, J.B. & McKim, D.K., Harper & Rowe, 1979, , p.351).

In July 1881 Briggs responded with an article entitled *The Right, Duty and Limits of Biblical Criticism*. He rejected inerrancy, and canonicity depending on authorship of tradition, citing the Reformers having taught that Canonicity depended on the witness of the Holy Spirit. He made the important distinction between Plenary Inspiration, which acknowledged errors and inconsistencies in the Bible but nonetheless held Scripture to be the infallible rule of faith and practice, and Verbal Inspiration, which imperiled the doctrine of Inspiration itself by bringing it into conflict with a vast array of objections along the whole line of Scripture and History (*Presbyterian Review* 2 (July 1881); pp.550-579). The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church remained committed to Plenary Inspiration of the Scriptures by which they probably meant overall inerrancy. Briggs, in his 7th and final article in this exchange, stated that the Pentateuch was a compilation of four main documents written soon after Moses. He maintained that nowhere did the Historic Faith of the Church, The great Reformers or the Westminster Divines teach or state the inerrancy of the original autographs.

In his *The Westminster Assembly and its Work* Warfield began by stating the obvious fact that the Westminster Confession teaches the verbal or plenary inspiration and infallibility or inerrancy of the original Scriptures. Warfield assumed that *the Westminster Divines were identical in their theology to that of Turretin and other post-
Reformation Scholastics - he did not prove it, he postulated it, (Rogers, J.B. & McKim, D.K., Harper & Rowe, 1979, , p.357) Warfield did not know, never investigated and took for granted that there was only one Reformed system of theology and that all whom he considered Reformed, no matter of what historical age, held to that system (Warfield, Benjamin B. (1931) The Westminster Assembly and its Work, New York, Oxford University Press, pp. 262-263). He could not imagine that the Reformed theologians of Britain could be strongly opposed to their brethren on the Continent.

Warfield –

1. attempted to show that Briggs had taken quotations out of context and had misrepresented the Westminster views (ibid; 263-271), in doing so he: quoted from members of the Assembly who had had no direct hand in framing and defining the sections on Scripture in the Confession, assumed a uniformity of viewpoint among the members of the Assembly that was historically not valid,

2. chose to cite those Divines whose writings were most amenable to his own position, attributed to the words of the Divines meanings that had been unmistakably developed by the Princeton theology and not by the Westminster participants, (ibid; pp. 262-263, 269-271).

3. held that an appeal to the testimony of the Holy Spirit apart from prior evidence was unthinkable mysticism. He never considered whether Princeton theology had itself been faithful to the Westminster Confession and the 16th century Reformation Confessions but read back his own position into those sources of which he approved, for example using Charles Hodge’s Systematic Theology as an example of all Reformed Systems when the status of this theology was the very question at issue (ibid; 213).

He never replied to Brigg’s objection that Princeton Theology predicated the inspiration of Scripture on its supposed human authors.

Most members of the Presbyterian church were of the opinion that Scottish Realism and Turretin were the Westminster Confession and Calvin, and so voted against Briggs who, after many trials was dismissed from the Ministry with the closing statement of the General Assembly of 1892 once more declaiming that – our church holds that the inspired Word as it came from God is without error … what has always been the belief of the Church taught in the Westminster Confession of Faith (cited in M.G. Rogers, Charles Augustus Briggs: Heresy at Union, in American Religious Heretics, ed. By George H. Shriver, Abingdon Press, 1966, pp.110-111, 138). In response to many protests the General Assembly adopted a supplementary statement saying - The Bible,
as we now have it, in its various translations and versions, when freed from all errors and mistakes of translators, copyists and printers, is the very Word of God and consequently without error (ibid; p.138). This ensured conflict over the Bible as a technically true source of information on science as well as religion for the coming decades.

This was essentially a struggle between the newer notions of scientific exactitude and the standards of the early American Enlightenment. Each applied to the Bible by the Liberals and Evangelicals respectively but neither challenged the older conceptions of self-justifying authority or the dictates of common sense. Europe’s churches continued to rely on tradition and hierarchy and increasingly lost touch with ordinary people. Serious and irreconcilable conflicts between Briggs and Warfield, as the new co-editors, resulted in the Presbyterian Review, the last link between the New and Old School parties respectively, being discontinued.

The Fundamentalist-Modernist Controversy was going strong in America in the late 19th and early 20th centuries with the Inerrancy of the Scriptures and Darwin’s theory of Evolution of the Species as the main topics. This conflict, which had flared up in the Presbyterian Church, was to have far-reaching effects. In 1910 the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church adopted 5 points which all ordination candidates had to affirm as “essential and necessary doctrines” –

- That the Holy Spirit did so inspire, guide and move the writers of the Holy Scriptures as to keep them from error.
- The virgin birth of Christ.
- Christ’s death as a sacrifice to satisfy divine justice and reconcile us to God.
- Christ’s bodily resurrection and ascension to Heaven and intercession.
- Christ’s mighty miracles which made changes in the order of nature.


These points were increasingly challenged on the grounds of representing a fundamentalist narrowing of the Presbyterian theological stance. In the mid 1920’s matters were brought to a head by a proposed merger of the evangelical churches which evoked much discussion including two famous sermons entitled Shall the Fundamentalists Win by Henry Emerson Fosdick, (ibid; 103-104), and Shall Unbelief Win by Clarence E. Macartney (C. Allyn Russell, (1976), Voices of American
J. Gresham Machen studied at Princeton Seminary under B.B. Warfield and then spent a year in Germany before becoming Assistant Professor of New Testament at Princeton in which post he confirmed his Princetonism by statements like - *the writers have been so preserved from error, despite a full maintenance of their habits of thought and expression, that the resulting book (the Bible) is the infallible rule of faith and practice. Christianity and Liberalism*, New York; Macmillan, 1923: 172/3). In the same book he contended that Christianity and Liberalism were two distinct and utterly different religions. Since the 1910 General Assembly pronouncement, scholastics like Machen were committed to defending inerrancy as the first in their list of “essential and necessary” doctrines.

In 1926 the Interim Report of the special theological commission appointed by the General Assembly to investigate causes of “unrest” announced two contentions -

1. They denied that the true history of the church was one of uniform theological conservatism arguing that diversity had always been an enriching aspect of the denomination.

2. They denied Machen’s assertion that conservative Christianity and Liberalism were mutually exclusive and incompatible - they believed that there was a place for both. The historical part of the commission’s report developed the idea that the Christian principle of toleration was deeply embedded in the denomination’s constitution. The report added that toleration does not involve any lowering of the standards. It does not weaken the testimony of the Church as to its assured convictions. (LOETSCHER, L. (1954) *The Broadening Church*, The University of Pennsylvania Press pp.131, 134-5). The two central convictions of Machen and the Princeton conservatives were thus denied.

The final report on the matter concluded that the General Assembly did not have the constitutional right to lay down binding definitions of the church’s essential faith and so the five points were without authority. A re-organisation of Princeton Seminary boards in 1929 resulted in Machen, and three other faculty members feeling that they could not be a part of an inclusive seminary and in 1929 they left Princeton to form the Westminster Seminary in Philadelphia which was committed to continuing the Hodge-
Warfield tradition of old Princeton (ibid; pp.148-149, C. Allyn Russell, (1976), *Voices of American Fundamentalism: Seven Biographical Studies*, Philadelphia: Westminster Press, pp.155-156). The Princeton position of equating inerrancy with the position of the Westminster Confession was never repudiated and the Presbyterian Church’s decision not to make any interpretation of the Confession left it without a clear confessional position. Warfield had identified the Princeton position, not with Scottish Realism and Turretin, but with the Bible itself and claimed that the church had always held to the Princeton particulars. A large amorphous movement known as evangelicalism continued the Princeton doctrine thinking they were the inheritors of the true Reformation Tradition.

**Criticisms of Princeton Inerrancy theory**

**Scotland:**

Thomas M. Lindsay (1843-1914) - objected to their formal as opposed to a religious idea of the infallibility and authority of scripture. He quoted their essence of inspiration as – *a superintendence exercised upon the writers of scripture by the Holy Spirit, and the result of this superintendence is to secure a book free from all error, whether of fact, or precept, or doctrine* (T.M. Lindsay, *The Doctrine of Scripture in The Expositor*, 5th series (1895); 286). This inerrancy is infallibility and this infallibility gives Scripture its authority and testifies to its Divine Authorship.

Lindsay maintained that inerrancy amounting to verbal inerrancy was not the opinion of the Reformers or of the Westminster Confession. They applied θεοπνευστος to the writings and not to the writers, conveying the universal line of thought that Scripture is inspired because it conveys the authoritative and infallible Word of God; it is not infallible and authoritative because it is inspired. Regarding Princeton’s attribution of formal inerrancy to ‘the ipsissima verba of the original autographs’ it follows that the Scriptures as we now have them are neither infallible nor inspired so where are we to get our errorless Scripture? Is the band of experts in textual criticism … to guarantee for us the inspired and infallible Word of God or are we to say that the unknown autographs are unknowable and that we can never get to this Scripture? Lindsay himself answers that - *this record I know to be true by the witness of His Spirit in my heart in and with the Word, whereby I am assured that none other than God Himself is able to speak such words to my soul*, (T.M. Lindsay, *The Doctrine of Scripture in The Expositor*, 5th series (1895); 278). Lindsay knew that the Princeton Theologians had
forsaken a Reformation Doctrine of Scripture for a scholastic one whereas he had accepted Scripture because of its function not because of formal proofs of its authority.

James Orr (1844-1913) also rejected the Princeton scholastic doctrine of Scripture by holding on to the Reformers’ functional approach and rejecting Princeton’s domino theory that the authority of the Bible would fall if the Princeton scholastic method of urging that unless it can be demonstrated that what is called inerrancy of the Biblical record, down even to its minutest details is so. This, on the face of it, is a most suicidal position for any defender of revelation to take up (Revelation and Inspiration, New York; Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1910, pp.197/8.). Regarding Verbal Inspiration, he wrote - it is apt to suggest a mechanical theory of inspiration, akin to dictation, which all intelligent upholders of inspiration now agree in repudiating. In the result it may be held to imply a literality in narratives, quotations, or reports of discourses, which the facts, as we know them, do not warrant (ibid; 210).

In respect of the reports of the Lord’s own sayings, Orr declared that although there is often a very considerable variation in expression, even the advocates of verbal inspiration are themselves compelled to recognise that absolute literality is not of the essence of inspiration - that the end is gained if the meaning of the saying is preserved, though the precise form of the words varies (ibid; 210). In common with the reformers he noted in the biblical account a freedom in regard to the letter, while the sense is accurately conveyed in the manner in which the New Testament writers themselves quote the Old Testament (ibid; 210/11). Orr developed a doctrine that affirmed the divine function of scripture but left freedom for the scholarly examination of its human form. Orr was quite critical of much of biblical criticism as it was practiced in his time. But in principle he was open to the findings of scholarship in a way that the Princeton theologians were not (Orr’s comments in The Fundamentals, cited in Barr, p.359, note 12). He did take the historical and cultural setting of the writers into account and accepted the human consequences of it for their writings. Orr used progressive revelation instead of accommodation to explain this combination of divine and human factors in Scripture. He conceded the significant differences between modes of thought in the Ancient Near East and the 19th century West which the Princeton theologians had not.

The Netherlands:
Abraham Kuyper (1837-1902) , who was an Augustinian-Calvinist , believed that faith
led to understanding and therefore the primary issue for the Dutch Reformed Tradition was how God related to humankind. This meant that the Holy Spirit moved persons to accept Scripture as authoritative because of the saving message it expressed. Kuyper said, *the Reformers wisely appealed on principle to the witness of the Holy Spirit ... by this they understood the testimony that went out directly from the Holy Spirit, as the author of the Scripture to our personal ego* (KUYPER, A. (1898) *Principles of Sacred Theology*, Grand Rapids, Michigan, Wm. B. Eerdmans, p.478-479). Regarding disparity of verbal reports Kuyper wrote - *If in the four Gospels' words are put in the mouth of Jesus on the same occasion which are all dissimilar in form of expression, Jesus naturally cannot have used four forms at the same time, but the Holy Spirit only intended to create an impression for the church which perfectly answers the anomaly* (ibid; 390). Some evangelicals criticized his view that biblical authority is recognized through one’s faith-relationship to Christ because they could not accept that one may have faith in Christ without first knowing that the biblical testimony to Christ is true.

Herman Bavinck (1854-1921) put forward the post-Reformation Scholastic method which proposed that reasons were necessary prior to faith and tackled the issue of whether God’s existence could be proved, and human reason compelling persons to believe the Bible because of evidential or logical proofs of its divine character. Bavinck, in defence of the Augustinian position, said, *Scripture is the word of God because the Holy Spirit witnesses of Christ in it, because it has the incarnate Word as its subject matter and content* (BAVINCK, H. (2003) *Reformed Dogmatics - Volume 1*, Grand Rapids, Baker, p.414). On the subject of technically correct scientific information he said, *The writers of Holy Scripture probably knew no more that their contemporaries in all these sciences, geology, zoology, physiology, medicine etc. and it was not necessary either. For Holy Scripture used the language of daily experience which is always true and remains so* (ibid. 417).

Both Bavinck and Kuyper realized that God had ‘accommodated’ himself to human language in communicating his divine message and both realized that there were anomalies. However Bavinck thought the anomalies did not deflect from the truth of Scripture (BAVINCK, H. (2003) *Reformed Dogmatics - Volume 1*, Grand Rapids, Baker; p.419-420) whereas Kuyper attributed the anomalies to the Saviour having appeared in the form of a servant and was thus bound to the limitation of our language (KUYPER, A. (1898) *Principles of Sacred Theology*, Grand Rapids, Michigan, Wm. B. Eerdmans). The Bible’s function was to give people encouragement in salvation not information.
about science: scientific findings were not an obstruction to faith but an occasion to understand more fully the ways in which God had revealed himself through human needs. Augustine and Calvin’s concept of ‘accommodation’ and James Orr’s ‘progressive revelation’ attempted to do justice to both the divine and the human in Scripture and Bavinck’s organic inspiration tried to do the same thing by citing the different functions of parts of the human body, some parts centrally more important than others, to maintain that not all parts of Scripture were of equal importance, as post-Reformation emphasis had done. These Reformed Theologians welcomed scholarly study but stated on the one hand, it had to deal with the Bible by the same rules of interpretation used with any other book, but should listen for what God has to say to us, (BERKOUWER, G.C. Scripture, Tradition and Interpretation, Grand Rapids, Eerdmans,(1978); pp. 70-91). By distinguishing between the centre and the periphery in Scripture Kuyper and Bavinck’s tradition allowed for the central saving message to be received in faith without waiting for scholarly reasons, leaving the supporting material of human language and culture open to scholarly investigation which could bring greater deepening of faith later. No human mistakes could frustrate God’s intention to reveal saving truth and so it was wrong to equate human accuracy with error in the biblical sense of intent to deceive.

England:

Amongst the critics of Princeton Inerrancy theory was Peter Taylor Forsyth (1842-1921). The main question for Forsyth was not one of integrity of the Bible but of its efficacy for grace, its sufficiency for salvation - to stake the gospel upon the absolute accuracy of the traditional view of the Bible, its inerrancy, or its authorship by apostles, is just to commit, in a protestant form, the Roman error of staking the sacrament on the correctitude of its ritual or the ordination of its priest, (Evangelical Churches and Higher Criticism, Contemporary Review 88 (1905): p.594), in Anderson, Gospel, p.46). He did not believe in verbal inspiration - while we can no longer believe in the infallibility of the Bible - we must believe in its finality, (FORSYTH, P. T. (1948) The Person and Place of Jesus Christ, London, Independent Press, p.155). He welcomed Higher Criticism saying - the Gospel not only tolerates, it demands science and criticism (FORSYTH, P. T. (1966) Positive Preaching and the Modern Mind, Grand Rapids, Michigan, William B. Eerdmans, p. 169.). The church must begin taking the Bible as a whole, not atomistically using its texts and sections. The Christian faith began with the movement of God to humankind, not with a movement of people to God. The moral authority of the cross demanded action, obedience and sacrifice.
CHAPTER 6

SOME FURTHER ASPECTS OF INERRANCY

In the previous chapters we saw why many theologians argue that the notion of the Inerrancy of Scripture was not properly developed until the 19th century by the Princeton Theologians. Their efforts were based on two main factors: the use of Turretin’s *Institutio Theologiae Electica* as their textbook in systematic theology, and Scottish Common Sense Realism as the philosophical basis for their theology. In this chapter we will consider the topic of Inerrancy as a whole. The adamant insistence on Inerrancy in the biblical texts is threatening to good educational policy in that the evidence for its truthfulness is questionable and those who advocate it tend to discourage equitable debate. Indeed those who are fanatically devoted to Inerrancy will not entertain speakers or writers of any alternate or opposing view and nor will they consider any results of modern science and biblical scholarship which are adverse to their beliefs. Despite the considerable work done in biblical scholarship since the height of the Inerrancy versus Errancy debates of the 1970’s, Inerrancy still attracts many adherents, some amongst the academy. Although not now so much in the public arena it still lies there as a considerable stumbling block to any hope of real church unity.

Rendering the Bible more intellectually acceptable was made more difficult by prominent authors, such as Gleason L. Archer in his 1975 book, *A Survey of Old Testament*, Chicago, Moody Press, making statements about the Old Testament such as - *If this written revelation contains mistakes, then it can hardly fulfill its intended purpose: to convey to man in a reliable way the will of God for his salvation and again if the Bible turns out to be a mixture of truth and error then it becomes a book like any other* (p.22). In the chapter that follows I explore the continuing development of Inerrancy.

A major contributory factor to both sides of the inerrancy/errancy debate strangely has been the impact of liberal criticism which, according to some, reduced the Bible to a collection of religious documents filled with textual difficulties and errors. This hardened the inerrancy view of some, whereas the insights of the critical movement persuaded many Christians to abandon their commitment to the infallibility of the Bible. In order to counter this latter development and defend the traditional Christian view of the inspiration and authority of the Bible against the attacks of liberal critics,
conservative Christians developed what has become known as the Doctrine of Biblical Inerrancy.

From previous comments it can be seen that the doctrine of inerrancy, in whatever definition it is couched, is a fundamental platform for the evangelical persuasion; in fact for some evangelicals it is the test of orthodoxy - PERRY, J. (2001) Dissolving the Inerrancy Debate: How Modern Philosophy Shaped the Evangelical View of Scripture. Quodlibet Journal, 3, No.4, p.1). It is therefore vital for the successful interpretation of this thesis to be thoroughly conversant with this doctrine, its history and development, which have already been covered, and its influence. Those Evangelical writers who are attempting some compromise, such as Scott McGowan, Mark Noll, Peter Enns and Thom Stark, are often useful in revealing some shortcomings of the Inerrancy Doctrine.

Some relevant comments from theologians of both persuasions, i.e. Liberal and Conservative may help to outline the roots of the Inerrancy debate:

Inerrancy has as its basis the notions that –

Because God is perfect and the Bible is God’s word: the Bible, it is claimed, must be perfect:

Because God cannot lie, and because the Bible is ‘God-breathed’, it is concluded that the Bible must be inerrant.

Although the premises are biblical, the conclusions above are unsupportable either in compelling logic or direct biblical support – lying is something different from making a statement that has technical accuracy (JOHNSTON, R. K. (1979) Evangelicals at an Impasse: Biblical Authority in Practice, Atlanta, John Knox; p.38/39).

According to Scott McGowan - Inerrancy must be seen in the context of the Enlightenment and the resulting liberal theology, since it was liberal theology’s rejection of the older orthodoxy that prompted an evangelical response and the development of the inerrantist position. As described elsewhere, the definition of inerrancy can extend from a total and inflexible position to one alleging freedom from error only applying to the original documents, the Autographs. At the heart of the Enlightenment were two key elements, affirmation of human autonomy and an affirmation of the final authority of reason. Both of these militated against an orthodox Christian doctrine of revelation (MCGOWAN, S.B. & MCGOWAN, A.T.B., Apollos branch of Inter-Varsity Press, 2007, The Divine Authenticity of Scripture (American ed.), Nottingham, p.50/51).
It must be noted that inerrancy is not a biblical doctrine but an implication drawn from another biblical doctrine (inspiration)… and (therefore) could not be insisted upon as a test of Christian discipleship; (MCGOWAN, S.B. & MCGOWAN, A.T.B., Apollos branch of Inter-Varsity Press, 2007, p.115).

The Bible is not some final unquestionable authority for decision-making, but as one of the earliest witnesses to the events concerning Jesus … the Bible is a human book in which human beings reflect upon their experiences of God … the resolution of truth-questions raised by the Bible cannot be settled by appeal to the Bible (BARTON, J. (1988) People of the Book, London, SPCK. p.54)

Inerrancy must not be confused with Inspiration because, as Everett Harrison remarks - No view of scripture can indefinitely be sustained if it runs counter to the facts. That the Bible claims inspiration is patent. The problem is to define the nature of that inspiration in the light of the phenomena contained therein (HARRISON, Everett, (1958) Revelation and the Bible, ed. Carl F.H. Henry, Philadelphia; Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., p.239).

T.F. Torrance attacked the dualism of the enlightenment world view and its dependence upon a Newtonian scientific paradigm. He has devoted his life’s work to the relationship between theology and science and his primary thesis is that much modern theological methodology is still based on Kantian dualism (that between phenomena and noumena), having completely ignored the transformation in modern physics. He states This dialogue with pure science can do theology nothing but good for it will help theologians to clarify their fundamental methods in the light of their own peculiar subject matter and to wrestle again with the implacable objectivity of the word of God until they learn to distinguish objective realities more clearly from their own subjective states (TORRANCE, Thomas F, (1965) Theology in Reconstruction, Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, p.20). Torrance notes that the base conception prior to Einstein was of space as the infinite receptacle of all things; this notion had come from the Renaissance through Galileo to Newton who then separated space from what happened in it and put forward the idea of an infinite receptacle, formed by time as well as space. For Newton the dualism of infinite space and eternal time were the attributes of God but, according to Torrance this joining together of God and the world led finally to their separation (Westfall, Richard S, (1973), Science and Religion in Seventeen-Century England, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press p.34).
B.B. Warfield was perhaps the best known of the Princeton Theologians and he put the case in the following terms - *It [the church] has always recognized that this conception of co-authorship implies that the Spirit’s superintendence extends to the choice of the words by the human authors (verbal inspiration), and preserves its product from everything inconsistent with a divine authorship – thus securing, among other things, that entire truthfulness which is everywhere presupposed in and asserted for Scripture by the biblical writers (inerrancy)* (WARFIELD, B.B. (1948) *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible*, Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, p.173).


Continual appeal by evangelical authors to the original documents is not sufficient according to R.K. Johnston - *Thus, to deal with issues involving inspiration is more than to make an apologetic appeal to the character of scripture’s autographs which we no longer possess. It is, instead, to take seriously the issue of theological interpretation. If discussion of inspiration is to prove fruitful in evangelical circles, it must move from dogmatic statement to matters of concrete theological judgment*, (JOHNSTON, R. K. (1979) *Evangelicals at an Impasse: Biblical Authority in Practice*, Atlanta, John Knox; p.46).

J. K. S. Reid’s book, *The Authority of Scripture* (London: Methuen, 1957), is perhaps the clearest illustration of a Neo-orthodox position by a scholar who is also a churchman. He sees, over the years, a recurrent movement from ‘living authority’ to ‘literal authority’ and especially in the “rigid torpor” of biblical inerrancy. He regards the Doctrine of Inerrancy as an entirely new theological position. He agrees that throughout the centuries many held to the position of verbal inspiration and verbal inerrancy but with an allegorism that modern Inerrantists have replaced with an inflexible literalism. He argues that neither Luther nor Calvin was subject to either of these errors as they interpreted the authority of the Bible in a living way. Apparently Calvin’s own inclination was to believe that II Peter was not written by the apostle Peter.
and that he noted with equanimity the dating of some Psalms in the Maccabean era (BARR, J., The Westminster Press, 1978, p.173). I have made this point elsewhere in this thesis whilst denying the fundamentalist claim that the church has always regarded Scripture as inerrant. For Luther, Scripture is not the word, but only witness to the Word, and it is from Him from whom it is conveyed, that it derives its authority. The sovereign action of God is in making Scripture the vehicle and occasion of His Word.

In the introduction to his Book Geisler arrogantly states - After forty years of continual and careful study of the Bible, one can only conclude that those who think they have discovered a mistake in the Bible do not know too much about the Bible - they know too little about it (GEISLER, N. L. (1992) When Critics Ask:. Wheaton, Illinois, Victor Books. p.26). Geisler’s responses will be quoted as representative of Evangelical answers at various points in the thesis, since his book was regarded as a handbook by many evangelicals. Gleason Archer, Harold Lindsell, Kenneth Kitchen, John Whitcomb and John Wenham are among other prominent Fundamentalist authors quoted from in the thesis and although these books were written a while ago they still represent the views of a significant number of conservative evangelicals today. Harold Lindsell, a fierce proponent of Inerrancy, maintained - From the historical perspective it can be said that for two thousand years the Christian Church has agreed that the Bible is completely trustworthy; it is infallible or inerrant (LINDSELL, H., Zondervan Publishing House, 1979, ; p.19). However history told a different story as already discussed in some detail.

Definitions of Conservatives, Liberals and Fundamentalism

We are now in a position to fully appreciate the definitions of Conservatives and Liberals and the differences between them but one author at least tried to see both sides of the dispute –

The Scriptures are human documents written by human beings with all that this implies but at the same time were ‘breathed out’ by God: inerrantists so emphasised God’s action that the authors become mere ciphers, whereas the liberals so emphasised the human side that the Scriptures lose their place of authority in the church. (MCGOWAN, S.B. & MCGOWAN, A.T.B.,Apollos branch of Inter-Varsity Press, 2007, p.121-122).

These examples were distilled largely from the work of Prof. James Barr, Nancey Murphy and Harriet A. Harris - A Liberal may describe the Bible as a record of the
historical development of spiritual experience, attitudes, such as faith and trust, and private moral convictions. A Conservative may describe it as a record of divine action.


Conservatives understand the bible as the inspired word of God, authoritative to the life of believers and containing sufficient and exclusive truth for salvation. They believe the Bible to give a true and accurate account of events as recorded, and passages that have a meaning that is universally true and clearly evident to those who have faith. Evangelical views could be summed up by -

- **Conversionism** - emphasis on ‘New Birth’ as a life-changing religious experience
- **Biblicism** - a reliance on the Bible as ultimate, inerrant religious authority
- **Activism** - a concern for sharing the faith
- **Crucicentrism** - a focus on Christ’s redeeming work on the cross.


From an author who considered Conservative and Liberal Christianity two different and separate religions comes the statement - *Christianity is founded upon the Bible* ........*liberalism on the other hand, is founded on the shifting emotions of sinful men* (MACHEN, J. G. (1923), *Christianity and Liberalism*, Grand Rapids, Eerdmans; p. 79). Regarding the tendency of liberal theology to regard Jesus as simply the first Christian, Machen argues *Jesus was not for Paul merely an example for faith; he was primarily the object of faith. Not the example of Jesus, but the redeeming work of Jesus was the primary thing for Paul* (Machen; 81).

Additional parallel beliefs held by the Fundamentalist section of Conservatism seem to be a rejection of - divorce, homosexuality, sex before marriage, abortion, dancing, cinema, alcohol, scholastic findings and other religions as a means of access to God or salvation. Within the Conservative camp are many factions from Separatist Fundamentalists to moderate Evangelicals, or even Neo-evangelicals. Broadly speaking these sub-sets graduate from severe, puritanical beliefs to a more flexible, more conciliatory viewpoint.
Liberals versus Fundamentalists

The size of the problem was expressed well by Stanley Fish - *The clash between Liberals and Fundamentalists is a clash between two faiths, between two ways of thinking undergirded by incompatible first principles, empirical verification and biblical inerrancy. Given this incompatibility it would not be possible for either party to cherish or take seriously the commitments and conclusions of the other, for to do so would be to abandon the foundation on which it rests* (Fish, Stanley, *Liberalism Does not Exist*, Duke Law Journal (1987) Vol.1987, p.999).

James Perry in his paper on the Inerrancy Debate (*Dissolving the Inerrancy Debate: How Modern Philosophy Shaped the Evangelical View of Scripture*), John Perry, Quodlibet Journal: Volume 3 Number 4, Fall 2001; p.1 ISSN: 1526-6575) stated - *In the late 1970s and early 1980s the controversy among evangelical theologians about biblical inerrancy reached its height. However, the relative silence among these theologians since that time should not suggest the controversy was ever resolved. The controversy quickly became an impasse and the impasse quickly became unspoken. As a result, evangelical theologians have, for the past twenty years, held widely divergent views of Scripture’s authority with no apparent hope of coming to a common understanding.*

Interestingly, the old revivalist distinction between belonging to a church and being saved through hearing the gospel, resulted in many churchgoers being denounced as ‘nominal Christians’ and from that ‘true Christians’ were only those who adhered to conservative evangelical doctrine. For me all fundamentalists are evangelicals but they take evangelical views to a stricter level and add to them militancy, hostility to modern scholarship and hostility to those who sympathise with it (such as Billy Graham), and a separatist tendency based on total exclusivity. The inclination to take evangelical positions to extreme levels may manifest itself in almost puritanical objections to dancing and going to the cinema and such like. A main objection to including Fundamentalist teaching in our public education system is its known objection to allowing, or even considering, other viewpoints and beliefs.

Contributors to Norman Geisler’s book, *Inerrancy*, are also confirmed Inerrantists, as is shown in the following direct quotations -

J. Barton Payne – the late Professor of Old Testament, Covenant Theological Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri from 1962 to 1978, wrote -
Higher Criticism ..... becomes negative criticism, often described as “the historical-critical method,” when it assumes the right to pass rationalistic judgment on scripture’s own claims about its composition and historicity. Such a method necessarily presupposes that the Bible’s claims are not inerrant. It thus disqualifies itself as truly scientific criticism since it refuses to view the object being analysed according to its proper (divine) character. (p.84).

Greg L. Bahnsen – until 1980 Assistant Prof. of Apologetics, Reformed Theological Seminary, Jackson, Mississippi -

While the Bible teaches its own inerrancy, the inscripturation and copying of God’s word require us to identify the specific and proper object of inerrancy as the text of the original autographa. The evangelical doctrine pertains to the autographic text, not the autographic codex, and maintains that present copies and translations are inerrant to the extent that they accurately reflect the biblical originals. We can be assured that we possess the word of God in our present bibles because of God’s providence; he does not allow his aims in revealing himself to be frustrated. Indeed, the results of textual criticism confirm that we possess a biblical text that is substantially identical with the autographa. The nature of God (who is truth himself) and the nature of the biblical books (as the very words of God) require that we view the original manuscripts, produced under the superintendence of the Holy Spirit of truth as holy, true and without error (p.189). Finally, contrary to recent criticisms, the doctrine of original inerrancy (or inspiration) is not unprovable, is not undermined by the use of amanuenses by the biblical writers, and is not contravened by the New Testament use of the Septuagint as “Scripture”. (p.150).

Gordon R. Lewis – Prof. of Systemic Theology, Conservative Baptist Theological Seminary, Denver, Colorado -

Jesus Christ was truly divine and truly human without sin. The human writers .... could receive changeless truths by revelation. Providentially prepared by God in their unique personalities they also had characteristics common to all other human beings. They were supernaturally overshadowed by the Holy Spirit. What stands written, therefore, in human language is not merely human but also divine. The Bible’s affirmations conform to the mind of God and to the reality God created. They are objectively true for all people of all times and cultures, whether received or not. The reason the Bible can function effectively to bring people to Christ is that its teachings are inerrant. (p.228).
The spirit in the testimonium, or internal testimony, works to confirm the reliability of scripture, giving us certainty that the Bible is the Word of God. (p.336). (GEISLER, N. L., Zondervan, 1980).

The Liberalists on the other hand maintain that the Bible was written by human authors who were subject to human errors and who wrote of their religious experiences using the wide literary license and the limited knowledge of their day. As the debate progressed, there was a steadily increasing concern on the Conservative side that Scripture be considered accurate in all matters, including the precise recording of detailed historical events and matters of science. For some conservatives this eventually became a test of orthodoxy; that theologians such as Martin Luther and John Calvin did not share this view reveals the force of modernity's influence. (PERRY, J. (2001) Dissolving the Inerrancy Debate: How Modern Philosophy Shaped the Evangelical View of Scripture. Quodlibet Journal, 3; No.4, p.2).

Many evangelical writers have had to admit that there are serious challenges to the Doctrine of Inerrancy; for example - Peter Enns lists the following issues which, he says, have not been handled well in evangelical theology –

Why does the Bible in places look a lot like the literature of Israel’s ancient neighbours? Is the Old Testament really unique? Does it not just reflect the ancient world in which it was produced?

If the Bible is the word of God, why does it fit so nicely in the ancient world?
Why do different parts of the Old Testament say different things about the same thing?
Why do the New Testament authors handle the Old Testament in such odd ways and often out of context?

In answer to this type of criticism, Peter Enns himself says –
The Bible is written in human language, and in the common tongue at that, (and) is an example of God “incarnating” himself. He adopts current cultural conventions and uses them for his purpose (ibid;19).

**Definitions of Inerrancy**

Defining biblical inerrancy is not easy, because it comes in a variety of forms, but all
Inerrantists believe in the total freedom from error of the original documents, *the Autographs*. David Dockery, a Southern Baptist conservative scholar, has identified nine different types of inerrancy, which range from mechanical dictation to functional inerrancy. The general term Inerrancy must, for clarity and precision, be divided at least into Infallibility, Inerrancy and Literalism according to Samuele Bacchiocchi, Ph. D. Retired Professor of Theology, Andrews University. It must be noted however that Inerrancy, no matter what definition best describes the particular person’s standpoint, is more a mindset or a general mentality, as even those who pretend to flexibility in their inerrancy outlook still have inerrancy as their basic underlying approach; all Inerrantists believe the original documents from the hands of the biblical writers to be inerrant. The following are the definitions understood in this thesis.

**Inerrancy:**
The Doctrine of Biblical Inerrancy dictates that the Bible, being inspired by God, is without error in everything that it affirms – historically, scientifically and theologically. As we will see this very inclusive view is not shared by all Evangelicals.

**Infallibility:**
Those who hold to this term maintain that the Bible is free of error only when it speaks of matters relating to faith and practice. However some writers have used this term synonymously with Inerrancy and some have even included Inspiration as equal to Inerrancy. The use of the term Inerrancy is further complicated by Robert Johnston’s classification of:

- Detailed Inerrancy - detailed inerrancy demands that the original copies of the Bible be considered without error, factual or otherwise.
- Partial infallibility – believe that the author’s intended message is in error at points, but their witness to the gospel is trustworthy and authoritative.
- Irenic inerrancy – agree that the Bible is without error but believe scripture itself must determine according to its intent the scope of that inerrancy.
- Complete infallibility – reject inerrancy as a helpful term for describing the total trustworthiness of the biblical writers’ witness, substituting the word “infallible” in its place.

Herman Bavinck nicely describes Infallibility thus –

*Scriptures are thus infallible, not in the sense of inerrant autographa, but that they will infallibly achieve God’s purpose in giving them. Where there occurs the dilemma of apparent contradiction the dogmatician must let the truths stand side by side rather than trying to force them into some artificial agreement. Convictions about Scripture are stronger or weaker depending upon our spiritual condition at any given time.*


Some scholars have referred to Infallibility as being characteristic of early church notables, for example Donald Bloesch maintains that references to the Scriptures as ‘inerrabilis’ are to be found in Augustine, Aquinas and Dun Scotus. The adjective ‘infallibilis’ was applied to Scripture by John Wycliffe and Jean de Gerson and as being ‘infallible’ by Luther and Calvin. (Bloesch, D, (1994), *Holy Scripture: Revelation, Inspiration and Interpretation*, Downers Grove: IVP p. 33-34). Bloesch later seems to limit the infallibility to the will and purpose of God as supremely manifested in Christ.

McGowan speaks of three groups of Inerrantists –

1. **Chicago Inerrantists who affirm the Chicago Statement** (see page 139),
2. **Textus Receptus Inerrantists** who offer detailed textual argument in favour of the view that the Autographa are accurately represented by, and only by, the so-called *Textus Receptus* (those Greek documents used for the Authorised Version of the Bible, the King James Bible).
3. **Fundamentalist Inerrantists** who reject all textual criticism, are largely anti-academic, sometimes tend towards dictation theories and usually argue that the King James Version of the Bible is the only legitimate version.

Regarding the latter, no two of the approximately 5000 manuscripts of the New Testament which we have are identical and scholars are forced to compare texts. (McGowan, S.B. & McGowan, A.T.B., Apollos branch of Inter-Varsity Press, 2007, ; p.104).

Thom Stark states that Chicago Inerrantists stipulate that the text of scripture is to be interpreted by grammatico-historical exegesis, taking account of its literary forms and devices, and that scripture is to interpret scripture. He further states that historical-grammatical exegesis is employed only to the extent that it suits fundamentalists. When it works in their favour, it is touted proudly; when it works against them it is quietly swept under the carpet. (Stark, T. (2011) *The Human Faces of God*, Eugene, Oregon, Wipf and Stock Publishers, p.39).
Regarding *scripture interpreting scripture*, the fact that the two texts were often written many years apart and by human authors with very different perspectives and agendas is dismissed by inerrantists because, they maintain, that the texts were really written by the same author, namely God (ibid, 38).

James Orr reduced Infallibility to:

- *The knowledge of the will of God for our salvation in Jesus Christ*
- *Instruction in the way of Holiness*
- *The hope of Eternal Life*


Strong - or verbal or absolute inerrantists believe, as stated by Harold Lindsell, one of its most outspoken advocates, that the Bible does not contain errors of any kind - *The Bible does not contain error of any kind, whether it speaks on history, geography, astronomy, chronology, science, or any area whatsoever* (LINDSELL, H., Zondervan Publishing House, 1979; p.18).

Weak - or limited inerrancy supporters object to making the authority of the Bible conditional upon its inerrancy. They restrict the accuracy of the Bible only to matters of salvation and ethics. They believe that divine inspiration did not prevent Bible writers from making "errors" of an historical or scientific nature, since these do not affect our salvation. For them the Bible is not inerrant in all that it says, but it is infallible in all that it teaches regarding faith and practice.

**Verbal Inerrancy and Literalism:**

These are the strongest views of the Ultra-Conservatives maintaining that the Bible in every word and statement is absolutely without error of any kind as it stands now. The Divine Inspiration which attended the sacred writers extended to the language of their expression as well as their thoughts themselves.

**Exclusivity, Fundamentalism and Inerrancy**

A close relative to Indoctrination is Exclusivism. In the latter case the exponent propounds his or her case to the total exclusion of any other view or belief. Such is often the case in Conservative Evangelicalism and certainly in the case of Fundamentalism. An excellent illustration of the exclusivism of fundamentalism is a
book entitled Inerrancy edited by Norman L. Geisler. As the short extracts quoted below show, almost every single author chosen to contribute speaks in exclusive favour of inerrancy. This is not a book about Inerrancy, as the title might suggest, but rather propaganda in favour of it, it being Geisler’s own single and adamant view. As Professor Barr has pointed out, ‘Fundamentalists will not engage with any person who does not share their views and is thus not, in their opinion, a proper Christian’.

However, even the author of what may have been regarded as an Evangelical ‘Bible’ at the end of the 1970’s, i.e. Harold Lindell, admitted – *More and more organisations and individuals historically committed to an infallible Scripture have been embracing and propagating the view that the Bible has errors in it.* He says later on the same page that *Belief in an infallible Scripture is not necessary to salvation* (LINDSELL, H., Zondervan Publishing House, 1979, ; p.20).

The positions held by the authors are those quoted in Geisler’s book at the time of writing and seem to be from those who presented speeches at the Chicago Meeting leading to the production of the Chicago Statement (see page 139).

1. John W. Wenham – Ordained minister, ex-Vice Principal and Warden of colleges and Vicar of St. Nicholas Church, Durham -

   *Jesus consistently treats the historical narratives (of the OT) as straight forward records of fact, and the force of his teaching often depends on their literal truth. He treats the very words of scripture, even “the smallest letter” and “the least stroke of a pen”, as inspired. This attestation of detailed verbal truth, coupled with historical and doctrinal truth, necessitates a doctrine of inerrancy in historical as well as doctrinal matters. To him, what scripture said, God said.* (GEISLER, N. L., Zondervan, 1980, ; p.2).

2. Edwin A. Blum - Associate Prof. of Historical Theology, Dallas Theological Seminary, Texas -

   *The Old Testament was for them (the NT writers) the authority in religious matters because God had spoken it by his spirit through human writers. They also reveal that their own writings are the commands of the Lord and equal in authority to the Old Testament revelation.* (p.38).

3. Gleason Archer – Prof. of Old Testament, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Deerfield, in his article in Geisler’s book, Inerrancy, stated that Jesus believed the following to be true and historical –

   - *The historicity of Jonah’s adventure with the great fish (Matt. 12:40)*
• The destruction of almost all mankind by a flood in the days of Noah ((Matt.24:38-39))
• The miraculous feeding of the Israelite host during the Exodus wanderings (John 6:49)
• The three and a half years of Elijah’s famine (Luke 4:25)

Gleason further stated that it is safe to say that in no recorded utterance of Jesus and in no written or spoken statement of his apostles is there any suggestion of scientific or historical inaccuracy in any Old Testament record. (GEISLER, N. L., Zondervan, 1980; p.58-59) Against the unlikelihood of the Incarnation he concludes that any event or fact related in Scripture – whether it pertains to doctrine, science, or history – is to be accepted by the Christian as totally reliable and trustworthy, no matter what modern scientists or philosophers may think of it. (GEISLER, N. L., Zondervan, 1980; p.58-59). Here it is once again presumed that the reader is an indoctrinated evangelical and believes implicitly in God becoming Man through a virgin birth after which improbability anything ought to be accepted and believed. As I have argued elsewhere the “virgin” birth is erroneous anyway because of a mistranslation from the Hebrew Bible to the Septuagint, and so Gleason’s argument falls down completely.

Needless to say there were many adverse reactions to these presentations, even in Geisler’s own book; for example – William LaSor in Theology, News and Notes and Dewey Beegle in Scripture, Tradition and Infallibility raise some valid discrepancies in the numbers in Chronicles and Samuel/Kings, the differences in the resurrection narratives, the dating of the Exodus, Peter’s denial of Christ and for Beegle, the length of the reign of King Pekah of Israel, the age of Terah when Abraham left Haran, the burial place of Jacob, the length of Israel’s sojourn in Egypt and how many times the cock crowed after Peter’s denial of Christ (Geisler, 56).

Paul Seely has intuitively pointed out that the biblical texts themselves do not tolerate mistaken information. Deut. 18:22 states if a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord but the thing does not take place or prove true, it is a word that the Lord has not spoken. Seely goes on to elaborate - the more biblical question is this: If the scientific and historical facts, which can be checked, prove to be false, why would anyone suppose they are divine revelations? Scripture itself teaches us to check alleged divine revelations of empirical facts by means of empirical data; and if they prove empirically to be false, they should not be accepted as divine revelations (Deut. 18:22; 1 Thess. 5:21). When the science-history in Genesis 1, as an example, is checked by empirical
data, it is proven by that data to be false: e.g., earth history does not begin with a primeval ocean. If we obey Deut. 18:22 and 1 Thess. 5:21, then we must conclude that the science-history in that chapter is not a divine revelation. (Seely, Paul H. Perspectives on Science & Christian Faith, Mar2011, Vol. 63 Issue 1, p71-72).

Philippians 2:7-8 clearly states that Jesus adopted human form – But emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness, and further - Hebrews 2:17 tells of Jesus - made like his brothers in every way. Because of these statements some have suggested that Jesus was obliged to use the language and beliefs of his day so that he could fit in without drawing undue attention to himself by dint of advanced scientific or other future knowledge.

Conclusion

The most important and fundamental barrier that separates Liberals and Evangelicals and, at present, totally prevents any chance of meaningful ecumenical reconciliation, is this doctrine of Inerrancy. Many Evangelicals insist that the Holy Scriptures are nothing more or less than the actual Word of God which is free of all error and conveyed through writers who were inspired by the Holy Spirit to write nothing but the undeniable truth. While ever these two opposing views are entrenched, namely Fundamentalism and Liberalism, there will continue to be mistrust and enmity between those who hold them, all of whom strongly assert their love of scripture and the Bible and the intention to present it correctly for the increasing good of the people. Discussions of the topic of Inerrancy between proponents of opposite views quickly turn polemical and anger rises resulting in an irate and unsatisfactory parting. To repeat John Perry’s apt summary - Given that one side in this debate doubts the other’s orthodoxy, and the other side in the debate doubt’s the first’s faithfulness to scholarship, the impasse seems permanent (PERRY, J. (2001), Dissolving the Inerrancy Debate: How Modern Philosophy Shaped the Evangelical View of Scripture Quodlibet Journal, 3; No.4, p.2).

The views quoted and expressed in this chapter clearly show the depth and feelings of the persuasions held by the two main camps of Evangelicalism and Liberalism. Scott McGowan summed up the two sides succinctly when he said that Evangelicals regarded the biblical authors as men speaking from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit, whereas the Liberals regarded them as men reflecting on their religious experience (MCGOWAN, S.B. & MCGOWAN, A.T.B., Apollos branch of Inter-Varsity Press, 2007, , p.208).
CHAPTER 7

MODERN FUNDAMENTALISM

In earlier chapters the developed Doctrine of Inerrancy was seen to be rooted in the work of Francis Turretin which was taken up by the Princeton Theologians in the 19th century. It was not until then that the Bible was expressly asserted to teach reliably about matters of science and history in addition to religious matters. Before the scientific revolution of the Enlightenment, the church’s pronouncements on everything, including scientific things, was taken as comfortable fact with no need to question anything. However once scientific findings began to have, not only credence in themselves, but disagreement with some ecclesiastical views, public education, awareness and understanding increased to the point where “toil and trouble” were bound to occur. Any questioning of the church’s views resulted in a hardening of their attitude and something of the characteristics of an ambit claim in that pronouncements and opinions were embellished. Many on the Conservative side, eschewing biblical scholarship, slid into Fundamentalism, whereas the Liberals became less spiritual and more critical, both textually and historically: revelation battled with reason. We will now trace the development of these latter-day characteristics.

The Short History of the Establishment of Modern Fundamentalism

Characteristics:
As already alluded to the term Fundamentalism arose from pamphlets called *The Fundamentals* (1910-1915) emphasizing Calvinist orthodoxy along with scriptural inerrancy, substitutionary atonement, the second coming and the historicity of miracles, including the virgin birth of Christ. *These twelve small books were sent free of charge to every theology student and Christian worker in the USA* (LANE, T. (1992) *The Lion Book of Christian Thought*, Oxford, Lion Publishing; p.194). At first the term Fundamentalism did not have the pejorative meaning it has now and the booklets, the cost of which was born by two Christian laymen, Milton and Lyman Stewart, kept potentially divisive issues to a minimum. About a third of the articles dealt with Scripture, another third concerned traditional doctrines and the rest comprised attacks on Darwinism, refutations of particular cults, writings on missions and personal
testimonies. **Fully fledged fundamentalism developed after World War I and was markedly more militant, signaling its divergence from pre-war evangelicalism.**


As time went on fundamentalism began to develop certain characteristics that distinguished it from the main stream of the evangelical movement:

- **Pre-millennial eschatology - strengthened by the use of the Scofield Reference Bible.**
- **An increasingly separatist mentality - a gradual withdrawal from mainstream schools and theological colleges when it became clear that theological liberalism had affected the teaching in these mainstream schools.**
- **The adoption of certain cultural distinctive - e.g. no dancing, drinking, smoking or cinema.**
- **The complete rejection of any form of biblical or textual criticism - this was an over-reaction to the higher-critical movement which stemmed mostly from German liberal theology. To solve the problem of which text of Scripture to use the fundamentalists argued that the King James Version (KJV) was the only one to be used and rejected any questioning of the accuracy of this text. To support this position two arguments were put forward -**
  - 1. God acted supernaturally in and through the 1611 translators so as to keep them from all error
  - 2. It was not the KJV itself that was providentially preserved in an inerrant condition but rather the Hebrew and Greek manuscripts that provided the basis for this translation: these manuscripts came to be called The Textus Receptus.
- **A campaign against biological evolution - this led to the infamous trial of John T. Scopes in 1925.**


**Philosophical Views Involved in the Emergence of Non-revelatory Theology**

The early church reached back to the Greek philosophers for a basis on which to base thoughts, the mind and spirit. Plato - (classical realism) - believed there was a real world independent of humanity. Reality was composed of unchanging ideas or ideals
that Plato called “forms”. Original realities, like beauty, existed in heaven; things in earth were only shadowy reflections of them. Men could, from memory and deduction, know the absolute ideas. Aristotle was Plato’s greatest pupil and developed Plato’s axioms into a system of logic the central feature of which was syllogism - two premises already known from which a new and previously unknown proposition could be deduced as a conclusion. These writings were gathered together in a collection known as the Organon (tool). He also recognized the problem of change but thought there was a pattern of change. For him reality was concrete things on earth called “substances”. “Form” was the purpose or objective the entity served in the scheme of reality, Matter was the stuff of which it was made. Substances were detected by our 5 natural senses. Platonism, or a modified form, Neo-platonism, was the dominant philosophy in the early church but only if it did not contradict the Christian Gospel. Aristotelians and Epicureans were at first regarded as atheists because they denied Providence and the Immortality of the Soul.

The Impact of Science and Philosophy

A Polish Churchman, Nicholas Copernicus (1473-1543) postulated in 1530 (published in 1543) that the earth was but one of the planets that revolved around the sun and that it turned on its own axis to form night and day. Theologians felt that this new theory would destroy the authority of the Bible (Josh.10:12-13) and the Scientists stuck to Aristotle’s acceptance of the old Ptolemaic teaching(Paraphrasing of extracts from William Dampier, (1966), A History of Science, Cambridge University Press, pp109-113, and Alan Richardson (1961), The Bible in the Age of Science, Westminster Press, pp.9-10). In the Post-Reformation period Scholastic theologians were developing their doctrine of Scripture away from the Reformation emphasis on the Holy Spirit’s witness to Christ and towards rational argument to prove Scripture’s inspiration; inspiration was separated from revelation. When the Bible was thought of as a book the technical accuracy of the text became important and its efficacy no longer depended on the work of the Spirit, but in the conception of the Bible as verbally inspired and inerrant. Accommodation was forgotten and the Bible became a book of delivered truths, and theology the systematic ordering of these truths which were delivered by biblical propositional statements.

Rene Descartes (1596-1650) rejected everything in which one could imagine the least doubt - one must have absolute certainty equal to arithmetical or geometrical demonstration (fields in which Descartes made significant contributions). In Le Monde
he substituted mathematical laws for Aristotle’s apparatus of Substantial Forms and Natural Kinds, but although ready in 1632 he withheld the book until 1637 on account of the trouble encountered by Galileo and Copernicus. The authority of the author was replaced with the modern notion of indubitable beliefs available to each individual. He rejected all appeals to authority; the only thing not to be doubted was the thinking self – ‘I think therefore I am’ (Rogers, J.B. & McKim, D.K., Harper & Rowe, 1979, p.167). Thoughts were the real entities, rather than external objects, with space the fundamental reality and motion the source of all change. Cartesianism provided an alternative to Aristotelianism; since the only certain thing was thought there was no room for philosophy of experience.

His proof of God’s existence starts from the idea of God which he finds in himself; an idea of supreme perfection: whatever caused the idea must at least have all the perfections that are represented in it, i.e. God (axiom - ‘a cause is at least as real as the effect’ (source not known). Descartes’ version of the Ontological argument is that Existence, being perfection, cannot be separated from the concept of a Supremely Perfect Being. The world is made up of two things - res cogitans, mind or consciousness, and res extensa, external matter, the former being unextended and indivisible and the latter the opposite. How an incorporeal mind can lodge and interact with a mechanical extended body is a mystery which has come to be known as ‘Cartesian Dualism’.

Changes in Science and Philosophy in 17th Century England:

Although Francis Bacon (1561-1626) had provided a new inductive approach to science in 1620 nothing stirred until after the Restoration in 1660. England had been in a chaotic state both religiously and politically and then into a civil war and a commonwealth change of lifestyle so it is not surprising that people did not settle down to theological matters until the dust had settled after Charles II was restored to the throne. Syllogistic Aristotelianism was the current scholasticism when The English Response to the New Science got going. This response was not as strongly repressive as that on the continent as the English were more lenient and freer in outlook. It must be remembered that theology was still a prominent part of the university courses and the new professional scientists were schooled in religion and became known as the virtuosi. These men followed Bacon’s lead in making science and religion separate spheres with distinct tasks. They accepted the Bible in faith (Augustinian approach) whilst at the same time recognizing the accommodated character of its human
language and thought. When the shift occurred to Aristotelian-Thomist methodology things changed and scientists and theologians tried to prove the validity of the Bible by evidence from science; the following are some examples -.

John Wilkins (1614-1672), later Bishop of Chester, still strove to keep science and theology separate and commented - While it is supreme and unquestioned as a spiritual authority, the Bible makes no pretense of delivering scientific truths. If it speaks of the sun and the moon rising, it does not intend to comment on astronomy, for the Bible is merely accommodating its language to the vulgar conceptions of its time. He did recognize that Astronomy was a positive intellectual aid to religion and so he was a transitional figure - a deeper study of astronomy only reveals the Creator’s excellence the better, (WILKINS, John, (1640) A Discourse concerning a new Planet, London, p.48).

Robert Boyle (1627-1692) was a Chemist and Physicist specializing in a corpuscular or atomistic view of matter. He, along with many other scientists, believed that their studies in natural science confirmed and strengthened belief in the providential hand of God active in creation - all truth is one!

The Puritans were, on the whole, receptive to the New Science as most of its proponents insisted that revelations in nature could not contradict the written word, all knowledge was to be limited by religion, and these notions seemed to fit well with their Augustinian “faith seeking understanding”. In 1660 the Royal Society was formed at Gresham College, a hotbed of Puritanism, with 12 members who believed their work in natural sciences was not only a supportive religious experience but also ‘overthrew atheism, sadducism, superstition, enthusiasm and the humor of disputing’. However, those insisting that natural phenomena followed natural laws that could be discovered by the human mind came into conflict with the doctrine of Providence which taught that God’s personal control over everything continued into his sustenance of the created order. ‘Natural Religion’, which was supposed to be a defender of the faith, an aid to religion, the curber of excesses of religious zeal in some sects and the provider of unanswerable proofs, began to displace the biblical faith. As each scientist, from his own discipline, sought to solidify the rational basis for the belief in God apart from the Bible, the Bible was seen less as a record of God’s relationship to people than as a further and higher revelation of his power; the nature of God was adjusted to fit a scientific universe as science viewed it.
The drift away from faith and towards reason as the locus of certain authority was seen in the works of the Cambridge Platonists and the Latitudinarians. Against the Anglicans they stressed that morality was more important than church polity and against the Puritans they maintained that reason must have priority over faith. They were basically Puritan and Platonic but sought unity between all parties on the real essentials of religion, never mind the minor details - *the reason of men is the candle of the Lord*. They were instrumental in placing reason in the foreground as the unquestioned authority for theological decision making.

Isaac Newton (1642-1727) built on the work of Copernicus, Kepler and Galileo; he synthesized their work in the law of universal gravitation (mutual gravitation in all bodies) - *Principia* 1687. Despite his desire to harmonize science and religion, everything was put on an experimental, mechanical, mathematical basis and God’s personality was lost, his being made to fit into scientific theory of the universe. A God deduced from nature would become no more than a projection of nature.

John Locke (1632-1704) pursued the Reasonableness of Christianity as Delivered in the Scriptures and became the foremost defender of free inquiry and toleration in the later 17th century. He pleaded for religious liberty for all except atheists and Roman Catholics. His ideal was a national church with an all-embracing creed. The existence of God and the secure basis of Christianity can be discovered by reason and reasonableness. *Reason became the judge of Revelation*, he wrote, *since revelation cannot be admitted against the clear evidence of reason. God has given us sense, perception and reason which are enough means to discover and know him; reason is natural revelation*. He wanted to prune the faith of all that was not reasonable (LOCKE, J. (1974) *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, London, J.M. Dent & Sons, IV 19.4).

He was influenced by Descartes and distinguished three kinds of knowledge –

1. Empirical Science - founded on ideas from sensory experience - ideas originated in sense perception,
2. Descartes’ indubitable knowledge - based in ideas constructed by means of inductive reasoning, and
3. Revelatory knowledge - based on God’s extraordinary way of communication.

In *The Reasonableness of Christianity* published in 1695 he considered the
Messiahship of Jesus essential, but the Trinity and Predestination unfounded. Miracles served as outward signs to convince the holy men of old that God was indeed the author of their purported revelations, as does the fulfillment of biblical prophecies.

Deism, a term made up of an amalgamation of *deus* and theism, embraced the belief in the existence of a supreme being who is regarded as the ultimate source of reality and the ground of value but as not intervening in natural and historical processes by way of particular providences, revelations and salvific acts. Only those tenets of traditional theology that can be established by reason independently of revelation ought to be accepted. The supreme reality was reason; revelation only gave supplementary information. No deference was given to any authority past or present and nothing contrary to reason could be part of Christian doctrine. Understanding of the world and the mind through Newton and Locke freed people from being at the mercy of divine providence and natural religion seemed all-sufficient. The Bible was now valid only insofar as its form could be verified by the researches of human reason and adjustments to Christian beliefs were made to accord with the conclusions of science and philosophy. They applied the principles of the Enlightenment in a critical way in order to establish what is and what is not reasonable to believe about God. Because of this they expressed doubts about the Trinity, immortality, revelations, and miracles and in the authority of the Bible and the Priesthood.

In this age of ability to describe the working of the world with mechanical precision the Bible began to be judged in the same light. Scripture’s message had to accord with Lockean reason and its language with Newtonian notions of perfection because if it failed to measure up, increasing numbers of theologians and church people felt drawn to the rational religion of Deism. In the latter part of the century: scripture now began to be discussed in terms of errancy and inerrancy.

If the 17th century had been called ‘The Age of Rationalism’ then the 18th was about to be titled ‘The Age of Enlightenment’ and be dominated by the British Philosophers Locke, Berkeley, Hume and Reid. Locke had proposed to found certain knowledge on sense experience and inductive reasoning alone. George Berkeley (1685-1753), an Irish Bishop, claimed that God, not matter, was the source of the sense perception we receive and that only minds and ideas really existed. David Hume (1711-1776) opined that all perceptions of the human mind are either impressions of experience or ideas. Causality is not a concept of logic but a result of habit and association impressed on
our imagination. The human soul is a sum of perceptions connected by association. Hence there is no such science as metaphysics, and belief in the existence of God cannot be proved by reason. By reducing all cognition to single perceptions and ruling out any purely intellectual faculty for recording and sifting them Hume taught pure skepticism. The only thing we know by sense experience is that we have sensations; habit and custom are the links between events in our minds and miracles were improbable. Hume criticized the design arguments for the existence of God which had been used foundationally by Locke and others. He maintained that the hypothesis of an intelligent designer for the complex machine of the universe was only one possible explanation and depends on our construing the universe as a mechanism rather than say an organism which could have been produced by propagation or even a fortuitous arrangement of atoms as we might say today. No human testimony can have such force as to prove a miracle and make it a just foundation for any system or religion (as per Locke). Thus Hume undermined both sides of Locke’s theological and apologetic structure and the arguments for the existence of God and the attestation of Scripture by the occurrence of miracles (MURPHY, N. (1996) Beyond Liberalism and Fundamentalism, Valley Forge, Trinity Press International; p.21).

English Presbyterians followed the drift toward Deism and many on into Unitarianism. In Scotland the Enlightenment produced a different result. Thomas Reid (1710-1796) developed Common-sense Realism. He opposed both Hume’s skepticism and Berkeley’s idealism by assuming an Aristotelian realism which based all knowledge on sense experience and committed to Francis Bacon’s method of “chaste induction”. He wanted to give philosophical validation to the practice of inductive science, the reality of the received Christian tradition and the common sense beliefs of ordinary people. His philosophy became known as Scottish Common Sense Philosophy, which greatly influenced the Princeton Theologians; it was the first real school of British Philosophy after the Cambridge Platonists and the only competent attempt to refute Hume as a whole. His work was disseminated and developed by Dugald Stewart (1753-1828) as professor of moral philosophy at Edinburgh, whose lectures and writings had great influence in Scotland, America and on the continent. Reid and Stewart asserted that the mind perceives external objects not just ideas or images of the objects. The act of perceiving was accompanied by an intuitive belief that the object really existed which validated its objective existence and this he likened to religious faith.

Nancey Murphy’s thesis is that both protestant liberal and conservative thought were
defined by certain developments in philosophy. It is not that liberalism supersedes fundamentalism, but rather that they are parallel developments arising out of responses to the philosophies of René Descartes, John Locke, and David Hume. She traces liberalism to those who responded to Hume in the vein of Immanuel Kant and Friedrich Schleiermacher, and conservatism to those who responded to Hume in the vein of Thomas Reid and the Old Princeton Theology (especially Charles and A. A. Hodge and B. B. Warfield (MURPHY, N. (1996) Beyond Liberalism and Fundamentalism, Valley Forge, Trinity Press International, p.5).

Earlier the Doctrine of Inerrancy was seen to be rooted in the work of Francis Turretin which was taken up by the Princeton Theologians in the 19th century. It was not until then that the Bible was expressly asserted to teach about matters of science and history.

**The Role of Philosophy**

The death of Rene Descartes can be used to date the beginning of modern philosophy at 1650. Similarly Friedrich Schleiermacher’s publication of On Religion: Speeches to Its Cultural Despisers in 1799 may have been the beginning of modern Theology and Galileo’s Dialogue Concerning the Two Chief World Systems in 1632 for modern Science. The term Postmodern is highly contested in many disciplines but in Anglo-American Philosophy 1950 makes a convenient date for its take over from the modern period of 1650 to 1950.

Nancey Murphy opined that Philosophy is largely responsible for the intellectual bifurcation of Protestant Christian thought, i.e. liberals and conservatives ((MURPHY, N. (1996) Beyond Liberalism and Fundamentalism, Valley Forge, Trinity Press International p.5/6). She says that this bifurcation arose from the differing philosophical roads taken by the two theologies after the opinions of David Hume, once Descartes had set the ball rolling. Murphy cites philosophical viewpoints as being the origin of the division in theology and language between Fundamentalists and Liberals as this diagram shows:

Rene Descartes (1596-1650) -> John Locke (1632-1704) -> David Hume (1711-1776)

1. Evangelicalism -> Thomas Reid (1710-1796) -> Princeton Theology (1812 ->)

2. Liberalism -> Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) -> Schleiermacher (1768-1834)
The adoption by Fundamentalists of Scripture as their foundation basis, and the basis of Experience by the Liberals was one cause of the split.

Locke's approach, which others have followed, was to refer to biblical miracles as a sign of the Bible's reliability. Besides Locke, another standard argument has been to point to the prophecies in Scripture and to argue that their fulfillment shows that the knowledge is supernatural and therefore from God. Later philosophers, such as Hume and Kant, called the Bible's foundational status into question by criticizing arguments for God's existence and by claiming that miracles are themselves so unlikely that no amount of evidence is sufficient to convince a reasonable person that one has occurred. According to Murphy, this argument led ultimately to Protestant liberalism; the acceptance of Locke via Reid led to conservatism.

Philosophy is largely responsible for the intellectual bifurcation of Protestant Christian thought, i.e. liberals and conservatives, she said -

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Philosophical Views</th>
<th>Conservatives</th>
<th>Liberals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Special categories of beliefs</td>
<td>Scripture</td>
<td>Experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theory of knowledge</td>
<td>Outside-in</td>
<td>Inside-out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theories of language</td>
<td>Propositional or truth-claims, cognitive.</td>
<td>Expressive /inner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theology and Science</td>
<td>Capable of over-lap and conflict</td>
<td>Non-interacting of reality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How does God act?</td>
<td>Interventionism - God is able and willing to violate or suspend the laws of nature.</td>
<td>Immanentism - acts in and through natural. processes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Evangelicals tend to be more moderate than Fundamentalists and include Mennonites and Pentecostals who hold a middle position between fundamentalism and liberalism.


Holding a middle ground presumes that we know exactly what Fundamentalism and Liberalism believe; Nancy Murphy provides a reminder in the following chart -

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Fundamentalism</strong></th>
<th><strong>Liberalism</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transcendence</td>
<td>Immanence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revelation as an Intrusion</td>
<td>Revelation as a correlation to discovery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bible as an Authority</td>
<td>Bible as a document of religious experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foundation is Scripture</td>
<td>Foundation is Experience</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This forced option has been one cause of the split between liberals and conservatives. Scripture is the result of acts of God

Scriptures are writings that express insights regarding God and human life that arise from Religious experience.

Emphasis on ability to engender religious experience not facts.


Fundamentalism is a theory about how knowledge claims to be justified - the chain of basing justification on other beliefs must stop somewhere and must not be circular or an infinite regress. For Locke it was miracles and for Schleiermacher it was God Consciousness.

There is a dichotomy between Scripture and Experience as sources for Theology. Experiential Foundationalism means basing one’s epistemology on experience. Fundamentalists are content to accept Scripture as that epistemological foundation but Liberals want an experiential foundation for their theology.

Perhaps the single most significant philosophical concept in these developments, with regard to inerrancy, was foundationalism. While Hume's epistemology could be called "inside-out," in which ideas are the foundation of knowledge, Reid's "outside-in" model assumed the world itself was foundational and that human ideas faithfully represented it. According to Murphy, Reid might put it as: *We have simply been constituted by God in such a way that we pass immediately from sensations to beliefs about the objects that cause them.* (Murphy, Nancy, Trinity Press International1996; p.32). It is at this point that these epistemologies begin to correspond to events in the American evangelical debate on inerrancy. Reid's "common sense" epistemology, together with
Francis Bacon’s inductive-empirical method, were formative in the so-called Old Princeton Theology espoused by Charles and A. A. Hodge and B. B. Warfield. "Epistemology" is a term coined by Professor Ron Laura of Newcastle University which refers to a ‘system of knowledge’.

The work of Hodges and Warfield was, in many ways, the starting-point of the inerrancy debate among American Christians. (ibid. 32-33). The Princeton theologians were among the first to engage and criticize the Protestant liberalism that developed in America in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Therefore, to stand the test as a valid Cartesian foundation, the evidence for the Bible’s authority had to be something verifiable to all reasonable observers. This also explains why the evidence must be external. It does no good to build a foundation on the Bible simply because the Bible claims it is true, for only those who believe the Bible in the first place count the Bible’s claims as indubitable, as John Perry said earlier. And in order for the Bible to have authority apart from its acceptance by the church it mattered a great deal that it was inerrant. Yet Luther expressed doubt that Moses wrote the Pentateuch, that the apostle Jude wrote the book bearing his name, and that Old Testament battle accounts were not exaggerations. For example: When one often reads that great numbers of people were slain - for example, eighty thousand - I believe that hardly one thousand were actually killed (Bloesch, Donald G. Holy Scripture: Revelation, Inspiration, and Interpretation. Downer's Grove: Inter-Varsity, 1994; p.90). Calvin has no problem suggesting in his Commentaries that Matthew incorrectly, but with no impropriety calls a comet a star. (Roennfeldt, Ray C. W. Clark H. Pinnock On Biblical Authority: An Evolving Position. Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1993; p.25).

In answer to Rogers & McKim’s proposal as to the significant influence of common sense philosophy on Princeton theology in general and the doctrine of inerrancy in particular, the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy was set up in October 1978 and produced The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy at the Hyatt Regency O’Hare in Chicago –

1. God, who is Himself Truth and speaks truth only, has inspired Holy Scripture in order thereby to reveal Himself to lost mankind through Jesus Christ as Creator and Lord, Redeemer and Judge. Holy Scripture is God’s witness to Himself.

2. Holy Scripture, being God’s own Word, written by men prepared and
superintended by His Spirit, is of infallible divine authority in all matters upon which it touches: it is to be believed, as God's instruction, in all that it affirms: obeyed, as God's command, in all that it requires; embraced, as God's pledge, in all that it promises.

3. The Holy Spirit, Scripture's divine Author, both authenticates it to us by His inward witness and opens our minds to understand its meaning.

4. Being wholly and verbally God-given, Scripture is without error or fault in all its teaching, no less in what it states about God's acts in creation, about the events of world history, and about its own literary origins under God, than in its witness to God's saving grace in individual lives.

5. The authority of Scripture is inescapably impaired if this total divine inerrancy is in any way limited or disregarded, or made relative to a view of truth contrary to the Bible's own; and such lapses bring serious loss to both the individual and the Church.


In the accompanying Exposition on page 276 of Beale’s book the statement what Scripture says, God says and further what Scripture says, Christ says, is made. Afterwards, Infallible is defined as the quality of neither misleading nor being misled and so safeguards in categorical terms the truth that Holy Scripture is a sure, safe, and reliable rule and guide in all matters. Inerrant is then defined as the quality of being free from all falsehood or mistake and so safeguards the truth that Holy Scripture is entirely true and trustworthy in all its assertions. What could be clearer than that to represent the position of the authors of the Chicago statement, and also that avowed by the author Professor G.K. Beale as he states – *The Chicago Statement of Inerrancy which represents generally my own understanding of what should be considered the evangelical view of the authority of scripture* (BEALE, G. K. (2008) *The Erosion of Inerrancy in Evangelicalism*, Wheaton, Illinois, Crossway Books; p. 24).
Then with breath-taking ambivalence, in Appendix 2 of his book, the following statements are made

- Non-chronological narration and imprecise citation were conventional and acceptable and violated no expectations in those days, we must not regard these things as faults when we find them in the Bible writers,
- When total precision of a particular kind was not expected nor aimed at, it is no error not to have achieved it,
- The truthfulness of Scripture is not negated by the appearance in it of irregularities of grammar or spelling, phenomenal descriptions of discrepancies between one passage and another,
- Solutions of apparent inconsistencies, where this can be convincingly achieved, will encourage our faith, and where for the present no convincing solution is at hand we shall significantly honour 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.(ibid; 277).

I am not sure who is suffering from illusions here but this list of exceptions to the earlier profession of inerrancy seems to be an admission of existing anomalies after all.

**Inerrancy and Fundamentalism**

Scott McGowan summed up the origins of Inerrancy as a Doctrine when he said – Any discussion of the idea of ‘inerrancy’ must be set in the context of the Enlightenment and the resulting liberal theology since it was liberal theology’s rejection of the older orthodoxy that prompted an evangelical response and the development of the inerrantist position (MCGOWAN, S.B. & MCGOWAN, A.T.B., Apollos branch of Inter-Varsity Press, 2007, The Divine Authenticity of Scripture (American ed.), Nottingham, p.50).

After the maelstrom of liberal ideas from the Enlightenment had encroached upon religion, it was the 1881 article Inerrant by B.B. Warfield and A.A. Hodge which gave expression to the doctrine of inerrancy, although using the terms errorless and without error. It made it clear that the superintendence of God in Scripture guarantees the errorless infallibility of all scriptural affirmation. (A.A. Hodge and Warfield, Inspiration, p.xiv). Hodge and Warfield did not imagine that they were saying anything new, merely spelling out the orthodox doctrine of Scripture in order to resist the encroaches of the developing liberal theology. As far as they were concerned this had always been the

Inerrancy is now fundamental to the Evangelical side and influences all its doctrines. Evangelicals believe that ‘Scripture cannot contain any error because it is inspired by God’, or ‘Scripture is indeed inspired because it contains no error’; some hold both inductive and deductive beliefs simultaneously and feel that Christian faith will stand only if the Bible’s authority can be rationally or empirically verified. Both James Barr and John Barton opine that many distortions of scriptural interpretation have occurred in an effort to support these beliefs. Professor Barr maintains that -

**Conservatives hold a doctrine which was expressly designed to maintain inerrancy and if they hold that doctrine with sincerity then they are bound to maintain it over the details of Noah’s ark and the logistics of gathering and managing such a large body of animals, of the depth of the flood worldwide, the years of Methuselah’s age and the number of chariots in a Chronicles passage set against a different number in the account of the same incident in Samuel/Kings. They should be forced to either maintain their position or else to alter their doctrine. Vagueness and generalities will not do and discrepancies, for example in the order of events in the Gospels, are to be explained or the doctrine must be admitted to have been unjustified. Inerrancy is their doctrine and it is not right that Conservative Evangelicals should say airily that they are not concerned about petty details.** (Barr, The Westminster Press1978, p.309).

John Barton comments that - **fundamentalist reasoning implies that it is the text that reveals the truth about God, not Jesus himself as he actually lived and died and rose again** (Barton, John (1900), People of the Book? The Authority of the Bible in Christianity: London, SPCK. p. 37).

Verbal Inspiration and Proof-texting together with Common Sense Philosophy informed the Old Princeton theologians and was conveyed to British evangelicals largely via James Packer. They have retained the witness of the Holy Spirit, with less dominance of Inerrancy, believing that scripture can be accepted as inspired and authoritative because of its effects upon believers.

In the late 1970’s when the debate about Inerrancy was at its height, two major events

Lower criticism, or textual criticism, the study of the history and variations of the text, is accepted by some conservatives whilst higher criticism, the reconstruction of sources and datings and different authorships, is not. Those conservatives who have accepted other versions of the Bible than the Authorised Version (the KJV) have, by implication, accepted textual criticism. However, ‘textual corruption’ was now able to be used as an explanation of discrepancies, especially in numbers, as with Samuel/Kings versus Chronicles, or even that 2 Samuel 21:19 is a textual error when it says that Goliath was slain by Elhanan, leaving the unobtainable autographs pristine and intact. This method of recourse or retreat became absolutely necessary when documents were discovered which antedated those used in the beloved King James Bible and which conflicted with it; it is now used not only where textual evidence exists but also in cases where it would be convenient if it did exist. Another explanation of the question of who actually killed Goliath is offered by Thom Stark when he writes in *the original composition of the Book of Samuel, David was not the one who killed Goliath. That honour belongs to an Israelite warrior named Elhanan and his story remains, however succinctly, in the Book of Samuel standing sharply at odds with that later addition of 1 Samuel 17, (STARK, T. (2011) *The Human Faces of God*, Eugene, Oregon, Wipf and Stock Publishers, p.154)*. The Chronicler had so much affection for David’s memory that he rewrote the Goliath text to state that *Elhanan, son of Jair, slew Lahmi, the brother of Goliath the Gittite, the staff of whose spear was like a weaver’s beam (1 Chron. 20:5) (ibid,155)*. Stark goes yet further when he states, *Goliath did not have a brother named Lahmi*. The Chronicler took the word ‘Bethlehem’, broke it up, and turned ‘lehem’ into a phony personal name, Lahmi (ibid,157).

*The classical central feature of fundamentalist doctrine is that the Bible is part of a movement of true doctrine from God to man transmitted to the community by prophets and apostles who are authoritative didactic functionaries*, (BARR, J., The Westminster Press, 1978 , p. 289). This is comparable to the Pope speaking *ex cathedra* about faith and morals. Theologians of Protestant Scholasticism of the 16th and 17th centuries intended divine dictation in the strictest sense in statements like – ‘Holy Scripture is verbally dictated by the Holy Spirit in such a way that no iota set down by the prophets
and apostles in their books is not God-given … the Holy Spirit actually supplied, inspired and dictated the very words and each and every term individually'. These tenets make explanation of the differences of literary style between various biblical writers difficult to explain.

Modern Conservative apologists put the case in the following terms:
1. The writers were fully conscious and God did no violence to their individuality
2. The apologists are very coy about the mode of inspiration
3. Prophets and Apostles worked out judgments and ideas out of their own experience in the life of their time but the contents of their messages are conveyed to them by the irresistible might of the revealing Spirit.
4. According to fundamentalist opinion the exact details of forthcoming events provided in Isaiah 40-66 and in the Book of Daniel were the result of prophecy under the inspiration of God and not added by a later writer as critical study proposes. How then does this differ from Dictation? All the instances where actual names, places and dates pertaining to future events are attributed to direct information given to the writer by God come effectively to the same thing as dictation (BARR, J., The Westminster Press, 1978; pp.289-295).

Rather than positively supplying information there are some conservatives who believe the role of Holy Spirit lies more in preventing the biblical authors from teaching error by controlling the writing down of the ideas, doctrines and social comments which the biblical writer has himself worked out. Such negative inspiration doctrine would not give good justification for their hostility to critical scholarship. When was the moment when the scriptural item was originally given and to which inspiration could be uniquely attached? Variety of sources, multiple previous editions, changes of text and additions of explanatory matter, some lasting a generation or more, complicate the identifying of the one inspired text. The Westminster Confession answers the problem partly by stating that the Hebrew and Greek texts were immediately inspired by God and by his singular care and providence kept pure in all ages. By the 19th century the known substantial variation of manuscripts in size and content made it impossible to sustain the Westminster Confessional position. It was the words as in the original autographs, and they alone that were inspired.

As the debate progressed, there was a steadily increasing concern that Scripture be considered accurate in all matters, including the precise recording of detailed historical events and matters of science. As John Perry says - *What happened in the evangelical*
debate is that the detailed inerrancy position became a test of orthodoxy among conservative evangelicals; that theologians such as Martin Luther and John Calvin did not share this view reveals the force of modernity’s influence. The inerrancy of the Bible matters a great deal to a great many evangelical Christians. In some cases this particular view of the Bible is almost the central tenet of the faith. For example, a heading concerning the Sermon on the Mount reads, "Why does Luke say Jesus stood to teach them when Matthew declares that he sat to teach them?". Geisler provides a couple of possible explanations and concludes that Jesus probably sat for some of the sermon and stood for the rest (GEISLER, N. L. (1999) When Critics Ask: A Popular Handbook on Bible Difficulties., Grand Rapids, Baker; p.388). This is a perfectly reasonable explanation; indeed, this may be exactly what happened. However, Geisler’s view makes very clear that Luke and Matthew cannot contradict without undermining the authority of the entire Bible, even on the minor issue of whether Jesus was sitting or standing. The implication is that all such minor discrepancies matter very much. In fact, Geisler sees his ability to provide plausible explanations for these seeming errors as vital to defending the Bible’s authority (PERRY, J. Quodlibet, Journal 3, 2001.No.4; p.1).

Some evangelical commentators have maintained that the “six days” of the creation account were not ordinary days, in other words those verses were not to be taken literally. Psalm 90 verse 4 - For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday, is often used to show that the word “day” is employed figuratively not literally and may even stand for a geological age (Kevan, E.F., The New Bible Commentary, Inter-Varsity Press, 2nd. Ed., 1954, p.77 and by Meredith G. Kline in the Revised 1970 edition p.82).

Guillaume Meignan, later to be Cardinal Archbishop of Tours, in 1856 concerning the biblical story of Balaam’s ass opined - if the words of the ass and the apparition of an angel are fiction or a dream, even though Sacred Scripture relates them as fact, why wouldn’t the whole story of Balaam be fictitious and a dream, why then wouldn’t the whole Bible be a mixture of truth and fiction? Meignan gradually moved to a more liberal position later holding that scripture was free from error only in essential facts, dogma and morals. Fundamentalists probably don’t spend much time thinking about Balaam’s ass but the moment it is questioned then the entire structure of faith and inerrancy is also threatened and their whole edifice may tumble down. Any sort of error or imperfection in the Bible could be fatal to all Christian faith and life. Any suggestion that Moses did not write Deuteronomy or that the disciple John, son of Zebedee, did not write the fourth gospel on the basis of his actual eye-witness of the events could
lead on to disastrous historical and theological assertions of doubt and so insistence on
the genuine authorships is the only way to stop all this at its source.

A detailed presentation of the work of Turretin and Warfield, the fundamental
fundamentalists, was given in Chapter 5 and the supportive work of these views by
Kenneth Kitchen, Gleason Archer and Harold Lindsell which is given and referenced
elsewhere. Because of the Fundamentalists’ disinclination towards biblical scholarship
and active hostility to critical studies, their output really boils down to defending a fixed
position, that is to say apologetic, using the biblical texts as proof texts. Their so-called
discussions are not really discussions but the production of material leading to a
Conservative conclusion. Warfield would not tolerate even one proven error as it would
contradict the total credibility of the Christian faith; some modern evangelicals think the
same way – If the authority of the Bible be construed in the sense that every isolated
word of Holy Scripture is inerrant, to call in question of even one of these points is
enough to shatter that authority (REID, J. K. S. (1957) The Authority of Scripture,

This stiffening of attitude against errancy was probably caused by the increasing
pressure of biblical criticism from the 18th century onwards but the circular reasoning of
the most common mantra, namely that of the Bible being inerrant because the Bible
itself said so, only worked if one was already a fundamentalist. Its use seemed to be a
measure designed to prevent those already fundamentalists from abandoning that
position when threatened with the reasoning of those who thought otherwise. The
hardening of the mantra to this position, and thus the loosening of the inner influence of
the Holy Spirit, was because the Liberals also recognized the role of the Holy Spirit in
their approach to the Bible and opposition to critical study was more important than any
other considerations. Narrowing to one single ground made their persuasion exclusive
and meant that only fundamentalists could affirm the authority of the Bible. When it all
boils down, authentication of inspiration of the Biblical Texts from the Biblical Texts
themselves requires an absolute belief in the inerrancy of the texts in the first place; in
other words you have to be a Fundamentalist already for the proof to have any

For Hodge and Warfield the divine decrees of the finite number of persons destined for
salvation and the finite number for damnation were the essential parts of Christianity
whereas the inspiration of scripture did not have the same status, but it had to be
believed because the Bible teaches it. *If inspiration had not been there … or even if we had no Bible … Christianity would have been in every respect true and valid; but we do have a Bible and it does teach inspiration so to deny it denies the doctrinal validity of the Bible as a whole* (ibid 260-303 - from the Princeton Theologians). John Barton commented on the use of the Bible to justify truth-questions - *The Bible is not some final unquestionable authority for decision-making, but as one of the earliest witnesses to the events concerning Jesus …. the Bible is a human book in which human beings reflect upon their experiences of God …. the resolution of truth-questions raised by the Bible cannot be settled by appeal to the Bible* (BARTON, J. (1988) *People of the Book*, London, SPCK. p.54).

Conservatives viewed scientific and religious language as being the same and describing the same people and the same universe, i.e. the same cosmology, geology and biology. Hodge therefore believed that proper interpretation of the creation accounts in Genesis would solve apparent conflicts with geology over the age of the earth. He interpreted days as periods of indefinite length and harmonized the creation narratives with scientific accounts of the order of development of the cosmos, the planets and various forms of life and concludes by saying - *who could have correctly narrated the secrets of eternity but God himself?* (Charles Hodge *Systematic Theology* 1: p.573).

Some Conservative Evangelical interpreters tell us that Adam was not the actual father of Seth, or Seth of Enosh, but rather that they were descendants, which enables the genealogy to be stretched to accommodate an unlimited time from creation to the flood. The modern fundamentalists reason - The Bible cannot be wrong -> therefore it must square with science -> therefore the text cannot be taken literally. Older evangelicals would have insisted on literacy, giving a date for creation in the 5th millennium BCE and “fossils be damned”. Concerning the creation of light sources in both Genesis 1:3 on the first day and 1:14 on the fourth day, the Cardinal Scofield Reference Bible proposes a huge gap after verse 1 and then in verse 3 *vapour diffused the sun’s light* and in verse 14 *the sun appeared in an unclouded sky* (SPONG, J. S. (1991) *Rescuing the Bible from Fundamentalism*, San Francisco, HarperCollins Publishers; p.26-29).

*If the authority of the Bible be construed in the sense that every isolated word of Holy Scripture is inerrant, to call in question of even one of these points is enough to shatter that authority* (REID, J. K. S. (1957) *The Authority of Scripture*, Connecticut & London,
The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy, (see pg. 136/7), produced by the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy (ICBI) of which Lindsell was a member, states, The truthfulness of Scripture is not negated by the appearance in it of ... seeming discrepancies between one passage and another. And just three years after that, in a collection of essays produced by the ICBI as a defense of the doctrine, one reads: In cases where the claim is made that a biblical statement is historically or scientifically false, one may respond that the critic fails to understand that the statement is not being used to teach history or science. Instead, it is being used to teach some moral or religious truth. Thus, to require exact factual accuracy as if the statement were being used to teach history or science would be to mistake its use . Is this an admission that the Doctrine of Inerrancy is false?

**Religious Language**

Conservative language emphasizes the cognitive with informative propositions or truth claims about objective realities and meaningfulness of religious utterances. The most extreme form was that of A.A. Hodge who claimed that even the choice of words in Scripture was governed by divine inspiration. The primary function of religious language is to describe God and God's relation to the world and to humankind, e.g. creation and how the universe came into being.

Liberals’ experiential and expressive beliefs interpret doctrines as symbols of inner feelings, attitudes or existential orientations. Religious language is about how God appears in human subjectivity.

Cultural-linguistic theory embraces communally authoritative rules that govern attitude, action and the use of first-order religious language.

Myth is a figurative representation of a reality that eludes precise description or definition. The biblical writers began with historical facts but added mythological allusions thus giving more significance; this was a vehicle by which objective intrusion of God into history was described (ibid. 46).

Schleiermacher wrote in The Christian Faith that religion is a matter of feeling, that religious affections are a form of self-consciousness and that Christian doctrines are
accounts of the Christian religious affections set forth in speech (Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, pp. 3, 5, 15). This is called experiential-expressive religious language. For example the doctrine of creation does not describe God’s acts in creating the universe but expresses the Christian’s awareness of the dependence of all things upon God.

A Liberal may describe the Bible as a record of the historical development of spiritual experience, attitudes, such as faith and trust, and private moral convictions. A Conservative may describe it as a record of divine action. The literary forms of the Bible reflect its own times and if the stories turn out to be legends it would simply mean that the past expressed its religious attitudes and convictions by the use of legend.

**Immanence or Intervention?**

Simon Laplace (1749-1827), an advocate of every atom in the universe as a component in an unfailingly precise cosmic clockwork mechanism, when asked by Napoleon about the role of God in his system is alleged to have replied - “I have no need of that hypothesis”. Determinism, resulting from considerations of the laws of nature and the behavior of atoms, presents two problems. If the body is nothing but an arrangement of atoms whose behavior is governed by the laws of physics, how can free decisions affect it? If science gives a complete and adequate account of the causes of all events, where is there room for God to act? Conservatives take an Interventionist view that God is able to overrule the laws of nature to produce special divine acts. Liberals take an immanentist approach emphasizing God’s action in and through all natural processes because God’s violation of the Laws he created is irrational. Conservative theologians hold that God is able and willing to suspend the Laws for some higher purpose, although working in the regular processes in the ordinary operations of His Providence. For Bultmann the “natural” course of events as laid down in the suppositions of Newtonian science was never interrupted and thus miracles cannot happen. Millard Erickson proposed a supernatural force negating the effect of the natural law, which was still operating, such that miracles were extra-natural but not anti-natural. The Liberals avoid any suggestion of God being a force amongst forces.

A reaction against the conservative view that God performs special miraculous acts, and against the Deist’s view that God is not active at all within the created world, resulted in the Liberals Immanentist view of divine action. This view emphasizes God’s
universal presence in continual, creative and purposeful activity in and through all the processes of nature and history resulting in all forms of progress. This overcame any suggestions of God being inconsistent and having to violate his own laws or being unable to achieve his purposes through his original ordering.

**Christianity and Science**

Conservatives are noted for their perception of conflict between theology and science, especially evolutionary biology, made possible by their propositional view of religious language. Liberal theology, beginning with Newton’s physics, has been largely shaped by accommodation to modern science, made possible by the experiential-expressivist theory of language. Immanuel Kant made a sharp distinction between the physical world known to science and the moral world with two different kinds of reasoning, pure reason and practical reason respectively. There can be no physical knowledge of God (pure reasoning) but if this unjust world is to become a just moral world there must be more to come, in other words immortality of the soul and God to mete out justice in the end (practical reasoning). Friedrich Schleiermacher argued that there were three spheres not two - Knowing (science), doing (morality) and feeling (religion). Piety is a modification of feeling, and doctrines are secondary, ordered expressions of piety not derived by reasoning from any kind of knowledge; Schleiermacher owed much to 17th century Pietism. Christian dogmas rest on the given of an inner experience which cannot be brought about by scientific means and thus lies outside the realm of reason (ibid. 57). Thus science and religion have nothing to do with each other and so findings of design can provide no support for religious beliefs but on the other hand theology cannot conflict with science even in the area of the creation of the universe; religion is content to feel that the entire universe depends on God: the compatibility is ensured by the compartmentalization. However there is no harm in borrowing language like the boundless activity and process of evolutionary biology to better analogise thinking of God.

Conservatives, on the other hand, view scientific and religious language as being the same and describing the same people and the same universe, i.e. the same cosmology, geology and biology, as already explained in connection with Hodge above.

Until the 16th century the doctrine of Scripture was placed in the introduction and was not an independent locus until the second half of that century. The Belgic Confession of 1561 gives several detailed chapters on the doctrine of Scripture and the Second
Helvetic Confession of 1566 by Bullinger begins with a long chapter on the Scriptures as the word of God followed by a chapter on interpreting Scripture. This trend culminated in the long chapter on the doctrine of Scripture which began the Westminster Confession of Faith of 1647 (MCGOWAN, S.B. & MCGOWAN, A.T.B., Apollos branch of Inter-Varsity Press, 2007, p.26-27). The reformers wanted to emphasize that all of their teaching was drawn from Scripture and so began with a strong statement on the authority, sufficiency and perspicuity of Scripture before dealing with any other doctrine. In the view of many, this position takes the primary focus away from God (ibid, p.28). To overcome this difficulty scripture ought to be placed under the work of the Holy Spirit and thus under the direction of God who caused it to be written. The error of viewing Scriptures as standing alone as a source of epistemological certainty results in the Scriptures taking on a life of their own without any further involvement of God (ibid, p.29).

**Problems arise from basic attitudes to foundations or givens**

The problem with taking Scripture as the foundational position is the question - *how can we know, with the requisite certitude, that the Christian Bible is, in fact, the revealed word of God?* (MURPHY, N. (1996) Beyond Liberalism and Fundamentalism, Valley Forge, Trinity Press International p.80).

The problem with the religious experience foundation for theology is that one must argue from inner ideas or experience to knowledge about realities outside the mind, this raises the question - how do we know that one’s religious experience is experience of a real, objective divinity rather than just a symbolic expression of humankind’s highest aspirations or basic life attitudes? (ibid. 81).

The problem with Interventionism is that it makes God a force as part of a system of forces and one which we ought to be able to measure just as we do the forces of nature.

The problem with the Immanentist view of divine action is that it either removes the aspect of intention from God’s acts or else makes every event equally intentional, including such as the holocaust and devastating natural disasters.

The problems with propositional language are its neglect of the self-involving character of religious discourse and how is one ever to know that theological propositions
accurately describe a reality?

The expressive account or religious language if not describing something God actually did but rather an expression of dependence on God then what can one depend on?
We cannot detach meanings from the way things are.

**Conclusion**

There never was a middle way between the Liberal and Conservative tracks. In my opinion the only present hope of a via media is a non-foundational theological method -

- It must take the Christian Scriptures as authoritative but not necessarily inerrant.
- In the application of those texts it must pay attention to the contemporary context.
- The interpretation of the texts will be affected by a variety of theological positions.

*Theology's success as a discipline answerable both to the church and to the academy depends on the answer to the question - “How to speak intelligibly to those in other frameworks - how can we justify our framework when we recognize the existence of competing frameworks”. An important ingredient here would need to be the development of a theory of truth appropriate to the new epistemology. Liberals should embrace a more robust doctrine of divine action (prevenient divine acts in revelation and salvation history) although there may be a range of views on the extent or frequency of such action between liberals and conservatives. It should also be possible to claim that God acts through all natural processes, including the evolutionary process. Any special acts in the creation of humans would necessarily be invisible to science because they would not be violations of natural laws. Also theology is necessary to answer questions like ‘what evolutionary value is there in the evolution of a species capable of a relationship with God’? New philosophical approaches to conceptions of the nature of the theological task ought to form more of a continuum or spectrum of theological opinions rather than a dichotomy.*

CHAPTER 8

FUNDAMENTALISM TODAY

Fundamentalism is now a subset of Conservatism representing the stricter, more puritanical members of the Conservative Evangelical camp. In the previous chapter and elsewhere I have traced the development of the characteristics and beliefs of Fundamentalists and Evangelicals and we must now see how these beliefs affect the behavior of the believers and their attitude to other Christians. We must also discriminate more clearly between these two groups of conservative Christianity as their attitudes and beliefs affect their behavior as teachers. In the Introduction to her book Harriet Harris distinguished between the characteristics of Fundamentalists and Evangelicals and she suggests that *numerically, well over ninety per cent of world evangelicalism is fundamentalist* (HARRIS, H. (1998) *Fundamentalism and Evangelicals*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, p.1). I think it is important to be absolutely clear about the characteristics of these two groups, especially as regards Scripture and the Bible. These characteristics and beliefs will be referred to again later but to establish our goal posts at the outset let us quote Table 1 on page 6 of Harriet A. Harris' book which lists the distinctions between fundamentalists and evangelicals as she sees them –

**Fundamentalists**
- Are suspicious of scholarship and Science. Tend to be anti-intellectual.
- Have a ‘mechanical’ view of how the Bible was written.
- Believe the King James Version of the Bible as the only inspired translation.
- Have a literalistic approach to history in interpreting the Bible

**Moderate Evangelicals**
- Accept some academic study in order to develop a deeper understanding of faith.
- Believe it essential to understand culture and circumstances in which the Bible was written.
- Value the King James (Authorised) Bible but believe there are now more accurate translations.
- See the Bible as a rich collection of poetry, prophecy, metaphor and symbol to be understood accordingly.
Reject involvement with Christians who do not accept their views. Will not negotiate on the essentials of the Christian faith but believe secondary differences do not prevent cooperation.

Often allow their culture to influence their beliefs. Thus some support racial intolerance, prosperity teaching and politically right-wing views. Seek to allow the Bible to question and challenge culture - including their own.

Having denied, until recently, that the Christian gospel has social implications. Believe that Christians have a duty to be ‘salt and light’ in society.

Insist on certain views concerning the Second Coming of Christ. Believe there are legitimate differences of interpretation about the details of the return of the Lord Jesus Christ to this earth.

James Barr sets out the most pronounced fundamentalist characteristics as:

- A strong emphasis on biblical inerrancy
- A strong hostility to modern theology and to the methods, results and implications of modern critical biblical study
- An assurance that those of other religious viewpoints are not really ‘true Christians’.


**Fundamentalist Beliefs Today**

As a result of sociological and political separatist and anti-intellectual factors, by the 1950s the word ‘fundamentalist’ had come to be identified with a particularly narrow form of evangelical Christianity, or of any other religion for that matter. Certain evangelicals, who no longer wanted to share these extremist views, coined for themselves the name ‘Neo-evangelical’ (BARR, J., The Westminster Press, 1978 , p.222). Notable amongst these were Carl F.H. Henry and Billy Graham who sought more intellectual respectability but did not abandon the use of the word ‘inerrancy’ despite their affirmation of the importance of biblical scholarship: so the inerrancy of Scripture remained a key concept in binding together those who were opposed to post-
enlightenment liberal theology.

According to Professor Barr, Conservatives today believe that they are simply putting back the same pure orthodoxy possessed by the early church, which has been lost or diluted by Liberalism - As conservative evangelicals see it there is nothing in their doctrine that is not stated or implied in the historical creeds and the confessional documents of major churches; they are merely taking over the stringency that the churches should have maintained. Their basic religious convictions are - the divine inspiration of Scripture, the divinity of Christ, the historical character of the resurrection and the expectation of a coming end of the world. Total Inerrancy, Infallibility and the centrality of scriptural inspiration is the conviction of true Fundamentalists, the inner circle, so to speak, of Evangelicalism (BARR, J. (2000) The Dynamics of Fundamentalism. The St. George's Cathedral Lectures p.7).

For fundamentalists the emphasis is on personal prayer, and some regard liturgical prayer as a vain repetition of set formulas. Prayer meetings where participants pray aloud in turn are favoured. Prayers are believed to -

- prepare the ground for effective reception of gospel preaching
- help the Christian to learn to submit his or her will to God and become more like Christ
- give a fuller measure of the Holy Spirit
- change things
- allow difficult decisions to be rightly concluded
- make money available for the needs of the church
- heal the sick
- Avert dangers and temptations
- Need to be repeated with fervor, not wearying
- Encourage the mention of particular persons and needs as right and proper (ibid. p32)
- And, the Bible although infallible only acts on the heart with the presence of the Holy Spirit through prayer.

In Low Church style:

- Emphasis is on the priesthood of all believers
- Trained clergymen not really necessary
- The sacraments are inessential to Christian identity or evangelical unity
• Personal prayer aided by the Holy Spirit is all that is necessary for preaching the Gospel and understanding scripture.

The prophets, the Bible and God himself urge evangelism and have promised that it will eventually be effective; doubting this is a failure of faith and surrender to temptation. Enthusiasm is rife for foreign missionary work, to be supported by every true Christian’s personal interest, money and prayers. The second coming of Christ in personal and physical form terminating the present stage of God’s dealing with the world are realities clearly affirmed in the Bible and cannot thus be denied. This may occur at any time and only until then is there time for a saving witness. (BARR, J., The Westminster Press, 1978, pp 11-39).

Regarding evangelism - *The Doctrines of Election and Predestination, which were beliefs of older Protestant Orthodoxy, were discarded or else nothing could be effectively changed by evangelism.* (BARR, J. (2000) *The Dynamics of Fundamentalism*. The St. George's Cathedral Lectures, p.6).

The classical central feature of fundamentalist doctrine is that the Bible is part of a movement of true doctrine from God to man transmitted to the community by prophets and apostles who are authoritative didactic functionaries. This is comparable to the Pope speaking *ex cathedra* about faith and morals. Theologians of Protestant Scholasticism of the 16th and 17th centuries intended divine dictation in the strictest sense in statements like - ‘Holy Scripture is verbally dictated by the Holy Spirit in such a way that no iota set down by the prophets and apostles in their books is not God-given … the Holy Spirit actually supplied, inspired and dictated the very words and each and every term individually’, (ibid. 289). These tenets make explanation of the differences of literary style between various biblical writers difficult to explain and copying between Gospel writers, with alterations, impossible to account for. Modern Conservative apologists put the case in the following terms:

1. The writers were fully conscious and God did no violence to their individuality
2. The apologists are very coy about the mode of inspiration
3. Prophets and Apostles worked out judgments and ideas out of their own experience in the life of their time but the contents of their messages are conveyed to them by the irresistible might of the revealing Spirit.
4. According to fundamentalist opinion the exact details of forthcoming events provided
in Isaiah 40-66 and in the Book of Daniel were the result of prophecy under the inspiration of God and not added by a later writer as critical study now proposes. How then does this differ from Dictation? All the instances where actual names, places and dates pertaining to future events are given are attributed to direct information given to the writer by God and come effectively to the same thing as dictation (BARR, J., The Westminster Press, 1978, 260-303).

Fundamentalism is not to be identified with any particular churches or denominations, although some churches like the Southern Baptists in the USA are predominantly fundamentalist and churches like the Baptists lean more towards its precepts. Anglicanism claims to represent the *via media* but there are undoubtedly low Anglican communities and theological colleges, which are predominantly evangelical in their point of view, and high, which tend to be liberal; in some definitions these terms are equated respectively with Protestant and Roman Catholic leanings.

Regarding Ecumenism, Fundamentalists believe that God wants all to be one in him but the necessary first step is to ensure that all the bodies concerned begin by accepting the essential fundamentalist conditions, especially the centrality and inerrancy of the Bible – in other words it is ‘my way or the highway’. There is already a sense of oneness between all fundamentalists, whether Methodist or Presbyterian or other, much more than between non-fundamentalist members of their own church. However the insistence on doctrinal correctness and purity and the principle of non-cooperation with anyone of different views, leads easily to quarrelsome division. The unity of churches amongst themselves outside the Fundamentalist agenda is not of much use or interest to the latter (ibid:11-15).

Fundamentalists have a penal and substitutionary understanding of the atonement in which Jesus takes upon himself the punishment that should be applied to humanity. This positive moral role for punishment carries through to women trying to escape the punishment for something they have done wrong by procuring an abortion or to support for capital punishment.

*Their firm belief in the coming end of the world and the second coming of Christ is born up by Mark chapter 13, the end of the book of Revelation and the texts of Daniel. Thus war and military conflict are to be expected and may not be a bad thing as they can be a part of the actual process by which the end of the world and the entry of the saints...*
into heaven are to be achieved. The belief that true Christians will soon be raptured out of this world into heaven is not shared by all fundamentalists (ibid:15).

Tenets of Fundamental Christianity, Conservative Evangelicalism

Introduction:

At the height of the disputations about Inerrancy in the late 1970’s two relevant major events took place, namely the 1976 publication of *The Battle for the Bible* by Harold Lindsell and the issuing of the *Chicago Statement*. The *Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy*, produced on October 1978 by the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy (ICBI), of which Lindsell was a member, states, *The truthfulness of Scripture is not negated by the appearance in it of ... seeming discrepancies between one passage and another*. Harold Lindsell’s book is dealt with in detail later in this thesis and the brief contents of the Chicago Statement were laid out on page 139, details are also to be found on the Internet at - http://www.kulikovskyonline.net/hermeneutics/csbe.htm and http://www.bible-researcher.com/chicago1.html. This statement affirms the traditional evangelical interpretation of the Bible according to its literal or normal sense, which is equated with grammatico-historical exegesis, and denies any treatment of the text or quest for sources lying behind it. A further meeting of the Council in 1982 addressed the emerging hermeneutical issues with 25 articles of Affirmations and Denials. They insisted that the meaning expressed in each biblical text is single, definite and fixed and the Holy Spirit enables an understanding of the spiritual implications for Christian living. In the collection of essays produced by the ICBI as a defence of the doctrine, one reads: *In cases where the claim is made that a biblical statement is historically or scientifically false, one may respond that the critic fails to understand that the statement is not being used to teach history or science. Instead, it is being used to teach some moral or religious truth. Thus, to require exact factual accuracy as if the statement were being used to teach history or science would be to mistake its use*. Perhaps in that case these people should have discarded the word “Inerrancy”.

The ICBI was composed of a number of leading evangelical scholars and pastors, including James M. Boice, Carl F. H. Henry, Norman Geisler, J. I. Packer, Harold Lindsell and Francis Schaeffer. The organization planned, and carried out, a ten-year effort to support the cause of detailed inerrancy through seminars, books, and the like.
The work produced by the Council tends to be considerably more scholarly and considerably less angry than *The Battle for the Bible* and its effects are still felt in the evangelical church today. Several of the founding members continue to publish on the topic. These statements are an amalgam of the trilogy of Summits sponsored by the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy, namely -


Summit II (November 10-13, 1982) resulted in the Chicago Statement on Biblical Hermeneutics.


With this last statement the proposed scholarly work of ICBI had been completed, for the doctrine of inerrancy had thus been defined, interpreted, and applied by many of the leading evangelical scholars of the day. (www.alliancenet.org/). The edited speeches of some of the main contributors were published in Norman Geisler’s book - GEISLER, N. L., Zondervan, 1980, .

Professor James Barr in his book *Fundamentalism* describes on pages 11-39 that in general the main areas of instructional belief in Fundamentalism today are to -

- Put a strong emphasis on the inerrancy of the Bible. Professor James Barr has made an in-depth study of fundamentalism and he states *the principle of biblical inerrancy may be regarded as the touchstone of fundamentalism, as it has been for the last century or so. For fundamentalists, within the total structure of Christian doctrine the doctrine of scripture is the essential cornerstone, surpassing the doctrine of the person of Christ and far surpassing the doctrine of the church.*

- Show a strong hostility to modern theology and critical study of the Bible

- Feel that those who do not share their views are not ‘real Christians’ and they view criticism of their position to be a criticism of Christianity itself.

- Have a list of Must-believe -ins, such as:
  - The Trinity
  - The virgin birth
  - The Infallibility and Inspiration of Holy Scripture
  - Looking forward to the personal return of the Lord

And further:

- A man within the church may by his own religiosity and goodness, both actively
encouraged and abetted by the church, become alienated from God by his pride in himself and his self-satisfaction and reject the help of divine grace and thus be ripe for conversion through the hearing of the gospel.

- This message can reach the deep sinfulness of all men and thus break down the barrier between the 'good people' and the supposed sinners of society.
- A church which evangelises within can also evangelise without, doing away with complacency.
- The blame for the enormous incidence of nominal Christianity in the churches lies in false teaching which instead of making clear to man his sinful state gives him the impression of being well set in the ways of good; man should be directed to his one hope of salvation namely cleansing in the blood of Christ as received through personal faith in Him.
- This false teaching is also vague and intermittent about the authority of the Bible and holds itself free to look elsewhere for its sources of authority.
- The true Christian is one who accepts conservative evangelical doctrine because only they fully recognize the authority of the Bible in which God has made known to us the way by which he intends us to know him; this is the main reason for doctrinal exclusiveness. It leaves no theological means of recognizing that non-evangelicals may conceivably be accepted by God.
- We are saved by grace through faith and not by the goodness of any human works or achievements and so the noble or saintly life of a non-evangelical Christian will not make a great impression; great non-Christians cannot be true Christians and a non-evangelical is a non-Christian.
- The Fundamentalist is not much interested in historical characters like Athanasius or Francis of Assisi but focuses on the increasing degree scientific and historical knowledge which has led to large-scale dilution of the gospel through liberal theology and negative biblical criticism.
- Fundamentalists believe that the Protestant, Baptist and Methodist denominations all had the same religious position as the Conservative evangelicals now have but that they have slipped away from the true gospel. Rather than try to create a new church yet again the fundamentalists are willing to work within the framework of existing churches - after all the Presbyterians still have the Westminster Confession and the Anglicans the Thirty Nine Articles?
- As conservative evangelicals see it there is nothing in their doctrine that is not stated or implied in the historical creeds and the confessional documents of
major churches; they are merely taking over the stringency that the churches should have maintained.

Professor Barr also writes - evangelicals work in non-church organisations, such as the Christian Unions of some Universities and some overseas missionary societies and are sometimes very exclusive and non-cooperative whilst still working quietly within a normal local church, preferring, of course, one whose leanings are towards conservative evangelicalism. Whilst not usually forming a church the conservative evangelicals do have an organizational base consisting of a training ground, a large and active publishing centre and an ideological centre. These exist to propagate the true Gospel, as they see it, and nothing else and to be exclusive against liberalism, modern biblical criticism and their non-evangelical counterparts, therefore calls to be more tolerant and cooperative are anathema. From these conservative evangelical organisations comes the solidarity of the witness to the distinction between the nominal and the true Christian and the insistence on the maintenance of the right doctrine, or true gospel, as against all sorts of modern teaching which seek to water it down (BARR, J., The Westminster Press, 1978, p.123-126).

Only speakers of known conservative evangelical views are employed at meetings. They believe that it is their special calling to present their own distinctive witness and not to confuse this through reiteration of contradictory opinions which they perceive are well known. Invited speakers must be “sound” and present the true and full gospel to the community and mention such fundamental truths as:

- The Trinity
- The divine inspiration and infallibility of the holy Scripture
- The supreme authority of scripture in matters of faith and conduct
- Universal sin and guilt and redemption from them only through the atoning death of Jesus Christ.

Doctrinal purity is expected of all speakers and all staff members employed by the organisation. Insistence on the one true doctrine in all areas of speaking and doing things builds up a powerful and sensitive consciousness of what is “sound” doctrine.

The conservative evangelical view of the true gospel:

- Sin is a fearful horror ever present which only the blood of Christ can dissipate
- Particular evil deeds are only the fruit of an underlying sinful disposition
- The saving act of God deals with sin as a totality
• The morality of the unsaved person is likely to be both hypocritical and prideful
• Sin has set a barrier between God and man and salvation is the removal of that barrier and the renewal of that relation of fellowship, righteousness and obedience which had been destroyed by sin.
• Christ took our place on the cross and endured the divine judgment due to men for their sins thus wiping sin away.
• The death of Christ was a sacrifice for the removal of sin on the pattern of the sacrificial atonement rituals of the Old Testament.
• God’s anger against sin was operative in Christ’s death
• It is totally wrong to suppose that following Christ’s teaching and example may do something to overcome sin, only his death on the cross does that.
• The only way to lift the burden of guilt is through the blood of Christ on the cross
• The resurrection is a bodily one but seen as only the completion of the atoning event.
• Conservative Evangelicals oppose any understatement of Christ’s divinity as they imagine Liberalism and Modernism to do.
• When a person accepts Jesus Christ as personal Lord and Saviour, then God’s atoning love in Christ becomes effective for him and in him and he receives all the gifts of adoption as a child of God.
• The influence of the faith must be felt in every department of the life of Christians
• The world or society cannot be redeemed, the gospel works on the individual
• The second coming is fervently awaited


Evangelism:
At the centre of lay evangelical witness is a prime emphasis that the believer must go on to pass on the message that has been the source of his own salvation. The questionings and hesitations of non-evangelical theologies and philosophies are not only useless but part of the opposition that has to be overcome. The prophets, the Bible and God himself urge evangelism and have promised that it will eventually be effective; doubting this is a failure of faith and surrender to temptation. Enthusiasm is rife for foreign missionary work, to be supported by every true Christian’s personal interest, money and prayers, (BARR, J., The Westminster Press, 1978 , p.33-35).
The Second Coming:
This belief was of Christ in personal and physical form terminating the present stage of God's dealing with the world, which as a reality clearly affirmed in the Bible and cannot thus be denied, in the Fundamentalist platform. This may occur at any time and only until then is there time for a saving witness (Matthew 24:14).

Lay Ministry:
Fundamentalists distrust mainstream clergy whom they believe to be tainted with liberalism and not fit representatives in society of the true Word of God. The fundamentalist lay person, if properly instructed, will and should do all the things a clergyman would do. The priesthood of all believers is present in a fairly extreme form as the basic needs for presentation of the true gospel are not scholarly training but personal faith in Jesus Christ, personal experience of the Holy Spirit and a good knowledge of the authoritative Bible. The special experience of a trained minister counts for little if it comes into conflict with the evangelical gospel or the authority of the Bible.


The Bible:
According to the fundamentalist the Bible is the supreme religious symbol and is the given form of words in which God has made Himself known and thus its words cannot be quoted too often. Christ is the true Saviour but the Bible is the accessible and articulate reality available empirically for checking and verification; the supreme tangible sacred reality. The Bible in Fundamentalism is comparable to the Virgin Mary in Roman Catholicism, or the Eucharist in Anglicanism, being the visible symbol involved in salvation. It is the function of the Bible to act as its supreme religious symbol that justifies us seeing fundamentalism as a quite separate religious form. The Fundamentalist position about the infallibility of the Bible is an attempt to prevent the religious tradition from being damaged through other modes of interpretation and is responsible for the endless repetition of biblical phrases and the incantational use of scripture which has almost become a ritual and may do without the actual use of the Bible at all, merely the reiteration of the traditional evangelical point of view.

The Bible's inerrancy in its correspondence with external reality and events is fed into the interpretative process at its very beginning. Questions such as – 'might the linguistic and literary forms suggest myth or legend, might it be mistaken in historical matters and might it be something generated by problems in the inner experience of
the early church’ - are not considered unless forced by the arguments of critical scholars. Inerrancy is the constant factor: literalness may vary up and down. Language and literary structure are subservient to the meaning dictated by the principle of inerrancy.

Harmonisation:
One of the most essential elements in conservative evangelical interpretation is the harmonising of disparate passages about the same event or reality. Although the examples of Ishmael’s age and Moses and Aaron’s descent are cases in point, a more direct one is the attempt to harmonise the ‘Cleansing of the Temple’ event. The synoptic gospels have it at the very end of Jesus ministry whereas John’s gospel has it right at the beginning. The New Bible Commentary explains by far the most satisfactory solution is that Jesus cleansed the Temple twice. About this the evangelical author Peter Enns writes – it is a distortion of the highest order to argue that Jesus must have cleansed the temple twice – 1. None of the Gospels say he did it twice, and 2. Historiography does not have to maintain chronological order which the Gospels do not support (ENNS, P. (2005) Inspiration and Incarnation: Evangelicals and the Problem of the Old Testament, Grand Rapids, Baker; p.65). According to Luke 24:51 Jesus’ ascension appears to have occurred on the same day as the resurrection whereas in Acts 1 it clearly occurs 40 days later - did Jesus’ ascension take place twice also? Notably, in 2008 Enns ‘resigned’ from Westminster Theological Seminary, despite fourteen years of stellar teaching and the fact that the majority of his colleagues deem his views on biblical inspiration to be within the contours of evangelicalism.

Fundamentalism declares that it is the only faith that faces up to the awfulness of sin; sin is why we need:

- Jesus Christ
- A substitutional atonement
- The Holy Spirit
- The Gospel has to be preached and heard
- The Second Advent


This extract from Gleason L Archer’s book A Survey of Old Testament 1975, p.22, will serve as a by-no-means-unique example of the evangelical stance - If this written revelation contains mistakes, then it can hardly fulfill its intended purpose: to convey to
man in a reliable way the will of God for his salvation. Why is this so? Because a demonstrated mistake in one part gives rise to the possibility that there may be mistakes in other parts of the Bible. If the Bible turns out to be a mixture of truth and error, then it becomes a book like any other. According to Archer and many other evangelicals then, a single mistake in the biblical text invalidates the whole Bible.

Again Turretin said, the Holy Spirit led the Apostles into all truth so that they might not err ... unless unimpaired integrity characterize the Scriptures, they could not be regarded as the sole rule of faith and practice (p.176 in Rogers and McKim quoting Allison pp. 59-64 cited from Turretin’s Institutio Theologiae Elencticae II, 4-7). In resting his entire case on the perfection of a single passage, not just on the original manuscript, which position so many Inerrantists have now retreated to, but on the extant copies, Turretin explained For if once the authenticity of the Scriptures is taken away, which would result even from the incurable corruption of one passage, how could our faith rest on what remains?.... Nor can we readily believe that God, who dictated and inspired each and every word of these inspired men, would not take care of their entire preservation. (Allison, p.60). These so-called rational proofs of the inspiration and inerrancy of the Scriptures were Turretin’s basis for belief in its authority, i.e. he followed the Aristotelian-Thomist method of placing reason before faith again turning his back on Calvin who regarded proofs only as secondary aids to our feebleness, as already mentioned. The arguments Turretin used to demonstrate authority of the Bible and that it was inspired and inerrant were - external marks, such as antiquity, duration, candour and sincerity of the writers, the blood of the martyrs, the testimony of adversaries and the consent of the people, and internal Marks like style, form, success and effects (Institutio, II,4,8 and 9, cited in Allison p. 62).

Conclusion

From the foregoing it can be seen that Fundamentalism depends and thrives on strict and uncompromising obendience to its firm precepts. The defence employed by Fundamentalists of declaring that the Bible is inspired and inerrant because it itself says so is clearly circular reasoning and only works for those who are Fundamentalists already. Professor James Barr suggests that it is circular because it is meant to be - It forms a tight, exclusive circle into which an outsider can break only by totally abandoning his objections and accepting in entirety the world-view of those within. It also encloses those already within and makes escape only possible at the cost of deep
and traumatic shattering of their entire religious outlook. He says, *The doctrine of inspiration is one worked out by and for the conservative position. It does not give reasons for the non-conservative why biblical inspiration should be essential, apart from the fact that the Bible says so, which is proof only for those who already hold a fundamentalist position in the first place. The argument is one designed for, and produced by, those within the conservative position, and for their own benefit only* (BARR, J., The Westminster Press, 1978. p.266).

The description “Fundamentalist” is applied to members of other organisations as well as religion and the term always signifies an uncompromising strict set of beliefs and behavior carrying with it a firm conviction that such beliefs are the only acceptable ones. It also represents the greatest barrier to any form of unity with other persuasions as the very basis of Fundamentalism is exclusivism.
CHAPTER 9
CRITICISMS OF FUNDAMENTALISM

We have just looked at Conservative Evangelicalism, its development and some of its main features. Among these features we mentioned Evangelising, the Second Coming, Lay Ministry and Harmonisation. The first of these is very important in our consideration of Religious Education in our schools because those of the evangelical persuasion are always very keen to ‘spread the word’ in any circumstances. As mentioned later approximately half of the one hundred plus government-approved groups for the teaching of RE in New South Wales are evangelical; in other words there are potentially as many evangelical teachers as all the other denominations put together, probably more, since evangelism is such an important part of the evangelical platform whereas it is reluctantly undertaken by most Anglicans.

We must now examine the considerable body of objections raised against some evangelical principles. Thom Stark has written – there are better ways to be a Christian than to be a fundamentalist, ways that do not preclude critical engagement with the numerous problematic aspects of the Christian scriptures and religion (STARK, T. (2011) The Human Faces of God, Eugene, Oregon, Wipf and Stock Publishers, p.xvii).

The Fundamentalists insist that their faith and practice today is, apart from some non-essentials, identical with the faith and practice of the church of New Testament times; they maintain that – there is nothing in their doctrine that is not stated or implied in the historic creeds and in the confessional documents of major churches (BARR, J., The Westminster Press, 1978 , p.22). They say that though the names they are using are modern terms and although the present forms of their faith may have been inherited from the Evangelical Revivals, the faith is the dominant faith of the Reformation as well as of the Early Church in which there always existed true Christians. The Fundamentalist is not much interested in historical characters, like Athanasius or Francis of Assisi, but focuses on the increasing degree of scientific and historical knowledge which has led, he or she feels, to large-scale dilution of the gospel through liberal theology and negative biblical criticism. To a fundamentalist a ‘true Christian’ is one who follows the fundamentalist platform to the letter.
The Fundamentalists cannot accept that other ways beside their own may be valid to becoming a true Christian because to do so would deny the very centre of their faith, the very process of perception by which they understand themselves as persons grasped and held by God after their personal conversion. That conversion, which makes a man into a true Christian, will coincide with an opinion change under which he will come to hold the views held by conservative evangelicals (ibid;11-39).

Mark Noll states that - Despite dynamic success at a popular level, modern American evangelicals have failed notably in sustaining serious intellectual life; they have nourished millions in the simple verities of the gospel but have largely abandoned the universities, the arts and other realms of higher culture. Feeding the hungry and banning the bomb do not assist intellectual vitality. Sponsorships include dozens of theological seminaries, colleges, hundreds of radio stations but not a single research university or in-depth periodical, (NOLL, M. (1994) The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind, Grand Rapids, Michigan, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company. p.3).

Most of the main tenets of fundamentalism have already been listed but in addition, in more extreme cases, some followers may adopt a dress code, insist on using the Authorised Version (KJV) of the Bible only and become doctrinally separatist, following a puritanical lifestyle banning such things as popular music and cinema-going. Belligerence and militant zeal are employed to preserve purity in doctrine and practice: George Marsden cites militancy as the key feature distinguishing fundamentalism from evangelicalism. Other Fundamentalists hold that liberal tendencies are responsible for causing the decline into secularism. (HARRIS, H. (1998) Fundamentalism and Evangelicals, Oxford, Clarendon Press. p.3-10).

Fundamentalism began to develop certain characteristics that distinguished it from the mainstream of the Evangelical movement –

- A strong emphasis on premillennial eschatology, within the broader context of dispensational theology.
- Increasingly separatist mentality including a gradual withdrawal from mainstream schools and theological colleges when it became apparent that theological liberalism had affected the teaching.
• Adoption of certain cultural distinctives, e.g. no dancing, no alcoholic drink, no smoking, no going to the cinema.
• An increasing anti-intellectual thrust with the complete rejection of any form of biblical or textual criticism.
• A serious concentration on the campaign to ensure that the case for biological evolution was not permitted to be taught in the public schools (The Trial of John T. Scopes in 1925 in Dayton, Tennessee).


Fundamentalists feel that a true Christian is one who accepts conservative evangelical doctrine because only they fully recognize the authority of the Bible in which God has made known to us the way by which he intends us to know him; this is the main reason for their doctrinal exclusiveness. It leaves no theological means of recognizing that non-evangelicals may conceivably be accepted by God (this was the main criticism of Harold Lindsell's book by fellow evangelist Carl Henry). We are saved by grace through faith and not by the goodness of any human works or achievements and so the noble or saintly life of a non-evangelical Christian will not make a great impression; great non-Christians cannot be true Christians and a non-evangelical is a non-Christian. From the conservative evangelical organisations comes the solidarity of the witness to the distinction between the nominal and the true Christian and the insistence on the maintenance of the right doctrine, or true gospel, as against all sorts of modern teaching which seek to water it down.

The fundamentalist sees the critical scholar as setting his own critical judgment against the intrinsic, God-given harmony of the Bible and its doctrines; because a scholar cannot see how varying elements hang together it means that he or she disagrees. Instead he or she should persevere in studying and comparing until the fullness of truth, as willed by God, becomes apparent to him. Jumping straight away to the conclusion of different sources is a threat to the unity, authority and effectiveness of Holy Scripture. Similarly any grading of biblical books, such as saying that Esther and Ecclesiastes are not as useful as say John’s gospel, although they may do it themselves, is rejected by fundamentalists when outsiders do it in case they are setting out to deprive them of their status as the absolute Word of God. However it seems sensible to say that if they had not been placed in the Canon many would not have found much to recommend Nahum or 3 John and that a massive amount of allegorizing
is needed to extract any religious morality from the Song of Songs.

The texts of 2 Timothy 3:16 and 2 Peter 1:19-21 are the only two general statements about the actual process of inspiration in the Bible. These two books may be thought of as marginal by most people, liberal or fundamental, when compared say with the Gospels or Romans or Galatians. Fundamentalists say that these letters come substantially or verbatim from Saints Paul and Peter, this fact being verified by their names appearing at the beginning of the letters and these names, being part of inspired scripture, give an infallible assurance of their authorship. This situation illustrates that although fundamentalism allows a certain grading of biblical material it combines with this the insistence that each and every part, anywhere in the Bible is fully divinely inspired and able to be used to validate doctrine. This latter statement puts pressure on the question of who wrote this or that book. The statements in Timothy and Peter referred to above most probably consider ‘Scripture’ to have been the Old Testament or Hebrew Bible, which was the Christian’s only ‘Bible’ in the early church. The canon of biblical books was not established firmly until 367 AD and so these comments cannot be construed as applicable to the Bible as we know it since they were written at least 200 years before. The authors of Timothy and Peter may not have even known some of the books in our canon, or may have known of them but considered them unauthentic. In the mid to late 2nd century when the letters were written scripture generally referred to the Hebrew Bible or Old Testament, as other references like those of Jesus show (BARR, J., The Westminster Press, 1978, pp.67, 79).

Fundamentalist readers only want books that are sound and wholesome because they say that the Bible is infallible and inerrant and attack critics who cast doubt on this. A Conservative Evangelical student will want to read a book which tells how Wellhausen is wrong, not a book about Wellhausen. No speakers or writers of the non-conservative line should be heard or read. For the average fundamentalist reader the function of Conservative Evangelical scholarship is to give him comfort and security that there are learned men out there who understand about things like Babylon and Ugarit and are yet fully reliable in their evangelical belief. His literature does not tell him much about the way in which its own scholars work or perhaps he would feel less comforted. The older school of evangelical scholars saw no problem in the supernatural, prophetic foresight or biblical inerrancy and dates such as that of Psalm 110 were settled by the statements in the Bible. Recently however Conservative Evangelical scholarship has kept supernatural dogma out of sight and only used it
when nothing else would serve to defend a conservative interpretation. The conservative scholar will survey the range of historical methodological possibilities and chose the most conservative view reasonably possible. This method yields very satisfactory conservative results in the short term but may well be preparing for the downfall of trust in the longer term. This recent type of scholarship, although it seems to uphold the conservative results which are acceptable to Conservative Evangelicals is highly questionable to the scholastic world in general which is not becoming increasingly respectful towards the conservative case as evangelical propaganda misleadingly suggests. The reputation of Conservative Scholarship increases as its purely conservative line decreases (ibid; p.121f).

The principle of scriptural authority, formulated expressly as inerrancy, means in effect than any Christian with his Bible which he believes to be inerrant can completely discount the arguments and opinions of any theologian who does not fully accept that principal - and most theologians do not!. Fundamentalist faith does not need theologians or formally trained clergy.

Fundamentalism does have its own theology but it is -

- **Fossilised** - built up on what was believed to have been that of the evangelical revivals and in part also on 19th century Calvanism.
- **Fragmented** - fundamentalism picked out a few essential points from older theology to produce a system that had to be believed and now exists as a set of doctrines.
- **Inactive** - there is no new work for the theologian to do, all that is left is apologetic to defend the faith against doubts, attacks and criticisms from within and without. The faith position to be defended is one which was believed to have existed universally in the past and is immovably fixed. This belief is erroneous as we will show in a history of inerrancy belief. (ibid; 161f).

Total complacency and lack of self-criticism is endemic and any individual fault is seen as resulting from not being conservative evangelical enough. Liberal or modernist theologies are given no credence whatsoever and there is not the slightest reason or biblical evidence, according to the fundamentalist view, why such theologies should be propounded. On every point of difference there is a conservative and orthodox answer which makes the liberal and modern approach unnecessary and wrong. All relations with non-conservative theology are purely polemical. Even when beliefs are shared,
such as in the Trinity, the resurrection and the Holy Spirit, no respect is granted by fundamentalists whose insistence on the authority of scripture grounded on and defined in terms of its infallibility and inerrancy, is paramount. Fundamentalists hold adherence to their doctrinal structure dearer than fellowship with other Christians or even friends and relatives (ibid; 160-186).

According to James Barr however, the perpetual conservative evangelical boasting about their emphasis on sin should be severely discounted because there is no evidence of any depth of understanding of what sin is or what it does. Sin is merely repeated and stated to be found in all other religions other that Fundamentalism. (BARR, J., The Westminster Press, 1978 , p.179)

Conservative Evangelicals may suffer from the pressure of sin and temptation but this is only because they are not as fully and consistently Conservative Evangelical as they might be. The Biblical writers may have been sinners (Gal.2:11) but when they put pen to paper ‘sin flew out the window‘ and what they wrote was a perfect expression of the will of God in no way distorted by human sin. The pretense of fundamentalism to a more profound and radical doctrine of sin is a bluff which should now be called, according to Professor Barr (ibid; 178).

In my experience the person who joins a Conservative Evangelical group soon finds that he or she has to believe in the inspiration of scripture in a form that necessitates the rejection of critical opinions about date, authorship and so on; the personal dynamics of the group are used to enforce conformity with these opinions. In defending Inerrancy, Fundamentalists insist that any attempted proof otherwise must show with the utmost rigour and beyond all possible doubt that the biblical writer thought to be in error had deliberately and expressly intended the sense that was thought to be erroneous. On the other side of the coin however, they make no demands upon themselves that interpretations of scripture taken to mean that biblical texts were inerrant in all matters, including history, genealogies, the figures in Chronicles, the authorship of Isaiah, the Pentateuch and all the letters of Paul, in fact meant all of these. Some of the Biblical writers quoted to support inerrancy may not even have known all the books in our present canon, certainly the earlier ones did not. Another major factor, namely that earlier biblical thought forms were different to ours, was given little if any consideration (ibid; 260-303).

Where the band of doctrinal purity is drawn tight enough, freedom and spontaneity can
easily and quickly be lost and a marked in-group mentality is formed, encouraged by -

- Lack of contact with non-conservative Christians
- Suspicion of unorthodox and non-evangelical tendencies
- All ideas are measured as to whether they favour the group’s ideology or not
- Instant defense against anything that might seem to criticize the values of the group
- A shifting constituency with a high turnover of membership (ibid 260-303).

**A Summary of Barr’s Criticisms of Fundamentalism**

1. Faith is made dependent on rationalist proof of the inerrancy of the Bible in which the promises of God are not considered trustworthy unless they are enshrined in a book all statements of which are infallible and inerrant.
2. The essentials of the faith are alleged to be unknown in other segments of church membership. This provides a reason for exclusiveness and hostility towards other forms of Christian faith.
3. The nearest to the realization of God’s will lay in the past with the Reformation and Evangelical Revivals; now, things are to get worse before a glorious future of a totally new age completely disconnected from the present world is emphasized.

**Other Critics of Fundamentalism**

In 1979 Rogers and McKim published their book opposing detailed inerrancy and some of their material I have paraphrased, discussed or referred to, elsewhere. In summary though one of their main point was that the contemporary argument for Inerrancy differs qualitatively from that of the Reformers … *what the Chicago Statement defined as Inerrancy was very different to what Luther and Calvin meant by it*. This development they connected to Charles Hodge’s admiration for the work of Francis Turretin, as I have done in the History of Inerrancy section of this thesis – (ROGERS, J. B. & MCKIM, D. K. (1979), *The Authority and Interpretation of the Bible*, San Francisco, Harper & Row, p. 279).

Until the 16th century the doctrine of Scripture was placed in the introduction and was not an independent locus until the second half of that century. The Belgic Confession of 1561 gives several detailed chapters on the doctrine of Scripture and the Second Helvetic Confession of 1566 by Bullinger begins with a long chapter on the Scriptures as the Word of God followed by a chapter on interpreting Scripture; this trend
culminated in the long chapter on the doctrine of Scripture which began the Westminster Confession of Faith of 1647 (ibid.26-27). The reformers wanted to emphasize all of their teaching was drawn from Scripture and so began with a strong statement on the authority, sufficiency and perspicuity of Scripture before dealing with any other doctrine. In the view of many this position takes the primary focus away from God (ibid.28). To overcome this difficulty scripture ought to be placed under the work of the Holy Spirit and thus under the direction of God who caused them to be written. The error of viewing Scriptures as standing alone as a source of epistemological certainty results in the Scriptures taking on a life of their own without any further involvement of God (MCGOWAN, S.B. & MCGOWAN, A.T.B., Apollos branch of Inter-Varsity Press, 2007, p.29).

Scott McGowan again writes - I have gradually become concerned that some ways of defining and using Scripture within evangelicalism are open to serious criticism and could do us more harm than good if we continue to maintain them in their present form. Through a failure to understand the differences between evangelicalism and fundamentalism, through a failure to engage with biblical scholarship, and sometimes through sheer obscurantist and anti-intellectual approaches, evangelicals have often damaged rather than helped the case for a high view of Scripture (ibid, p.11).

Mark Noll wrote - The Evangelical Protestant mind has never relished complexity. Indeed its crusading genius, whether in religion or politics, has always tended toward an over-simplification of issues and the substitution of inspiration and zeal for critical analysis and serious reflection (NOLL, M. (1994) The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind, Grand Rapids, Michigan, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company; p.6f). He goes on to mention two historians from the University of Wisconsin whose books illustrate the weaknesses of evangelical intellectual life - Ronald Numbers’ The Creationists (Knopf, 1992) and Paul Boyer’s When Time Shall Be No More: Prophecy Belief in Modern American Culture (Harvard University Press, 1992). He points to the spate of books which came out within weeks of the outbreak of the 1991 Gulf War featuring efforts to read this crisis as the direct fulfillment of biblical prophecy heralding the end of the world (NOLL, M. (1994) The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind, Grand Rapids, Michigan, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company; p.13). No matter how much egg these people get on their faces they still keep coming back with the same rash and unsound hermeneutics; mysteriously, people keep buying their books in large numbers.

Carl F.H. Henry expressed his concern for an intellectually responsible evangelicalism
and new concerns for social engagement and theological reflection through teaching at Fuller Seminary, editing *Christianity Today* and cooperating with Billy Graham. He criticized his colleague Harold Lindsell’s book because of its exclusiveness.

By the late 1940’s firms in Grand Rapids, Michigan, the centre of Dutch settlement, notably William B. Eerdmans Publishing company and Zondervan were eagerly publishing books by American Evangelicals.

Nancey Murphy, Harriet Harris and Bishop Spong were also critical authors as presented with others elsewhere in this thesis.

In general, a summary of criticisms levelled against Fundamentalism might be:

- Total complacency and lack of self-criticism is endemic and any individual fault is seen as resulting from not being conservative evangelical enough.
- Liberal or modernist theologies are given no credence whatsoever and there is accorded not the slightest reason or biblical evidence why such theologies should be propounded.
- On every point of difference there is a conservative and orthodox answer which tries to make the liberal and modern approach unnecessary and wrong.
- All relations with non-conservative theology are purely polemical.
- Even when beliefs are shared, such as in the Trinity, the resurrection and the Holy Spirit, no respect is granted by fundamentalists whose insistence on the authority of scripture grounded on and defined in terms of its infallibility and inerrancy, is paramount.
- Fundamentalists hold adherence to their doctrinal structure dearer than fellowship with other Christians or even friends and relatives (ibid 160-186).
In Chapter 9 we investigated some notable objections to, and criticism of, some of the Fundamentalist/Evangelical characteristics. The opposition mainly took issue with the exclusivity of the persuasion, having its roots in the indoctrinational tendency of its teaching and the adamant belief in the Inerrancy of the Scriptures. The latter belief, as I will suggest later, colours the Fundamentalist approach to the Bible as strenuous efforts are made to harmonise what clearly seem to be anomalies or contradictions in the text, in obedience to it. The enlightenment led to some secularization of society because no place could be found for the God described in the Scriptures. At the heart of it were two key elements, an affirmation of human autonomy and an affirmation of the final authority of reason, both of which militated against the orthodox Christian doctrine of revelation. If reason is the final authority then no appeal can be made to a divine being and if human beings are autonomous then they must decide for themselves without any interference from God, church or Bible. Whilst Fundamentalism has been shown to be somewhat exclusive and particular, Liberalism can also be a bit closed-minded, neglecting spirituality in favour of scholastic emphasis and accuracy; more detailed criticism will be presented after their two main bastions of biblical study, the Documentary Hypothesis and the Synoptic Problem solutions. We have seen that fundamentalism thrives on exclusivity, supporting and encouraging itself by repeated recourse to the same scriptural proof texts and strenuous discouragement of any conflicting belief or opinion, whether spoken or written. We will now turn to the other major theological persuasion under consideration, namely Liberal Theology.

Regarding the origins of Liberal Theology, Scott McGowan, in his book *The Divine Spiration of Scripture*, cites the Enlightenment as the beginning of a schism since it spawned Liberal Theology and it was the latter’s rejection of the older theology, based on revelation that in turn prompted a strong evangelical response. *The Enlightenment could find no place for the kind of God described in the scriptures who created all things and held all things in being. The orthodox Christian doctrine of revelation was militated against by the two key elements of the Enlightenment - human autonomy and the final authority of reason* (MCGOWAN, S. B. (2007) *The Divine Spiration of Scripture*, Nottingham, Apollos of Inter-Varsity Press, p.51).
Liberalism


A main philosopher of the Enlightenment was Immanuel Kant who attempted to synthesise the two current schools of empiricism and rationalism. The former school argued that all knowledge comes about by sense perception alone and so all talk of God, life after death, the soul and so on was meaningless. Its foremost supporters were John Locke and David Hume. The rationalists, like Descartes and Spinoza, argued that all knowledge comes about by reasoning from certain general principles or self-evident truths, and mathematics was the most precise form of thought. Kant could not believe that the mind was a blank page, as Locke suggested, but that it accepted the facts gained in experience and processed them according to its own inbuilt concepts. Unfortunately Kant’s thinking, involving two realms of Phenomena and Noumena, produced a non-supernatural religion that became essentially a system of ethics, (FLEW, A. (1984) *A Dictionary of Philosophy*, London, Pan Books Ltd. p.190f., MCGOWAN, S. B. (2007) *The Divine Spiration of Scripture*, Nottingham, Apollos of Inter-Varsity Press, p.53).

To bring Christian theology into line with philosophy, science and the overall world view of the enlightenment, a school of theology developed in Germany which became known as ‘Liberal Theology’. Liberal Theology was faced with Kant’s philosophy, the rapid scientific advancement in which Newton indicated a closed, causal universe and the Higher-Critical school of German biblical studies. The first to attempt a reconstruction of Christianity was Friedrich Schleiermacher who sought another way to provide a foundation for religious claims. For him the heart of religion was not to be found in dogma or reason but in experience, feeling and intuition. Theology was no more than an attempt to put religious feeling and experience into words; *we believe in God because of this feeling of absolute dependence*. All religions share this feeling but Christianity is the highest form because of Jesus Christ. Each of us has a ‘God-consciousness’ which is impaired because of our sin; Jesus Christ had a perfect God-consciousness bringing a special relationship to God. The Bible has authority, not as part of God’s self-revelation, or as a source of divine truth but as a shaper of our God-

Ritschl rejected metaphysical knowledge of God in that we can know him only through the community of faith and our experience in the church, the place where justification and reconciliation take place rather than the human heart; Jesus Christ’s great work was to create the church and inaugurate the kingdom of God. Ritschl opined that doctrines do not convey any truth about reality but simply what it means to us (value judgments) so we must go behind these doctrines to the historical facts of Jesus’ life and ministry, (MCGOWAN, S.B. & MCGOWAN, A.T.B.,Apollos branch of Inter-Varsity Press, 2007, , p.56).

Schleiermacher and Ritschl then began the movement known as Liberal Theology in which:

- The older orthodoxy was increasingly questioned.
- The miraculous elements in the Bible were treated with doubt and even skepticism.
- The so-called Greek philosophical influences were removed.
- The Scriptures are to be understood simply as historical human documents which have arisen within the faith community of which we are a later part.
- Creedal affirmations such as the virgin birth, the incarnation and the resurrection were questioned or denied.


On page 56 of his book Scott McGowan said of the Scriptures, liberal theology stated –

- It is instructive for us to know what Jews and Christians of an earlier generation believed.
- We must not imagine that there was any kind of supernatural activity that led to the writing of these ancient documents – other religions also have their ‘Scriptures’.
- The only authority Scriptures have in the church is that of tradition.
- We may highly value Scriptures insights and religious genius without being obliged to agree with them on everything.

Many of the views of the original writers were primitive and even immoral, such as the
view that God would command them to brutally destroy their enemies.

**The Literary Aspect**

The text as a finished piece of writing constitutes a world in its own right and serves as an object of investigation. A study of the language of the text by -

- Various meanings or shades of meanings - philology and lexicography.
- The grammar of a language including syntax, inflection or accidence.
- Patterns of sentence structure, such as parallelism and chiasm.
- The literary style - vocabulary, word arrangement, the effect they achieve - sophisticated, ordinary, calm, excited, narrative, argumentative.
- Genre - historical narrative (1 Samuel), Poetry (Psalms), Wisdom (Job), Prophetic Oracle (Amos), Gospel, Letter or Apocalypse (Revelation).
- Smaller forms or Sub-genres - creation myths, genealogies, individual narratives, legal codes, testaments, proverbs, oracles parables, prayers, hymns, exhortations etc.
- Unity and integrity of a text - to judge if it is a whole or composite work or whether certain parts were added earlier or later.
- How the characters are portrayed, interact, develop.
- The Plot - how it is developed, how tension is introduced and resolved.
- Literary mood - what emotions the text is intended to elicit.
- Perspective - is the narrative written by a participant or an outsider, sympathetic, non-sympathetic or neutral.

(Achtemeier et al, (1985) - p.131)

The Literary Form of a text is often a clue to -

- its meaning, e.g. whether one interprets Genesis 1-3 as creation myth, allegory, polemic or scientific history,
- its life setting, e.g. relating a hymn to a liturgical setting out of which it arose,
- comparing the text with similar literary forms in both biblical and other writings often enabling one to see things in the text one would otherwise have missed.

Offshoots of these main areas have occurred such as –

**Form Criticism** - The oral and written history of a portion of the text, e.g. the Decalogue in Exodus 20 and 34 and Deuteronomy 5: it has the following features -
• It first determines the bounds of a particular literary unit, called a *pericope* (Gk. ‘a cutting all around’) which has its own integrity with a definite beginning and end, an internal structure and a self-contained meaning, e.g. a parable.

• Second, it attempts to understand the function of the unit in its setting in social life (*Sitz im Leben*) e.g. a wedding song or a psalm.

• Third, one assumes that these literary units display formula patterns evident elsewhere in analogous writings which are then searched.

• Fragments of Jesus’ words and deeds were passed on by word of mouth or in writing and the first preachers made use of these pericopes as a basis for their sermons.

The pre-literary stage of the Form Critical approach to the gospel tradition was regulated by four axioms –

1. The stories and sayings of Jesus were first circulated in small pericopes, except for the Passion narrative and some versions of the Resurrection and Appearances which existed as blocks, perhaps used liturgically.

2. These pericopae can be classified according to literary form or type.

3. The relative age and historical value of the units can be determined by using criteria such as length (expansion denoting embellishments), names, additions (indicating a later development) and the presence of Semitisms pointing to an earlier age.

4. *Sitz im Leben* – the persuasion that each unit may be placed in an appropriate life setting in the early church.


**Redaction Criticism:**

As a refinement of Form Criticism this investigates the way in which the text or tradition has been edited, e.g. the editing of material from Samuel and Kings by the Chronicler and how this relates to the redactor’s purpose or motivation. This criticism is concerned mainly about two things –

• To understand how various literary units function in the present arrangement in the biblical text, accrediting each Bible book with an overall structure or architecture; hence it is important to see the parts in relation to the whole.

• To understand the social situation in which the text was given its final shape and to which it was addressed. Older traditions were often brought together and updated for the purpose of speaking to a new situation, for example, the Book of Jeremiah in its redacted form was not just addressed to the situation in the
state of Judah in its final days, but was elevated to a ‘preaching to the exiles’ who needed to hear the word of Yahweh addressed to them in their new situation. (ibid. 333f)

**Canonical Criticism:**
This more recent type of biblical criticism places greater emphasis on the final form of the text and is less interested in the stages of development or the literary aspects. It views the Bible as a collection of canonical writings regarded as sacred and normative in the face of Israel and the church, which in turn implies –

- That the biblical writings possess another dimension that may not have been there when the text was originally composed, giving it an added perspective – how and why the text has addressed communities of faith down the ages and what they are saying to the living community of faith in the present.
- As part of a collection a book requires a canonical context, no longer being read in isolation. It stands as part of a chorus of voices to be heard along with the rest and interpreters must investigate its message as part of the entire canonical witness. (ibid.336).

**The Theological Aspect**

Alongside critical biblical study came a movement in Protestantism that dominated academic theology in the late 19th century lead by Schleiermacher, Hegel and Ritschl. Its characteristics were:

1. Commitment to the task of reconstructing Christian belief in the light of modern knowledge - “a maximum acknowledgment of the claims of modern thought” (Claude Welch).
2. Emphasis on the freedom of the individual Christian thinker to criticize and reconstruct traditional beliefs - rejection of the authority of tradition or church hierarchy to control theology.
3. Focus on the practical or ethical dimension of Christianity - away from empty speculation and towards the concept of the kingdom of God.
4. To base theology on some foundation other than the absolute authority of the Bible - the traditional dogma of the supernatural inspiration of Scripture had been hopelessly undermined by historical-critical research - ‘the Bible itself is a husk hiding the pure kernel of unchanging truth lodged within it’. The task of theology was to identify the kernel, the essence of Christianity, and clearly
separate it from the husk of cultural ideas and expressions that encased it; for many the husk included miracles, supernatural beings such as angels and demons, and apocalyptic events.

5. Continued drift toward divine immanence at the expense of the transcendence of the early 19th century thinkers. Prior to the Enlightenment, theologians saw the Incarnation as the dramatic way in which God bridged the gap between a radically holy, transcendent God and sinful, finite humankind, whereas liberal theologians opted for continuity between divine and human as manifested by the rational, intuitive or moral capabilities of humans viewing Jesus as the exemplary human rather than as the invading Christ (GRENZ, S. J. & OLSON, R. E. (1992) *20th Century Theology*, Downers Grove, Illinois, Inter-Varsity Press. P.51-53).

A good example of the use of combined forms of criticism is the question of the unity of Second Corinthians. Was our Second Corinthians always as we have it now or was it originally a number of epistolary fragments that were later redacted as Second Corinthians? Since the letter is the most disjointed and jerky of Paul's letters it is not difficult to understand that various partition theories have arisen. There is also a contrast in tone between Chapter 7 and Chapters 10-13. Some scholars attribute the change of tone to news recently at hand and others to Paul writing different parts of the letter in different places. Elsewhere scholars noted changes in content suggesting that various sections were originally discreet fragments. Comparing the letter with apologetic letters and political speeches from the era many concluded that Second Corinthians can be located in one or another class of literature.

Partition theories require that the final redactor had removed various beginnings and endings of the constituent letters prior to reassembling them; this presents a textual problem involving editing, cutting and pasting which in that era was a laborious and expensive task as well a moral difficulty in view of the respect for the apostolic text. In conclusion, reflection on the practicalities of the redaction of the fragments into a consolidated epistle, as well as the failure of the redactor to smooth out the difficulties, some of which I have referred to, make one wonder why the original letters were not simply left as they were. This longstanding discussion demonstrates the use of combining various types of criticism in the search for the original text. (Rev. Dr Paul Barnett, *Chronology and the Corinthians*, (2012), SSEC Newsletter, Macquarie University, Sydney).
The Foundation Members of 20th Century Theology

David Hume (1711-1776) - all perceptions of the human mind are either impressions of experience or ideas - maintained that causality is not a concept of logic but a result of habit and association impressed on our imagination. The human soul is a sum of perceptions connected by association. Hence there is no such science as metaphysics, and belief in the existence of God cannot be proved by reason. By reducing all cognition to single perceptions and ruling out any purely intellectual faculty for recording and sifting them, Hume taught pure skepticism. He was the strongest advocate of Empiricism (empirical - based on observation and experience rather than theory and logic). (CRAGG, G. R. (1970) The Church and the Age of Reason, London, Penguin books. p.168).

Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) - God could not act in the world in ways unknown to human experience – held that the practical or moral realm of life was the proper sphere of religion. He attempted a new balance between transcendence and immanence. He was born, lived and died in Konigsberg but his major work “The Critique of Pure Reason” in 1781 rocked the philosophical world; this was followed by Critique 2 and 3 in 1788 and 1790 respectively. As Copernicus had elevated the Sun to the centre of the universe so Kant elevated the mind to the centre of human knowing (Epistemology). John Locke had argued that the mind was an empty vessel devoid of any innate ideas; it simply received impressions from the outside world (the passive mind) and then formulated ideas from them. Hume had argued that this empirical theory of knowing was inadequate as it was unable to give us knowledge of features of reality like causality (the consequence of a series of events) and substance (colour, size etc.). This brought into question the empiricism of Deism. Kant proposed a mind active in the knowing process as it systematized the raw data from the senses to give organized knowledge. Realities, such as God, immorality and freedom, which exist beyond space and time cannot be known through scientific enterprise because science is based on sense experience. These metaphysical concepts can be indicated as plausible only because we know of nothing that contradicts them (CRAGG, G. R. (1970) The Church and the Age of Reason, London, Penguin books, p.251f).

Kant proposed that God must exist as the one who guarantees that complete justice will prevail in that realm which must exist in which virtue is adequately rewarded. Human freedom is required in order to account for the universal human experience of being an acting moral agent - moral obligation presupposes freedom.
Kant reintroduced the anathema of ‘original sin’ when he proposed a ‘radical evil’ present within us which we cannot root out by our own powers but because human actions are free, it must be possible to overcome it. An empirical example of a person morally pleasing to God exists in our reason and has one historical exemplar, Jesus’ disposition in the face of his suffering “for the sake of the world’s highest good”. Christianity was a means toward the establishment of a universal ethical commonwealth. The right course is not to go from grace to virtue but rather to progress from “virtue to pardoning grace”. He did not ground morality in theology but theology in morality. Kant sought to establish religion as the devotion to a transcendent lawgiver whose will ought to be the goal of humankind. Ultimately the “divine voice” universally heard by autonomous human reason is a voice from within, not a word from the transcendent “beyond”. He attempted a new balance between transcendence and immanence. (GRENZ, S. J. & OLSON, R. E. (1992) 20th Century Theology, Downers Grove, Illinois, Inter-Varsity Press. p.25-31)

Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831) - Whereas Kant had sought to shift the focus of religion from the domain of “pure reason” (sense-based knowledge) to that of “practical reason” (based on the experience of the human person as a morally conditioned being) and devotion to a transcendent lawgiver, Hegel looked to the intellectual dimension for that sense of transcendence linking ultimate truth with the capability of the human mind to comprehend the meaning of the process of human history.

Hegel denied that sense experience was the only basis for knowledge or that forming ideas from sense experience was the most significant method of obtaining knowledge (GRENZ, S. J. & OLSON, R. E. (1992) 20th Century Theology, Downers Grove, Illinois, Inter-Varsity Press. p.33).

Three related concepts capsulise Hegel’s attempt to envision reality in a new way -
1. Spirit - an active subject, a process present in humans as the inner being of the world, the sole reality. All processes in nature and history form a unified whole as the manifestation of the spiritual principle underlying them.
2. Truth as Process - not as the rational conclusion reached by reason (Descartes) but the ebb and flow of reasoning that eventually leads to resolution. The epochs of human history are the stages through which Spirit passes en route to self-discovery. Knowledge is philosophical mastery of the patterns produced by the historical process.
3. Dialectic - Truth includes what it negates as it passes to the next stage of its history. Thesis -> antithesis -> synthesis -> new thesis and so on. (ibid; p.33f).


Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834) - *A feeling of dependence was the foundation of Christianity* - Kant had set forth ethics and morality as the focal points of the special religious dimension, Hegel had moved the focus to the intellectual or speculative realm but Schleiermacher elevated the intuitive life, a special human experience he called “feeling” to the centre of religion. He is to Christian theology what Newton is to physics and Darwin to biology. He strove to make Christianity compatible with the scientific and philosophical revolutions of his age. The substitutionary doctrine of the atonement states that Christ suffered at the hands of God the just punishment for human sin. Schleiermacher’s *The Christian Faith* was hailed as the greatest systematic theology work since Calvin’s *Institutes* and presented a system of Christian doctrine for modern times. It was a liberation from outmoded authoritarian dogmatism to a truly modern form that would not conflict with science - a trail blazer in liberal theology. The awareness of absolute dependence is the true source or origin of religion and its deepest foundation (*The Christian Faith*, (1963) ed. H.R. MacIntosh and J.S. Stewart, 2 volumes; New York: Harper and Row).

Romanticism was a reaction to the cold rationalism of the Enlightenment philosophy and placed great emphasis on human feelings, imagination and intuition valuing music and poetry as a means of self-expression; the movement’s greatest leader was Goethe.

Theology had suffered indifference and even hostility at the hands of the Enlightenment, and the French Revolution placed the Goddess of Reason in its place. According to Kant *pure reason was limited to objects of sense experience and what lay beyond was not knowable*, (GRENZ, S. J. & OLSON, R. E. (1992) *20th Century Theology*, Downers Grove, Illinois, Inter-Varsity Press. p.43). Historical criticism had raised questions about the origin of the Bible and other texts and questioned the
uniqueness of Christianity. Romanticism wanted to recover the power of human feeling and imagination which had been lost in rationalism. Schleiermacher attempted to show that religion is rooted in an experience essential to humanity, as opposed to Kant’s basing God on practical reason and Hegel’s march of Absolute Spirit through history, his approach was through intuition - immediate consciousness of the deity, God consciousness (MURPHY, N. (1996) Beyond Liberalism and Fundamentalism, Valley Forge, Trinity Press International; p.22).

Schleiermacher suggested that 'the impasse between rationalism and orthodoxy could be solved if the feeling of absolute dependency was seen as the source of theology' (GRENZ, S. J. & OLSON, R. E. (1992) 20th Century Theology, Downers Grove, Illinois, Inter-Varsity Press. p.44).

Orthodoxy practised a theology from above and Enlightenment theology was a deistic theology from below. Orthodoxy led to authoritative theology which stifled human creativity and confused the church’s dogmas about God with God himself. The Enlightenment in rebelling against this produced a sterile, bland, natural religion that differed little from religious philosophy. Schleiermacher wanted human reflection on human experience of God, fundamental to human nature, and an integrative element in human life and culture - the feeling of being utterly dependent on something infinite that manifests itself in and through finite things (Terrence N. Tice, Introduction in Friedrich Schleiermacher's On Religion: Addresses in Response to its Cultured Critics, Richmond: John Knox, 1969, p.12), the essence was not in rational proofs of the existence of God or supernaturally revealed dogmas or churchly rituals and formalities. The ‘feeling’ (Gefühl,) with which Schleiermacher equated religion, connoted a deep sense or awareness, beneath and before explicit thought or sensation, the common source of all religions. Just as reason and conscience give rise to science and morality, so piety gives rise to religion, something in its own right, not subsumed (ibid; 79).

Schleiermacher defined theology as the attempt to set forth the Christian religious affections in speech (ibid;76) - the feeling of being totally dependent upon the redemptive work of Jesus Christ for one’s own relationship to God is the essence of Christianity. Theology must constantly re-examine the doctrinal formulas of Christianity to determine their adequacy to express the Christian God-consciousness, with Jesus Christ being the highest expression (Friedrich Schleiermacher, The
Christian Faith, 2nd Ed. H.R. Mackintosh & J.S. Stewart; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1928, p.98). Inadequate formulations should be replaced with better and more contemporary expressions of Christian Piety. Every doctrinal form is bound to a particular time and could not claim permanent validity; they must be drawn from the inward experience of Christian people. The Bible is special in that it recorded the religious experience of the earliest Christian communities, and the New Testament that of Jesus, and it served as a model for all attempts to interpret the significance of Jesus Christ for specific historical circumstances. Schleiermacher did not find the Bible supernaturally inspired or infallible and the Old Testament seemed to lack the dignity of the New; the Holy Spirit's influence in its writings differed only in degree from the Spirit's influence elsewhere. *Its truth for theology lies in its reproduction of the pure model of Christ’s own God-consciousness. It is the theory of universal religious experience (God consciousness) that undergirds Scripture.* (ibid; 609, 608).

Schleiermacher did not describe God, as that was to limit and divide thus taking away God’s infinity; all talk about God is always talk about human experience of God (ibid; 194). God is the all-determining reality, the ultimate cause of everything, both good and evil, the one who acts but cannot be acted upon. God’s omnipotence necessitates God being the cause of all evil otherwise some other agency is causing it and limiting God’s omnipotence. The feeling of absolute dependence requires that all of nature is willed, ordained and caused by God and so special acts like miracles would contradict this.

God cannot be asked to change the course of events by intercessory prayer; what happens must have been part of the original divine plan. Schleiermacher eliminated the supernatural and considered the idea of the Trinity not helpful in Theology. ‘God is the absolute, all-determining, supra-personal power immanent in everything but beyond all the distinctions creatureliness imposes on existence’.

Schleiermacher rejected the traditional doctrine of the Incarnation and Jesus’ two natures as illogical. *Jesus Christ is completely like the rest of humanity except that he has an absolutely potent God-consciousness, a product of God’s activity in his life, a veritable existence of God in him. Jesus’ redemptive work lies in his communication of this God-consciousness to others* (ibid. p.393).

Albert Ritschl (1822-1889) - After Schleiermacher’s The Christian Faith of 1821 came
Ritschl's *The Christian Doctrine of Justification and Reconciliation* of 1870-1874. Ritschl distinguished between scientific knowledge which strived for pure objectivity and disinterested cognition, and religious knowledge consisting of the value things have for the knower’s ultimate fulfillment and achieving the person’s highest good i.e. science is about the way things are and religion about the way things ought to be. Theology was interested in God not as an object of theoretical interest but only in so far as he affects the lives of people morally by helping them to achieve their highest good; for Ritschl that was in the kingdom of God revealed in Jesus Christ in whom humans find their highest ideal perfectly lived. Theology therefore is the investigation of the collective religious and moral experience of the kingdom of God in the church and it seeks to construct a system of value judgments based solely on the effects of God on Christians’ lives and the worth of those effects for their highest good taking into account historical research into the original effects of Jesus’ preaching of the Kingdom of God. The kernel and heart of it all is the kingdom of God. God really is known in his effects, not speculation into his nature.

Metaphysical attributes like omnipotence and omnipresence lay in the realm of theoretical rather than religious knowledge and could not be articulated as a value judgment. The kingdom of God according to Ritschl was the unity of humanity organized according to love. The identification of God’s being with the progress of his kingdom in the world seemed to imply divine immanence within history.

The Creed of Chalcedon in 451 AD affirmed that Jesus Christ possessed two distinct natures, human and divine, but Ritschl’s interest was in his historical conduct, religious convictions and ethical motives which exert an influence on us. Jesus’ unique vocation was to be the perfect embodiment of the kingdom of God among humans and to make possible humanity’s greatest good. Christ pre-existed only in the sense that he and his work were eternally known and willed by God (ibid; p.398, 413).

Karl Barth (1886-1968) - The advent of World War I and the Swiss theologian Karl Barth set in motion a reaction to the liberalism and optimism that pervaded the 20th century - this new direction was termed “neo-orthodoxy”. It was characterized by an attempt to rediscover certain of the doctrines that had been central to the older Christian orthodoxy - human sin, divine grace and personal decision - to hear God speak from beyond. His two commentaries on Romans of 1919 and 1921 harshly criticized liberal protestant theology whilst affirming the validity of both the historical-
critical method of studying Scripture and the doctrine of verbal inspiration - he did this by viewing the whole Bible as human, subject to the strains and weaknesses of any human product, but at the same time all of it is from God in that it says something that does not arise from human culture and is not immanent within it; the revelatory content is not its words and sentences but the persons and acts to which it testifies. The historical-critical method of biblical investigation has its rightful place: it is concerned with the preparation of the intelligence – and this can never be superfluous. But, were I driven to choose between it and the venerable doctrine of Inspiration, I should without hesitation adopt the latter, which has a broader, deeper, more important justification. (BARTH, K. (1968) *The Epistle to the Romans*, London, Oxford University Press pp. 90-95). Barth said his concern was to see through and beyond history into the spirit of the Bible, which is the eternal spirit (ibid; 1). He emphasized the wholly otherness of God, the gospel, eternity and salvation and argued for a theology from above to replace the old, human-centered theology from below. Barth summarised his own position by declaring the possibility of knowledge of God’s Word lies in God’s Word and nowhere else. Barth’s concept of the ‘Word of God’ also left a place for the human reception of that Word. He taught that God the Holy Spirit made hearing and response to God’s Word possible but it occurred in concrete situations, existentially. Part of the task of dogmatics at its foundation was the examination and explanation of the human experience of the Word of God. (PARKER, T. H. L. (1970) *Karl Barth*, Grand Rapids, Michigan, William B. Eerdmans p.67).

Thus Barth broke with the tradition of modern liberalism which concentrated on the philosophical and historical study of the biblical text. Some scholars were puzzled by his unhistorical and uncritical approach to the Bible (e.g. Harnack and Hermann, two of Barth’s own teachers), but some found it a badly needed correction (such as Schlatter and Adolf Julicher) GRENZ, S. J. & OLSON, R. E. (1992) *20th Century Theology*, Downers Grove, Illinois, Inter-Varsity Press, p.67). He wrote against human reason and enlightenment rationalism and in favour of the Word of God and the Gospel. He opposed every form of Natural Theology, the attempt to gain knowledge of God from nature, culture and philosophy, but leaned towards the possibility of knowledge of God in Jesus Christ as grasped by faith. True theology must be the explication of God’s Word and nothing else, human reasoning must not be allowed to subvert it to anthropocentric theology by human, historical modes of thought. God establishes an analogy between himself and humanity in Jesus Christ to graciously give knowledge of the Way, the Truth and the Life - there is no proving this truth and
one either “sees it” or not. Faith is a gift of God.

The only source of Christian Theology is God’s Word consisting of three forms or modes -

1. The primary form is Jesus Christ and the entire history of God’s acts leading up to and surrounding his life, death and resurrection. Jesus is the unique and unsurpassable self-revelation of God; God himself is actively present in the flesh of a real human being.

2. Scripture, the privileged witness to divine revelation - the church’s proper attitude toward scripture is one of obedience and submission because the only authority above it is Jesus Christ himself.

3. The church’s proclamation of the gospel.


The Bible is God’s Word to the extent that God causes it to be His Word and speaks through it; (ibid; 109). God’s Word always has the character of an event. What we have in the Bible are human attempts to repeat and reproduce the Word of God in human words and thoughts and in specific human situations.

Barth interpreted God’s transcendence as his Freedom of divine living and loving in supreme and utter independence having the perfections of unity, omnipresence, constancy, omnipotence, eternity and glory, (BARTH, K. (1963) Church Dogmatics, II/1, Edinburgh, T. & T. Clark; pp.440-677). Barth rejected every kind of rational justification of the truth of revelation leaving no intelligible bridges connecting theology with other disciplines or with common human experience.

Liberal Critics accused Barth of removing the Bible from historical critical inquiry and moving towards verbal inspiration, see L. Harold DeWolf, The Religious Revolt Against Reason, New York: Harper & Row, 1949, although applauding his denial of its inerrancy. Conservatives object to the reduction of the Bible’s doctrinal infallibility, e.g. Clark Pinnock in Karl Barth and Christian Apologetics, Themelios, May 1977; 66-71, and Bernard Ramm in After Fundamentalism, the Future of Evangelical Theology, San Francisco: Harper and Row; 1983. Other doubters maintained that a theology of revelation only, was too subjective to be able to convince others. Revelation only through Jesus Christ, with no general revelation, rejects any other encounter between God and man and every doctrine is turned into a form of Christology, e.g. Jesus is both
the subject and object of predestination. The roles of the Father, the Spirit and human beings in salvation history are neglected. However Barth did bring back the Trinity and the Transcendence of God from obscurity to which 20th century theology had condemned them (ibid. p.65-77). The question was how to keep God’s self-revelation alone as the basis of theology and yet preserve the character of this revelation as an historical event. To Barth, Anselm’s concept of theology was *faith seeking understanding* and for Barth his very faith summoned him to knowledge; theology was the quest for understanding and its purpose was not to create faith, to confirm it, or to overcome doubt, because faith itself was not touched whether theological investigations failed or succeeded. A reading of scripture that did not pass beyond merely the understanding of its words, paragraphs and histories was not enough. On one level the Bible spoke in its words and histories. On the second level the truth of its message was revealed; this second level demanded a ‘reading within’ and an understanding as God illuminated the text.

Rudolph Bultmann (1884-1976) was a New Testament Scholar whose concern was to make Biblical faith understandable to the modern mindset. He believed with Karl Barth that 19th century Theology had made the human person, rather than God, the centre. The attempt to move behind the Gospels to determine exactly what Jesus himself had said and done (The Quest of the Historical Jesus) had raised the theological difficulty of which was the normative, the Jesus of the Gospels or the historical Jesus? Perhaps the main authors here respectively were Martin Kahler and Albert Schweitzer. Bultmann entered the lists on the side of Kahler who argued that the key to the New Testament arises through the message proclaimed by the church and not through history. The Form Critical Bultmann concluded that the Gospels presented a Jesus covered over with the thought forms of the Hellenistic context in which they were written - the Christ of faith. This Christ, Bultmann suggested, is in keeping with Christian faith which does not arise out of the results of historical research but from a personal confrontation with the Christ in the present. The Jesus of history has little relevance for faith, rather the Christ in the Gospel message that God had acted in Jesus. Faith can only be the gift of God’s grace that comes to us in the *kerygma*. History was important for events, such as the Cross for example, but God’s action in historical events is open only to the eyes of faith. God’s revelation lies in the present encounter with the preaching concerning Christ not with the historical Jesus. He regarded eternal life as a present, existential reality and not a future, temporal anticipation.
By demythologizing the New Testament Bultmann meant not removal but proper
interpretation of myth in order to see the true meaning of the documents expressed in
this literary form - *The real purpose of myth is not to present an objective picture of the
world as it is, but to express man’s understanding of himself in the world in which he
lives. Myth should be interpreted not cosmologically, but anthropologically, or better
makes the Christian message unacceptable to the modern mind but also distorts the
message itself inhibiting the genuine encounter with the *kerygma*. Demythologising is
vital because it facilitates the task of addressing humans today in the matter of the
existential confrontation with the reality of the transcendent God. Liberal theology
sought to bridge the gap between the ancient texts and the modern world by the
discovery of the timeless truths found in the documents, the most important of which
were the ethical principles taught by Jesus; Bultmann thought we should bring the
crucial question of human existence to the texts to be able to hear the Word of God
Inter-Varsity Press.p.65-77).

Based on Kierkegaard’s concept of God being qualitatively different from creation
preventing reason from providing knowledge of God, Barth had reintroduced the
transcendence of God over the immanence of 19th century theology and Bultmann
joined Barth in this endeavour. He went further to state that God cannot be spoken of
except in relation to the human person and God cannot act in the world except in the
private realm of personal faith but he could not reaffirm the transcendence of God in its
full biblical sense.

In summary Liberals are those for whom the Bible is inspired truth about God,
important in the life of believers but not necessarily authoritative in all matters. Their
persuasion contains a mixture of literal and symbolic truth and human errors and what
the Bible is taken to mean may depend on who reads it: its truth standing alongside
truth about God from other religions. There may be acceptance of some of the
conservative beliefs listed previously but not so adamantly or exclusively.
(Andrew Village of the University of Wales in Bangor, UK Review of Religious Research
Criticisms of Liberal Theology

After its birth at the hands of Schleiermacher and Ritschl in Germany, Liberal Theology was faced with Kant’s theology, the rapid scientific advancement in which Newton indicated a closed, causal universe and the Higher Critical School of German Biblical Studies. As the concept of Liberal theology became well known the following criticisms emerged –

1. Christianity became an ethical religion with little or no possibility of real personal knowledge of God.
2. Jesus is regarded simply as the first Christian
3. Jesus is an example of faith rather than an object of faith
4. The bible is a human book containing many errors rather than a revelation of God to man
5. Christ is regarded by liberals as an example and guide but by evangelicals as a saviour.
6. As Alasdair Heron said, _Liberal theology had reduce theology to anthropology, had failed to take seriously the reality of God and the need for revelation, had not accepted the authority of the Bible as vehicle for God’s word_ ((MCGOWAN, S.B. & MCGOWAN, A.T.B., Apollos branch of Inter-Varsity Press, 2007, p. 63)
7. J.K.S. Reid wrote, _There appears over the years a recurrent movement from living authority to literal authority; a rigid torpor that replaced a living voice_ (REID, J. K. S. (1957) _The Authority of Scripture_, Connecticut, London, Greenwood Press, p.25).

Karl Barth was turned away from liberal theology by -

- The Scriptures contained not human religion but God’s Word; not the right human thoughts about God but the right divine thoughts about men.
- The ethics, dogmatics, biblical exegeses and interpretation of history of 19th century liberal theology had no future - he was dissatisfied with their war ethics.
- Liberal theology had capitulated before the philosophy of the enlightenment.
- The Bible had been so emptied of content by Higher-critical scholarship that he had nothing to preach on a Sunday.

Evangelicals regarded the biblical authors as *men speaking from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit*, whereas the Liberals regarded them as *men reflecting on their religious experience* (McGowan, S.B. & McGowan, A.T.B., Apollos branch of Inter-Varsity Press, 2007, p.208). Liberals thought that the Scriptures were an interesting collection of what Jewish and Christian believers had thought throughout the centuries, from which we can learn a great deal, but that have no real authority over our own thinking. Liberal theology tried to accommodate Christianity to human beings who had rejected the supernatural, resulting in little to say about incarnation, resurrection, salvation and eternal life focusing instead on the ethical or socio-political sphere (ibid.208).

J. Gresham Machen of Princeton Theological Seminary was a staunch conservative evangelical and his principal argument was that liberalism was not a form of Christianity but an entirely different religion which cannot be permitted to co-exist in the church and must be named an enemy of biblical Christianity (see page 107). Liberalism appeals to man's will while Christianity announces first a gracious act of God and it is in their doctrines of God and humanity that the differences are manifest (ibid.75). Liberalism shows a loss of consciousness of sin and a rejection of the transcendence of God; it asserts that the Bible is a human book with many errors and bases its foundation on the emotions of sinful men instead of a revelation from God to man.
CHAPTER 11
THE OUTPUT WORK OF BOTH SIDES
Part 1 - Liberal

Liberal Critical Study

Having thoroughly described the history and characteristics of the two primary groups and some of the main proponents thereof, we will now look at the output of these two schools in bringing their version of biblical interpretation to the field of education and the public arena. I will consider the Liberal output first as its main scholastic theological work consisted of two major theories concerning the origination of the Old Testament and New Testament writings, concentrating on the Pentateuch and the Gospels respectively. These theories, well supported by major scholars of international reputation, I will present and explain first, before examining criticisms of them. The Evangelical position, on the other hand, is so wide-ranging, affecting the whole Bible, that I will present its output later accompanied by criticism of each stage of it so as to enable direct association.

The Liberal theologians are very engaged with scholarly biblical study and the best examples of their work lie in this area. It is in the area of critical study of the Biblical texts that the Liberal side excels and consequently the examples I have chosen are two outstanding contributions to the understanding of the provenance of the Pentateuch and the Gospels. These bastions of their work are the Documentary Hypothesis, explaining the origins of the writings contained in the Pentateuch, and proposed solutions to the Synoptic Problem, the latter being the astounding similarities, alongside the individual differences, in the presentations of Jesus and his ministry in the three Synoptic Gospels, Matthew, Mark and Luke. An examination of these two major areas of their work will serve to clearly show the thrust and direction of the Liberal output.

The Documentary Hypothesis

The component parts of the Documentary Hypothesis consist of analyses of the contributions of the following authors or schools –
The Jahwist (referred to as J, or the Yahwist in English), who wrote in the South of the country in the time of Solomon in c.950 -922 BCE. He lived at a time when Israel was at her greatest as a mini-empire with the great Solomon at its head and his mighty temple and palace complex resplendent for all to see. Israel was one nation in his time and J thought it would be a good idea, and a tribute, to write a mighty epic about Israel’s greatness, traditions and achievements. He collected Law Codes, Poems, Hymns and stories from the major centres of worship, as well as collections of writings from earlier times, and produced the four books of Genesis to Numbers which we now call - the Tetratuch. These were completed by him in the last half of the 10th century BCE.

Prior to the establishment of settled communities in Israel, and the writing that followed, her culture had been an oral one and most of the stories written in our Old Testament had probably been passed down orally for quite a while with some different additions and embellishment round each campfire at the major religious centres. Before Israel became known as Israel, its ancestor, Abraham, had come from Ur, which had its own myths, and settled in Haran, which also had its own traditional stories, and then down to Canaan, a land rich in religious ritual, rites, sacrifices and ceremonies, many of which Israel seems to have adopted after settlement there. The difference between Israel and its stories and the surrounding cultures and their myths was that Israelite tradition tried to change the hierarchical and polytheistic stories of its environment to focus on its own single God, the real one (ENNS, P. (2005) Inspiration and Incarnation: Evangelicals and the Problem of the Old Testament, Grand Rapids, Baker; p.53/4).
The above diagram, from page 54 of Peter Enn’s book, shows the worldview of the Ancient Near East (ANE) when Genesis was formulated. J did not want to change this but rather to change the notion of its origin from the old remnant of the battle of the gods to Yahweh’s own and sole creation. Many of Israel’s alterations of ANE’s traditions were directed at showing the superiority of Israel’s God to the pantheon of surrounding deities (Ps. 96:5). The actual exclusion of other gods from consideration, Monotheism, was not fully established until the Babylonian exile in 587 BCE, as has been shown by the recent discovery of pagan idols in Jewish houses excavated in Jerusalem and dated to the period immediately prior to the exile.

Paul Seely sees quite clearly that many of Israel’s ‘traditions’ were ‘borrowed’ from surrounding cultures and altered, as far as characters and emphasis were concerned, to suit the current requirements - When the history-science of Genesis 1 is compared to ancient Near Eastern literature, it becomes readily apparent that its concepts about the natural world are ancient Near Eastern concepts; this again tells us that they are not divine revelations. The view which emerges from obeying Deut. 18:22 and 1 Thess. 5:21 and from comparing the history-science in Genesis 1 to ancient Near Eastern literature is that God, like a wise Father, has chosen to reveal himself and his will to his children in terms of their understanding of the natural world. (Seely, Paul H., Perspectives on Science & Christian Faith, Mar2011, Vol. 63 Issue 1, p71-72).

Deuteronomy 18:22 declares that if - the thing does not take place or prove true, it is a word that the Lord has not spoken, and 1 Thess.5:21 advises to ‘test everything’.

An inerrantist’s view of the assertion of an upper firmament holding back the waters is provided in their classic, The Genesis Flood (1961), by Henry Morris and John Whitcomb; they assert that on the second day of creation, the waters covering the earth’s surface were divided into two great reservoirs—one below the firmament and one above; the firmament being the “expanse” above the earth now corresponding to the troposphere … With the biblical testimony concerning a pre-flood canopy of waters, we have an adequate source for the waters of a universal flood. In another harmonization of Scripture and science, Hugh Ross claims that the “expanse” in Gen. 1:6–8 refers to the troposphere and the “waters above” are water vapor. He contends that “God’s ‘separation’ of the water accurately describes the formation of the troposphere, the atmospheric layer just above the ocean where clouds form and humidity resides.” (Hugh Ross, Creation and Time, (Colorado Springs:
In an attempt to pour oil on troubled waters, Denis O. Lamoureux, an Associate Professor of science and religion at St. Joseph’s College in the University of Alberta, states – What the biblical writers and other ancient peoples saw with their eyes, they believed to be real, like the firmament and heavenly sea. This was the science-of-the-day in the ancient Near East. In contrast, we view the physical world from a modern phenomenological perspective. Thanks to modern scientific knowledge, when we see the blue dome of the sky, we know that it is only an appearance or visual effect caused by the scattering of short wave light in the upper atmosphere. Consequently, it is critical that these two different perspectives of nature be differentiated and not conflated in the reading of Scripture. (The erosion of biblical inerrancy, or toward a more biblical view of the inerrant word of God? By: Lamoureux, Denis O. Source: Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith, 62 no 2 Je 2010, p 133-138, Article page 6.).

Although J was the first whose writings made up chapters in the Bible they were not the oldest items therein since he used some extracts from even earlier material, such as - The Song of Miriam (Exodus 15:21), The Song of the Ark (Numbers 10:35-36) and The Song of Deborah (Judges Chapter 5) - all of these are from around 1200 BCE and possibly the work of eye-witnesses (PAGE, J. A. (1998) Who Writes for God Vol. 1, Thornton, John A Page: 20). Some early songs, sayings or proverbs from ancient Canaanite sources are dated to before the time of David, e.g. Ex. 15:1-18 adapted as a thanksgiving for the crossing of the Reed Sea. Abraham’s attempted sacrifice of Isaac and Jacob’s dream at Bethel are both pre-Israelite adaptations – it is hard to deny the evidence of dated stone tablets before your eyes on which these stories are written. The stories of Genesis seem to be younger than the stories of other ancient Near Eastern cultures … to theorise that the Israelite stories were actually older … and that all the other surrounding stories are parodies and perversions of the Israelite original … would seem motivated by a desire to protect one’s theology rather than to engage the available evidence, (ENNS, P. (2005) Inspiration and Incarnation: Evangelicals and the Problem of the Old Testament, Grand Rapids, Baker; p.52).

The annual ceremony of covenant renewal, held first at Shechem and later moved to Shiloh, was an occasion for the recitation of the laws and narratives in Israel’s tradition and had resulted in the establishment of a certain liturgical order before J arrived to collect and collate them. Like many researchers after him he must have expended considerable effort in trying to organize and collate the hundreds of blocks of oral and
written material which he had collected. The characteristics of J’s writings were that he:

- Began with the second account of creation (Gen.2:4b-4:26)
- Chronicled the history of his people from slavery to a great nation.
- Used Yahweh as the Holy Name; Yahweh constantly intervened to make good.
- Described God often in human terms (anthropomorphic - Gen.2:7, 8, 3:8, 21).
- Had a lively, vivid and theological style.
- Gave answers to questions like why do humans - use language, have religion, wear clothing, have dominion over animals, and why are there seasons, rainbows, briars and thorns.
- Moved through the stories of Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph and Moses.
- Does not shrink from naming his heroes’ faults (Gen.20:1f, 9:20, 19:30-36).
- Told how other nations of the earth came into being (Gen.21:8-21, 25:29-34, 27).
- Called the original dwellers in the Promised Land, Canaanites.
- Called Sinai, Sinai.
- Believed that all nations were to be blessed through Abraham (Gen.12:3).
- Extolled the Monarchy and the Temple and a hierarchy chosen by God.

Ancient Near Eastern concepts may have helped give shape to the theology of sacred space in the building of Israel’s Tabernacle and Temple, e.g. the eastward orientation, the placement of important cultic objects, the designation of areas of increasing holiness and the rules for access to the Holy Place, (BEALE, G. K. (2008) The Erosion of Inerrancy in Evangelicalism, Wheaton, Illinois, Crossway Books; p.28).

- Gave a version of the Ten Commandments without the Sabbath rest (Ex.34), which scholars opine is because the later version of the Decalogue with the 7th day rest had not yet been written.

(This list was compiled from the many references in Anderson and Boadt.)


Soon after the death of Solomon in 922 BCE the kingdom split into two, the Southern
half taking the name of Judea and the Northern half retaining the name of Israel, or Ephraim on some occasions. The Southern Kingdom still retained the Jerusalem Temple and the Royal House of David as the dominant institutions but in the North a new form of ‘Church and State’ relationship had to be designed (Spong, J. S. (1991). *Rescuing the Bible from Fundamentalism*. San Francisco HarperCollins Publishers p.46).

The Elohist (referred to as E), who wrote in about 800 BCE in the Northern Kingdom, thought that J’s account was too biased towards happenings in the South of the country and so, in Samaria he composed his account of similar material but with a Northern slant. These two writers were so named because their writings can be distinguished, among other things, by the name they called God, namely Jahweh by the Jahwist and Elohim by the Elohist (see page 201f for the other characteristics of each). The Northern Kingdom was much more democratic and felt that the people could and should choose and empower their leaders none of whom could claim permanent status. This attitude resulted first in a rebellion against Solomon’s son Rehoboam in 922 BCE, and the resultant split into two kingdoms, and thereafter a more tempestuous and unstable monarchical succession in the North. The North had no Temple to compare with Jerusalem but they had sacred places and shrines, like Bethel where E was quite possibly a priest around 800-850 BCE. The Shrines of Hebron, Beersheba and Bethel were identified by E with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob respectively and when the North split off without any temple its shrines were extolled to combat the allure of Jerusalem in the South. The E epic begins with Abraham, rather than with creation, and remains more nationalistic and provincial than J. Jacob was the focus of E’s tale whose life was followed in great detail (Gen.27-49). E used dreams to convey God’s power and most of the magic of the Egyptian plague stories are of E origin. Interestingly the allocation of the plagues are seen by some scholars to have been directed against some of Egypt’s specific gods, for instance; frogs – Hequet, livestock – Hathor, storms – Seth, darkness – Re or Ra and death – Osiris (ENNS, P. (2005) *Inspiration and Incarnation: Evangelicals and the Problem of the Old Testament*, Grand Rapids, Baker; p.101). In E God established his covenant first with the people but in J the people were prevented from profaning the Holy Places and in E’s version of the Ten Commandments the covenant was sealed with the people (Ex.24:8) not just with Moses and the hierarchy as in J (Ex. 24:9-11). Prophets too in the Northern Kingdom were to arise when they were needed (e.g. Hosea and Amos) not dynastically.
When the Northern Kingdom was conquered by the Assyrians in 721 BCE and the leaders of the people taken away to foreign lands, some managed to escape and bring the Elohist document to Jerusalem in the unconquered South, at least this is what some scholars appear to believe in reading material about this period (ANDERSON, B.W., Prentice-Hall, 1991, p.290). Around 700 B.C. the two accounts of J and E were combined to produce one epic of God's dealings with Israel, referred to as the Tetrateuch (Four Scrolls) and now set out as Genesis to Numbers. Which actual verses were written by which writer are set out in the appendix to my book, *Who Writes for God* – Vol.1, but such details need not concern us now. A welding framework for the combination with some additions and more emphasis on monotheism was provided by the P school in 550 BCE or so, mostly whilst in exile. The harmonization of J and E was never completely accomplished and still accounts for many of the contradictions in the Old Testament text.

In 622/1 BCE a law book was discovered in a collection box of the temple during restoration work in the reign of Josiah (640 - 609 BCE) (BOADT, L. (1984) *Reading the Old Testament*, Mahwah, NJ, Paulist Press, p343f) which sparked off a Jewish revival movement to resurrect the law in all its former glory, and cure a relapsed society (2 Kings 22:8-18). This book came to be called the Second Law or Deuteronomy (the implementing legislation of the covenant made by God with Israel at Horeb) and was incorporated with the Tetrateuch during the massive editorial process, or redaction, which took place during the Jewish Exile in Babylon 587-537 BCE to form the Pentateuch or Torah. During the years immediately following its discovery a massive religious reform movement was instigated by Josiah after he had read the entire book to the people. The authors of Deuteronomy wanted to purify the worship in Judah and purge from it all foreign rites, whilst centralising worship under the supervision of the Jerusalem Priesthood. This included shutting down all religious shrines except the Jerusalem Temple where Passover was to be celebrated exclusively. They wanted to bring the people to realize the love Yahweh had for them, which reflected a spiritual monotheism - Yahweh was sublime, awesome and total. They insisted that no image of God was to be used in worship (Deut.4:12, 15-19).

The Deuteronomistic School (D) had written the Book of Deuteronomy about 690 B.C. and they then went on to become known as the Deuteronomistic Historians and compose, or at least edit, the books of Joshua to 2 Kings between the years of 610 and 550. The J/E combination, with or without the blending of some of Deuteronomy (D),
was the book that was taken into captivity when Judah was conquered by the Babylonians in 587 and its leadership was removed into captivity there (Ps.137).
The Priestly Group (P) were the final major participants in the formation of the Law portion of the OT. They were formed from the deported leadership during the Babylonian exile to preserve and document Judaism over and against the influences of Babylon and its religion, especially on the younger generation who grew up there. Part of this thrust comprised a complete editing and rearranging (called ‘Redaction’) of the known writings of J, E, D and a separate Holiness Code known as H (Lev.17-26) as well as their own additions and clarifications, known as P. See below for a diagrammatic representation of these events.

The differences between the writings of J and E which has enabled scholars to tell which verses to attribute to which writer are:

J
- Uses Yahweh (the Lord) for God
- Describes God in human terms (eg. 3:8-10)
- Style is lively, vivid and theological
- Calls the PL aborigines, Canaanites
- Calls Sinai, Sinai
- Favours the Southern region
- God comes down to earth at times
- His account begins with the Creation
- Prophet-like interest in ethics and theology
- Little interest in sacrifice or ritual

E
- Uses the word Elohim for God
- God is not seen as anthropomorphic
- Style is historical, moral and awe-full.
- Calls the earlier inhabitants, Amorites
- Calls Sinai, Horeb
- Favours the Northern Kingdom
- e.g. Reuben saves Joseph’s life
- God is much less immanent
- His account begins with Abraham
- Interest in ritual, worship and visions
- Interest in origin of names and customs


Characteristics of the writings of the P school:

- A systematic account of the origins and institutions of the Israelite Theocracy
- A particular interest in origins, and details of sacrifices and ritual
- Inclusion of Genealogical Lists, Inventory Lists
- A strong concern for liturgical practice, cultic matters and law codes
- A love of order
- Inclusion of several hymns and poems
- Alterations, additions and revisions to re-enforce their teachings during the Exile to maintain the Jewish faith among those Jewish captives who were faltering -
- The inclusion of God's resting on the Sabbath Day
- The addition of 7 pairs of clean animals in Noah's selection to enable ritual sacrifice to occur without depleting the species (Gen.7:1-10)
- The alteration of the story of manna from heaven so that the Sabbath Day supply was accounted for and revered in the Exile (Ex.16:4f)
- Editing of a version of the Ten Commandments to require the Jews to keep the Sabbath Day holy (Ex.20)
- Inclusion of most of the laws and details of worship in Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers
- The placing of circumcision into the story of the founding father, Abraham
- Strict dietary laws

The Priestly School composed, redacted and added over a period of time from Ezekiel to Ezra but in particular during the Babylonian Exile (587-538 BCE) when the influence of that country on the younger generation, born and brought up there, was a threat to the continuation of the old traditions of Judaism. The authority and power of Judaism resided for centuries to come in Babylon.

All this became associated with the name of Julius Wellhausen as the ‘Newer Documentary Theory’ which he presented with great skill and persuasiveness in 1876, supporting the JEDP sequence upon an evolutionary basis. There had been earlier suggestions by Astruc, Eichhorn, De Wette, Geddes, Ewald, Bleek, Delitzsch, Hupfield, Graf, Kuenen and others but it was Wellhausen who cleverly brought things together.

The diagram below sets out in graphic form the formation of the Pentateuch in the method known as the Documentary Hypothesis which is still debatably accepted, in some form, by most scholars.

Arguments For and Against the Documentary Hypothesis:

Criticisms of the Documentary Hypothesis had been present almost as soon as Wellhausen published his findings. Against Wellhausen himself these were:

- He exhibited a general skepticism regarding the historicity of accounts recording non-contemporaneous events
- He assumed that culture and religion evolved gradually from early primitive forms
- He rejected all supernatural elements in the religion of Israel
- He neglected the influence of Israel's neighbours on Hebrew History
- He disregarded archaeological findings in reconstructing the history of Israel.

These deficiencies did not stop the wide and enthusiastic acceptance of the theory.

In his book, *A Survey of the Old Testament*, Gleason L. Archer devotes many, many pages (especially 81-105) to a refutation of the findings of reputable scholars from Julius Wellhausen (1844-1918) onwards. Since Archer and others have devoted so much time and energy to denigrating Wellhausen it would be as well to be clear on just what he was responsible for. The success of his work can be traced to his logical and cogent presentation of the views of his immediate predecessors such as Ewald, Reuss, Graf, Hupfeld, Vatke and Hegel. He posited the four main documentary contributions to the Hexateuch, namely J, E, D and P in that chronological order, with the redactions of P continuing from the exile until the reforms of Ezra and Nehemiah in c.450 BCE. Assigning the composition of the Hexateuch to a time after the Prophets, made them the originators of monotheism, breaking the bonds of the ancient naturalistic religion in Israel. The earliest prophets, according to Bernard Duhm (*Theology of the Prophets*, 1875. - Duhm also identified Trito-Isaiah), were still rooted in naturalism and only with Amos was the new emphasis on the action of God introduced and religion taken out of the realm of nature into a moral sphere (BROWN, R. E., FITZMYER, J. A. & MURPHY, R. E. (1993) *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, London, Geoffrey Chapman p.1119).

B.D. Eerdmans of the University of Leiden asserted in 1908 that he could trace a primitive background to many of the sagas in Genesis preceding J or E. This finding is really meaningless because the documentary hypothesis admits to the early authors having collected material from many sources which varied in time and place of origin. Eerdmans however withdrew from the documentary hypothesis school proclaiming that the earliest written unit in the Pentateuch was a polytheistic Book of Adam commencing at Gen.5:1 sometime before 700 BCE, although the oral tradition on which the book was based was much older. These earlier writings were re-edited after the discovery of Deuteronomy inclining to a monotheistic re-interpretation, according to Eerdmans.

Other criticisms included;

- A denial of the independence of the J and E sources - Sigmund Mowinckel averred that E quite often used Jahweh as a name for God and he refuted that Ex. 3:14 represented Jahweh as a new name for God but rather that it was already known to the Hebrews.
- That the Pentateuch in general was composed by Ezra and his assistants in Babylon, according to Max Lohr in 1924.
- That E was really the earliest in 650 BCE and J in 615 against Josiah’s reforms.
• That there was no E at all but merely J plus supplements and additions.
• Various writers claiming earlier or later dates for Deuteronomy.

Several criticisms are based on the Pentateuch containing earlier or later material but really these findings can easily be accounted for by J and E having collected early traditional material from different worship centres for inclusion and then P having redacted later editions with later material. Whilst there are voices raised against almost anything that is said about biblical material the fact remains that the vast majority of renowned, unfettered theologians and scholars accept the Historical-Critical Method and the Documentary Hypothesis in principle. The opinion bandied about by many evangelical writers that the critical methods are on the wane is false and deceptive for their readers. As Professor Barr observes almost all serious scholarship continues to work with some sort of source analysis of the Pentateuch as a natural and inevitable working instrument. There is strong evidence of a move by some Conservative scholars, such as Donald Guthrie, towards accepting the priority of Mark and the contribution of the Q source. These changes of attitude are well reflected in the different attitude of The New Bible Commentary Revised and the New Bible Dictionary when compared with the earlier New Bible Handbook (BARR, J., The Westminster Press, 1978, p.141f). Dr. Archer, on page 91 of his A Survey of Old Testament, admits that much of modern scholarship has remained loyal to the methods of documentary analysis and their innovations have been limited more or less to isolating a few more documents beyond the time-honoured four.

He continues his objection to the Documentary Hypothesis by taking five pillars, as he calls them, of its construction and refuting them in turn -

1. The validity of the Divine Names (Jahweh and Elohim) as an indication of diverse authorship - The first scholar to make a thoroughgoing investigation of the relationship of the Masoretic text (MT) and the Septuagint (LXX) was Johannes Dahse in 1903 when he showed that the LXX has a non-corresponding name for God in 180 instances, making the use of Yahweh and Elohim unreliable as criteria for the early authors and the Masoretic Text errant in the transmission of names. Because the documentarians had used the LXX so freely for correction of the Hebrew text these findings were an embarrassment. This same discrepancy between LXX and MT made the use of names unsafe for the purposes of source division according to the studies of Harold M. Wiener in 1909. He went on to show that the alleged discrepancies between the various laws of the Pentateuchal legislation required no diversity of authorship,
although there were some non-Mosaic elements, citing discrepancies in the law code of Hammurabi as equally glaring but having no bearing on the historical fact of Hammurabi (1728-1676 BCE) having incorporated them. These objections are, of course, independent of the fact that there are other criteria on which the writings of the early contributors to the Pentateuch can be identified, as outlined below (VON RAD, G. (1987) *Genesis*, London, SCM Press Ltd p.26.).

The Hebrew authors were quite capable of using more than one name for God, more than one style of writing and more than one synonym for a single idea. Even if J, E and P were accredited with such eclecticism the overall list of characteristics as tabled below would make the identification of separate authors the sensible explanation. Although there may be some detractors from the use of the name for God to discriminate between the contributors to the documentary hypothesis, W.F. Albright among them who suggested other criteria, there remain many other identifying characteristics to allow separation of their contributions –

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yahwist (J)</th>
<th>Elohist (E)</th>
<th>Priestly (P)</th>
<th>Deuteronomist</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>God walks and talks with us</td>
<td>God speaks in dreams, etc</td>
<td>cultic approach to God</td>
<td>moralistic approach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>stress on blessing of the Lord</td>
<td>stress on fear obeyed</td>
<td>stress on law obedience</td>
<td>stress on Mosaic approach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>earthly speech about God</td>
<td>refined speech about God</td>
<td>majestic speech about God</td>
<td>speech recalling God's work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>stresses the leaders</td>
<td>stresses the prophetic</td>
<td>stresses the cultic</td>
<td>stresses fidelity to Jerusalem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>narrative and stories</td>
<td>narrative and warnings</td>
<td>dry lists and schemata</td>
<td>long homiletic speeches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>stress on Judah Northern Israel</td>
<td>stress on Judah</td>
<td>stress on whole land of Israel</td>
<td>stress on whole Northern Israel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>uses “Sinai”</td>
<td>uses “Horeb”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>calls natives “Canaanites”</td>
<td>calls natives “Amorites”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>uses genealogy lists</td>
<td>loves military imagery and fixed phrases</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

traditions asserting that E was simply a religious adaptation of J quite often using the
name Jahweh which was already known to the Hebrews, despite Exodus 3:14.
(Sigmund Mowinckel, *The Two Sources of Predeuteronomic Primeval History (JE) in

2. Against J, E and P as separate documents - as well as E being an adaptation of J,
Max Lohr in 1924 showed that P was so inextricably involved in the J and E sections
that it could not stand alone. Lohr seems unaware of the fact that the P source was
mainly the activity of a redactor and thus would naturally be interwoven with its target
material.

3. Against the priority of J to E - that E was written first c. 650 BCE and J later in 615
was the opinion of R.H.Kennet in 1920.

4. Paul Volz and Wilhelm Rudolph concluded in 1933 that there were no good grounds
for making out a separate, coherent E source; these writings were merely parts of J or
supplements to it.

5. Against the origin of D in the reign of Josiah (621BCE) - some nameless twentieth
century critics are cited by Archer as preferring to transfer the date of D to a much
earlier period in view of the data of the text itself and of the historical conditions known
to have prevailed at that time. He describes OT criticism during the last quarter century
as “a chaos of conflicting trends, ending in contradictory results, which create an
impression of ineffectiveness in this type of research” (Archer, 1975) (p.104).

I must strongly refute statements like this because in my own reading and research I
have found that most major scholars agree the following:

- That the Old Testament results from multiple authorship and redactions.
- That most major stories are revisions of earlier versions from surrounding
cultures.
- That Israel adopted these borrowed stories into its tradition giving the
characters Hebrew names and injecting Israel's morality.
- That later redactors assembled the sections and provided a framework and
some contributions of their own.
- That these various contributors can be roughly identified using several criteria
and the characteristics and the modus of these contributors can account for the
anomalies, contradictions and variations in the text (over and above copying and transmission errors).

I contend that the evidence makes them by far the most satisfactory explanation of provenance and authorship. Although J, E, D and P are still taught as the Documentary Hypothesis there is valid discussion going on as to detail and allocation, and suggestions of other smaller contributing authors like H, L, K and S, but nothing like Archer’s dogmatic statements.

Archer implies that all liberal theologians have as their basic tenet that there can be no such thing as supernatural revelation and that it made it absolutely obligatory to find a rationalistic, humanistic explanation of every God-manifesting feature. (ARCHER, G.L., Moody Press, 1975 p.105). This may have been true of Wellhausen but I find it untrue of many liberal theologians as liberal theology does not demand a denial of God’s ability to reach man in many ways but only attempts to reveal those unhistoric and implausible stories which jar against the modern intellect and cause doubt and mistrust of some biblical messages.

- Archer accuses the Documentarians of attributing all repetitions and duplications to diverse authorship. Once again Archer is off the mark as duplications, such as the thrice repeated story of his wife being his sister by Abraham and then by Isaac (Gen. 12:13, 20:2 and 26:7) are surely the same-authored pericope but put in these three places by a later redactor. Although Sarah was rumoured to be Abraham’s half-sister, this certainly was no excuse in Isaac’s case.
- For some obscure reason Archer picks out the case of the slaying of Sisera, the general of Jabin’s army, by Jael to try and accuse the Documentarians of ingenious manipulation of the text and accepting no reconciling explanation. He says that there were not two accounts (J and E) because the second version of the story in Judges 5:25-27 does not say that Sisera was actually drinking milk at the moment of impact - I ask you what superficiality to base an accusation on! I quote the passage so that the reader can make up his/her mind - 5:25: He asked water and she gave him milk, she brought him curds in a lordly bowl. 5:26: She put her hand to the tent peg and her right hand to the workmen’s mallet; she struck Sisera a blow, she crushed his head, she shattered and pierced his temple. 5:27: He sank, he fell; where he sank, there
he fell dead. If Sisera had not been drinking milk when he died then it must have been a near thing! Actually the real difference in the accounts is that in the first one in 4:21 the victim was asleep when he was slain and in the second he was not (ibid; p.108).

- Many of the minor critics of the Wellhausen format quoted by Archer have grossly mistaken notions such as - Deuteronomy having been written in the Jerusalem temple in Josiah’s time, P being a discreet document instead of a series of interjections, conjunctive passages or Priestly contributions and older pieces contained in J and E dating those documents, rather than having been earlier pericopes collected by J and E in their compilations (ibid; 95-104).

- Archer concludes in Chapter 8 by accusing modern European critics and Source critics of:
  - Being unable to reconstruct the way things really happened in ancient times
  - Special pleading, circular reasoning and questionable deductions from unsubstantiated premises
  - Scarcely any of the laws of evidence respected in legal proceedings are honoured by the architects of this documentary theory.

Similar superficial and vacuous explanations have been employed to try and avoid the facts in these other cases:

- The Diverse Flood Narratives in Genesis 6-8 – three versions of its duration
- The three accounts of the naming of Isaac in Gen. 17:7, 18:12 and 21:6
- The two accounts of Joseph’s abduction to Egypt in Gen. 37:25 and 37:28
- Abraham and Isaac passing off their wives as their sister in Gen.12:10-20, 20:1-18 and 26:6-11
- Two accounts of the flight of Hagar in Gen.16:4-14 and 21:9-21
- Two namings of the well at Beersheba - Gen.21:31 and 26:33.

Archer claims that his outline of Exodus, on page 221 of his book, shows a single, highly gifted author. Once again this is nonsense as the text of Exodus shows the same distribution between J, E and P as the rest of the Pentateuch using the criteria already shown. Its logical arrangement is due to the redactive effort of the Priestly School (P) which did not produce a clumsy patchwork as Archer alleges.

**Some Points Against Archer:**

Gleason Archer describes OT criticism during the last quarter century as a chaos of
conflicting trends, ending in contradictory results, which create an impression of ineffectiveness in this type of research (ArcherMoody Press1975) p.104 – quotation from Old Testament in Modern Research by H.F. Hahn; p.41). We must strongly refute statements like this because, as Scott McGowan urges - most theologians in the modern period have rejected the classical expression of doctrine (The Orthodox Doctrine of Scripture). There can be little argument but that an anti-supernaturalist position has long been the prevailing view within academy, (MCGOWAN, S.B. & MCGOWAN, A.T.B.,Apollos branch of Inter-Varsity Press, 2007, p.50).

In view of the above it is worth considering again that a description of the Old Testament might include –

- That the Old Testament results from multiple authorship and redactions.
- That most major stories are revisions of earlier versions from surrounding cultures.
- That Israel adopted these borrowed stories into its tradition giving the characters Hebrew names and injecting Israel's morality.
- That later redactors assembled the sections and provided a framework and some contributions of their own.
- That these various contributors can be roughly identified using several criteria and the characteristics and the modus of these contributors can account for many anomalies, contradictions and variations in the text (over and above copying and transmission errors).


Professor W.F. Albright (1891-1971) was highly critical of the Wellhausen-type of biblical criticism which he decried on the grounds of evolutionism and he took as historical the biblical account of the Patriarchs whilst at the time the German scholars were insisting that the real historical knowledge of Israel begins only with the entry into Canaan. Albright’s attempts to push biblical scholarship into a more conservative orientation are handicapped by his lack of expertise in some areas he ventured into, such as his belief that the Israelites gained their foothold in Canaan by decisive attack.

The Synoptic Problem

The Synoptic problem has been well described as that of – 'elucidating the complex literary inter-relationship of the Synoptic Gospels in such a way as to account for both the differences and the similarities'. How are the Synoptic Gospels related to each other and to prior collections of material about and from Jesus?

The History of the Development of a Solution:

Saint Augustine (354-430 AD) had declared that Mark was the lackey and abbreviator of Matthew, and that opinion remained unchallenged in the church until 1774 when one of the first of the great German theologians, J.J.Griesbach (1745-1812), became the first person known to refer to the first three Gospels as “Synoptic” (Gk. Synopsis = seen together); he challenged the Augustinian version in his Synopsis Evangeliorum. He put forward his theory that Matthew wrote the first Gospel, Luke copied it making alterations at times, followed by Mark who copied carefully what Matthew and Luke agreed upon and used one of them or none where they did not – this is sometimes called The Two Gospel Hypothesis. The big criticism levelled against this theory is that Mark would have had to turn his back on much vibrant material such as the birth narratives, the resurrection appearances and the Sermon on the Mount, and in any case if the inclusive and comprehensive Gospel of Matthew had been our first there would have been no need for Mark. Other objections are – why would Luke replace Matthew's infancy narrative with a completely different version of his own, why would he substitute a different genealogy and why would he break up Matthew’s great speeches of Jesus and disperse their contents throughout his Gospel?

In 1835 Karl Lachmann published an essay on The Order of Narration in the Synoptic
Gospels which paved the way for Markan priority by suggesting the order Mark/Matthew/Luke. In 1863 Holtzmann asserted the priority of Mark and his use as a source by both Matthew and Luke and the existence of a common source used later by Matthew and Luke. In the extensive work, tagged Source Criticism, which has been done since, four main sources have been identified as a solution to the Synoptic Problem:-
2. ‘Quelle’ or ‘Q’; the ‘label’ given to a supposed documentary source of sayings and teaching of Jesus which are common to Matthew and Luke but not found in Mark.
3. Material found only in Matthew – ‘Special M’ – some 300 verses.

The characteristics of the Synoptic relationship

1. In a feature called the Triple Tradition the same passage appears in all three synoptics (verbatim agreements are in the original Greek - ORCHARD, J. B. (1983) A Synopsis of the Four Gospels, Edinburgh, T. & T. Clark Limited) and where the Gospels do not agree about where to place the material in their framework, Mark’s arrangement is always supported by one of the other two; Matthew and Luke never agree against Mark.
2. Substance – of Mark’s 661 verses, 606 of them are compressed into 500 verses in Matthew and Luke uses some 350 of them, only 24 of Mark’s verses are not in either: Matthew uses 51% of Mark’s actual words and Luke 53% in the material they reproduce, e.g. large blocks of Mark’s Little Apocalypse (13:5-8, 14-17, 28-32) are reproduced almost verbatim. Of the 1,068 verses of Matthew, about 500 contain material also found in Mark; of the 1,149 verses of Luke, about 250 are paralleled in Mark.
3. When either Matthew or Luke disagrees with Mark, the other agrees with very few minor agreements between Matthew and Luke against what is said in Mark, however, some scholars maintain that there are about 1000 of these minor agreements, including omissions, which is too many for independent action and so they say there must be some direct relationship between Matthew and Luke in addition to their use of Mark.
4. Agreement between Matthew and Luke begins and ends where Mark does: the birth narratives and the resurrection appearances, neither of which are in Mark, do not coincide in any way.
5. Mark is closer to both Matthew and Luke than they are to each other.
6. Matthew and Luke have some 250 verses in common which are not in Mark at all. This material is called the “Double Tradition” and most of it is sayings or teaching material and it is not arranged in the same way in the two Gospels. A separate source is thus suggested for this material and has been given the title ‘Q’, from the German ‘Quelle’ meaning ‘spring or source’. Sometimes there is close agreement between them, such as the 63 common words between Matthew 3:7-10 and Luke 3:7-9, and sometimes there is divergence in reporting the same story or account, e.g. the Sermon on the Mount and the two versions of the Lord’s Prayer (Matt. 5:3f and 6:9-15 vs. Luke 6:20f and 11:2-4 respectively). The use of Mark and Q is sometimes called the “Two Source Theory”.

7. The alterations of Mark’s rugged style by Matthew and Luke either to correct the Greek or soften the expressions all incline to point to Matthew and Luke having Mark in front of them when they wrote their Gospels.

Matthew and Luke copied Mark independently as they only agree with each other when Markan material is present.

**Examples of the Triple Tradition:**

*If anyone would come after me ……*  
Mark 8:34-9:1

*Plucking the grain on the sabbath*  
Mark 2:23-28

*Which one of the disciples is the greatest*  
Mark 9:33-37

*Let the children come unto me*  
Mark 10:13-16

*Jesus foretells his betrayal*  
Mark 14:18-21

**Examples of the Double Tradition:**

*Jesus’ lament over Jerusalem*  
Matt. 23:37-39

*The Parable of the King’s banquet*  
Matt. 22:37-39

*John’s preaching of repentance*  
Matt. 3:7-10

*The Temptation*  
Matt. 4:1-11

The last two are examples of Matthew and Luke placing their ‘Q’ material in the same place.

**Problems with a Solution:**

The problem remains that there are alleged to be about 1000 minor agreements between Matthew and Luke against Mark in the Triple Tradition. These are too many to say that Matthew and Luke improved on Mark identically, there must, one would think, have been some contact between the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. This is the major
Achilles Heel of the Two Source Hypothesis, that Mark and Q were the sources for the Synoptic Gospels; the agreement between Matthew and Mark in order and wording in the Triple Tradition was mediated through Mark, their agreement in wording alone in the Double Tradition is through Q. The almost complete failure of agreement on any order for the Q material (the teaching and preaching of Jesus; no narrative) proves that they placed it into their Markan outlines quite independently.

A further problem arises in the ‘Great Omission of Luke’ – why would Luke apparently omit all references to the contents of Mark 6:45-8:26 if he had our Canonical Mark in front of him? A solution to this requires the existence of an earlier version of Mark’s Gospel, referred to by the scholars as Proto-Mark, but the absence of textual dislocation and uniformity of style mediates against this. Other suggestions are that Luke had an aversion to “doublets”, two versions of the same event, yet there are doublets in Acts e.g. 10-11. There are five instances of Mark-Q overlap – John the Baptist, The Temptation, collusion with Beelzebul, parable of the mustard seed (followed in Q by the leaven) and the Commissioning of the Disciples: the Two Source hypothesis now has two Achilles Heels i.e. 1) the minor agreements between Matthew and Luke in the Triple Tradition and 2) the Mark-Q overlaps.

There is a school of thought that believes that the verbatim agreements between Mark and Q are too many for coincidence, but if Mark knew Q why did he leave out so much, e.g. the Lord’s Prayer and the Beatitudes? The Griesbach hypothesis falls down through lack of explanation as to why Mark did it.

There seemed to be exceptions to every rule and so additional proposals emerged:
1. Matthew had access to Markan pericopes not included in his Gospel as we now have it.
2. Matthew and Luke copied an earlier version (Proto-Mark) than our present one but this does not explain the agreements in omission between Matthew and Luke.
3. The minor agreements suggest a Deutero-Gospel (a later version): changes to the Gospel may well have still been going on during the copying.
4. The wide variety of agreement between Matthew and Luke in the Double Tradition suggests two editions of Q.
5. The existence of sources M and L for unparalleled, unique material.
6. When the tradition divided into Mark and Q some may have gone in both directions.
7. Proto-Luke theories (e.g. Streeter) to explain Luke’s blocks and omissions.
8. Boismard’s solution is an extremely complex use of multiple documents and multiple editions of each Gospel with crisscross copying.

The Two Source theory falls down because of the multiple agreements between Matthew and Luke in the Triple Tradition, implying that Luke probably knew Matthew (there are some Matthewisms in Luke, but no Lukeisms in Matthew). With multiple copying at the time it is highly likely that different versions existed and that some of the originals or early copies were lost. The present Gospels may all have had more than one Proto version.

The E.P. Sanders and Margaret Davis hypothesis:-
1. Matthew used Mark and undefined other sources whilst creating some of the ‘sayings’ material himself.
2. Luke used Mark and Matthew as well as other sources and also created ‘sayings’ material.
3. There were probably earlier and later editions of the Gospels and some cross-copying from one edition of one to one edition of another and back the other way at a later stage.

Review of theories:-
1. The Two Source theory, i.e. Mark and Q – with the additions of Proto and Deutero-Mark, further sources, two versions of Q, overlaps and Proto-Luke, can handle most cases except the evidence that Luke knew Matthew and the verbatim agreement between Mark and Q in the supposed overlap passages.
2. The Griesbach hypothesis – Matthew was copied by Luke, and Mark conflated them both – again this fails to explain why anyone would carefully conflate the Gospels whilst omitting so much important material and in any case ancient conflation usually occurred in blocks rather than by switching back and forth from phrase to phrase: Mark’s breathless style is not that of a copyist.
3. Goulder’s hypothesis – Matthew had only Mark and the Old Testament, Luke had Mark, Matthew and the Old Testament, the material attributed to Q was composed by Matthew and Luke. This seems OK except there still seemed to be other sources for the ‘sayings’ material.
4. Boismard’s Multiple Source theory – multiple documents and multiple editions of each Gospel; the final form of each Gospel was dependent on the earlier version of at least two of the others. This theory explains Mark-Q overlap in that Luke knew a Matthew and that final Mark used intermediate Matthew and Proto-Luke which had
both used Q. The only problems with it are – a) why was Mark produced at all, and b) can such final detail in the construction of hypothetical documents be presumed?

In conclusion we can only say that Markan priority is held by many scholars to be extremely likely and that crisscross copying from multiple editions of the Gospels consequent upon the hand-copying situation of the day can best explain the intricacies of the Synoptic Problem. Whatever form the cross-copying took it still undoubtedly took place and in doing so dashed any thoughts of inerrancy to pieces.


My own thoughts:

![Diagram showing the tradition (30-60 C.E.) with connections between Proto-Mark, Mark, Proto-Matt, Matthew, Luke, Q1, Q2, Special source M, and Special source L.](image)


**Criticisms of the Synoptic Solution:**

The similarities between Matthew, Mark, and Luke are so numerous and so close, not just in the order of the material presented but also in the exact wording of long stretches of text, that it is not sufficient to explain these similarities on the basis of common oral tradition alone. Rather, some type of literary dependence must be assumed as well. That is, someone copied from someone else’s previously written text; several of the evangelists must have used one or more of the earlier Gospels as sources for their own compositions. The situation is complicated because some of the material is common to all three Synoptics, while other material is found in only two out of these three Gospels. Moreover, the common material is not always presented in the same order in the various Gospels. So, the question remains, for some, who wrote first, and who copied from whom?
For most of Christian history, people thought that Matthew was the first and oldest Gospel, and that Mark was a later, shorter version of the same basic message. From the mid-19th century until today, however, many scholars are convinced that Mark is the first and oldest Gospel (at least in the final version, as we have it today), and that Matthew and Luke are later expansions of Mark. Why? Mark's Gospel contains several grammatical, literary, historical, and geographical difficulties (minor errors) that are not found in Matthew and/or Luke. If Matthew was first, it is harder to understand how Mark could have introduced these errors; but if Mark was first, it is easy to see how Matthew and/or Luke wanted to and were able to correct Mark's minor mistakes.

1. Mark's Gospel contains several episodes that are obscure (4:26-29; 14:51-52) or make Jesus look crazy (3:19-21), magical (7:32-37), or weak (8:22-26). If Matthew was first, it is harder to explain why Mark added these strange episodes; but if Mark was first, it is easy to understand why both Matthew and Luke omitted them.

2. Mark's basic chronological/geographical structure is the same as in the other two Synoptics but the material found in both Matthew and Luke (but not in Mark) is in very different orders in these two Gospels. If Matthew was first and Mark second, it is hard to understand why Luke would have kept the same order for all the material found in both Matthew and Mark, but substantially rearranged all the other material found in Matthew but not in Mark. If Mark was first, however, then it is easy to explain how Matthew and Luke inserted the extra material they have in common (from the Q source?) into Mark's overall outline, although in significantly different ways. http://catholic-resources.org/Bible/Synoptic_Problem.htm.

With such swathes of copied material between the Synoptic Gospels, much of it verbatim, the fact that inter-Gospel copying took place is seldom questioned. The only queries raised are those of chronology - which gospel was written first and was copied by which other next? For my purposes of showing that absolute Inerrancy is unsustainable it does not matter which Gospel was written first, the fact that two of the inspired Gospel authors did not consider material written by another "inspired" author to be the sacred Word of God, not to be touched or altered in any way, is sufficient to prove my point. Two of the authors freely altered the text they received from the other either to better suit the message they wanted to convey to their hearers or to present the material in better or clearer language; they obviously thought that the received text was produced by human authors and therefore amenable to human alteration.
The Historical-Critical Method

The Historical Aspect

‘A concern for a historical strand within the literal sense of scripture was always a possibility where the classical heritage was preserved through the early fathers’, according to the Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation (COGGINS, R. J. & HOULDEN, J. L. (1990) A Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation, London, SCM Press.p.284).

Higher Criticism, which recommended the application to the Bible of the same methods of literary and historical analysis as those applied to other books, only came into public cognizance after the 1875 articles by W. Robertson Smith (Rogers, J.B. & McKim, D.K., Harper & Rowe, 1979, ; p.278).

The application of the Historical-Critical Method (HCM) is usually attributed to the German writers such as Semler, Michaelis, Reimarus and Lessing when Biblical interpretation became less politically sensitive in the 18th century. The basics of the method are -

- Scrutiny of the documents to check whether they are what they purport to be
- That the documents emanate from the authors claimed for them
- That they are un-tampered with
- That the quality of any copies are ascertained
- Witnesses are examined for coherence of their accounts and for a match with others’ testimony and for the veracity of their own testimony - e.g. word for word replication suggests collusion, complete disparity creates doubt, use of out of character style or vocabulary suggests prompting or hearsay evidence, odd local or technical jargon needs to be explained,
- Examine testimony for signs of possible ulterior motives - social, financial, personal or psychological that may be inspiring the testimony
- General plausibility.

Some may well be opposed to these methods on the grounds of -

- Disrespect of the sacred text
- The raising of doubts about cherished beliefs
- Irrelevancy as all the Jewish and Christian scriptures may be works of literary imagination anyway.
As Harper’s Bible Dictionary says - The Bible itself must be approached critically. Its historical claims are not always to be taken at face value. As a book of faith the Bible is not always free of bias; it presents historical events from a confessional point of view (ACHTEMEIER, P. J., BORAAS, R. S., FISHBANE, M., PERKINS, P. & WALKER, W. O. (1985) Harper's Bible Dictionary, San Francisco, Harper & Row. P.130). This is the view taken by the Liberal side of the dispute. It is a way of looking at things quite differently, namely the Liberal methodology, which looks at the Bible in a more scholarly way rather than a purely doctrinal way. There seem to be grounds for following the history of Historical-Critical Biblical Scholarship and Liberal Theology and along different pathways. The former contains such milestones as the Documentary Hypothesis as presented by Wellhausen and others, and the Synoptic Problem as tackled by Grissbach and others, whilst the latter lies with the 20th century Theologians, Kant, Hegel, Schleiermacher, Ritschl, Bultmann and Barth. However the HCM does allow an attempt to reach a commonly accepted truth in some areas. It provides logic and explanation which others can test as well as the validity of its factual evidence, thus avoiding any suggestion of indoctrination.

A biblical writing may be said to have a history of its own which includes:

- Time and place of composition-
  - Actual date within the writing
  - Archaeological evidence
  - Other writings from the same period that provide reliable evidence for dating persons or events mentioned in the text
  - Quotations in dated writings
- The circumstances in which it was produced-
  - Knowing the region or city in which a writing arose may identify the political and social circumstances and thereby clarify certain features of the text
- Its author or authors -
  - May be anonymous, e.g. Genesis, the Gospels, Hebrews
  - Pseudonymous, e.g. Ecclesiastes, Song of Solomon, Isaiah 40-66, the Pastoral Letters
  - Composite - collections of writings and sayings of a single author, e.g. John, Romans, 2 Corinthians, Philippians
- How it came to be written or Source Criticism -
- JEDP of the Documentary Hypothesis was the founding system in the 18th century.
- Applying Source Criticism to other books revealed the use by the editor of Chronicles of the earlier writings in 1 and 2 Samuel and 1 and 2 Kings.
- These principles were used to solve the Synoptic Problem in the New Testament where Mark’s gospel was seen to be a source for Matthew and Luke as well as a second source, Q.
- The audience to which it was addressed -
  - this may be clearly stated, as in Luke 1:1-4, or not referred to.
  - Scholars try to determine not only the addressees but the circumstances that existed between them and the author that prompted his writing.


**Opinions Contrary to Higher Criticism:**

Probably Kenton Sparks is not alone when he writes – *If not in the church, then where should historical criticism be introduced?* Sparks’s answer is the Christian college or university: *By focusing historical critical discussions in such academic institutions, rank-and-file church members are better insulated from the potentially destructive effects of intense academic inquiry and debate* (Sparks, K. L. (2008). *God’s word in human words: An evangelical appropriation of critical biblical scholarship*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic. p. 364).

This, in my opinion, must be the principle of most current Clergy who seem most reluctant to introduce any new theology or hermeneutics which may seem controversial or even heretical to the minds of their aging, traditional congregations.

**Criticisms by Gustav Maier:**

Gustav Maier concedes that the Historical-Critical Method (HCM) *has constantly been the practice of theological Christian Scholarship* (Maier Theologischer Verlag Rolf Brockhaus1974:108) but lists the following objections to it:

- It is impossible to discover the Canon in the Canon - *the Bible itself gives no key with which to distinguish between the Word of God and Scripture*.
- The Bible does not permit itself to be separated into a Divine Scripture and a Human Scripture - *in spite of honest endeavor no agreement has been reached*
as to what was part of Divine Truths.

- **Revelation is more than subject matter** - here Maier seems to be saying that statements preceded by *God said* … or similar injunctions, should not be judged by the subject matter which those following statements contain but by the Lord speaking a divine truth which is binding on the listener which man cannot re-evaluate … a witness of personal encounter and the declaration of the divine will.

- The Conclusion is established prior to the Interpretation - the HCM has to bring with it a conclusive judgment as to what God's Word or genuine faith was, to bring to an end the confusion between Scripture and God's Word and unlock the subject for consideration.

- **Deficient practicability** - a restriction has existed for 200 years in the application of the HCM to everyday practice in the church. Maier maintains that this is because the results were too complicated or obtuse or people objected that it was ‘different in my Bible’. He cites Professor Delitzsch as having discovered a public still too unknowledgeable and almost unprepared to receive his lectures. He points out quite rightly that Clergymen who on Mondays stand out as determined representatives of the higher-critical method … were proud of the fact that on Sundays they had preached ‘normal’ sermons that were faithful to the Scriptures. He goes further to suggest that the impossibility of taking the knowledge obtained from HCM and making it the foundation of practical life in the church was where the remoteness and estrangement between theological scholarship and congregational life has its roots, not in difficulties of communication. This lack of practicability he cites as a serious objection to the method.

- **Critique is not the appropriate answer to revelation** - to quote from Maier - the most important objection is that historical criticism over against a possible divine revelation presents an inconclusive and false counterpart which basically maintains human arbitrariness and its standards in opposition to the demands of revelation. Therefore because this method is not suited to the subject, in fact even opposes its obvious tendency, we must reject it.


Eugene Klug in his Foreword to Gerhard Maier’s Book, *The End of the Historical Critical Method* epitomizes the Evangelical attitude by statements like - Historical-
critical practitioners ... became morticians at the funeral and burial of the Word of God and it is time that higher criticism be seen for what it is, an uncritical and unjustified denigration of the Biblical text. It had become a godless technique that eroded the Word of God itself.

Both Luther and Calvin held a ‘high view’ of scripture but whereas Calvin approved only that which was written in scripture, Luther approved of that which was not contradicted by scripture. Although Martin Luther himself used Historical-critical thinking when he announced that within the New Testament there are contradictions between individual writings and then relegated the Letter of James, Jude, Hebrews and Revelation to an appendix in his translation of the New Testament into German in 1522, he thought any biblical irregularities had little effect upon the Bible’s messages. The denigrators of the HCM then quote Luther’s typically modest remark that no one should be obligated to accept my thought or judgment as implying a denial of his reason to relegate these books but the fact is that he did relegate them; and many others had serious doubts about their authenticity also.

Martin Luther stands at the crossroads of biblical understanding from which he, and also Calvin, followed the path according to which the Bible is a living authority making itself felt and heard in religious experience. Protestant scholasticism followed the alternative path holding no less that the Bible is an inspired book, and regarding it as a fixed and external standard and text book of what may be believed (Reid 61).

**Criticisms by Gleason L Archer**

In his hearty support for the inerrancy of Old Testament writings, Archer has co-opted the great W. F. Allbright once more as showing again and again that the biblical record has been vindicated against its critics by recent archaeological discovery. His implication is that most or even all of the OT texts have been vindicated, whereas this is far from the truth. He asserts that the Egyptian, Babylonian and Assyrian records are more likely to be propagandistic and biased than the Hebrew Scriptures which he says have lofty ethical standard (ARCHER, G.L., Moody Press, 1975 p.107). What about just one famous example, the site of Jericho has been shown by Archaeology to have been an uninhabited ruin at the time of Joshua’s alleged march around the walls (ANDERSON, B. W. (1991) The Living World of the Old Testament, London, Prentice-Hall; p.137). What happened to lofty standards there?
Archer insists that Israel's monotheism came as a direct and sudden result of revelation and was monotheistic from the start (ARCHER, G.L., Moody Press, 1975 p.145). Most scholars believe that Abraham’s father, Terah, was a moon-worshipper from Ur and that Abraham himself may have been a believer in El, the god of the region of Canaan in his time. The New Jerome Biblical Commentary states that in Israel there is no clear and unambiguous denial of the existence of gods other than Yahweh before second Isaiah in the 6th century BCE. (BROWN, R. E., FITZMYER, J. A. & MURPHY, R. E. (1993) The New Jerome Biblical Commentary, London, Geoffrey Chapman. 77:17-20). Exod. 12:12, Num. 33:4, Josh. 24:15, Ps.96 and Judges 10:6 all speak of other gods as if they existed. Admittedly the religion of Israel in the Promised Land forbade the worship of other gods (implying that they existed) as well as the making of any image of Yahweh; both requirements were absolutely unique at the time, but the question was not whether there was only one Elohim (this word is actually plural signifying all gods) but whether there was any Elohim like Yahweh (Brown et al. Geoffrey Chapman1993 p.1287). Israel came out of the Babylonian exile as monotheists.

Many theologians have stated that It is not clear how Israel’s monotheism originated. (ACHTEMEIER, P. J., BORAAS, R. S., FISHBANE, M., PERKINS, P. & WALKER, W. O. (1985) Harper's Bible Dictionary, San Francisco, Harper & Row; p.652) but later infer that the natural tendency for groups, from tribes to nations, to have a ‘special’ god grew amongst the tribes of Israel to be the dominant religious tradition of Yahweh. Many scholars seem to feel that the early Israelites did not have the intellectual sophistication to consider the abstract question of monotheism per se and point to the fact that the Third Commandment does not say that there are no other gods but rather that You shall have no other gods before me. (Anderson, Bernhard (1991), Harlow, Longman Group; p.107-9). Wellhausen’s revolutionary assigning of the prophetic writings to a period before the final composition of the Hexateuch made the prophets the originators of Monotheism and not its renovators (Brown et al. Geoffrey Chapman1993 p.1119). Bernard Duham (1847-1928) constructed a coherent pattern of religious development in Israel and stated that the earliest prophets were still rooted in naturalism and it was only with Amos that the new element was introduced with emphasis on the action of God and not on God’s dealing with Israel in a naturalistic way (Brown et al. Geoffrey Chapman1993, p.1119) (B. Duham 1916, Israel’s Prophets).

Archer concludes by accusing modern European critics and Source critics of:
• Being unable to reconstruct the way things really happened in ancient times
• Special pleading, circular reasoning, questionable deductions from unsubstantiated premises
• Scarcely any of the laws of evidence respected in legal proceedings are honoured by the architects of this documentary theory.

(ARCHER, G.L., Moody Press, 1975; Chapter 8).

**Biblical Minimalism – The Copenhagen School**

On the Liberal side there has been a more recent development which has generated a lot of interest in scholarly circles, some scholars combining the findings of the Copenhagen School with their own or other liberal ideas.

In the 1990’s a school of thought emerged from scholars at the University of Copenhagen which made two main claims:

1. That the Bible could not be considered reliable evidence for what happened in ancient Israel.
2. Israel itself is a problematic subject for historical study.

The Minimalists are not a unified group but comprise several notable scholars, such as Neils Peter Lemche, Keith Whitelam and Philip Davies. They do not all agree some details but all agree that the Bible is a doubtful source of information about ancient Israel.


In his book *In Search of Ancient Israel*, Philip Davies suggests that there are in fact three Israels –

1. The Literary (Biblical) Israel
2. The Historical Israel – the inhabitants of northern Palestine during most of the Iron Age (1200-600 BCE).
3. Ancient Israel – which scholars have constructed out of an amalgamation of the other two.


In his book Niels Lemche opines –

*The Israelite nation as explained by the biblical writers has little in the way of a historical background. It is a highly ideological construct created by ancient*
scholars of Jewish tradition in order to legitimize their own religious community and its religio-political claims on land and religious exclusivity.


According to Philip Davies the true historical Israel was a group of people living in Northern Palestine between approximately 1000 and 722 BCE. The Biblical or Literary Israel is a construct by the scribal elite of the historical group to create a religion and tradition which they did not yet have. The third Israel is the scholarly one which we read about in books like “The History of Israel” and is constructed by scholars from a mixture of biblical Israel and some historical date, some of doubtful relevance. -

*They have taken aspects of biblical Israel and married them with data from archaeological and non-biblical sources to create their own version of a past Israel.*

CHAPTER 12
THE OUTPUT WORK OF BOTH SIDES
Part 2 - Conservative

Conservative Evangelical Writings

I have outlined two major representatives of Liberal output, namely the Documentary Hypothesis and the Synoptic Problem, followed by a description of the Historical-Critical Method of hermeneutics so favoured by the Liberals and criticized by the Fundamentalists. Since Conservative Evangelicalism is so set against scholarly biblical studies they do not produce much representative scholarly output themselves. Accordingly I have presented as their output two major representatives of their case. I have chosen these two authors, rather than more recent ones, because they were “pillars” of evangelical inerrancy interpreters whose forthright views still form the basis of fundamentalist belief today.

*Evangelicals have no research university and no Nobel laureates because they are not doing the kind of work for which these exist* (NOLL, M. (1994) *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*, Grand Rapids, Michigan, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company p.15-22).

Consequently their work manifests itself mostly in apologetic and literary presentations of their fixed position: relevant sections of two solid and well-renowned authors in the conservative tradition are critiqued below. Both of these authors were on the staff of the conservative Fuller's Theological College until it abandoned its strictly fundamentalist stance and adopted a more liberal position. They were prominent when the debate about Inerrancy was at its height in the 70’s and 80’s. Liberal responses to the evangelical propositions contained in these two conservative presentations are interspersed, because to keep them all to the end results in a less effective connection between the two points of view. As a result, this chapter contains many statements of the evangelical, and even fundamentalist, position but also the objections from the Liberal side whilst the original statements are still in mind.
Examples of Conservative Evangelical Output

Extracts from ARCHER, G.L., Moody Press, 1975:

In his book Dr. Archer devotes no less than the first 13 chapters to a discussion of the Conservative position including some objective criticism of the Liberal view which will be presented later in the thesis. However in looking at Dr. Archer’s own fundamentalist views I have included the liberal objections to them at the same place so as to relate directly to his statements rather than as a later section when it may be difficult to recall what his original statements were. This method has also been employed in the critique of my second source of Conservative Evangelical representative output, namely LINDSELL, H., Zondervan Publishing House, 1979.

Gleason Archer maintains that for human reason to attempt to pass judgment upon divine revelation, which he describes the Old Testament as, the judge must know more about God than the Bible itself knows. He concludes by saying that - if that revelation is to come in a usable and reliable form, not dependent on man’s fallible judgment, it must come in an inerrant form. Otherwise it would depend ultimately on the authority of man for its validation and therefore could not serve its purpose as a trustworthy disclosure of divine truth (ARCHER, G.L., Moody Press, 1975 p.22). There is a multiplicity of faulty reasoning involved here and I am sure that only a modest human reason is required to detect some of the many errors in the Biblical writings by the very human authors who wrote and edited them. As for the purpose of the Old Testament being disclosure of divine truth, I think it is more -

- To show the God of Israel as a faithful, constant and loving God who punishes only for deserved moral transgressions and favours the lives of faithful people (Gen.26:5).
- To showcase Israel’s God as the only true God in charge of everything (Ps.96:5).
- To document God’s dealings with Israel as a Salvation History and to show the progression to the Covenants and Promises between Yahweh and Israel.
- Although the primal fellowship was broken by disobedience, God continued to communicate with humankind with the intention of redemption - the return of the God-human relationship to the original ideal state, the undoing of the results of the fall in Eden, and to restore human beings to the original creative image (William Sanfor Lasor, Wm. B. Erdmans, The Paternoster Press1994:89).
In a footnote Archer states, *It makes no essential difference whether the source was written or oral, whether it came from a fallible human hand or mouth; in either case the Holy Spirit eliminated mistakes and ensured the inscripturation only of truth. All the discrepancies which have come down to us in the Received Text of the Hebrew Scriptures are perfectly well accounted for by errors in later textual transmission* (ibid; 24). Whilst I am sympathetic with a religious person’s faith and spirituality, the crediting of the Holy Spirit with the task of universal inspirational correction of every mistake all the human authors of the biblical writings attempted to put down by somehow guiding their writing implements to write something else is altogether too much to swallow. Finally, Dr. Archer makes the adamant statement *accuracy inheres in every part of the Old Testament as well as the New Testament, so that as a whole and in all parts, the Bible is infallible as to truth and final as to authority. This accuracy extends even to matters of history and science as well as to theology and morals* (ibid; 27). In my opinion this statement is so obviously misguided, especially in the areas of history and science as will be explained later, and so very inaccurate that nothing more really needs to be said at this point.

It is certainly true that many of the errors in the biblical writings do come from faulty copying, translation or intentional altering by the copyists or editors along the way. The inerrancy advocates have now retreated back to the original documents in each case claiming those to be inerrant in this way -*Inerrancy is necessary only for the original manuscripts of the biblical books. They must have been free from all mistakes or else they could not have been truly inspired by the God of truth in whom there is no darkness at all. God could never have inspired a human author of Scripture to write anything erroneous or false* (ibid; 23). This view is so simplistic as to be naive and so surprising from a man of assumed learning and theological knowledge, why else would he presume to write a text book on the Old Testament. In any case the processes of passing on an oral tradition, converting it to a written medium, sometimes translating it into another language, producing a final text, copying and preserving that text and adding exegetical comments at any of these stages, run into one another and form one total complex of tradition making the identification of what or where the original document was, from which inerrancy can be said to have begun, very difficult.

When confronted with the question of whether temple or palace archives were in error in the first place, or perhaps what some prophets spoke was inaccurate, Archer says *As God employed oral communications to reveal his truth, safeguarding them from*
error until they were recorded in written form, so also God could take erroneous human archives and guide the human author to avoid all errors and record only what was in fact true. Whatever Scripture asserts to have been historically true, regardless of the intermediate source of the information, must be understood as trustworthy and reliable (ibid; p.23). Perhaps someone should have told the Jahwist this when he had collected versions of the same traditional story told and handed down in different sites and found them to vary such that he felt bound to include more than one version, as is the case with Genesis 1:1-2:4a and 2:4b-3:24 and the 3 versions of the duration of the flood to be detailed later. Even the names of the Patriarchs are often the names of towns, or names found on stone tablets like the Ebla, Ugarit and Mari archives which pre-date the patriarchal narratives by many centuries (ANDERSON, B. W. (1991) The Living World of the Old Testament, London, Prentice-Hall /Longman, p.34). Regarding the words of Moses, Isaiah and Malachi, Archer also states - The Holy Spirit eliminated mistakes and insured the inscripturisation only of truth … all errors which have come down to us … are perfectly well accounted for by errors in later textual transmission (ARCHER, G.L., Moody Press, 1975 p.23). Later he makes the astounding statement - These then are the only alternatives available to us as we confront the Scriptures: either they are inerrant, or else we are (ibid;p.28).

The ultimate falsehood of Fundamentalists like Archer harking back to the original documents as inerrant and the translations being responsible for any mistakes is evidenced by the matter of the virgin birth. If Archer is so keen on citing the original documents why does he not mention one of the most important topics of all in biblical interpretation namely the use of the word virgin to describe Mary’s state before Jesus’ birth, and after in some interpretations. As explained by Bishop Spong (SPONG, J.S., HarperCollins, 1991, . p.16) investigation of the original documents in the Hebrew Scriptures reveals that the introduction of the term ‘virgin’ came about during the translation in c.250 B.C. for the Jews of the Diaspora, when the Greek word parthenos was used in the Greek version, the Septuagint, to translate the Hebrew word almah. The word almah actually means young woman and the real Hebrew word for virgin is betulah. Nowhere in Hebrew Scriptures, when the word almah is used, is there a connotation of virginity (ibid p.214) and (STARK, T. (2011) The Human Faces of God, Eugene, Oregon, Wipf and Stock Publishers; p.28). Why have the Ultra-conservatives not acknowledged this fact, since they are so fond of taking refuge in original documents, even when they are not available? In addition to the completely wrong translation of the word (by the way the RSV has corrected this error and its version of
the relevant verse 7:14 in Isaiah is - *Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold a 'young woman' shall conceive and bear a son and shall call his name Immanuel,* Isaiah was actually talking to King Ahaz of Judah about a sign from God regarding the siege of Jerusalem being carried out at the time and not a prediction for the future. *The prophecy was completely fulfilled within a few short years after it was given* - Stark, Thom (2011), *The Human Faces of God,* Wipf and Stock, Eugene; p.29. The use of this quotation, misquoted though it usually is, to predict a virgin birth for a child some 700 years later is highly questionable. Matthew used the Greek version of the Hebrew Text which had the mistranslation *parthenos* in it to attempt to prove the Virgin Birth tradition.

Unfortunately for Archer’s arguments we are not dealing here with just typographical errors or small detail but with whole episodes and sagas which are at best inaccurate and at worst fictitious. The archaeologists have evidence that both Jericho and Ai, which Joshua is said to have ordered to be burned down by his troops in Josh. 8:19-20, were in fact a heap of ruins at the time of Joshua (c.1250 BCE according to ANDERSON, B. W. (1991) *The Living World of the Old Testament,* London, Prentice-Hall; p.130) and that there had been a gap of occupation there from about 2400-1200 BCE (ibid; p.136-7). The genealogy in Genesis 5 makes no mention of a great flood which later wiped out all of mankind, including Noah’s brothers and sisters (Gen.5:30) leaving only Noah’s immediate family. If Noah’s boat had come to rest on the top of Mount Ararat, which is over 17000 feet high, then water, finding its own level, would have flooded the rest of the world to the same height requiring many times the amount of water the earth contained or could disperse. Even when the bigger picture is considered, the records of surrounding cultures to the Promised Land contain the names, locations and exploits of many of the characters alleged to be in Israel’s past history (ibid; p. 34). Archer still goes on to discuss the ability of the Ark to house and maintain a large group of animals for a significant time (ARCHER, G.L., Moody Press, 1975; p.210) but does not explain how two animals of every species from distant unknown lands were obtained and handled and then returned to their place of origin. The theories of Archer are not sufficient to account for all of the 100 or more errors in the current versions of the Bible (see Appendix 1) and quite irrelevant to the major anomalies such as the clear adaptation by Israel of earlier Babylonian and other sagas.

The tablets of the ancient *Enuma Elish* contains a number of striking similarities to the account of creation in Genesis (BOADT, L. (1984) *Reading the Old Testament,*
Mahwah, NJ, Paulist Press, p.117), but the most notable and provable example is the story of Noah and the ark in Genesis 6-8 which is so obviously taken from the Babylonian saga of Utnapishtim recorded on tablet 11 of the *Gilgamesh Epic*, or a common source from which both took their theme. As has been mentioned earlier, the story of a great flood has been found in many of the surrounding cultures pre-dating Israel’s entry into the Promised Land - especially Sumerian, Assyrian and Babylonian. Such a legend is also found among the Hindus (Manu), the Chinese (Fah-he), the Hawaiians (Nu-u), the Mexican Indians (Tezpi) and the Algonquins (Manbozho), all of these agree that mankind was destroyed by a great flood as the result of divine displeasure at human sin and that a single man or family was preserved (see *Die Flutsagen* by Richard Andree 1891).

On pages 127 to 134 of his book Archer cites cases of Doublets and Parallel accounts but he does so under the headings of *Supposed Doublets* and *alleged events* and *artificial dissection* whereas these matters were ‘actual’ and no amount of twisting and turning by Archer can escape that. Archer tries to explain away the two accounts of creation for example (1-2:4a and 2:4b-3) by the second being an extension of the first giving more detail of the creation of man himself. The embarrassing fact that the second account repeats the creation of the world all over again he explains by alleging a technique of “recapitulation”, to try and avoid the obvious fact that it is a second separate version of the creation myth as told in surrounding cultures, to say nothing of its different approach to the creation of man.

As far as the historicity of Adam and Eve is concerned Archer states that it was *certainly taken as historical by Christ and the Apostles* and that *no decisive objections have ever been raised against the historicity of Adam and Eve either on historical, scientific or philosophical grounds* (p.201 and in 1 Tim. 2:13-14). The scholarly work of the Leakey family in the Olduvai Gorge in Northern Tanzania seems to show conclusively that early species of hominids originated there over a million years ago, eventually evolving into Homo Erectus and migrating outwards from Africa.

Regardless of these massive saga inconsistencies, Archer and his like-minded evangelicals continue to cite minutiae. As the icing on the cake Archer cites quotations from Scripture itself to verify the inerrancy of Scripture itself in a blatant circular manner, in fact the very epitome of circular reasoning. This type of reasoning only works if one is already a Fundamentalist believing that every word in the Bible is true and so not needing the proofs. Of the important anomaly that Adam was perhaps not
the first man, Archer says - *it is not always possible to make a clean-cut separation
between theology-ethics and history-science .... as in the case of the literal, historical
Adam* and quickly moves on (ibid; p.27). Later, on page 33 he states - *any
discrepancies which appear must be dealt with as only apparent, not real. When all the
facts are in, the charges of error will prove to be unsubstantiated.* This advancing of
proof that has not been found yet is inexcusably unacceptable as valid argument and,
in fact, any proof that does exist shows that the errors are factual and many of them
probably from the origin of the document. This sort of false reasoning, if indeed it can
even be accorded the title of reasoning, is second only in questionability to Archer’s
use of unproven and unverified Scriptural quotations to justify itself as inerrant. These
‘facts’ which the evangelical people are expecting to ‘come in’ would have to be mighty
and extensive indeed if all the errors are to be explained and corrected. Appendix 1,
for example, contains a list of some of the errors that I have found in the course of my
reading. As a matter of interest, way out on the other extreme, Professor Richard
Dawkins has said that Jesus was tortured and killed to rectify an imaginary sin by a
non-existent Adam.

Archer states at the end of his section on *Difficulties in the Bible* that *a genuine,
outright contradiction in the Scripture ...... would be good cause for abandoning faith in
the inerrancy of Scripture* (ibid; p.33) – the examples of contradictions in scripture
seem to be too numerous to discuss individually but many are included in the list in
Appendix 1. Not only are there these errors far too numerous and varied to be all
accounted for by copying or translation discrepancies, but there is also the much bigger
picture of whole sagas being fictitious. It does not take an *infallible human judgment* to
detect errors in the Bible, which Archer states as the alternative to infallibility. God’s
contribution in all this was in the inspiration provided to faithful men to bend themselves
to the task of writing the spiritual and religious books we now have in the first place.
Perhaps a quotation from The Right Reverend Mark Haverland’s excellent little book,*Anglican Catholic Faith and Practice* may be relevant here –
*Probably no single theory of inspiration is adequate for explaining the whole of
Scripture with all its great variety. In some cases God may have inspired the Biblical
writers by providing a direct and supernatural vision or infused knowledge. In other
cases God may have inspired by exciting or encouraging extraordinary, but entirely
natural, interests and abilities. Sometimes God may have inspired by guiding the
selection or editing of pre-existing texts, some of which may even have come from
totally uninspired sources. At other times God may have inspired by his general
providential governance of human history or indirectly by shaping a second writer by a
more directly inspired primary writer. So long as one accepts that God is quite capable of inspiring in any and all of these ways, and that God did fully inspire the authors of Scripture in ways sufficient to work his will, more detailed explanations may be left to private opinion. (HAVERLAND, M. (1996) Anglican Catholic Faith and Practice, Athens, Georgia, Holyrood Seminary Press p.21).

As a final polemic Archer cites quotations from the Scriptures of statements by Jesus and his apostles as proof of the inerrant record of God’s revelation to man in these words - The basic ground for the complete trustworthiness of Scripture is the trustworthiness of God Himself. To contend, as Archer frequently does, that because a piece of Scripture starts with a phrase like - Thus says the Lord or The Lord said unto Moses - it must therefore be divinely true is spurious, as any author could use those phrases for dramatic effect, as was perfectly permissible in those times. The defence employed by Fundamentalists of declaring that the Bible is inspired and inerrant because it itself says so is certainly circular reasoning and only works for those who are Fundamentalists already. Professor James Barr suggests that it is circular because it is meant to be. It forms a tight, exclusive circle into which an outsider can break only by totally abandoning his objections and accepting in entirety the world-view of those within. It also encloses those already within and makes escape only possible at the cost of deep and traumatic shattering of their entire religious outlook (BARR, J., The Westminster Press, 1978 . p.266). I think the obvious flimsiness of Archer’s emotive and circular arguments condemn themselves and I rest my case.

Notwithstanding the inconsistencies I have pointed out, the messages behind the narratives are the lasting thing and what makes the Bible still a best seller and the greatest book ever produced. People often don’t realize how much our morality and conduct is based on biblical advice, like the list of sins in Paul’s letter to the Galatians 5:19-24 and, of course, the Ten Commandments themselves (Exodus 20:1-17, Duet. 5:6-21).

The second example of Conservative Evangelical Apologetic, which follows below, is the renowned publication by Harold Lindsell released at the height of the inerrancy debate in the late 1970’s and used almost as a second Bible by fundamentalists of that era.
LINDSELL, H., *The Battle for the Bible*, Zondervan Publishing House, 1979,

In this case the whole book is a presentation of the Evangelical case and so the whole book has been critiqued and liberal objections placed alongside. This book is particularly important because of its universal use in the past as the epitome of the Conservative Evangelical case and defence of it. Although too rich for the blood of some evangelicals, such as Carl Henry, it still remains a pillar for some Conservatives.

**Definitions used by Lindsell:**

Although the following terms have been defined before, Dr. Lindsell has a slightly different view of some of them. In order to properly understand this partial critique of his book I have defined some terms again in the manner Dr. Lindsell sees them.

**Evangelicalism:**

This is a movement originating in the 18th century which laid special emphasis on personal conversion and salvation by faith in the atoning death of Christ. Later there was a general acceptance of belief in the verbal inspiration in the Bible and resistance to the findings of science and Bible criticism.

**Inerrancy:**

Absolute Inerrantists believe, as stated by Harold Lindsell, one of its most outspoken advocates, that *The Bible does not contain error of any kind, whether it speaks on history, geography, astronomy, chronology, science, or any area whatsoever* (page 18). Almost all Inerrantists though, now limit this insistence to the original documents, the Autographs which, of course, are no longer extant.

**Infallibility:**

In our present context this term can refer to those who hold that the Bible is without error only when it speaks of matters relating to our faith and practice. Originally the word referred to the absolute correctness of statements made by the Pope when in his official capacity, e.g. from the throne of Saint Peter (ex cathedra). Dr. Lindsell uses the words ‘infallible’ and ‘inerrant’ interchangeably and also means that the Bible is free from error in the whole or in part when he uses the terms trustworthy and authoritative.

When I began to read Dr. Lindsell’s book, on the first page I read the sentence - *When*
anti-supernaturalists try to persuade me that I am mistaken I reply that I did not write the Bible. This is akin to another commonly used mantra popular with those of a fixed Evangelical persuasion - I would rather believe Jesus than you. Both these statements and many like it are making the almost incredible mistake of taking quotations from a text under question for its own verification in the current discussion and using it as proof of the very veracity under consideration. That would be like taking the first statement of an accused person on trial as to his innocence as perfectly true and abandoning the rest of the proceedings. Dr. Gleason L. Archer in his book A Survey of Old Testament subtitles a whole section on Page 25-28 - The Doctrine of Inspiration Affirmed by Scripture Itself. To quote just one example from this section, Dr. Archer writes - Hebrews 1:1-2: God, who … spake … by the prophets, hath … spoken to us by his Son. From this quotation Dr. Archer maintains - This asserts the same infallibility for the writings of the Old Testament prophets as it attaches to the New Testament message of Christ Himself. How can something under trial for its Inspiration or otherwise be quoted as the absolute judge of its own case?

On page 18 Lindsell states that the Bible does not contain errors of any kind - The Bible could not, if it is trustworthy, say that Julius Caesar was emperor when Jesus was crucified or that Caesar Augustus perpetrated the sack of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. If it did these things, it would then be conveying information to us that is palpably false, he says (ibid; 18). I would point out that Luke 2:1-5 tells us that a pregnant Mary and Joseph went up from Galilee to Bethlehem to be enrolled when Quirinius was governor of Syria. Historical records tell us that Quirinius was governor of Syria from 6 to 7 A.D. Matthew 2:1 states that Jesus was born in Bethlehem in the days of Herod the King. Again reliable records tell us that King Herod died in the year 4 B.C. (BOADT, L. (1984) Reading the Old Testament, Mahwah, NJ, Paulist Press, p.521) and furthermore the Bible records that he ordered the execution of all infants of 2 years of age and younger; there is no historical recording of this. How can these facts be reconciled with Lindsell’s insistences on inerrancy? Either Luke or Matthew or both made an undeniable mistake; it is there before our eyes and there is no escaping it! For a more detailed discussion of these matters see page 344f.

Immediately following comes another falsehood perpetuated by Fundamentalists everywhere - From the historical perspective it can be said that for two thousand years the Christian Church has agreed that the Bible is completely trustworthy; it is infallible or inerrant (ibid; 19). This statement is manifestly wrong as any good and honest
A student of church history should know and as I have demonstrated earlier. Certainly when considering historical characters like Marcion, in the 140's A.D. who disagreed so strongly with the Biblical text that he proposed his own canon of Scripture, one could perhaps argue that most of the rest of the church did not agree with him but when going on to consider a list of influential worthies who questioned the veracity or accuracy of the Biblical writings, one cannot pretend that the whole church throughout history accepted the Bible as Inerrant. Marcion’s canon consisted basically of Luke’s Gospel, minus the first three chapters, and ten letters of Paul. *In the latter he often had no need to revise them for they already agreed with his own logic: Paul’s interest in the Old Testament seemed at best casual and intermittent as he considered the Christian message to be a fresh input by God to be grasped and interpreted on its own terms with no need to begin with Jewish Scripture. Not that Paul was actually opposed to the existing Scriptures, e.g. 1 Cor.15:3-4 (Hosea 6:2, Ps.16:10), it was just that he usually considered Old Testament proofs to be no longer required. (BARTON, J. (1988) People of the Book, London, SPCK. p.4-5).*

When one has a flimsy case with very limited scope for any attempts at proofs or evidence, especially when one is hostile to biblical critical study, the same methods and so-called ‘proof texts’ must be used over and over again in thinly veiled different guises. This applies particularly to the Evangelical fondness for falsely using quotations from the text under question as so-called proofs of the very text under discussion. On page 21 Lindsell does it again by averring that the apostle John in the Fourth Gospel unequivocally states that the second half of the prophecy of Isaiah was written by the prophet himself. I presume he was referring to John 12:38 where a quotation from Isaiah 53:1 is included and annotated as The word spoken by the prophet Isaiah. Gleason opines that there are some who believe there were two Isaiahs, one who wrote the first thirty nine chapters and another, or a school of prophets, who wrote the rest of the book. I am afraid this deliberately misleading statement that ‘there are some’ should, if the truth be told, read ‘the prevailing consensus of scholarship believes’ that there were two (or even three) Isaiahs (Clements, R. E. (1987) Isaiah 1-39, Grand Rapids, Mich., Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, p.2). To quote the much respected Harper’s Bible Dictionary - *As a rule, modern prophetic scholarship distinguishes between two major “books”: chapters 1-39 and 40-66, called First and Second Isaiah respectively. The first relates to the second half of the 8th century BCE, the Assyrian period, while chapters 40-66 are a product of the 6th to the 5th century BCE, the Persian period. The distinction has been recently confirmed by computer*
analysis of the language (Y.T. Radday). (Many scholars call chapters 56-66 of the second composition a third book). Achtemeier, P. J., Boraas, R. S., Fishbane, M., Perkins, P. & Walker, W. O. (1985) Harper's Bible Dictionary, San Francisco, Harper & Row p.427). On the same page Lindsell observes that – the Book of Jonah was historical because Jesus affirmed it to be and that the writer of 2 Peter asserted that he was present at the transfiguration of Christ, which could not be true if the letter was written in the second century (LINDSELL, H., Zondervan Publishing House, 1979, ; p.21). Lindsell has based the historicity of the Book of Jonah on Jesus affirmed it to be (Matthew 12:40) and the authenticity of the Second Letter of Peter on the Epistle itself claims to have been written by Peter; once again this is circular reasoning at its most blatant and therefore completely invalid. As far as the specific incidents, which he purports support the second letter of Peter, are concerned, whatever they may be, the scholars quote its mounting concern for the delay in Christ’s return and its dependence on Stoic Physics as support for this epistle’s late first or early second century date of composition.

Reasonable interpretive opinion regarding the book of Jonah may run along these lines: ‘After the Restoration, under Ezra and Nehemiah, laws were passed making it a crime to live in Judah unless you could show a pure Jewish blood line back for 10 generations; half-breed wives and children were banished. In the midst of these political purges, Jewish story tellers once again took up their pens to comment against injustice. Fictitious heroes in the characters of Ruth and Jonah both lead the readers into making judgments against the common wisdom of the day in profound and provocative ways. The Book of Ruth extolled the virtue of a foreign woman who became the great grandmother of King David and thus opposed the reigning Xenophobia of the time. Jonah, who for his part could not believe that God could care for the gentiles of Nineveh who fell outside the limits the Jews had placed round God’s love and favour, finally saw that there was something amiss in his being more compassionate towards a tree than to the people of Nineveh’. (John Shelby Spong, A New Christianity for a New World (2009), Parts XXII – XXIV; North Adams, MA. Waterfront Media Inc.).

As far as claims for Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch are concerned (because Jesus affirms it) these are so far removed from modern thought, proofs and established fact that the proofs of its falsehood are overwhelming. This matter will, in any case, be dealt with more fully on page 321.
Dr. Lindsell avers, on page 24, *I will speak to the issue ironically, not polemically* and yet he persists in little implications towards his very partisan viewpoint by using doubtful assertions. Here are some examples - He states that:

- No doubt a case can be made out for errancy in such a way that the unlearned and unsophisticated will fall for it (p.25) - this clearly implies that the learned and sophisticated persons would naturally adopt inerrancy otherwise. How insulting and misguided that is when the vast majority of reputable and erudite scholars see clearly that inerrancy is obviously unsupportable, as Fuller Seminary did.

Lindsell says, of the view held by those who disagree with him - *a view I consider dangerous to the church and impossible to defend from Scripture or from history* (p.24). Well, I have already defended my position from history and I am in the process of defending it from scripture at every turn that Lindsell makes to distort the truth. As far as being dangerous is concerned, those who insist on biblical literalism in a professed love of the Bible and the Christian Religion are, in fact, *contributing to its demise by their propagation of untenable statements and viewpoints* SPONG, J. S. (1991) *Rescuing the Bible from Fundamentalism*, San Francisco, Harper Collins Publishers. p.31).

- History affords examples of people who professed to be evangelicals but whose lives were no better and in some cases were even worse than those of some liberals (p.26). This clearly implies that the persons with the worst lifestyle were liberals and is certainly polemic.

In his second chapter, on page 30, Lindsell says, *This brings us to the doctrine on inspiration, which is clearly taught in the Bible itself*. This clause *clearly taught in the Bible itself* connotes of finality; in other words - ‘Ah well! If it is taught in the Bible itself then that is that!’ This, of course, is not so. The present discussion is about whether the writings in the Bible are inerrant or not. You just cannot go about quoting texts from the Bible as being the last word on the matter when those very texts are up for question in this study. Although it is very difficult for the Inerrantists to try and come up with any real evidence to support their case, which is why they repeatedly keep going back to the Bible and quoting it as an unimpeachable source when it itself is under question, they must try to reason their case from some valid grounds, if such can be found.

On Lindsell's page 31 we read - *the authors of Scripture, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, were preserved from making factual, historical, scientific or other errors … if*
the Scripture is inspired at all it must be infallible. This bold statement contains an assertion and its corollary - the biblical writers were preserved from making any errors whatsoever and as a corollary if they did make mistakes then inspiration did not take place. Did the Biblical writers make any mistakes - yes they did, many of them! Now that most inerrantists have retreated back to saying that only the original documents were inerrant, they would try and dodge errors pointed out to them by saying that they had been tampered with by subsequent transmitters.

There are many, many errors of a scientific, historical, geographical or cultural type but according to Lindsell’s own statement, only one error needs to be demonstrated to negate the whole notion of inerrancy or inspiration, as he calls it here. To quote him directly - If Scripture is inspired at all it must be infallible and If there is any doctrine of infallibility based upon the biblical data, it must include all of Scripture or none of it. Statements like this from the evangelical side justify my somewhat particular examples in Appendix 1. For a Fundamentalist any error, no matter how small, invalidates the Inerrancy Theory and raises the possibility of other errors elsewhere. However I have given more far-reaching examples in other places.

To place Inspiration as a scripturally taught doctrine on a par with the Deity and Resurrection of Christ, as Lindsell does on page 34 is, quite frankly, misguided. Even where there is the occasional mention or implication of inerrancy the words are by no means proven to be the actual words of the speaker. To bring out again the much worn 2 Timothy 3:16-17, as Lindsell does on the same page, is not only to use the Bible to try and prove the Bible but these words are not the words of God, they are the words of the writer of the letter. Unfortunately as well as being of doubtful authorship, these letters were written at least 200 years before the Canon of the Bible was established and could not therefore be used to describe the biblical text as we know it. The authors of Timothy and Peter may not have even known some of the books in our canon, or may have known of them but considered them unauthentic, as mentioned earlier (page 166). In the mid to late 2nd century, when the letters were written, scripture generally referred to the Hebrew Bible or Old Testament, as other references like those of Jesus show. No doubt the writer of 2 Timothy did believe at that time that the scriptures were the Word of God but then they also believed that the earth was flat and that the sun revolved around the earth - we have learned differently about both since then.

Again on page 34, Dr. Lindsell brings the Virgin birth of Christ into the argument. The
use of this quotation, misquoted though it usually is, to predict a virgin birth for a child some 700 years later is highly questionable. Matthew used the Greek version of the Hebrew Text which had the mistranslation *parthenos*, for the Hebrew word *almah*, in it to attempt to prove the Virgin Birth tradition thus perpetuating the mistake. This gigantic mistake alone should be enough to scotch the Inerrancy theories of the Fundamentalists and Ultra-conservatives for ever.

The quotation 2 Peter 1:21 no prophecy ever came by the impulse of man, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God does not prove that the Bible is Inerrant, it merely shows that whoever wrote that letter believed at that time the sentiments he expressed in that verse, that's all! The claims in 1 Thess. 2:13, 1 Cor. 14:37 and Galatians 1:11-12 are not God's words they are Paul's words in which he gives his opinion that his messages are from God. Paul's belief that the return of Jesus would occur in his lifetime (1 Cor.7:29f, Rom.13:11) proved to be mistaken. All these quotations prove is what the man Paul thought at that time. For example in Romans 3:28 Paul writes - *For we hold that a man is justified by faith apart from works of law*, whereas James in his letter in 2:26 says *faith apart from works is dead*. These two statements show diametrically opposite views from the two letter writers and they can’t both be right about the function of faith. Apart from showing yet again that the entire Biblical text is not inerrant, they do not prove anything about the issue of ‘faith versus works’ but only what the two men’s opinions were on the subject at the time of writing.

Dr. Lindsell asserts on page 35 that the spades of a thousand diggers over the centuries have not discredited the truth of Scripture nor has the turned-over earth proven the Bible to be untrue. This tautological statement is grossly untrue. To give but one example, archaeology has shown that the sites of Jericho and Ai, allegedly sacked by Joshua after entry into the Promised Land, were in fact uninhabited sites in Joshua’s time which had been deserted for a considerable period., as mentioned briefly earlier - *Both Ai and Jericho were ruins when Joshua arrived in c.1250 B.C., Ai from 2350 BCE and Jericho from c.1560. Where Archaeology is able to demonstrate destruction of late Bronze Age Canaanite sites, none were cities mentioned in the Joshua account* (ANDERSON, B. W. (1991) The Living World of the Old Testament, London, Prentice-Hall (p.136/7). Carbon dating of the remains confirms the much earlier demise of these towns than that alleged by the Biblical account. So many biblical notions have been found wanting by archaeological findings that the description Biblical Archaeology was changed to Palestinian Archaeology.
Lindsell has given as his opinion that God did not intend the Autographs to be preserved in case they became the object of idol worship nor did he preserve the mercy seat that was in the Holy of Holies in the temple, but he has preserved for us the Scriptures which have remained unadulterated, by which we mean free from error. We can say honestly that the Bible we have today is the Word of God. If Lindsell, and presumably his colleagues, can honestly say that the Bible we have today is the Word of God and free from error, perhaps they would like to peruse the list of ‘difficulties’ in the Biblical Text in Appendix 1 from my own book, (PAGE, J. A. (1998) Who Writes for God Vol. 1, Thornton, John A Page.p.245). Which of these, I wonder, would Lindsell et al class as copyists’ mistakes or a misspelled or misplaced word and which would have to be admitted to be a mis-statement or something that is contrary to fact and thus negate the whole inspiration case?. Are these the minimal textual problems to which Lindsell refers on page 37? Perhaps a more lenient and understanding definition of inspiration may be called for, rather than the ‘all or nothing ‘gung ho’ statements’ of the Inerrantists? If this were so then perhaps Bishop Haverland’s definition may be suitable (see page 235 of the thesis).

In his section on Interpreting Scripture on pages 37/38 Lindsell tries to water down his own definition of evangelical literalism by first excluding figures of speech and then suggesting that the Scripture writers would never say that the sun revolved around the earth. The earth was thought to be flat until around the time of Columbus in 1492 and that the planets revolved around the earth until Copernicus (1473-1543). Certainly the biblical writers thought so too (Joshua 10:12-13) as their views of the situation of heaven and earth were very basic. Psalm 19:6, in talking about the sun, says – Its rising is at one end of the heavens, and its circuit to their farthest bound.

In the account of the flood the little noticed verses Genesis 7:11 and 8:2 state that the fountains of the great deep burst forth, and the windows of heaven were opened in the first and the fountains of the deep and the windows of heaven were closed in the second. This clearly indicates how primitive the scientific knowledge of these writers was since they thought the world-wide flood was caused by the waters believed to be held above and below the earth by firmaments (Genesis 1:6-8) being released, as well as by the rain falling. To suggest in the same section that Isaiah 40:22 - It is he who sits above the circle of the earth implies in any way that the Hebrews knew, or thought of, the earth as circular or imagined its orbit as circular centuries before Western Scientists did, is absurd. This gross misuse of a so-called proof text demonstrates a
lack of knowledge of the Hebrew language. The Hebrew word translated as “circle” in the RSV Bible actually comes from a root meaning *curtain* and what the writer meant to convey is that God sits even higher than the *firmament*, *canopy* or *tent* thought to hold back the primeval waters above the earth (Gen.1:6-8, 7:11), and from his lofty position can see and know all that goes on, a big theme of Second Isaiah’s. Not to know, or even investigate, this Hebrew derivation and, worse still, not to realize and admit that the original Hebrew word applied to Mary was not virgin but “young woman” displays a staggering lack of scholarship on the part of Dr. Lindsell and his colleagues.

Regarding the authority of the Bible, Dr. Lindsell, on page 39, makes the controversial accusation that *additionally information in a thousand instances has proved that the Bible’s critics were wrong*. He seems to echo the hollow cry of many evangelicals that anomalies in the Bible are only apparent and further evidence ‘yet to come in’ will clarify any problem areas. Again he embarks on the suicidal view that *the authority of the Bible for man is viable only if the Bible itself is true - infallibility and authority stand or fall together*. Extremists throughout hermeneutical history have made this extravagant claim, including Turretin and the Princeton Theologians, and have paid the price of egg on the face when errors have been clearly demonstrated in the biblical texts. Even the very conservative writer Carl F.H. Henry was unhappy with Harold Lindsell’s book because the author deprecated the Christianity of those who did not subscribe to his adamant views, especially those on Inerrancy.

Lindsell returns to the area of thin ice on which he was skating before, namely *infallibility in Church History*, when, on page 42, he lists heretical groups which arose in the earlier church stating that none of them questioned the Bible’s inerrancy. This is not true in that the Ebionites used only the Gospel of Matthew and repudiated Paul altogether (STEVENSON, J. (1987) *A New Eusebius*, London, SPCK , p.99).and Montanus and his two Priestesses questioned the authority of the Hebrew prophets offering instead their own ‘real time’ communications with the Holy Spirit (CHADWICK, H. (1967) *The Early Church*, London, Penguin Books Ltd., p.52). But much worse still than these inaccurate details is the unforgivable practice of many polemicists, including Lindsell, of quoting only those sources which agree with their own viewpoint and conveniently omitting those which don’t. To bring to light one important example in Lindsell’s passage about heretical groups on page 42, I point out that he conveniently leaves out the case of Marcion (c.140AD) who was so incensed with the fallibility of the Old Testament and much of the New that he proposed his own Canon of Scripture
consisting of Luke’s Gospel, minus the first 3 chapters, and 10 of the Letters of Saint Paul, as explained earlier. Marcion cited Isaiah 45:7 "I make peace and it is I who send evil, I, the Lord do these things" which he contrasted with Jesus’ saying that a tree was known by its fruit, a good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, and then pointed to the series of injunctions and lessons in the Old Testament which are contradicted in the New (FREND, W. H. C. (1982) The Early Church, Philadelphia, Fortress Press; p.56). There are many other instances of the early church’s concern with Inerrancy including the list I provided earlier in Chapter 3.

I have mentioned before, Lindsell’s propensity for risky proposals and his choice of the Form-critic Rudolph Bultmann to quote from is another example. The very influential The New Jerome Bible Commentary states on page 1140 that fundamental conservatism would reject his (Bultmann’s) work entirely and this because of his skepticism as regards historical reliability of the New Testament as he assigns most of the tradition to the creative imagination of the early Christian communities; even the sayings of Jesus are not in their proper contexts but in situations created by later traditions and especially by the evangelists themselves. (BROWN, R. E., FITZMYER, J. A. & MURPHY, R. E. (1993) The New Jerome Biblical Commentary, London, Geoffrey Chapman. P.1138-9). So much for Bultmann’s support for an 'error-free Bible'.

I do not propose to dignify the repeated quotations from Scripture justifying itself, which Lindsell has laboriously copied out, with a reply because, as I have pointed out, it is inappropriate to try and use the very subject matter under scrutiny and examination as an authority on itself to declare itself inerrant. I have stated elsewhere that proofs involving the Bible justifying itself only work if one is already a Fundamentalist. People avowing the truth of the biblical writings in ancient times really believed what they were saying because they knew no better at that time, but much of it is known not to be true now. The most popular version of how the world was made in c.550 B.C., when the Pentateuch was put together in a big redaction by the Priestly Group during the Babylonian exile, and probably after, was that God created the world in the 6 stages that are detailed in the first Chapter of Genesis. A second version, probably the J version, is included at Genesis 2:4b - 25 and must still have had some adherents for P to have seen fit to include it after its own later-dated version of 1:1-2:4a. Both versions are a considerable leap ahead from the good god versus bad god of earlier ideas, such as the Babylonian one. However people, if asked today, would aver that the Big Bang
Theory was true, just as the ancient people would have adhered to their versions; they were what was thought by the people at that time. To go comparing statements from the past, when people knew no better, with today’s knowledge is both misleading and irresponsible. I have put forward the notion later that P’s main purpose in the Creation Epic anyway was a polemic to demonstrate Monotheism. However to quote people from the past whose statements represent what they thought at that time is quite valid unless that quotation is wrong. For example Lindsell incorrectly represented the following great church figures as attesting to Inerrancy whereas in fact their opinions were as follows –

Origen (185-254) acknowledged that the New Testament evangelists and Paul expressed their own opinions and that they could have erred when speaking on their own authority. He distinguished between the revealed message and the commentary on it by the scriptural authors. As I have pointed out the use of allegory saved many Old Testament passages from exclusion, even in Origen’s own eyes. The use of allegory was necessitated in the first place by the difficulties the biblical texts presented, not least of which were the cruelties and violence allegedly advocated or insisted upon by God himself. In order to accept these writings Origen and others turned the conquest of Canaan into a metaphor for the Christian mission to the Gentiles or for Christ’s conquest of the soul. Origen wrote – within us are the Canaanites, the Perizzites and the Jebusites (Hom. Jes. Nave. 1.7). He went further to say that unless those carnal wars were a symbol of spiritual wars, I do not think that the Jewish historical books would ever have been passed down by the apostles to be read by Christ’s followers in their churches (Hom. Ios. 15.1, Ex: STARK, T. (2011) The Human Faces of God, Eugene, Oregon, Wipf and Stock Publishers, p.138f).

Augustine (354-430) warned Christians not to take their ‘science’ from the Bible as such appeals would expose the Bible to ridicule - It is deplorable that Christians, even though they ostensibly base their dicta on the Bible, should utter so much nonsense that they expose themselves to ridicule. While ridicule is all they deserve, they also give the impression that the Bible authors are responsible for their mutterings, thus discrediting Christianity before the world, which is led to assume that the authors of the Scriptures were ignorant fools also (POLMAN, A. D. R. (1961) The Word of God According to St. Augustine, Eerdmans, p.61). When Augustine used the phrase free from error- he meant free from deliberate and deceitful telling of that which the author knew to be untrue not problems that arose from the human limitations of knowledge,
various perspectives in reporting events of historical or cultural conditioning of the writers, (Kerr, David W. (1957) Augustine of Hippo, in Inspiration and Interpretation. ed. John F. Walvoord, Grand Rapids, Wm. B. Eerdmans, p. 73) which he knew to exist. He took the inspiration for granted because of the effect it had on people under the work of the Holy Spirit. The Bible was not a textbook of science or an academic tract, it was a book of life whose purpose was to bring the Good News of salvation and guidance in the Christian way of life.

To solve the antithesis between the Old and New Testaments, Augustine used accommodation, as had Clement, Origen and Chrysostom. The activity of the Holy Spirit governed the outcome but not the methods of the biblical writers, according to Augustine, each giving an account according to his recollection of the event and his judgment as to how to present it. Differences in accounts were to whet peoples’ spiritual appetites for understanding and were not problems for Christian faith as the truth resided in the writers’ thoughts not in the form of words - the sentiment (and the intention of the speakers) and not the jots and tittles of letters ought to be looked at (Harmony, II, xxviii, 67, Nicene and post-Nicene Fathers by Schaff, 6:135). These problems belonged to the area of understanding the Scripture with the tools of research but the integrity of the biblical authors’ intentions was a matter of faith.

Under the aegis of The letter kills but the spirit gives life (2 Cor. 3:6) Augustine resorted to allegorical exegesis to view the spiritual meaning of what seemed to teach perverse doctrine, such as immoralities of the Patriarchs, provided that we also believe in the truth of the story as a faithful record of historical fact. He declared that it was only after discovering the allegorical method from his Bishop, Ambrose, that he was able to become a Christian. As guidelines for interpretation Augustine adopted and modified the Rules of Tyconius as hermeneutical keys - Historical, Aetiological, Analogical and Allegorical, i.e. look for the communication of the eternal, the facts of history, future events and moral precepts (Preus, James Samuel, (1969), From Shadow to Promise: Old Testament Interpretation from Augustine to the Young Luther, Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, Chapter 1). The saying In the Old Testament the New is concealed; in the New the Old is revealed, (Walgrave, Jan H., (1972) Unfolding Revelation, Theological Resources, Philadelphia, Westminster Press), enabled him to give both literal and spiritual interpretations of the same text to indicate that one prefigured the other but sometimes these methods were over-stretched such as when claiming that Jacob set up the rods before the flocks as a prophecy of Christ and not to
cheat his father-in-law (Gen.30:37-43). He felt that too much literalism led to heresy, as in the case of the Manichees and Satan tempting Christ with Scripture.

Martin Luther (1483-1546) stated - *When discrepancies occur in the Holy Scriptures and we cannot harmonise them, let them pass, it does not endanger the articles of the Christian faith* (cited in Shelton, p.181 from *Weimarer Ausgabe*, XLVI, 727). When Luther says there is no falsehood he was not talking about factual errors, which he had already admitted occurred, but he was affirming the reliability of God’s Word in accomplishing righteousness in the believer. Neither Augustine nor Luther predicated the trustworthiness of Scripture in communicating its saving message on the technical accuracy of its human-accommodated form but on its divine function and its success in accomplishing it. Luther understood what the early church theologians had called ‘God’s accommodation’ as an incarnational style of accommodation – the Bible was the Word of God in the words of human beings.

John Calvin (1509-1564) categorically rejected a narrow literalism that he called ‘syllable snatching’ (Rogers, J.B. & McKim, D.K., Harper & Rowe, 1979, , p.97). Most of the early church fathers used the concept of ‘Accommodation’ when dealing with difficulties in the Bible. That concept was ‘the adaptation of the verbal message to the make-up of the persons being addressed, taking account of their situation, character, intelligence and emotional state’. Calvin adapted this still further to bridge the great gap between God and Humanity through the divine condescension to speak and act in human forms so that all could understand and benefit. This principle was demonstrated in its finest in Jesus Christ’s taking on human form. A concentration on the intent of the author and the cultural context rather than on the form of the words enabled Calvin to accept the accommodated character of biblical language.

Because man had become bleary eyed through suppression of innate knowledge, the spectacles of Scripture were needed to see clearly (Calvin, Inst.1.vi.1). To acknowledge ‘errors’, such as Paul’s misquoting of Psalm 51:4 in his Romans 3:4, Calvin opines *In quoting Scripture the apostles often used freer language than the original, since they were content if what they quoted applied to their subject, and they were not over-careful in their use of words* (Calvin’s Commentary on Romans 3:4, Calvin’s New Testament Commentaries (CNTC), p.61). Whatever may be said about this, and similar quotations, they certainly aver that the biblical text is not inerrant. Again of the mis-use of the phrase a little lower than the angels in Hebrews 2:7, Calvin
says, *It was not the purpose of the apostle to give an accurate exposition of the words. There is nothing improper if he looks for allusions in the words to embellish the case he is presenting* (Commentary on Hebrews 2:7 CNTC, p.22). It may not have been improper in those days but it certainly does not support Inerrancy of the Scriptures as Evangelicals falsely claim. In his Commentary on Hebrews 10:6 Calvin affirmed that - *They (the apostles) were not over scrupulous in quoting words provided they did not misuse Scripture for their convenience. We must always look at the purpose for which quotations are made ... but as far as words are concerned, as in other things which are not relevant to the present purpose, they allow themselves some indulgence* (Commentary on Hebrews 10:6 CNTC. p.136).

Contrary to Lindsell’s blanket assertion that the Reformers’ attitude toward the Word of God was positive acceptance of it as both authoritative and infallible, both Calvin and Luther recognized and admitted contradictions in the Biblical texts, as has been demonstrated above, and Calvin, in talking of this admission said *it was not necessary that the Scripture display an exact, technical accuracy nor was exact correspondence between the literal meaning of an Old Testament passage and its use in the New Testament* (Rogers and McKimHarper & Row, Publishers,1979 (p.106-114 quoting material from Calvin’s *Institutes*. 1. xvii. 13).

As a trained humanist Calvin was always occupied with the circumstances and culture in which the Bible message was set as he knew that this coloured the text’s meaning (Rogers, J.B. & McKim, D.K., Harper & Rowe, 1979, , (p.97) (from *Institutes IV, xvi. 23*). God’s revelation of himself in Christ was a model of God’s method of communicating with us, according to Calvin, and God’s saving message was adequately communicated in all the varieties of normal human speech. This is what Calvin himself said - *He accommodates Himself to our ignorance; for thus does the Lord often prattle with us, and borrow comparisons from matters familiar to us, when He speaks of His majesty; that our ignorant and limited minds may better understand His greatness and excellence* (Commentaries on John 3:12, Calvin’s New Testament Commentaries, p.70). Accommodation was a suitable means of explaining anthropomorphism and resolving inconsistencies in the biblical record as Calvin admitted there were.

Enough evidence has surely been provided to prove clearly that statements to the effect that the whole church had always considered the Scriptures Inerrant are misguided. Rather than spend an inordinate amount of time questioning each and every one of Lindsell’s early sources on alleged support for inerrancy, especially
Origen, Chrysostom, Augustine, Jerome, Luther and Calvin, with whom I have already dealt, the tenet that the whole church had always held the Bible to be inerrant I absolutely refute; Inspired – Yes, Inerrant – No. For my case it actually only behoves me to prove that one influential person from the earlier church did not believe the Scriptures to be wholly inerrant, whereas for the Evangelical case all early church notables must be proved to have thought so, which they manifestly did not, as my earlier quotations from them show – there are two reasons for refuting the view that Calvin believed in verbal inspiration … the refutation rests on Calvin’s expressed view that there is no identity of Spirit and Word, and on his statement that the Word must be supplemented by the operation of the Spirit before becoming effective for faith and salvation (REID, J. K. S. (1957) The Authority of Scripture, Connecticut, London, Greenwood Press, p.46). Even the great Warfield himself insisted – A proven error in Scripture contradicts not only our doctrine, but the Scripture claims and, therefore, its inspiration in making those claims (Inspiration, p.245).

Fuller Seminary changed its statement of faith from a belief in inerrancy to a belief in an infallible Bible to deliver itself from the charge of ethical delinquency and misconduct LINDSELL, H., Zondervan Publishing House, 1979, (p.22f). I personally think they may have made the change simply because they saw that a belief in inerrancy was untenable in the light of modern scholarship. This must have been a blow to Dr. Lindsell, who was Vice President and Professor at Fuller, and for his colleague on the staff, Dr. Gleason Archer, who both subsequently resigned. Harold John Ockenga (1905-85), at various times the President of Fuller, called for a ‘new evangelicalism’ that would value scholarship and take an active interest in society while maintaining Protestant orthodoxy. Edward John CARNELL, (1919-1967) (author of The Case for Orthodox Theology, Philadelphia, The Westminster Press). He entered a career of writing, teaching and administration at Fuller Theological Seminary and moved out of Fundamentalism whereas Carl Henry expressed his concern for an intellectually responsible evangelicalism and a new concern for theological reflection through teaching at Fuller. These leaders cooperated with Billy Graham who used his influence in promoting the intellectual enlightenment of evangelicalism and the reestablishment of evangelical academic respectability (NOLL, M. (1994) The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind, Grand Rapids, Michigan, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company; p.231/4).
CHAPTER 13
AGAINST INERRANCY

There has been a re-emergence of the Doctrine of Inerrancy in more recent times. It should have faded in the light of modern science and biblical scholarship but it hasn’t. It is now continuing in a new tradition called Fundamentalism in which it has re-emerged and been re-packaged as if it was a new thing. All Conservatives hold to one or other of the versions of Inerrancy given already in previous chapters, but many writers of the Liberal persuasion have written against these views. It is therefore worthwhile presenting some of these major objections to the doctrine of inerrancy and visiting some creditable scholars who expressed them. This chapter is a presentation of these liberalist comments against the Doctrine of Inerrancy, some even coming from the evangelical side. Inerrancy becomes a serious issue when we come to consider its educational suitability. Public funds in Religious Education should not be spent teaching exclusive beliefs if they are manifestly untrue or inappropriate. Not only is Inerrancy questionable in its adherence to good educational practice but it constitutes a major stumbling block and divisive stance in any pursuance of Church Unity.

Some evangelical authors are now beginning to seriously question the advisability of insistence on Inerrancy; for example Scott McGowan importantly writes - I have gradually become concerned that some ways of defining and using Scripture within evangelicalism are open to serious criticism and could do us more harm than good if we continue to maintain them in their present form. Through a failure to understand the differences between evangelicalism and fundamentalism, through a failure to engage with biblical scholarship, and sometimes through sheer obscurantist and anti-intellectual approaches, evangelicals have often damaged rather than helped the case for a high view of Scripture (MCGOWAN, S.B. & MCGOWAN, A.T.B., Apollos branch of Inter-Varsity Press, 2007, p.11).

Associate Professor Denis O. Lamoureux in reviewing G.K. Beale’s book The Erosion of Inerrancy in Evangelicalism (2008), Wheaton, Il., Crossway Books, and whilst confiding that his confidence in Beale was irreparably fractured, queried – Is young earth creation a “possible” interpretation in the twenty first century? So too the day-age hermeneutic of progressive creation. Does Beale not realize that the creative events in Genesis 1 do not align with the cosmological and geological records? (Perspectives on
Even a renowned Conservative, Dr. Hubbard, when President of Fuller Theological College softened his position and presided over the 1970 revised mission statement deleting from the earlier statement of 1950 the phrase, *free from error in the whole and in part*, and including the recognition of the need for reverent, yet critical, interpretation, states - *Where a rigid system of apologetics becomes the basic definition of orthodoxy, true biblical scholarship becomes difficult if not impossible* (HUBBARD, D. (1977) *The Current Tensions: Is There a Way Out*, Waco, Texas, Wordbooks p.176). About this change here and elsewhere Dr. Lindsell wrote – *This change of position with respect to the infallibility of the Bible is widespread and has occurred in evangelical denominations, Christian colleges, theological seminaries, publishing houses and learned societies* (LINDSELL, H., Zondervan Publishing House, 1979, ; p.20). Soon after Dr. Hubbard’s changes to the mission statement, Harold Lindsell and Gleason Archer resigned their positions on the faculty of Fuller College.

Erstwhile evangelical lecturer Peter Enns lists the following issues which, he says, have not been handled well in evangelical theology –

*Why does the Bible in places look a lot like the literature of Israel’s ancient neighbours?*  
*Is the Old Testament really unique? Does it not just reflect the ancient world in which it was produced?*  
*If the Bible is the word of God, why does it fit so nicely in the ancient world?*  
*Why do different parts of the Old Testament say different things about the same thing?*  
*Why do the New Testament authors handle the Old Testament in such odd ways and often out of context?*  


Perhaps the greatest obstacle of all to realistic biblical interpretation is the Fundamentalist’s insistence that the Bible is to be viewed as “The Inerrant Word of God” and nothing less and that it contains no errors of any kind whatsoever. Regarding this, J.K.S. Reid opines - *If the authority of the Bible be construed in the sense that every isolated word of Holy Scripture is inerrant, to call in question of even one of these points is enough to shatter that authority* REID, J. K. S. (1957) *The Authority of Scripture*, Connecticut & London, Greenwood Press, Methuen, p.27.

According to John Perry *The heart of the disagreement is the accuracy of the Bible’s account of items not integral to salvation; how precisely the Bible reports scientific,*
geological and similar information, as well as whether it contains any internal inconsistencies about historical events (PERRY, J. (2001) Dissolving the Inerrancy Debate: How Modern Philosophy Shaped the Evangelical View of Scripture. Quodlibet Journal, 3, No.4, p.2).

Professor James Barr in his book, *Fundamentalism*, states that if the superficial arguments between fundamentalist faith and critical biblical scholarship, namely - the author of each book, which sentences Jesus actually spoke, dates, sources and the like, were resolved there would still be a deep field of conflict between fundamentalist and critical approaches in the area of Theology, due to deep-lying structures of thought which are basic to fundamentalist Christianity. Conservatives hold a doctrine which was expressly designed to maintain inerrancy and if they hold that doctrine with sincerity then they are bound to maintain it over the details of Noah’s ark and the logistics of gathering and managing such a large body of animals, of the depth of the flood worldwide, the years of Methuselah’s age and the number of chariots in a Chronicles passage set against a different number in the account of the same incident in Samuel/Kings. They should be forced to either maintain their position or else to alter their doctrine. Vagueness and generalities will not do and discrepancies, for example in the order of events in the Gospels, are to be explained or the doctrine must be admitted to have been unjustified. Inerrancy is their doctrine and it is not right that Conservative Evangelicals should say airily than they are not concerned about petty details. (BARR, J., The Westminster Press, 1978 ; p.308/9).

If the phrase ‘as it is written’ when used in the New Testament is taken as evidence of acceptance of the truth of something in the Old Testament, as Conservatives believe, then when that accepted truth is in error, as in 1 Cor. 3:19 which refers to a statement by Eliphaz contradicted by God (Job 42:7) but taken to establish doctrine in the New Testament, then Inspiration is falsely applied. There are many instances in the biblical text that seldom come to light and certainly are not advertised by the inerrantist school. An example of such a case is the denial in Job (10:20) and Ecclesiastes (9:5) of the possibly of the afterlife; another example might be Luke 2:52 which tells us and Jesus increased in wisdom and in years clearly implying that Jesus had at one time a lesser degree of wisdom. Neither of these examples would fit in with the fundamentalist view of Jesus’ sinlessness and perfection as they would certainly not be prepared to discuss at what point, exactly, did Jesus cease to be human and become omniscient. In the former example an inerrant Bible’s contradiction of their unshakable faith in the afterlife
is quietly ignored (STARK, T. (2011) *The Human Faces of God*, Eugene, Oregon, Wipf and Stock Publishers, p.55). At the time of the Canaanite conquests up until about the 2nd century BCE the Jews did not believe in an afterlife: this is reflected in texts from Ecclesiastes such as *a living dog is better than a dead lion* and *the dead know nothing* (Eccl. 9:3-6) and the utter destruction in 1 Sam. 15:2-3. If historical and biblical accuracy is to be maintained by the inerrantists then a rethink of the nature of God must result.

Where there are conflicting accounts, the simplest solution is to propose that the incident occurred more than once but this has become a little too simplistic for some conservatives and E.J. Young for example, in dealing with two versions of Jesus’ reply to the enquiry about what should be done to inherit eternal life, which are not verbally identical, (Mark 10:17f and Luke 18:18f versus Matthew19:16f), has stated that *firstly we do not know that the intention of the writer was to give a verbatim report* (YOUNG, E. J. (1963) *Thy Word is Truth*, London, The Banner of Truth Trust, p.130) and secondly, the conversation was translated from the original Aramaic into Greek. In either of these cases the words of Jesus have been incorrectly reported in one or the other instance or both and the Inspiration of the Holy Spirit did not guide them in committing to writing the actual words of Jesus: if this has occurred once it could have occurred again elsewhere.

**An analysis of the views of some notable theologians on the subject of inerrancy.**

Most scholars attribute the time of Abraham to c.1800 B.C. (e.g. ANDERSON, B. W. (1991) *The Living World of the Old Testament*, London, Prentice-Hall. p.35) and yet the first writings in the Bible were not penned until the reign of Solomon (c.950-922 BCE); who then would claim inerrancy for biblical stories contained in the Old Testament which had been passed down by word of mouth around many and various campfires for over 800 years? The views of many early church fathers, who thought the biblical texts capable of variation, with the occasional difficulty, have been discussed in Chapter 3.

Typical of the Modern Evangelical view of the history of Inerrancy is this statement, already mentioned, by Harold Lindsell, a significant and frequently quoted Conservative author, - *for two thousand years the Christian church has agreed that the Bible is completely trustworthy; it is infallible or inerrant* (LINDSELL, H., Zondervan Publishing
House, 1979, p.18). Contrary to this oft-trumpeted claim by Fundamentalists that the church has always believed the Scriptures to be inerrant, history tells a different story as we have seen (see Chapter 3). Significant waverings and doubts of several early church notables have already been noted but Fundamentalism has carefully picked out certain tenets of the early church which suited its viewpoint and held fast to them. They believe such adherence to be ‘orthodoxy’, but there are many areas where fundamentalists themselves are anything but orthodox. Consider the person of Jesus Christ for instance; traditional orthodoxy holds that Christ is both God and man (Council of Chalcedon) whereas the emphasis of fundamentalism falls heavily on the deity of Christ; in fact the name Christ is a theological statement in itself identifying Jesus with the heaven-sent Messiah or Anointed One. The essential thing for Conservatives is to affirm that he is God walking about and teaching in a man’s body. The personal affirmation of faith in many fundamentalist organisations is “Jesus Christ is my Saviour, my Lord and my God”. This view of Jesus as unequivocally God colours all the teachings of Jesus such as – ‘David wrote Psalm 110 (Mark 12:36, Luke 20:42, Matthew 22:43) and Jonah was in the belly of the fish (Matthew 12:40) and that Daniel spoke the prophecies allotted to him (Matt.24:15)’ - these and other teachings of Jesus are alleged to be infallible and inerrant because they came from Jesus the God who shared fully in God’s infallibility. Jesus was therefore not just a man speaking under the conditions and limitations of his time and situation but more like God dispensing eternally correct information through a human mouth - (BARR, J., The Westminster Press, 1978; p.160-186). Modern scholarship does not agree that these teachings are true. According to Professor James Barr again Fundamentalists accept their tradition as the true interpretation of the Bible, protect this by Inerrancy Doctrine and refuse to hear any speakers who hold contradictory views (ibid; pp.18-36). Thus Fundamentalism has doctrines borrowed from older Protestant orthodoxies in a piecemeal fashion, rather than Theology. Fundamentalism affirms essentials and compiles check-lists to test non-conservative theologies (ibid; p.166-8), they are perhaps more concerned with the factual truth of a passage rather than with its religious significance, (ibid; pp. 49-56, 70 and 93); they cannot see how scripture can be inspired unless it is historically inerrant.

Given below are the statements of some notable Theologians, some of them Conservative, who seriously question the doctrine of inerrancy.

Scott McGowan states that most biblical scholars reject the inerrantist position for one
reason or another, the body of church goers belonging to the Conservative Evangelism group still support inerrancy, at least as far as the original documents are concerned. (MCGOWAN, S.B. & MCGOWAN, A.T.B., Apollos branch of Inter-Varsity Press, 2007, p.105).

A cogent argument against the use of the term inerrancy is that it needs so much qualification, even by its defenders, that it is in danger of dying the death of a thousand qualifications, (I. Howard Marshall, (1982), Biblical Inspiration, London: Hodder & Stoughton, pp. 72-73).

Rome argued that dogma rested on pronouncements of the church whereas Herman Bavinck (1854-1921) insisted that these dogmas may function with authority only to the degree that they are the dogmas of God, as theology is entirely dependent upon God’s self-revelation in the Scriptures. Theology is not a human construct rather a human reflection upon the self-revelation of God as the epistemic standard of truth: human beings are not themselves the source and standard of religious truth being sinful and corrupt. Speaking at a time when there was a move towards a supposedly objective, unbiased method of scientific theology, Bavinck was convinced that the theologian must be a believer. The conviction that there is a God who is knowable is that which distinguishes theology from religious studies, the latter requiring no personal faith. For Bavinck faith is the internal principle of knowledge of revelation and thus of religion and theology (ibid.140f). Bavinck’s faith, based on divine authority of the word of God, is in contrast to the then current views of sense perception and mathematical proof.

Norman Geisler, one of the most vocal inerrancy supporters, published When Critics Ask: a Popular Handbook on Bible Difficulties in 1992, and there Geisler’s view makes it very clear that Luke and Matthew cannot contradict each other without undermining the authority of the entire Bible, even on the minor issue of whether Jesus was sitting or standing. The implication is that all such minor discrepancies matter very much, let alone major ones like the above. In fact, Geisler sees his ability to provide plausible explanations for these ‘apparent’ errors as vital to defending the Bible’s authority. Almost all Inerrantists though, now limit this insistence to the original documents, the Autographs, and since there are none extant this is a safe retreat.

The body of church goers belonging to the Conservative Evangelism group still support inerrancy, at least as far as the original documents are concerned. Regarding the
frequent reliance of Fundamentalist argument upon the non-existent Autographs Scott McGowan points out - *If textual inerrancy is so vital to the doctrine of Scripture, why did God not preserve the Autographa or precise copies of the same? Indeed, if inerrancy only applies to the Autographa (which we do not possess), then surely it is a somewhat pointless affirmation? What was the point of God acting supernaturally to provide an inerrant text providentially if it ceased to be inerrant as soon as the first or second copy was made? If God could act with such sovereign over-ruling providence to ensure that the text was absolutely perfect when it left the hand of the author, why did he not preserve it for us, if an inerrant text is so vital to the life of the church? In any case, even if we affirm that Moses was the author of Deuteronomy, he clearly did not write the last chapter containing the account of his death! In that case at least, an editor or scribe added something. Could not other books have received similar treatment? If so, which is the autographic text? As these questions demonstrate, a simple appeal to autographa, as made by some scholars, does not solve all of the difficulties (MCGOWAN, S.B. & MCGOWAN, A.T.B., Apollos branch of Inter-Varsity Press, 2007, p.109).

The renowned Inerrantist, Harold Lindsell, even has an answer for the unavailability of the autographs when he says - *God did not intend the Autographs to be preserved in case they became the object of idol worship nor did He preserve the mercy seat that was in the Holy of Holies in the temple, but He has preserved for us the Scriptures, which have remained unadulterated, by which we mean free from error. We can say honestly that the Bible we have today is the Word of God* (LINDSELL, H., Zondervan Publishing House, 1979, p.35f).

Some Evangelicals are wary of using the actual word “Inerrant”; James Orr said, as mentioned previously, it was - *the most suicidal position for any defender of revelation to take up (because) unless we can demonstrate inerrancy of the biblical record down even to its minutest details, the whole edifice of belief in revealed religion falls to the ground*. He did however view the scriptures as infallible as regards the knowledge of the will of God for our salvation in Jesus Christ, instruction in the way of holiness and the hope of eternal life, (ORR, J. Duckworth, 1909, p.197/8, 217).

It surely stands to reason that matters of science and history without records or reliable knowledge to go by must surely not correspond to modern knowledge. Error, therefore, must be allowed and expected in matters in these areas, *As Donald Bloesch wrote* -
Scriptural inerrancy can be affirmed if it means the conformity of what is written to the dictates of the spirit regarding the will and purpose of God. But it cannot be held if it is taken to mean the conformity of everything that is written in Scripture to the facts of world history and science (Donald G. Bloesch, (1994), *Holy Scripture: Revelation, Inspiration and Interpretation*, Downers Grove, IVP, p.107).

Even the staunch conservative Carl Henry had, in 1965, asserted that evangelicals have a need to overcome any impression that they are merely retooling the past and repeating clichés (Ladd, (1971) *The Search for Perspective*, Interpretation 25, p.47). This is certainly the view of many opponents since Conservative Evangelism does not involve itself in biblical scholarship or research.

It has been noted that Martin Luther and John Calvin both allowed some flexibility in the written word whilst expecting satisfaction in the effect thereof; a sort of dynamic effectiveness of the Word of God as expressed by human writers in the biblical texts. Despite their very high regard for Scripture, both Luther and Calvin acknowledge that, in certain places, the Bible is not entirely factual, (PERRY, J. (2001) *Dissolving the Inerrancy Debate: How Modern Philosophy Shaped the Evangelical View of Scripture*. Quodlibet Journal, 3).

J.K.S. Reid published *The Authority of Scripture* in 1957 as a clear and cogent presentation of the Neo-orthodox position. He was anxious to avoid the liberal dismissal of Scripture but also to warn against bibliolatry. He wrote, there appears over the years a recurrent movement from living authority to literal authority; a rigid torpor that replaced a living voice (REID, J. K. S. (1957) *The Authority of Scripture*, Connecticut, Greenwood Press; p.64). He was referring here to those who affirm biblical inerrancy. He argued that neither Luther nor Calvin were subject to this error, rather, they interpreted the authority of the Bible in a living way as a means through which God makes his word heard in the present day. He notes that Calvin sometimes expresses himself in ways that would not indicate a commitment to verbal inerrancy and the view that Calvin does not hold to it describes the situation most easily (ibid; p.65). He writes stating that Calvin, one of the frequently cited supporters of Inerrancy, did not in fact believe in verbal inspiration – The refutation rests rather on Calvin’s express view that there is no identity of Spirit and Word, and on his statement that the Word must be supplemented by the operation of the Spirit before becoming effective for faith and salvation. If this separation be recognized, it is impossible to impose upon
Calvin a doctrine of verbal infallibility and inerrancy (ibid; p.48/47). Martin Luther himself wrote the Scriptures did not speak about scientific, technical or philosophical questions, rather the Scriptures spoke with clarity about salvation and the life of faith (Luther, Weimarer Ausgabe 18, 653.28-35).

Reid expressed his view of Inerrancy today as - The doctrine of inerrancy, in the way it is expressed today, is an entirely new theological position. Throughout the centuries many held to the position of verbal inspiration, but the older form of verbal inerrancy was combined with an allegorism that the modern inerrantists have replaced with an inflexible literalism. In earlier ages, a view of the Bible was held that possessed enough suppleness to accommodate such critical discrepancies as were discovered, and still to retain the authority of the Bible. In the later period, the Bible was regarded in terms of a type of a literal inerrancy which, when the discoveries were remade and extended, made it impossible for biblical authority to survive. A view of the Bible was held which no longer had the resilience necessary to meet the fresh challenge, and authority seemed to suffer a mortal blow. If the authority of the Bible be construed in the sense that every isolated word of holy Scripture is inerrant, to call in question of even one of these points is enough to shatter that authority. (J.K.S. Reid, (1957) The Authority of Scripture; a study of the Reformation and post-Reformation understanding of the Bible, London; Methuen, p. 27).

Dewey Beegle states Those who defend inerrancy are deductivists pure and simple. They begin with certain assumptions about God and Scriptures, namely, that God cannot lie and the scriptures are the word of God. From these assumptions inerrantists deduce that the Bible is without error. This approach leads to an a priori determined conclusion, to dogmatism, and to disregard for the phenomena of scripture. Regardless of the problems of the phenomena, the inerrantist stubbornly maintains his stance on scripture. (p.271 in Geisler’s Inerrancy), (Dewey Beegle, Scripture, Tradition and Infallibility, Grand Rapids; Eerdmans, (1973) pp 175-224).

The Theologian Charles Augustus Briggs in 1881 in his bitter dispute with B.B. Warfield over Inerrancy said if anyone can find any comfort in verbal inspiration and the inerrancy of the Scriptures, we have no desire to disturb him, provided he holds these errors as private opinions and does not seek to impose them on others. But fidelity to the truth requires that we should state that they are not only extra-confessional, but that they are contrary to the truth and fact, and that they are broken reeds that will surely
fail anyone who leans upon them, and that they are positively dangerous to the faith of ministry and people. Charles Briggs goes on to say that Battle for Truth is infinitely better than stagnation in error. Every error should be slain as soon as possible – C.A. Briggs The Right, Duty and Limits of Biblical Criticism, Presbyterian Review (July 1881): 551 from Rogers, J.B. & McKim, D.K., Harper & Rowe, 1979, p.351.

Professor Barr actually says that there is no biblical or exegetical ground on which to claim inerrancy of the Bible, he says it is a philosophical implication because the nature of God is to be perfect and as he involved himself in inspiring the collection of biblical books those books would partake in the divine quality of perfection. (BARR, J., The Westminster Press, 1978; p. 277). This way of thinking does not come from the Bible as therein God is presented as - changing his mind (Gen.19:21-22, Jonah 3:10, or averring the accuracy of Scripture Luke 24:44, John 10:35), regretting what he has done (Gen.6:6-7) and being able to be argued out of positions he has already taken up (Gen.18:23-33). Professor Barr maintains that the Doctrine of Inerrancy distorts Scripture. Because it insists that the Bible cannot err, not even in historical matters, it has been forced to interpret the Bible wrongly in order to make it fit (ibid. 79), even sacrificing literal interpretation at times in order to avoid imputing error to the Bible (ibid;40, 46-54). A ploy of the inerrantists is to manipulate the believer into accepting their doctrine of inerrancy by appealing to their devotion to Christ, (STARK, T. (2011) The Human Faces of God, Eugene, Oregon, Wipf and Stock Publishers, p.48). This endlessly repeated argument seeks to use the personal loyalty of Christians towards Jesus as a lever to force them into fundamentalist positions on historical and literary matters (BARR, J., The Westminster Press, 1978, p.74). Matt. 5:18 says, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen will by any means disappear from the law until everything is accomplished and this is frequently used to support the inerrantists’ case. However, inerrantists already presupposed that the Gospel of Matthew is giving an inerrant record of Jesus’ words whereas in reality there is good reason to suppose that some of these words may have been attributed to Jesus by Matthew in support of Matthew’s own theological agenda (STARK, T. (2011) The Human Faces of God, Eugene, Oregon, Wipf and Stock Publishers, p.49). Matthew’s agenda was directed squarely at his Jewish colleagues whereas Luke, whose audience is mostly Gentile and whose purpose is the admission of the Gentiles, uses the same material but introduces a significant variation saying it is easier for heaven and earth to pass away, than for one stroke of a letter in the law to be dropped and in the verse before the law and the prophets were in effect until John came (Luke 16:17,16). Thus both Luke and
Matthew uses the same saying of Jesus to achieve opposite positions, in that the law was only valid until the ministry of John the Baptist after which point it was set aside to allow the Gentiles to come in (Stark; 50).

Although close to Warfield in many other areas, James Orr, Abraham Kuyper and Herman Bavinck rejected the specific issue of inerrancy (MCGOWAN, S.B. & MCGOWAN, A.T.B., Apollos branch of Inter-Varsity Press, 2007, p.87). The defence employed by Fundamentalists of declaring that the Bible is inspired and inerrant because it itself says so is certainly circular reasoning and only works for those who are Fundamentalists already and thus believe every word in the Bible to be true - only those who believe the Bible in the first place count the Bible’s claims as indubitable (PERRY, J. Quodlibet, Journal, 2001, 3; p5). Professor James Barr suggests that this reasoning is circular because it is meant to be, as already mentioned (BARR, J., The Westminster Press, 1978 , p. 266) but he also says in order to avoid imputing error to the Bible, fundamentalists twist and turn back and forward between literal and non-literal interpretation (ibid; 40).

Conservative Evangelicals feel they can cope with a person who disagrees with a theological belief, which is not a matter for proof from empirical evidence, whereas historical and literary information is. A person who points out numerous factual discrepancies on literary or historical grounds is a more serious threat. Although to many the details of ancient historical names and ages seem theologically marginal, to the Conservative Evangelicals they are of primary importance in their implications for the doctrinal teaching of the Bible and its divine veracity, which must all be perfect (ibid; p.71).

The principle of scriptural authority, formulated expressly as inerrancy, means in effect that any Christian with his Bible which he believes to be inerrant can completely discount the arguments and opinions of any theologian who does not fully accept that principal. Fundamentalist faith does not need theologians, and its secularism and disregard for the clergy, who are believed to be tainted with Liberalism, is widespread.

Total complacency and lack of self-criticism is endemic and any individual fault is seen as resulting from not being ‘conservative evangelical enough’. Liberal or modernist theologies are given no credence whatsoever and there is not the slightest reason or biblical evidence why such theologies should be propounded, according to Fundamentalism. On every point of difference there is a conservative and orthodox
answer which makes the liberal and modern approach unnecessary and wrong. The classic example of this is Norman Geisler’s book, *When Critics Ask* - in his introduction to the Book Geisler arrogantly states - *After forty years of continual and careful study of the Bible, one can only conclude that those who think they have discovered a mistake in the Bible do not know too much about the Bible - they know too little about it* (GEISLER, N. L., Victor Books, 1992, . p.26). Relations with non-conservative theology are purely polemical. Even when beliefs are shared, such as in the Trinity, the resurrection and the Holy Spirit, no respect is granted by fundamentalists whose insistence on the authority of scripture grounded on and defined in terms of its infallibility and inerrancy, is paramount. Fundamentalists hold adherence to their doctrinal structure dearer than fellowship with other Christians or even friends and relatives, as many of us have discovered to our cost.

Evangelists tend to class non-conservative theology and theologians together as they do not expressly begin from the authority of scripture, understood and defined as inerrancy. The reluctance of fundamentalists to understand or even read other theologies follows naturally from the intellectual and doctrinal structure of fundamentalism itself - the inerrancy of scripture is the sole overriding criterion for distinguishing between one theology and another. Membership of the fundamentalist organisation carries the necessity of believing that everyone outside it is completely liberal in theology and there is no understanding of what they think, or incentive to find out. Criticism of the Bible in any form is an attempt to undermine Christianity as a revealed religion (BARR, J., The Westminster Press, 1978  pp.120ff).

If the phrase ‘as it is written’ when used in the New Testament is taken as evidence of acceptance of the truth of something in the Old Testament, as Conservatives believe, then when that accepted truth is in error, as in 1 Cor. 3:19 where Paul makes a quotation from scripture, *he catches the wise in their craftiness* (Job 5:13a) which God seems to contradict in Job 42:7 when he says *you have not spoken of me what is right* then Inspiration is forfeit. Another example is provided by Paul’s misquoting of Psalm 51:4 in his Romans 3:4.

In October 1978 the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy was produced which remains the position held by many evangelicals today. These evangelicals are often referred to as ‘Chicago Inerrantists’ as opposed to ‘Fundamental Inerrantists’, who reject all textual criticisms and tend towards dictation theories and use the KJV, and

The fact that no two manuscripts of the New Testament, of which around 5000 exist, are identical really makes fundamental inerrancy unsustainable from the start. Why should it be that one 17th century translation of the Bible into one European language by one group of Anglican scholars should somehow be the only inerrant text of the Bible available to humanity? It is also very difficult to sustain that only one manuscript, the Textus Receptus, is authentic, (Parker, T.H.L. (1975) John Calvin: A Biography, Philadelphia; Westminster Press (Rogers, J.B. & McKim, D.K., Harper & Rowe, 1979, pp.103-105).

Like some other strong inerrantists, Greg Bahnsen insists if the Bible is not wholly true, then our assurance of salvation has no dependable and divine warrant; it rests rather on the minimal and fallible authority of men (The Inerrancy of the Autographa in Inerrancy ed. by Norman L. Geisler (1980), Grand Rapids, Michigan p.154).

Herman Ridderbos wrote - But divine inspiration does not necessarily mean that the men who spoke and wrote under inspiration were temporarily stripped of their limitations in knowledge, memory, language and capability of expressing themselves as specific human beings in a certain period of history (Ridderbos, Herman, (1978), Studies in Scripture and its Authority, Grand Rapids; Eerdmans). Ridderbos went on to point out the different versions of the Lord’s Prayer and the Beatitudes (pp. 26-27).

Bishop John Shelby Spong, although not a recognized professional theologian, has written many books on biblical matters and has certainly put forward many ultra-liberal views which have stirred up lively debates. Because of his sometimes extreme views he is not in favour with Liberal Academia but some of his thoughts are, in my opinion, worthy of some consideration. For example he says that those who insist on biblical literalism in a professed love of the Bible and the Christian Religion are, in fact, contributing to its demise by their propagation of untenable statements and viewpoints which go against modern proven facts and are therefore totally unacceptable to intelligent enquirers and also disturb some established Christians. (SPONG, J. S. (1991) Rescuing the Bible from Fundamentalism, San Francisco, HarperCollins Publishers. p.31).
He goes on to list some of the many statements and points of view taken in the Biblical texts themselves which modern people cannot agree with and which are now considered errant; for example -

- Despite the free use of the term in all our weather forecasts, the Sun does not rise in the morning and set at night - the earth rotates and thus makes it appear as though the sun is rising and setting. That earth-centric view of the cosmos appears again in the book of Joshua when the sun is ordered to stand still so that the slaughter of the Amorites by the Israelites could continue (Josh.10:12-13).

- The earth is not flat and is not in the middle of a domed place with water above, which fell as rain (Gen.8:2), water below which rose up to contribute to flood waters (Gen.7:11, 8:2) and lights in the dome which were perhaps specks of heaven shining through (Psalm 148:4).

- Water was not under the earth in such a way as to allow it to break forth in the great flood (Gen.7:11) to cover the entire earth.

- For all the mountains on earth to be covered to a depth of 15 cubits (Gen.7:19-20) the water would have had to have been 5 miles deep and could never be sustained nor absorbed again by the earth.

- God did not hang the Sun and Moon on this dome for a light during the day and the night (Gen.1:16-18) - billions of suns, stars and galaxies exist all around the earth, which is not the centre of the universe.

- The picture of God as a male person seated on a throne in heaven just above the earth needs now to be re-thought.

- This picture of a flat earth inside a dome with heaven above is perpetuated in the New Testament as Jesus rises in the Ascension to enter a keyhole in the sky to be enthroned at the right hand of God (ibid; 30).

- Neither the scientific nor cultural suppositions of the two creations stories told in Genesis 1:1-2:4a and 2:4b-3:24 are accepted, believed or acted upon by people in this century (p.29) in any scientific way.

- Hurricanes, droughts, floods and storms are now explained other than by being caused by God's anger.

As Bishop Spong also says, *despite no modern person believing these things, biblical literalism, here and in many places elsewhere, is assumed in our theological understanding of God, Jesus and salvation. Thus our biblical theology is built upon the*
sand and unless a more substantial construction can be made it will gradually be abandoned as more and more people find it intellectually unsatisfactory, or even incorrect, and it will go the way of Mount Olympus religion - SPONG, J.S., HarperCollins, 1991, : p.31.

Let us just point out one or two examples where the errors are so fundamental and all pervasive as to be beyond any explanation of transmission or copying alterations:

1. Scientific – Jesus repeatedly ascribes illness to the presence of “demons” and proceeds to cast them out as a cure-all. The man called ‘Legion, who wore no clothes and dwelt among the tombs (Luke 8:27-39, Mark 5:5-19), we would today presume to have a mental illness or at the very least to have lost touch with reality. According to the Bible however a complete cure was affected by Jesus commanding the unclean spirits to come out of him. A dumb man was cured by “casting out a demon that was dumb” (Luke 11:14). A woman who was bent double allegedly had a spirit of infirmity whereas now we would diagnose ‘ankylosing spondylitis’ or osteoporosis or something similarly orthopaedic (Luke 13:11-13).

2. Geographical – Mark 7:31 reads - Then he returned from the region of Tyre, and went through Sidon to the Sea of Galilee through the region of the Decapolis. Sidon is North of Tyre and so Jesus would not have gone through it on his way South from Tyre to the Sea of Galilee and the Decapolis was on the far side of the Lake from him. Genesis 14:14 has Abraham going in pursuit of his nephew’s abductors “as far as Dan”. The tribal territory of Dan was not allotted as such until many centuries later. After making a convenant with Abraham at Beer-sheba, Abimelech returned to the land of the Philistines; the Philistines did not land in that place until approximately 600 years later.

3. Gospel Anomalies - The first three Gospel writers, in chronological order, were Mark, Matthew and Luke, according to the most popular version of the Synoptic Problem, and anyone reading them will soon notice considerable similarities between them (hence the term synoptikos - ‘seeing the whole together’ coined by Johann Griesbach in 1774). The similarities are most marked, sometimes even verbatim in the Greek, and the paradox of the first three gospels being so similar yet different is known to the experts as the ‘Synoptic Problem’. At the same time as their portrayal of Jesus and his ministry is individual to the three evangelists all their accounts differ from John’s Gospel in many situations, such as the following:
Did the cleansing of the temple occur at the beginning of Jesus’ ministry as in John (2:13-17) or in the last week of his life as in Matthew (12:12-13) and Mark (11:15-19)? Did the miraculous catching of the fish occur in the Galilean phase of Jesus; Ministry as in Luke (5:4-7) or was it a post-resurrection event as in John (21:4-8)? Did Jesus’ ministry last 1 year as the Synoptics suggest or 3 years according to John? Was the last supper a Passover Meal as Matthew (26:17f), Mark (14:12f) and Luke (22:17f) or a preparation for the Passover as in the Fourth Gospel (13:1-9, 12-16)?

We all happily celebrate the birth of Jesus on December 25th whereas many scholars feel that he was actually born in April/May and certainly shepherds hearing the news of the infant’s birth would not have been out trying to ‘keep their sheep’ in snow, or even trying to find them. The climate of Jerusalem really falls into two very obvious seasons. Winter weather in Jerusalem is fairly cold and this can be a rather wet time of the year, with snow often making an appearance. (http://www.jerusalem.world-guides.com/jerusalem_weather.html ). In any case sheep were usually kept in a communal village pen in the winter time.

In reading recent literature in the area of Inerrancy I do detect a considerable weakening of previously impenetrable bastion of biblical inerrancy. Respected authors, such as Scott McGowan mentioned several times already, and theologians like Allison, Albert, Sparks, Noll, Stark and Lamoureux have all cast doubt on the reliability of the Doctrine of Inerrancy in one way or another. In his paper on G.K. Beale’s book, The Erosion of Inerrancy in Evangelicalism, Lamoureux himself questions the ‘Young Earth’ theories, the creative events in Genesis and the implied passage of the sun over the earth, among others (LAMoureux, D. O. (2010) Essay Review of The Erosion of Biblical Inerrancy by G.K. Beale. Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith, vol.62, Number 2, June 2010, p.134/5.

Iszbicki, in reviewing Thom Stark’s book, The Human Faces of God, says that it presents Stark’s struggle with a flawed Bible and further that Stark states why the David and Goliath story can’t possibly be true; and, hardest for most Christians to accept, that Jesus was actually wrong and believed in an imminent apocalypse (IZBICKI, M. J. (2011) Review of the Human Faces of God. Anglican Theological Review, Evanston, 93, pp.362/3.

The Christmas Story

From the outpouring of Christmas stories into the secular world at that time of year
everyone absorbs the tales of Bethlehem, the leading star, the shepherds and the wise men from Christmas cards, carols, and store windows by osmosis. If a literal interpretation of these matters is required then:

- Blue sky separates God’s dwelling place in heaven and ours on earth
- Angels can appear to men and sing to them
- A wandering star can persist long enough to guide magi from Persia to Bethlehem, a journey of several months it is presumed, or even 2 years if Herod’s calculations are correct
- Matthew was the only Gospel to relate that the three Magi visited the infant Jesus in a house in Bethlehem
- According to Matthew Herod did not seem to know the location of the house or the identity of the infant so he slaughtered all children up to 2 years of age but no official record exists of this significant act and nor is it mentioned in any other gospel or ever dramatised in Christmas pageants and plays
- Only Luke’s Gospel has the story of the Shepherds who somehow found a stable in which a baby had been born
- The typical nativity scene or pageant in the Christian churches has the wise men presenting their gifts with the shepherds looking on - there was no manger or stable in Matthew’s version which had the wise men and there were no wise men in Luke who had the story of the shepherds in the stable.
- There was no journey to Bethlehem for a census registration in Matthew and the holy family only moved up to Nazareth to avoid Herod’s son Archelaus who had succeeded to the Judean throne and who might be expected to continue the persecution (Matt.2:22-23); Luke quite specifically has Mary and Joseph living in Nazareth before journeying down to Bethlehem (Luke 2:39)
- After the birth in Bethlehem Matthew tells of the holy family fleeing to Egypt to avoid Herod’s search for the child (Matt.2:13-15): Luke has the child circumcised on the eighth day and taken to the temple in Jerusalem at the time of purification (40th day) and thence home to Nazareth (2:22-39) - they cannot both be right!

(SPONG, J.S., HarperCollins, 1991, : p.156). Anomalies and contradictions such as these do not bother the occasional church goer who only hears one version from one gospel or the same meld each year and so is not troubled by disagreements but it is a different matter for those who insist on Inerrancy. The irreconcilable contradictions, historical errors and blatant exaggerations contained in the Birth and Resurrection narratives are undeniable refutations of inerrancy. In the table below are presented
some disagreements between the Gospels regarding matters surrounding the death and resurrection of Jesus:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EVENT</th>
<th>PAUL</th>
<th>MARK</th>
<th>MATTHEW</th>
<th>LUKE</th>
<th>JOHN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>'Who went to the tomb on the first day at dawn?</td>
<td>Said nothing</td>
<td>MaryMag Mary mother of James, Salome</td>
<td>Mary Mag. And the other Mary</td>
<td>Mary Mag. Mary mother of James, Joanna and others</td>
<td>Mary Magdalene alone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What was found at the tomb?</td>
<td>No comment</td>
<td>A young man in white</td>
<td>An angel of the Lord in an earthquake</td>
<td>2 men in dazzling apparel</td>
<td>no messenger on first visit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did the women see the risen lord</td>
<td>no hint of the location of appearances</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location of Resurrection appearances</td>
<td>No hint</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>in Galilee</td>
<td>In Jerusalem</td>
<td>Jerusalem and Galilee</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Most evangelicals in the West seem to believe that although Christ died for everyone people have to take the decision to accept him; God will not save automatically but only if the gospel is preached and then is accepted (BARR, J., The Westminster Press, 1978, p.11/12). The biblical passages about election and pre-destination are not taken literally, for example - *he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. He destined us in love to be his sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will* (Ephesians 1:4-5) is totally ignored and constitutes another case where theological difficulties mean that the Bible cannot be taken literally.

Others assert that believing in the Virgin Birth is a "core doctrine" of Christianity (ibid;166), but scholars can now demonstrate quite conclusively that both Paul and Mark seem never to have heard of it; and John, who was among the last writers in the New Testament, appears to have specifically rejected it since he refers to Jesus on two occasions as "the son of Joseph" (1:45, 6:42) and on other occasions as coming directly from God as a heavenly creature (The Prologue – John 1:1-18).
The anomalies in the birth story of Jesus must inevitably contain errors since Luke maintains that the decree summoning Jews to return to their birth place for a census occurred when Quirinius was governor of Syria (Luke 2:2). Historical records tell us that Quirinius became governor of Syria in the year 6 AD. - EUSEBIUS (1989) *The History of the Church*, London, Penguin Books Ltd: p.412. The Liturgical Press; page 49 states *Luke simply has the facts wrong; this places Jesus’ birth shortly after 6 AD.* To re-visit Matthew’s account of Jesus birth it contains the statement that *Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the King* (Matt. 2:1). History records that Herod died in the year 4 BCE, and if Herod ordered the killing of all infants of 2 years of age or younger (Matt.2:16) he must have had the idea that Jesus may have been born as early as 6 BCE. All this gives us a range of 12 years from 6 BCE to 6 AD for the date of Jesus’ birth. What can the Inerrantists make of that? Mark and John wisely contain no accounts of the birth of Jesus because there are no reliable written accounts of the event. The date of 6 AD is also the time of the failed revolt lead by Judas the Galilean but Luke in Acts 5:37 places Theudas chronologically before him whereas Theudas’ rebellion actually came later on and he was executed by Fadus the procurator in c.44 A.D. (MUNCK, J. (1967) *The Acts of the Apostles*, New York, Doubleday. p.48). These are actual before-your-eyes-mistakes and cannot be waved or explained away by Inerrantists and the Fundamentalist has to twist and turn the interpretation to maintain the Bible’s freedom from error.

**Literalism**

The importance of Inerrancy is described by the well-known conservative author Harold Lindsell in these terms - *the implications of the errancy view are tremendous … I am of the opinion that this is a watershed question* (LINDSELL, H., Zondervan Publishing House, 1979, p. 21-23). Any suggestion that Moses did not write Deuteronomy or that the disciple John, son of Zebedee, did not write the fourth gospel, or the letters under his name on the basis of his actual eye-witness of the events, could lead on to disastrous historical and theological assertions of doubt and so insistence on the genuine authorships is the only way to stop all this at its source. *A vast amount of conservative argumentation is therefore a waste of time,* according to E.J. Carnell, as he points out - . *What of the places in the Bible where the words were the speeches of Satan or of false prophets or other enemies of God* - (CARNELL, E. J. (1959) *The Case for Orthodox Theology*, Philadelphia, The Westminster Press.,p.281).
In his public dispute with Warfield Charles Augustus Briggs (1841-1913) stated that:

1. **The historic faith of the Church is to be found in the official symbolical books and nowhere else. None of these symbols state that the ipsissima verba of the original autographs are without error.**

2. **It is well known that the great Reformers recognized error in the Scriptures and did not hold to the inerrancy of the original autographs.**

3. **The Westminster Divines did not teach the inerrancy of the original autographs.**

4. **It seems to me that it is vain to deny that there are errors and inconsistencies in the best texts of our Bible. There are chronological, geographical, and other circumstantial inconsistencies and errors which we should not hesitate to acknowledge.**


When was the moment when the scriptural item to which inspiration could be uniquely attached was originally given? Varying sources, multiple previous editions, changes of text and additions of explanatory or correctional matter, some lasting a generation or more or being incorporated completely, complicate the identifying of the one inspired text. The Westminster Confession answers the problem partly by stating that the Hebrew and Greek texts were *immediately inspired by God and by his singular care and providence kept pure in all ages* (ibid; 294). If by “kept pure” the Confession meant unaltered then by the 19th century the known substantial variation of manuscripts made it impossible to sustain the Westminster Confessional position. It was the words as in the original autographs, wherever and whatever they may be, and they alone that were inspired.

There were other major large scale problems, such as Adam being purported to have been the first man on earth and yet his son Cain, having been banished to the land of Nod after killing his brother, - *knew his wife and she conceived and bore Enoch* (Genesis 4:17). This clearly implies that there were other species- identical humans living elsewhere on the earth at the time of Adam, to the East in the Land of Nod in this case, for Cain to have found a wife. Some Fundamentalists would have it the Cain married his sister, but there was not mention of other children in the story of Cain and Able and no mention was made of Cain and his wife moving to Nod. This and the genealogy that follows in Genesis 4:17-22, although in a different form from a different pen, do not reckon with the Flood and the annihilation of all living beings, except Noah’s family, soon to follow nine generations later making genealogies invalid - Gen.7.
The Bible cannot stand on its own as a foundation within modern philosophy, it needs a further foundation, Inerrancy. The philosophical constraints caused evangelicals to care so much about detailed inerrancy that all apparent difficulties must be reconciled, no matter how great the exegetical sacrifice (PERRY, J. (2001) Dissolving the Inerrancy Debate: How Modern Philosophy Shaped the Evangelical View of Scripture. Quodlibet Journal, 3.4, p.4). A good example of exegetical sacrifice is the discrepancy in the gospel accounts of Peter's denial of Jesus. Mark 14:30 records before the cock crows twice you will deny me three times (14:30, 72), whereas in the other gospels the cock is said to crow only once. The solution proposed by Professor Lindsell in his book is that Peter actually denied Jesus six times that night and that the cock crowed after both the third and sixth denials (LINDSELL, H., Zondervan Publishing House, 1979., p.4) Lindsell was criticized strongly for this, even by a fellow inerrantist Gordon D. Fee, who said that such a move bordered on arguing for an inerrant text but it just shows how far otherwise intelligent and learned people will go in the all-out defence of the vital inerrancy claim no matter how great the exegetical sacrifice (Hermeneutics and Common Sense (1980) in Inerrancy and Common Sense (ed. by Roger R. Nicole and J. Ramsey Michaels, Grand Rapids: Baker p.5,183).

Inerrancy is the most fundamental of fundamentalist tenets in regard to scripture and it dictates exclusive attitudes and interpretations of everything from Christology to Historicity. Professor James Barr has summed up the Conservative Evangelical position on the Bible as - The Bible is authoritative, inspired and inerrant because the Bible itself says so (BARR, J., The Westminster Press, 1978. p.260). Although this mantra-like statement is so frequently put forward by the Conservative side, Professor Barr actually says that there is no biblical or exegetical ground on which to claim inerrancy of the Bible, he says it is a philosophical implication because the nature of God is to be perfect and as he involved himself in inspiring the collection of biblical books, those books would partake in the same divine quality of perfection. This way of thinking does not come from the Bible, as therein God is presented at times as - 'changing his mind, regretting what he has done (ibid;277), for example - Gen.6:5-8, Exodus 32:11-14, 33:5, 17), didn't know - (Gen.22:12, Ps.116:15), being able to be argued out of positions he has already taken up - (Gen.18:23-33), commanding genocide - (Deut. 7:1-2) and condoning slavery - (Ex. 21:2-6). The inflexible devotion of some groups to the Doctrine of Inerrancy results in hermeneutics often being manipulated in order to support it. Insistence on Inerrancy belies evidential proof and
thus slides into Indoctrination to present its case and recruit people to it (BARR, J., The Westminster Press, 1978; p. 277).

The genocides and wholesale and bloody slaughter of some of Israel’s enemies during its progress to the Promised Land have been a cause of disturbance and difficulty to interpreters since the time of Origen. *City after city was offered terms of peace by Israel, and city after city was prevented by divine intervention from accepting those terms, so that Yahweh’s armies would have an excuse to implement Yahweh’s policy of Canaanite extermination* (STARK, T. (2011) *The Human Faces of God*, Eugene, Oregon, Wipf and Stock Publishers, p.113). Early hermeneutics resorted to allegory because of the problematic nature of the text reflecting badly on God’s character. Deut. 7:1-6 is a classic example of the merciless destruction ordered by Israel’s God which presents a stumbling block to the inerrantists’ cause; also - at that time we captured all his towns, and in each town we utterly destroyed men, women and children. We left not a single survivor (Deut. 2:34). Some attempt at the rationale of total genocide is attempted in Deut. 20:17-18 as You shall annihilate them- the Hittites and the Amorites, the Canaanites and the Preizzites, the Hivites and the Jebusites, just as the Lord your God has commanded, so that they may not teach you to do all the abhorrent things that they do for their gods, and you thus sin against the Lord your God. This and like-minded sections are justified by renowned apologists and biblical inerrantists, like Gleason Archer, on the grounds that the genocide of the Canaanite tribe was absolutely necessary just as the wise surgeon removes dangerous cancer by use of the scalpel, so God employed the Israelites to remove such dangerous malignancies from human society, (ARCHER, G. L. *Encyclopaedia of Biblical Difficulties*, para 63).

An affirmation in The Chicago Statement stated that Scripture is to interpret Scripture. This is based on a logic which purports that all Scripture is the product of a single divine mind (Henry, Carl, *God who Speaks*, pp.214, 218). The fact that the two texts were perhaps written over a thousand years apart and by human authors with very different perspectives and agendas is discounted because the texts were really written by God. For example, Ezekiel’s statement that the sins of parents should not be visited on the children (Ezek.18:20) is not helped by comparing Isaiah’s statement on the same subject that the parents should be punished by dashing their infant’s heads against the rocks (Is.13:16). (STARK, T. (2011) *The Human Faces of God*, Eugene, Oregon, Wipf and Stock Publishers, p.16). Yahweh was not averse to the destruction
of children as in Ex. 22:29 he demands that the first born sons be given to him to punish the Israelites for their disobedience by making them desolate. According to Ezekiel, Yahweh’s command was expressly evil which is a problem for the inerrantists who are committed to reformed conceptions of divine sovereignty. (ibid; 66).

In order to reconcile a problematic text with an undeniable fact, inerrantists abandon the historical-grammatical reading and replace it with their own imaginative and anachronistic interpretations. For example, in 1 Tim. 2:12-14 the author writes I allow no woman to teach or to have authority over any man. She is to remain silent. In order to accept this statement as inerrant a person would have to acquiesce to the notion that women are inherently intellectually inferior to men. The author is making an argument from the order of creation, as he refers to Eve’s deception, whereas Inerrantists impose a distinction between cultural truth then and now or else they will posit imaginative scenarios, such as that, in this particular church, some women were falling prey to heretical doctrines and the author’s words applied only to those women (STARK, T. (2011) The Human Faces of God, Eugene, Oregon, Wipf and Stock Publishers, p.41).

Perhaps we should let the Dean of Perth have the last word - A desire to establish certainty in matter of faith is understandable. A yearning for ultimate surety is natural. A search for the fundamentals which constitute an incontrovertible basis for belief is commendable. Yet, the attributing of inappropriate and unreasonable authority to these fundamentals is irrevocably to distort their essential character and message. The effect of this misattribution can all too easily become that of encouraging a loveless, condemnatory religion, prepared to go to any lengths to enforce what is, in reality, nothing but an irrational and fanatical misperception of divine revelation. John Shepherd, Dean of Perth, Foreword to BARR, J. (2000), The Dynamics of Fundamentalism. The St. George's Cathedral Lectures; Foreword.
CHAPTER 14

BIBLICAL EXAMPLES

In previous chapters I have endeavoured to show that the Doctrine of Inerrancy has re-emerged as a central tenet of evangelical and fundamentalist denominations. This being so I have argued that the pedagogic orientation of these groups is sufficiently compromised rationally to warrant a charge of indoctrination against the form of religious education they espouse. The time has now come in the thesis to show, by evidential examples, that the claims for inerrancy are untenable and educationally pernicious.

If one is to oppose inerrancy it is incumbent on one to produce some examples to support one’s view, as I have alluded to on many occasions in previous chapters and evidentially in Appendix 1. The Bible itself, despite evangelical avowals to the contrary, especially those already quoted from Norman L. Geisler, Gleason L. Archer and Harold Lindsell for example, provides multiple examples of the shortcomings resulting from human authorship. Appendix 1 lists over 100 short examples, some of which are the result of copying errors and additions over the centuries, but the sections below describe more fundamental and far reaching anomalies which cannot be explained on typological grounds. The Old Testament in particular is seeded throughout with myth and legend, legitimately used by ancient authors as illustrations of points to be made, as the parables were in the New Testament. There is nothing wrong with this, it is only when some people adamantly refuse to admit that some of these illustrations are mythical, and insist that they are valid historical facts, that difficulties arise. Tom Stark opines that had it not been for allegorical and/or spiritual interpretations, the conquest narratives and carnal war stories would never have been passed down by the apostles to be read by Christ’s followers in their churches (STARK, T. (2011) The Human Faces of God, Eugene, Oregon, Wipf and Stock Publishers; p.34 – ex. Origen’s Hom. Ios. 15.1). I see the Old Testament as a collection of the writings of religious men wanting to describe their feelings of religiosity, the tradition of their worship and their salvation history with their God who was omnipotent. They often used myth and legend, to validly illustrate their points as was acceptable in those times, and they adopted mechanisms of surrounding cultures to create tradition and formulate worship rituals. These writings were affected by the beliefs of the age and the ambience in which they were written and later by their target audiences. An acceptance of the fact that many
early writers used myth and legend to express matters too esoteric to merit ordinary language would go a long way to softening the Inerrancy debate. However, whether one attempts to excuse the portrayal of God as bloodthirsty and vengeful as a reflection of Israel’s laws, or as allegory, or symbols of our own vices, it is still unacceptable as an Inerrant characteristic of our New Testament God.

The Biblical Texts in General

The Bible is not some final unquestionable authority for decision-making, but as one of the earliest witnesses to the events concerning Jesus …. the Bible is a human book in which human beings reflect upon their experiences of God …. the resolution of truth-questions raised by the Bible cannot be settled by appeal to the Bible ((BARTON, J. (1988) People of the Book, London, SPCK. p. 54)

At least two of our previously encountered Fundamentalist authors leave no doubt whatsoever as to their firm and unrelenting belief in the freedom from error of all the biblical texts -


Dr. Gleeson L. Archer, in Chapter 3 of Christ’s View of Scripture, states - in his acceptance of the historicity of Jonah’s adventure with the great fish (Matt.12:40), of the destruction of almost all mankind by the flood in the days of Noah (Matt. 24:38-39), of the miraculous feeding of the Israelite host during the Exodus wanderings (John 6:49) , and of such precise details as the three and one half years of Elijah’s famine (Luke 4:25), the Lord Jesus made it clear that, regardless of the skepticism of unbelieving critics, these events took place in history just as the Old Testament records them. It is safe to say that in no recorded utterance of Jesus and in no written or spoken statement of his apostles is there any suggestion of scientific or historical inaccuracy in any Old Testament record. (WENHAM, J. W. (1980) Christ’s View of Scripture, Grand Rapids, The Zondervan Corporation, p.58).

Luke, in 24:27, writes – Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures. Here Jesus clearly implies multiple references to his Messiahship in the Hebrew Bible. There do not seem to be any such references and even Micah 5:2, which mentions a ruler coming out of
Bethlehem, is more a question of Luke and Matthew engineering the siting of the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem: the famous quotations from Isaiah refer to local matters only. The oft cited quotation from Hosea 11:1 - *Out of Egypt I called my Son* – does not refer to a future messiah but to a past event when Israel, as God’s son, was delivered from Egyptian slavery. (ENNS, P. (2005) *Inspiration and Incarnation: Evangelicals and the Problem of the Old Testament*, Grand Rapids, Baker; p.133, 135).

However, there are many examples when the biblical anomaly cannot just be shrugged off or explained away, as Scott McGowan explains - *The usual Inerrantist reply to the pointing out of biblical conflicts and contradictions is that these are only apparent and not real or they will argue that if we had the autographa we would see that the problem does not exist there, only in errant manuscripts because of errors in the copying over the centuries.* (MCgowan, S.B. & McGowan, A.T.B., Apollos branch of Inter-Varsity Press, 2007, p.112). As explained later in the thesis there are great and far-reaching anomalies that cannot be fobbed off as copying errors. For example the *History of the Ancestors* uses names found in earlier cultural records, such as Abraham found in the Ebla Documents and the Mari Archives, and Benjamin and Jacob found in other extrabiblical texts. The social customs and legal usages found in the biblical patriarchal stories relate much more to Mesopotamian practice in the second millennium than to Israel’s social and legal life (ANDERSON, B. W. (1991) *The Living World of the Old Testament*, London, Prentice-Hall, p.42). The religion of Israel’s ancestors, whoever they may have been, belongs to a period that preceded Moses, of course, and although the traditions of Genesis have been reworked in the light of the Exodus, the Sinai Covenant and Monotheism, still the ancestors most probably followed the religion of the Fertile Crescent from which they came - as Joshua states in 24:2 and14b - *Your fathers lived of old beyond the Euphrates, Terah, the father of Abraham and of Nahor; and they served other gods ….put away the gods which your fathers served beyond the river and in Egypt and serve the Lord.*

Article 18 of the Chicago Statement, explained earlier in shortened form, affirms that - *the text of Scripture is to be interpreted by grammatico-historical exegesis, taking account of its literary forms and devices.* The affirmation continues – *and that Scripture is to interpret Scripture.* Underlying this axiom is the dogmatic assumption that ‘all Scripture is the product of a single divine mind and since all Scripture is written vicariously by God then one verse can clarify another even though they may have been written many years apart in a different place, to a different audience and with a different
agenda in mind.

There is evidence within the archaeological findings at Mari, Ebla, Nuzi and Ugarit that Abraham, Isaac, Ishmael, Israel and Jacob may have been Canaanite holy men connected with the religious sites of Hebron, Beersheba and Bethel (ANDERSON, B. W. (1991) *The Living World of the Old Testament*, London, Prentice-Hall.p.32). The ancients did not know about the Ice Ages or Neanderthals or the age of the Dinosaurs, and yet some extremists still use biblical ages of persons to calculate and insist that the world is only 6000 years old; a statement so seemingly misguided as to defy comment. Archbishop James Ussher of Ireland announced his meticulously calculated time of the Creation as early Saturday evening, 22 October 4004 B.C.E., a date immortalized in the margins of countless Bibles for nearly three centuries. Bishop Colenso vigorously opposed Ussher’s early date for the earth and cited other severe discrepancies in the Old Testament record.

Colenso’s calculations showed that the court of the Tabernacle, "when thronged, could only have held 5000 people." The Bible (Deut. 1:1) says that "Moses spake unto all Israel," which numbered upward of two million people. "Surely," reasoned Colenso, "no human voice, unless strengthened by a miracle of which the Scripture tells us nothing, could have reached the ears of a crowded mass of people, as large as the whole population of London." Crying babies alone would have made it impossible to hear Moses at great distances.

The Bible (Ex. 16:16) says that the Israelites dwelt in tents in the wilderness. But "allowing ten persons for each tent, (and decency would surely require that there should not be more than this, - a Zulu hut in Natal contains on an average only three and a half, – two million people would require 200,000 tents," plus "a prodigious number of trained oxen" for transport". (The Most Important Biblical Discovery of Our Time": William Henry Green and the Demiseof Ussher's Chronology Ronald L. Numbers Reviewed work(s):Source: Church History, Vol. 69, No. 2 (Jun., 2000), pp. 257-276, Published by: Cambridge University Press on behalf of the American Society of Church History Stable).

Some evangelical commentators have maintained that the “six days” of the creation account were not ordinary days, in other words those verses were not to be taken literally. Psalm 90 verse 4 - *For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday,* is
often used to show that the word “day” is employed figuratively not literally and may even stand for a geological age (Kevan, E.F., *The New Bible Commentary*, Inter-Varsity Press, 2nd Ed., 1954, p.77 and by Meredith G. Kline in the *Revised 1970* edition p.82). Statements like the young earth theory and other dogmatic insistences on Biblical Inerrancy, despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary and despite disagreements amongst the proponents and clear common sense, are still deterring many from religious beliefs and bringing religion as a whole into disrepute.

The conflicting manner of entry and conquest of Canaan (Joshua versus Judges) and the attributing to Jairus in Mathew’s Gospel (9:18) of words which he did not actually say, according to Mark 5:35f and Luke 8:49f, are other good examples which are not so easily dealt with (Marshall, I, Howard (1982), *Biblical Inspiration*, London: Hodder & Stoughton, p.61). Certainly when Jesus uttered the word γέγραπται (it is written) and then a quotation followed from the Old Testament (the Hebrew Bible, or the Septuagint in the case of the Gospel writers) upon which Jesus based his teaching item (e.g. Matthew 4: 4, 6 and 10), there is a clear implication that the quotation is true. *Jesus recognized the authority of the Old Testament and to deny its accuracy is to destroy the credibility of Jesus in all regards* (CARNELL, E. J. (1959) *The Case for Orthodox Theology*, Philadelphia, The Westminster Press p.35f). When these opinions of so-called proven truth of the Old Testament are held fanatically by learned persons to the total exclusion of any consideration of an alternative, there is sometimes little that can be done to penetrate the armour of indoctrination. However there are some Evangelicals who are peering outside their comfort zone and receiving an inkling that there may be chinks in that armour - *Where a rigid system of apologetics becomes the basic definition of orthodoxy, true biblical scholarship becomes difficult if not impossible* (HUBBARD, D. (1977) *The Current Tensions: Is There a Way Out?*, Waco, Texas, Wordbooks p.176). Scott McGowan says - Even Carl Henry, one of the strongest advocates of Inerrancy, was very unhappy with Harold Lindsell’s strongly fundamentalist book, *The Battle for the Bible*, because *Lindsell appeared to call in question the reality of the Christian profession of those who denied inerrancy* (MCGOWAN, S.B. & MCGOWAN, A.T.B., Apollos branch of Inter-Varsity Press, 2007, , pp.114/115).

When considering the Biblical texts it is salutary to remember that there was no mass media in those times and the passing on of news relied on the memory of the observer or hearer, after which it was filtered through other people, inevitably being changed and
embellished or truncated, the circumstances or context in which the event took place being often forgotten. It is an important fact, that the events or deeds themselves were remembered but not necessarily the context in which they took place. This explains why in Mark’s gospel, for example, Jesus’ miracles tend to be gathered together in one section and parables in another as though Jesus had selectively performed them in groups. Only perhaps in the Passion Narrative has the sequence and location of events been preserved because the whole block may have been used liturgically.

Mark’s Gospel was the first of our canonical gospels to be written and tells of the Holy Spirit entering into an adult Jesus as God’s son; Mark seems to be unaware of the story of the Virgin Birth which allotted the conception itself to the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:35, Matt.1:18). Another thing which mediates against the historical accuracy of biblical material is the tendency for history to be coloured by the persuasions of the authors. For example even in our present day we would not expect the Japanese account of the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki to read the same as the American account. How much less can we rely on the absolute accuracy of Bible history when we consider the authors’ very limited grasp of science, reality or world geography and their susceptibility to myth, legend and magic. In addition the texts of the Synoptic Gospels were affected by the intended hearers, e.g. Matthew wrote for his fellow Jews and Luke for the Gentiles. These inaccuracies versus the insistence by Evangelicals that the Bible is the inerrant Word of God, are a prominent reason for younger, thinking individuals to be harbouring serious doubts about the integrity of religion. This is an appropriate place to remind ourselves of the allowable items of Literary License which existed in earlier times -

- To attach a name to a piece of literature that would enhance its acceptance - in all probability some of the gospels fall into this category as our 4 canonical gospels were anonymous for their first 100 years or so (Letters of Justin Martyr, Apology 1: 66 (Stevenson, 1987:64 Bettenson, 1963:67) and then given their names by Irenaus in c.170AD (Bettenson, 1963: 28).
- To attribute to an historical character words that he or she may perhaps have said - Paul’s speech to the councilors on the Areopagus is a good example (Acts 17:22-31), taking about 1 ½ minutes only to read it was written by Luke who had not himself been present.
- To plagiarise freely - e.g. 500 verses of Matthew’s Gospel contain material from Mark, and Luke’s Gospel has 350 verses from Mark, many verbatim in the
Greek.

- To ‘Read Back’ - that is to describe past things in terms of the writer’s times or to insert things which had, in fact, happened later so as to given them the authenticity of age and tradition, such as the sacrificial requirements asked of the wilderness wanderers which obviously required a settled farming situation.

- Historical and Geographic inaccuracies due to the absence of suitable records and reference books such as we now possess, e.g. Abraham going up to the land of Dan 600 years or so before it was named and allocated to that tribe.

- In the Old Testament certain idioms and codes were understood by the hearers of the time, such as 40 days signifying a long time, 12 being the number of redemption and 7 of fullness, scarlet the colour of harlotry and pale green signifying pestilence and death.

- A device known as Eponymous Writing was used by many ancient writers to fix for the reader the exact roots of the heroes - giving them names of local towns (ANDERSON, B. W. (1991) *The Living World of the Old Testament*, London, Prentice-Hall, p.31f).

- Finally we must not forget the embellishments that took place in the repeated telling of the traditional tales in separate places before they were written down. These points were gathered together by me from various sources over time.

When was the moment when a scriptural item was originated and to which inspiration could be uniquely attached? Development, truncation and embellishment of sources at various worship centres, multiple previous editions, changes of text and additions of an explanatory nature, and translation variations, complicate the identifying of the one original inspired text. The processes of passing on an oral tradition, converting it to a written medium, sometimes translating it into another language, producing a final text, copying and preserving that text and adding exegetical comments, often from the margins of the document being copied, at any of these stages run into one another and form one total complex of tradition making verbal inspiration decisions irrelevant. The thing that stretches to breaking point the doctrine of verbal inerrancy of the Old Testament is the notion of the inclusion of the Hebrew Vowel Points. As all scholars know, the vowel points were not added to written Hebrew until after 500 AD by the Massoretes, whereas the fundamentalists maintain that the Pentateuch was totally written by Moses in c.1200 BCE. This makes a mockery of connecting inerrancy with the original autographs or tying inspiration to the actual writing of the books.
Despite all this some still maintain that the unavailable original documents were inerrant but there are many instances where an original document or documents is or are hard to envisage. Take the saga of the Exodus for example. As the Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation puts it - *the tradition was first formulated orally by reciters within the liturgy of the central sanctuary of the tribal league. It was embellished with stock narrative motifs like sojourn, conscription, plagues and flight. It was further developed orally by popular narrators by the addition of semi-nomadic wilderness traditions showing knowledge of the watering-places and caravan routes between Egypt and Canaan. The Pentateuchal documents represent adoption of these traditions with many narrative links such as genealogies and itineraries, into the literary works of sustained theological reflection, attributable to authors (COGGIN, R. J. & HOULDEN, J. L. (1990) A Dictionary of Biblical Interpretation, London, SCM Press; p.223).* What is certain historically is that the eclipse of Egyptian power over the Near East coincided with the change from Bronze Age to Iron Age in the 13th and 12th centuries BCE and the ingress of the Semitic semi-nomads from the East and the Sea Peoples from the West - all around the time of the Hebrew entry into the Promised Land in c. 1250 BCE. The saga of the Exodus from Egypt is so entrenched and persistent in the tradition that it must have some sort of basis but it is thought by the experts that there were probably reactionaries against the rule of Egypt locally in Canaan (a Hegemony) as well as many departures from the tyranny in Egypt and many other entries into Canaan of Hebrews and others (compare the entry version in Joshua). There seem also to have been other peoples and groups in the Hebrew exodus itself (Numbers 11:4 - *The Rabble*). These groups may also have joined the Israelite annual covenant renewal meetings at Shechem and adopted the new religion there or contributed to it. Where are the original, inerrant documents in all this; or in the mythical accounts of the Patriarchal Ancestors or The Tower of Babel or other long and involved sagas?

There are many statements and points of view taken in the Biblical text which readers today often cannot agree with in affition to those listed on page 265, for example -

- Sickness is not caused by God’s punishment for wrong-doing but has known pathological causes.
- Symptoms like Epileptic fits are caused by brain abnormalities and not by the inward presence of demons (Luke 9:38-42), nor by some action of the moon as the Greek word σεληνιαζετα, meaning to be epileptic, implies (Matthew 17:15).
- The Bible acquits a slave owner of beating a slave to death provided he survives a day or two after the beating (Exodus21:20-21).
• God seems prepared to make people eat human flesh (Jeremiah 19:9).
• Man was not created suddenly in the form he is now, as in the Adam and Eve saga (Gen.1:26, 2:7), but by gradual development through stages over many millennia. The fossil record and the timeline of man’s development evidently overwhelm the instant creation of Adam and Eve.

Questions have been asked and are still under discussion about the following biblical items -

• There is no knowledge and no extant account of the circumstances of the birth of Jesus hence four very different approaches to this in the four gospels. Because of Micah 5:2, Matthew and Luke felt obliged to have Jesus born in Bethlehem - Matthew’s method - Mary and Joseph lived in Bethlehem already in the days of Herod the King They moved to Egypt (Hosea 11:1b) after Jesus’ birth to escape Herod’s persecution and then returned to live in Jewish Galilee after his death in 4 BCE. Luke’s method - a heavily pregnant Mary undertook an arduous 4-8 day journey to Bethlehem (when Quirinius was governor of Syria in 6-7 AD.), returning to Nazareth via purification in Jerusalem. Mark avoids the issue altogether and John proposes the direct descent of a heavenly being taking the human form of Jesus.

• The four canonical gospels were anonymous for their first 100 years - in the writings of Justin Martyr in c.150 he calls the Gospels memoires of the apostles. (Bettenson, Oxford University Press1963:67).

• The Book of Isaiah was written by 3 different persons, or schools of persons, at 3 different times in history when, at each time, Israel found itself in very different circumstances (Brown et al.Geoffrey Chapman1993) - p.230) (Achtemeier et al.Harper & Row,1985) - p.130) (Bernard Duhm 1892). The Fundamentalist position is that Jesus, the God-man, may have known that Isaiah was not the author of the complete work attributed to him, but he "accommodated" himself to the false Jewish view in order to facilitate his communication of the truths from this book. To have addressed the false Jewish tradition of Isaiahic authorship would have shifted the important focus from the point of the main theological message from Isaiah to a pedantic point about historical authorship. (BEALE, G. K. (2008) The Erosion of Inerrancy in Evangelicalism, Wheaton, Illinois, Crossway Books; p.17).

• The Flood Story contains additions and rearrangements made by P when that school was in Babylon itself, and therefore exposed to the earlier version, or
perhaps to support some of P’s teaching, or both?
• The Book of Daniel was written in c.185 BCE and not c.600 BCE as fully explained elsewhere (see Page 340ff).
• There are at least 100 mistakes in the Bible of an historical, geographic or sociological nature. (See Appendix 1 - and Page, Vol. 1, 1998; 245;)

The well-known evangelical author Norman Geisler felt the need to answer the many challenges to Inerrancy that were coming from many quarters and so produced his book *When Critics Ask*, which became a popular ‘handbook’ for fundamentalist supporters. I will use some further extracts from this book to illustrate typical evangelical responses to some of the questions which I, and others, raise in denying the veracity of the Doctrine of Inerrancy. I feel obliged to point out, however, that the reasoning behind most of Geisler’s responses depends firmly on the absolute belief in the supernatural and the inerrancy of the biblical texts - in other words you have to be an Evangelical in the first place for many of his responses to carry any weight whatsoever.

Many Christians find the conquest narratives morally repugnant and unacceptable, portraying as they do a God of violence and vengeance. Mention has been made earlier of Marcion’s objections to these being so strong that he developed his own canon. According to Thom Stark the Old Testament scriptures were saved precisely because of the predominance in earlier periods of allegorical interpretation (STARK, T. (2011) *The Human Faces of God*, Eugene, Oregon, Wipf and Stock Publishers; p.33). This allegorizing was necessitated by the problematic nature of some of the Old Testament texts which Evangelicals mistakenly insist were taken literally on face value by the early church.

In drawing attention to disputed material in the biblical texts it is not my intention at this point to provide irrefutable evidence of a certain interpretation but to indicate that serious doubts are entertained by a significant body of scholars. I use scientific and technical errors only to combat the vocal and adamant Inerrantists, not as a criticism of the biblical texts themselves. The limited scientific knowledge and the lack of historical
records quite understandably results in erroneous sections which usually do not really affect the underlying messages especially in spiritual or salvic matters.

The Creation

As I have pointed out, Israel incorporated into its tradition many Ancient Near Eastern beliefs and practices which it modified to demonstrate the superiority of its single and singular God over the multiplicity of surrounding deities: G.K. Beale refers to this incorporation as social-cultural osmosis (Beale, G. K. (2008). The Erosion of Inerrancy in Evangelicalism. Wheaton, Crossway Books, p.37). The biblical account of creation is no different in this regard. The Genesis account is firmly rooted in the mythological worldview of the time (Enns, P. (2005). Inspiration and Incarnation: Evangelicals and the Problem of the Old Testament. Grand Rapids, Baker, p.27). What makes Genesis different from its Ancient Near East counterparts is that the God Abraham's seed were bound to was different from the gods around them (ibid; 53). Early parts of the Old Testament held to henotheism, belief in one god without asserting that this god is the only god (e.g. Pss. 4:2, 40:4, 96:4-5,106:28); the ears of those early hearers would not yet have been prepared for monotheism. Statuettes and figurines found in ruins near Jerusalem and dated to 800 BCE show that Israelites had not by then given up the worship of more than one god. According to SBS 1’s program The Bible – A History part 1, by Howard Jacobson in the Lost Worlds series, the creation accounts in Genesis were put together during the great Exile of 586/7-536/7 BCE . The P account of Genesis 1-24a is a carefully crafted polemic to refute the current widespread notion of a panoply of gods, each responsible for a different area: Genesis 2:4b-25 has been called by Gerhard von Rad “the Yahwistic Story of Paradise and chapter 3 “the Story of the Fall” (VON RAD, Gerhard, (1972), Genesis, London, SCM Press Ltd., pp 73-102). Genesis was not really interested in how the world was created but mostly in showcasing their one God theology. The battle between a good god and an evil one was responsible for the creation of the earth in the old theologies. The Jewish writers during the Exile wanted to show that only their God, Yahweh, the one God, was responsible for creating everything and he had not left them alone. The Priestly School of writers (P) went on to assemble the Jewish historical saga that we have in the Old Testament to show how God has always known and controlled everything and has chosen Israel but has had to punish them with an limited exile for their straying from the laws that God had
directed them to obey. The reassurance was needed to control those who were
tempted to stray to the Babylonian God, Marduk, who had seemingly favoured
his people with a beautiful land and riches, and to explain why their God had
allowed them to be captured and deprived of the Promised Land. This gave the
exiled Jews hope and sure enough after 50 years of captivity the Jews were
released by the Persian conquerors to go back to their land. I believe that only
about 5000 at the most initially took advantage of the freedom and returned to a
ruined strip of land and a destroyed temple to try and survive and rebuild. My
reason for believing this is that many of the younger generation, who had been
born in Babylon, had assimilated there and remained (BOADT, L., Paulist Press,
1984, p.436/7). Also there was considerable delay and difficulty in beginning
the temple rebuilding project, as the urgings of Haggai and Zechariah imply.
Ezra 1:5 says all those whom the spirit of God stirred up to return for the
rebuilding of the temple. In chapter 2 he records a second and larger group
who returned under Zerubbabel.

Only after the acceptance of monotheism by the Jews, probably during the exile, could
the creation story have been written. It was written there in the exile in the 6th century
BCE, not by Moses two thousand or so years before. It was revolutionary enough in
the 6th century BCE and would have been unthinkable in Moses’ time. The Priestly
writers of the exile (P school) needed something striking to bring back their straying
fellow Jews.

The Internet lists multiple creation myths from Africa to the Pacific but only very
extreme fundamentalists now insist on the six days of creation, as portrayed in
Genesis, being scientific fact. The morning and evening phraseology and other details
indicate that the original author meant six days literally because, of course, he knew
nothing about our modern science and was not ‘wrong’ in his time and place (this
example explains a definition of critical scholarship as making it possible to understand
the literature without using the word ‘error’) but the Fundamentalist has to twist and
turn the interpretation to maintain the Bible’s freedom from error of any kind, as any
kind or degree of ‘wrongness’ would be catastrophic (BARR, J., The Westminster
Press, 1978 p.40-119). The Creation Stories in Genesis 1 and 2 clearly suggest that
God created man in his present recognizable Homo sapiens form and does not take
into account what we now know as the evolution of man through many stages over
millennia. In the process of man’s evolution Homo erectus evolved into Homo sapiens
over a period of approximately one and a half million years. Davis A. Young, an evangelical geologist, has come to the following conclusions - The universe is far older than a few thousand years … animals and plants died long before human beings ever appeared on the earth … the human race has been on earth for tens of thousands of years, quite possibly hundreds of thousands of years … Geology provides no evidence whatsoever for a universal flood … paleontology and biogeography render impossible the notion that animals from all over the world migrated to the ark and were redistributed therefrom … The evidence of paleontology and biology strongly suggests that there has been progression in life forms throughout time (Theology and Natural Science, Reformed Journal, May 1988, 14-16). A newer theory regarding the Genesis creation myths is that they were a polemic against polytheism and in support of Monotheism written by the Priestly School during the Babylonian exile; this is elaborated further elsewhere in this thesis.

Where in this chain of events did humans really emerge and when did they possess a soul? Is the civilization of the human race as we know it merely the suppression of our animal instincts and urges to survive, reproduce and satisfy our needs for food and water? Do not these urges quickly emerge when humans are placed in circumstances of extreme privation, such as the abandoned survivors of a plane crash? Those who insist on biblical literalism in a professed love of the Bible and the Christian Religion are, in fact, contributing to its demise by their propagation of untenable statements and viewpoints which go against modern proven facts and are therefore disturbing to intelligent enquirers, and also even confuse some established Christians. As Augustine wrote in the early 400’s AD - Reckless and incompetent expounders of Holy Scripture bring untold trouble and sorrow on their wiser brethren when they are caught in one of their mischievous false opinions and are taken to task by those who are not bound by the authority of our sacred books. For then, to defend their utterly foolish and obviously untrue statements, they will try to call upon the Holy Scripture for proof and support and even recite from memory many passages which they think support their position. (The Literal Meaning of Genesis, New York; Newman (1982), Vol.1, p.42-43).

Literality is again abandoned in the case of the genealogical lists in Genesis 5 and 11 in view of overwhelming scientific evidence. Some Conservative Evangelical interpreters tell us that Adam was not the actual father of Seth, or Seth of Enosh, but rather that they were descendants, which enables the genealogy to be stretched to accommodate an unlimited time from creation to the flood. Older evangelicals would
have insisted on literacy, giving a date for creation in the 5th millennium BCE and ‘fossils be damned’. The modern fundamentalists reason - The Bible cannot be wrong therefore it must square with science, therefore the text cannot be taken literally.

Concerning the creation of light sources in both Genesis 1:3 on the first day and 1:14 on the fourth day, the cardinal Scofield Reference Bible proposes a huge gap after verse 1 and then in verse 3 vapour diffused the sun’s light and in verse 14 the sun appeared in an unclouded sky.

Evangelicals offer several possible well-known interpretations of Genesis 1 that can be quite consistent with the notion of ‘essential historicity.’; these include (1) “a literal creation” in six days, (2) “a literal creation” with the days representing extensive periods of time, and (3) Wheaton College professor John Walton’s view that *Genesis 1 reflects temple imagery and does not deal with material origins*. See John Walton, *The Lost World of Genesis 1* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 2009). Leading progressive creationist Hugh Ross argues: *Obviously, no author writing more than 3400 years ago, as Moses did, could have so accurately described and sequenced these events [in Genesis 1] plus the initial conditions, without divine assistance. And if God could guide the words of Moses to scientific and historical precision in this most complex report of divine activity, we have reason to believe we can trust him to communicate with perfection through all the other Bible writers as well.* Not only do most reputable authorities seriously doubt that Moses wrote the Tetrateuch (see BROWN, R. E., FITZMYER, J. A. & MURPHY, R. E. (1993) *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, London, Geoffrey Chapman; p.4 (section 1:5), but the so-called scientific and historical precision does not align with modern knowledge.

A bitter battle was fought in America and in its courts over the veracity of the beliefs of Creationists and the right to teach such beliefs in American schools. Creation Science or scientific creationism is a branch of creationism which attempts to provide scientific support for the Genesis creation myth avoiding religious considerations, and disprove generally accepted scientific facts, theories and scientific paradigms about the history of the Earth, cosmology and biological evolution. Its most vocal proponents are fundamentalist Christians in the United States who seek to prove Biblical inerrancy and nullify the scientific evidence for evolution.

The main ideas in Creation Science are:

- the belief in creation “ex nihilo”;

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• the conviction that the Earth was created within the last ten thousand years;
• the belief that mankind and other life on Earth were created as distinct fixed "baraminological" kinds; The word "baramin", which is a compound of the Hebrew words for created and kind, is unintelligible in Hebrew. Baraminology has been heavily criticized for its lack of rigorous testing and post-study rejection of data not supporting desired findings. Baraminology is a pseudoscience. Universal common descent, which states that all life shares a common ancestor, is well-established and tested, and is a scientifically-verified fact. However, neither cladistics, the field devoted to classifying living things according to the ancestral relationships between them, nor the scientific consensus on transitional fossils are accepted by baraminologists. Despite voluminous evidence for evolution at and above the species level, baraminologists reject universal common descent and the emergence of new families and higher taxa.
• the hypothesis that fossils found in geological strata were deposited during a cataclysmic flood which completely covered the entire Earth.

As a result, Creation Science also challenges the geologic and astrophysical evidence for the age and origins of Earth and Universe, which creation scientists acknowledge are irreconcilable to the Genesis account. Creation Science proponents often refer to the theory of evolution as "Darwinism" or as "Darwinian evolution" as a means of deprecation. While Creation Science purports to be a genuinely scientific challenge to historical geology, the antiquity of the universe, and the theory of evolution, it is a religious, not a scientific view. Creation Science does not qualify as science because it lacks empirical support, it supplies no tentative hypotheses, and it attempts to describe natural history in terms of scientifically untestable supernatural causes.

The 1982 ruling in McLean v. Arkansas found that Creation Science fails to meet the essential characteristics of science and that its chief intent is to advance a particular religious view. Judge William Overton handed down a decision on January 5, 1982, giving a clear, specific definition of science as a basis for ruling that creation science is religion and is simply not science. The ruling was not binding on schools outside the Eastern District of Arkansas but had considerable influence on subsequent rulings on the teaching of creationism.
The teaching of Creation Science in public schools in the United States effectively ended in 1987 following the United States Supreme Court decision in Edwards v. Aguillard 482 U.S. 578 (1987) a legal case about the teaching of creationism that was heard by the Supreme Court of the United States in 1987. The Court ruled that a Louisiana law requiring that creation science be taught in public schools, along with evolution, was unconstitutional because the law was specifically intended to advance a particular religion. It also held that "teaching a variety of scientific theories about the origins of humankind to school children might be validly done with the clear secular intent of enhancing the effectiveness of science instruction."

The court affirmed that a statute requiring the teaching of Creation Science alongside evolution when evolution is taught in Louisiana public schools was unconstitutional because its sole true purpose was to advance a particular religious belief. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Creation_Science). Surely the same conclusion ought to be arrived at here in Australia when similar misguided beliefs are being freely, unopposedly and exclusively presented to our schoolchildren.

The Sumerian creation myth, the oldest known, was found on a fragmentary clay tablet known as the Eridu Genesis, datable to the 20th century BCE. It also includes a flood myth. The Babylonian creation myth is recounted in the Epic of Creation also known as the Enuma Elish the Mesopotamian Epic of Creation dates to the late second millennium B.C.E. In the Babylonian creation myth, the god Marduk (or Assur in the Assyrian versions of the poem) is promoted to defend the other gods from an attack plotted by the ocean goddess Tiamat. The god Marduk offers to save the gods if he is appointed as their leader and is allowed to remain so even after the threat passes. The gods agree to Marduk's conditions. Marduk challenges Tiamat to combat and destroys her. He then rips her corpse into two halves with which he fashions the earth and the skies. Marduk then creates the calendar, organizes the planets, stars and regulates the moon, sun, and weather. The gods pledge their allegiance to Marduk and he creates Babylon as the terrestrial counterpart to the realm of the gods. Marduk then destroys Tiamat's husband, Kingu, using his blood to create humankind so that they can do the work of the gods. Marduk was the current god of the Babylonians when Israel was in captivity there. It has to be admitted that the Genesis accounts of creation are a good deal more up to date and reasonable than the much earlier "Battle of the gods" versions; in fact the Genesis accounts are as far ahead of the earliest creation myths as the Big Bang is ahead of Genesis (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Creation_Science).

**Harmonisation**

There are irreconcilable contradictions in Scripture that no amount of careful harmonising can gainsay (Barton, John (1988) People of the Book? The Authority of the Bible in Christianity, London: SPCK, p.5). Many of the bitter battles over hermeneutics involve wording and textual expression and meaning about which J.K.S. Reid writes there appears over the years a recurrent movement from living authority to literal authority (J.K.S. Reid, (1957) The Authority of Scripture; a study of the Reformation and post-Reformation understanding of the Bible, London; Methuen, p. 25).

One of the most essential elements in conservative evangelical interpretation is the attempt to harmonise disparate passages about the same event or reality. A good example is the attempt to harmonise the ‘Cleansing of the Temple’ event. The synoptic gospels have it at the very end of Jesus ministry whereas John’s gospel has it right at the beginning. The New Bible Commentary explains - by far the most satisfactory solution is that Jesus cleansed the Temple twice. According to Luke 24:51 Jesus’ ascension appears to have occurred on the same day as the resurrection whereas in Acts 1 it clearly occurs 40 days later - did Jesus’ ascension take place twice also? The common way for conservative evangelicals to tackle the ascension doublet is to take Acts as the correct one and suggest that Luke telescoped his account or was imprecise. It would never enter their heads that no certain knowledge existed of the temporal sequence, that contrary accounts existed or that the theological requirements of the message were different in the different accounts: all these explanations occur, but are anathema to Inerrantists. Where there are conflicting accounts the simplest solution is to propose that the incident occurred more than once but this has become a little too simplistic even for some conservatives and E.J. Young for example, in dealing with two versions of Jesus’ reply to the enquiry about what should be done to inherit eternal life (Mark 10:17f and Luke 18:18f versus Matthew 19:16f), has stated that firstly we do not know that the intention of the writer was to give a verbatim report and secondly, the conversation was translated from the original Aramaic into Greek. In either of these cases the words of Jesus have been incorrectly reported in one or the
other instance or both and the Inspiration of the Holy Spirit did not guide them in committing to writing the actual words of Jesus: if this has occurred once it could have occurred again elsewhere.


The following extract from John Perry's excellent article entitled Dissolving the Inerrancy Debate gives us another view - An excellent example of a particular view of biblical authority ruling over the Bible itself is found in ‘The Battle for the Bible’ by Harold Lindsell. In a section dealing with alleged errors in the Bible, Lindsell addresses the discrepancy in the gospel accounts of Peter’s denial of Jesus. The alleged error is certainly a minor one, in that Mark 14:30 records Jesus as saying ‘Before the cock crows twice, you will deny me three times’, whereas in the other gospels the cock is said to crow only once after Peter’s three denials. (PERRY, J. (2001) Dissolving the Inerrancy Debate: How Modern Philosophy Shaped the Evangelical View of Scripture. Quodlibet Journal, 3). Lindsell feels compelled to posit that the cock crowed six times within Peter’s hearing, although the various gospel texts clearly say “three”.

Lindsell’s solution then is that Peter actually denied Jesus six times that night and that the cock crowed after both the third and sixth denials. (LINDSELL, H., Zondervan Publishing House, 1979, : p.175). Such a claim makes one wonder who actually has a higher view of Scripture's authority. When the data do not allow for such manipulation, as with Jesus’ remark that the mustard seed is the smallest seed, then Lindsell slides into an argument that hinges on the author’s intention, e.g. it was the intention of the speaker to communicate the fact that the mustard seed was ‘the smallest that his hearers were accustomed to sow”’. (LINDSELL, H., Zondervan Publishing House, 1979, , pp. 169, 174ff). The point, however, remains that the constraints of modern philosophy caused evangelicals to care so much about detailed inerrancy that all apparent difficulties must be reconciled, no matter how great the exegetical sacrifice. Lindsell also hypothesizes that the “molten sea” described in 2 Cor. 4 as being 10 cubits in diameter and 30 cubits in circumference far from being an error (because circumference = π x diameter) refers to the diameter measured from the outer edges and circumference taken from the inner edge of the 4inch thick vessel, (LINDSELL, H. (1979) p.175).

Lindsell's concern for inerrancy goes beyond his concern for its exegetical implications. He could not be clearer about this when he states: I am making the claim that had
there been no Bible there would be no Christian faith today, nor, for that matter, would there be a faith called Judaism. (ibid:18). Certainly many inerrantists would reject Lindsell’s claim, yet it does still serve as an example of the changes that took place, even within the inerrantists’ position, during the twentieth century. In fact, by comparison to Lindsell, Warfield appears almost hesitant to use biblical inspiration as a foundation in the Cartesian sense.

For a genuine error to be acknowledged by Lindsell it must be indisputably false but with scripture’s autographs no longer extant, they are by Lindsell’s criterion unfalsifiable. Inerrancy has become a shibboleth, to be defended even at the expense of theological discourse (Johnston, R. K. (1979). Evangelicals at an Impasse: Biblical Authority in Practice. Atlanta, John Knox; p.27).

Another example concerns the Sermon on the Mount and reads, Why does Luke say Jesus stood to teach them when Matthew declares that he sat to teach them? (GEISLER, N. L. (1999) When Critics Ask: A Popular Handbook on Bible Difficulties., Grand Rapids, Baker; p.388). Geisler provides a couple of possible explanations and concludes that Jesus probably sat for some of the sermon and stood for the rest. This is a perfectly reasonable explanation; indeed, this may be exactly what happened. However, Geisler’s view makes very clear that Luke and Matthew cannot contradict without undermining the authority of the entire Bible, even on the minor issue of whether Jesus was sitting or standing. The implication is that all such minor discrepancies matter very much. In fact Geisler sees his ability to provide plausible explanations for these seeming errors as vital to defending the Bible’s authority (John Perry, Quodlibet, Journal: Volume 3 Number 4, Fall 2001).

On pages 60-82 of Norman Geisler’s book, Inerrancy, Gleason L. Archer attempts to explain away what he calls alleged problems -

1. Numerical discrepancies in historical books. In 2 Sam. 10:18 David slew 700 men of their chariotry, but in 1 Chron. 19:18 he slew men of 7,000 chariots. This Gleason dismisses as a numerical discrepancy in the Masoretic Text. In 2 Sam.10:18 the figure of 40,000 is given for the Syrian cavalry whereas the Chronicles parallel lists the 40,000 as infantrymen. 2 Chron.36:9 gives the age of Jehioachin at his accession as eight whereas 2 Kings. 2:48 gives the age 18. In 1 Kings 4:26 Solomon is said to have built 40,000 stalls for his warhorses but in 2 Chron. 9:25, the figure is 4,000. 1 Chron. 11:11 gives 300 slain by
Jashobeam whereas 2 Sam. 23:8 makes the figure 800. In all there appear to be 18 numerical discrepancies between Chronicles and Samuel/Kings, all of which Gleason explains by *garbling decimals in the process of textual transmission* (p. 61)

2. Genealogies of Christ – in this more links are given in Luke than in Matthew but Gleason opines that the former gives the lineage of Mary and latter the line of Joseph (p.61).

3. The location of Joseph’s grave in Acts 7:16 is given as the tomb that Abraham had bought from the sons of Hamor in Shechem, but in Joshua 23:32 the remains of Joseph are said to have been laid in a plot of ground that Jacob had bought from the sons of Hamor. Gleason explains this by surmising that the original Abrahamic well had been stopped up by hostile tribesmen or had caved in from natural causes and that Jacob had to reclaim the ancestral rights to burial field near Shechem. Stephen was aware of Abraham’s purchase through oral tradition (61-62).

4. The number of angels in Jesus’ tomb – Matthew (28:5) and Mark (16:5) mention only one but Luke (24:4) and John (20:12) specify two. Gleason tries to make out that on many occasions, such as Matt. 8:28 vs. Mark 5:2 and Luke 8:27 and Matt. 20:30 vs. Mark 10:46 and Luke 18:35, there were always two persons present but that only one was prominent and vocal (p.62-63).

5. The Source of the Potter’s Field reference – the apparent discrepancies between Matthew 27:9, Zechariah 11:13 and Jeremiah 19:2,11, 32:9 are said by Archer to be a conflation of Zechariah and Jeremiah in Matthew which he states was a general practice of New Testament writers who then referenced only the one who was the most famous (p.63).

6. The Dating of the Exodus – The Book of Exodus in 1:11 refers to the Israelites acting as slave labour in the building of the city of Rameses implying by Rameses’ dates that the Exodus must have taken place after 1300 BCE. Archer maintains that a date around 1440 is supported by1 Kings 6:1, Judges 11:26, Acts 13:19-20 and that the name Rameses or Ramose was already current in the Hyksos period before Moses' birth in 1526, according to Dr. William Albright (63-65). (Recent and current archaeological digs in Palestine have produced no evidence of the Exodus or Solomon’s Temple).

7. The Number of Peter’s denials – this section has been discussed many times by many scholars and Archer is no exception as he discusses it here and in the next few pages devoted to Dewey M. Beegle as he expresses doubts about the
veracity and/or accuracy of –Jude’s Reference to Enoch (Jude 14), Jude’s Reference to Michael and Satan (Jude 9), the Length of Pekah’s Reign, the Dating of Sennacherib’s Invasion, The Time Span of Genesis5 Genealogies, The Age of Terah When Abraham Left Haran, Jacob’s Burial Place, The Length of Israelite Sojourn in Egypt, the Number of Rooster Crows At The Time of Peter’s Denial, Paul’s Quoting of Eliphaz and the Leading of David to Make the Census. There is not room here to expand on all these to which Archer finally concludes – We have weighed all of Beegle’s arguments and found them falling far short of his announced purpose of proving the Bible guilty of mistakes even in the autographs……there is far greater prospect of reliability and security in the inerrancy of the Word of God itself than in the judgments of it by a finite, sinful man. Once again here is a conservative evangelical presuming that all of us consider the Scriptures to be the absolute Word of God itself – the letters of Paul, for instance, are the words of Paul, not the words of God, however inspired they may be. (p.58f).

Harold Lindsell believes in the total inerrancy of the Autographs of scripture and that inerrancy is crucial for all of Christian theology. Once inerrancy is abandoned, he believes that there is an inevitable deterioration of faith. Conservatives such as Lindsell have said that the biblical writers were men of their times who wrote what they believed to be true but what is now known to be false. This is certainly true but Lindsell goes further and stated they may have believed that the sun revolves around the earth, but they did not teach this in Scripture (Lindsell, Harold (1972), The Infallible Word, Christianity Today 16, p.10). Surely Joshua’s stopping of the Sun’s rotation in Joshua 10:12-13 clearly implies that the Sun revolves around the earth!

Thus, to deal with issues involving inspiration is more than to make an apologetic appeal to the character of scripture’s autographs which we no longer possess. It is, instead, to take seriously the issue of theological interpretation. If discussion of inspiration is to prove fruitful in evangelical circles, it must move from dogmatic statement to matters of concrete theological judgment (JOHNSTON, R. K. (1979) Evangelicals at an Impasse: Biblical Authority in Practice, Atlanta, John Knox; p.46).

Interestingly Jesus himself allegedly engaged in a form of harmonization when attempting to justify Old Testament statements that had become out of date, for example, Jesus’ explanation of Moses’ divorce laws in Mark 10:2-9 and parallels. As
evidenced later Jesus also believed in the veracity of the alleged multiple OT
references to the Messiah, which scholars believe to be only local references. Jesus
recognized the authority of the Old Testament and to deny its accuracy is to destroy the
credibility of Jesus in all regards (CARNELL, E. J. (1959) The Case for Orthodox

Archaeology

Kenneth Kitchen, a renowned conservative biblical apologist, accepts the time of
Joshua as being in the mid-13th century BCE in his book Reliability pg. 256. Ai, literary
means “ruin” and whereas Joshua 7-8 describes the destruction of that city. It lived up
to its name in the excavations by Judith Marquet-Krause, a French-Jewish
archaeologist who found that between the 16th and 12th centuries BCE Ai was entirely
unoccupied. Joseph Callaway, an avowed conservative Christian, re-examined the site
hoping to vindicate the biblical account but was forced to confirm the earlier findings.
He took an early retirement from his Professorship at the Southern Baptist Theological
Seminary (STARK, T. (2011) The Human Faces of God, Eugene, Oregon, Wipf and

According to the archaeologists both Ai and Jericho were uninhabited ruins when
Joshua arrived, as already stated, - Ai from 2350 BCE and Jericho from c.1560 BCE.
Where Archaeology was able to demonstrate destruction of late Bronze Age Canaanite
sites, none were cities mentioned in the Joshua account (ANDERSON, B. W. (1991)
Despite the clear reference in Joshua 10:4 to an attack on Gibeon James Pritchard, an
American archaeologist and a devout Christian who excavated the site of ancient
Gibeon in the 1960's, was forced to conclude that Gibeon did not exist during this time.
The same section of Joshua claims utter destruction of the kings and armies and all of
the inhabitants of numerous cities, including Aphek, Bethel, Dor, Gezer, Megiddo and
Jerusalem. Judges 1:21-36 lists all of these cities as still fully inhabited by Canaanite
peoples and remaining still to be conquered, (STARK, T. (2011) The Human Faces of
God, Eugene, Oregon, Wipf and Stock Publishers, p.143/4),

The author of the genealogy in Genesis 5 seems to be blissfully unaware that a flood a
few generations later wiped out all of mankind except Noah’s immediate family. If
Noah’s boat had come to rest on the top of Mount Ararat, which is over 17000 feet
high, then water, finding its own level, would have flooded the rest of the world to the
same height needing many times the amount of water the earth contains or could drain away. Even when the bigger picture is considered of the records of surrounding cultures to the Promised Land containing the names, locations and exploits of many of the characters alleged to be in Israel’s past history, let alone the total implausibility of a worldwide flood, Archer still goes on to discuss the ability of the Ark to house and maintain a large group of animals for a significant time (ARCHER, G.L., Moody Press, 1975 .210). The theories of Archer are not sufficient to account for all of the 100 or more errors in the current versions of the Bible (see Appendix 1) and quite irrelevant to the major anomalies such as the clear adaptation by Israel of earlier Babylonian or Sumerian sagas, such as The Enuma Elish described below. Another provable example is the story of Noah and the Ark in Genesis 6-8 which is so obviously taken from the Babylonian saga of Utnapishtim recorded on tablet 11 of the Gilgamesh Epic of c.1700 BCE or, at the very least, both versions were taken from a common previous source, not from the Word of God. The section Proverbs 22:17 – 24:22 bears striking similarities to the Instruction of Amenemope showing that they are connected in some way. Amenemope (c.1200BCE) is older which suggests that the author of Proverbs likely knew of and was in some direct sense dependent upon this Egyptian text – (ENNS, P. (2005) Inspiration and Incarnation: Evangelicals and the Problem of the Old Testament, Grand Rapids, Baker: p.37/38). The references to the Philistines, who did not arrive until several centuries after the time of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, are other examples of anachronism.

Modern archaeological techniques began in Palestine with Sir William M. F. Petrie at Tell el-Hesi in 1890 but Biblical Archaeology depended too much on stratigraphy, pottery chronology and major architecture without considering position, water supply, rainfall, climate and the availability of arable land in the shaping of a culture. Could bones, seeds and other organic remains tell much about diet, disease and social structure? Starting about 1970 larger, multi-disciplined teams were employed retrieving and examining data and samples of every sort. Some archaeologists working in Israel have doubts about Joshua’s entry into the Promised Land in general as it was under Egyptian rule at the time and Joshua and his people would be escaping from Egypt to Egypt, so to speak. Serious questions are also being raised about early Israel’s alleged monotheism. Evidence is apparently coming to light that they believed Yahweh to have had a consort, the mother goddess, Asherah. Contemporary pole-holes, suggesting Asherah worship, have seemingly been found near altars, and the worship of Yahweh and Asherah as a fertility pair seems possible. Small statuettes from the
period have also been unearthed portraying very fertile Asherah’s. The main sites and sources in which Archaeology did, or was expected to, contribute to biblical understanding were -

**Ebla:**
Excavations at Ebla in 1974-76 removed more than 17,000 tablets from a large mound located 42 miles south of Aleppo in Syria; they had fallen in such a way as to allow a reconstruction of the original shelving arrangements and 4,000 complete texts which dated between 2,600 and 2,250 BCE were assembled. These cuneiform writings in the ‘Eblaite’ language were not as helpful for biblical matters as previously thought but they do attest to the city-state system and mention Baal, Dagan, Ugarit, Biblos, Carchemish, Mari and Ishmael.  

**Mari Tablets:**
The Mari age was c.1728 to 1686 BCE and 25,000 clay tablets from that time were discovered at Mari, a major city in Syria on the Euphrates river border with Iraq. The material has thrown light on prophecy in the Bible, the nature of the Israelite tribes, the movement of peoples westward and Biblical names such as Ishmael, Levi, Benjamin and Nahor. Some continuity can be traced from Ebla to Mari to Ugarit (cf. Ras Shamra). It seems possible that the ancestors of Israel brought with them from their Amorite homeland some of their traditions, such as the stories of the creation (cf. Enuma Elish), the garden of Eden and the flood (cf. the Gilgamesh Epic) and the Tower of Babel (the Ziggurat of Babylon) and that these were later transformed and incorporated into the religious epic of Genesis 1-11 using symbolic Hebrew names for the characters.  

**Enuma Elish** ('When on High'):
This Babylonian creation epic records a great battle between the forces of order and those of chaos among the gods. It has many similarities to Genesis and is one of what have come to be called Ancient Near Eastern parallels to the Old Testament. A consensus date is sometime in the second millennium BCE, although the god Marduk came to prominence in the eighteenth century BCE. Some of the agreed similarities to
the Genesis account of creation are –
The sequence of the days of creation
The creation of a firmament, dry land, luminaries and humanity followed by a rest
Darkness precedes the creative acts
There is a division of the waters above and below the firmament
Light exists before the creation of the sun, moon and stars
The Babylonian story though belongs to the older theory of the battle between the good
god Marduk and the bad goddess Tiamat, with heaven and earth created from the dead
Press p.116-117), but *both Genesis and Enuma Elish ‘breathe the same air’* (ENNS, P.
Grand Rapids, Baker: p.26). If the Old Testament has so much in common with the
ancient world and its customs and practices, as other examples in this thesis show, *in
what sense can we speak of it as revelation?* (ANDERSON, B. W. (1991), The Living
*Reading the Old Testament*, Mahwah, NJ, Paulist Press, pp.42, 63, 120/1, 126/8, 251).

**The Gilgamesh Epic:**
This is, as explained in detail elsewhere, an epic of an ancient king who sought
immortality only to be frustrated by a serpent: it achieves its greatest similarity to
Genesis in the story of Utnapishtim and his great flood.

**Ugarit** *(The Ras Shamra Tablets):*
A coastal city in northern Syria called Ugarit was destroyed in c.1200 BCE by the
invading Sea Peoples. An entire library from the royal palace was found in 1929
providing hundreds of texts in a dialect very similar to ancient Hebrew which gave first-
hand information about the religious situation in c.1400 BCE. Religious myths and
liturgical documents portray the high god El, whose consort was Asherah, over the
storm god Baal and his consort-sister the warrior goddess Anath. The myth of Baal’s
death and resurrection represents the conflict waged in nature as summer dies to
winter and is resurrected again in spring. The tablets revealed hundreds of gods, some
native and some borrowed from Babylon and other powerful neighbours, some cosmic
and some very local. A series of texts on clay tablets called the *Epic of Baal* is very
important for understanding Canaanite beliefs. Elements of ritual and mythology were
taken over from this Canaanite religion and incorporated into the worship of Yahweh by
the incoming Israelites who rededicated sanctuaries like Bethel, Shechem and Gilgal.
The Canaanite agricultural calendar was adopted and Baal names were used with no thought of abandoning Yahweh. Saul and David both gave Baal names to their children and some syncretism occurred from the time that Israel set foot on Canaanite soil. Although there was much in common between Israelite religion and Canaanite, such as temples, inner sanctums, altars with horns, regimented sacrifices, Israel insisted on their one main God, unfailingly merciful and demanding strict moral behavior from his followers. It was easy to attribute the prosperity of the land to Baal and the extensive fertility rites and no doubt some Israelites were seduced into these practices but overall Israel managed to save its faith against these odds.


**Amarna Tablets and Letter:**

Between 1400 and 1375 BCE the kings of the small city states of Palestine wrote letters to the Pharaoh of Egypt asking for help against the hapiru who seemed to be a lawless, raiding group. The letters tell a lot about the land just before the Hebrew Exodus and even the word 'Hebrew' and hapiru or apiru may be related. These letters, written on clay tablets and stored in the royal library at Tell el Amarna, have been valuable because they reveal numerous small towns, each with its own ruler, struggling against one another for positions of power and land and all of them facing wandering bands of Apiru marauders who were landless or exiled and included whole tribes or clans without loyalty to any state. Whilst not all scholars agree that the Apiru may identify with incoming Israelites the letters do reveal how much social unrest was present and how Palestine was ripe for a change in the balance of power (ibid; 159).

If Archaeology did nothing else it proved beyond doubt that Israel borrowed many items from surrounding cultures to include in its traditions and customs, including sacrifices, festival times and major sagas, like the flood and creation (ibid; 124-128).


**The Nuzi Tablets:**

These tablets, found from 1920 onwards from the second millennium BCE, are not stories but give valuable administrative and legal texts which give a feel for the world of Israel’s first ancestors and validation of the contexts of the legal situations, contracts, prohibitions and ancestral rights mentioned in some Genesis stories, such as those of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Laban and Joseph.
The Law Code of Hammurabi:

There are many similarities between some of the almost 300 laws of the Hammurabi Code and some of the Old Testament laws, especially between Hammurabi laws 195-214 and Exodus 21-23. Most similarities concern the law of “an eye for an eye” etc. based on the perceived worth of the injured party. Since the Genesis material is so similar to that written centuries before, how does this gel with the biblical version that these laws were uttered by God and revealed to Moses on Mount Sinai?

Deuteronomy and the Hittite Suzerainty Treaties:

Treaty documents between kings and their vassals were found in the excavations of the ancient Hittite civilization. The structure of these treaties has been compared with that of the book of Deuteronomy and with the Ten Commandments in particular – Preamble – “I am the Lord your God, “, Historical Prologue – “who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery” Stipulations – “You shall have no other gods before me” blessings and curses and the future – “So that you may live long in the land the Lord your God has given you”, (ANDERSON, B. W. (1991) *The Living World of the Old Testament*, London, Prentice-Hall, p.100). Not all scholars accept these comparisons.

Fundamentalists’ Criticism of the Dating of Early History

Inerrantist biblical scholar Christopher Wright acknowledges the discrepancies mentioned above but dispenses with them by claiming that descriptions of the slaughter of *everything that lives and breathes* were not necessarily intended literally (Wright, *The God I Don’t Understand*, p.88). This of course is a classic example of the unwritten inerrantist hermeneutical principle that historical texts must be interpreted literally unless or until a literal interpretation creates a factual discrepancy, in which case it obviously must be taken metaphorically (STARK, T. (2011) *The Human Faces of God*, Eugene, Oregon, Wipf and Stock Publishers, p.145). The conquest narratives contain repeated explicit instructions from Yahweh to kill and destroy those seen as enemies or obstructions to Israel (e.g. Numbers 31:17, Josh. 11:14 and 1 Sam. 15). Such conduct is far from the characteristics of the God which modern Christians believe in and worship.

Creationists point to experiments they have performed, which they claim demonstrate that 1.5 billion years of nuclear decay took place over a shorter period of time, from
which they infer that billion-fold speed-ups of nuclear decay have occurred. Whitcomb and Morris reject Carbon 14 dating, stating that the radiocarbon method (of dating) cannot be applied to periods in the remote past, because the biblical doctrine of a universal Deluge calls for a non-uniformitarian history of the earth's atmosphere and thus of cosmic-ray activity and radiocarbon concentrations (WHITCOMB, J. & MORRIS, H. (1980) The Genesis Flood, Grand Rapids, Michigan, Baker Book House. p.43/44). This is a massive violation of the principle that radioisotope decay rates are constant, a core principle underlying nuclear physics generally, and radiometric dating in particular. The scientific community points to numerous flaws in the creationists' experiments, to the fact that their results have not been accepted for publication by any peer-reviewed scientific journal, and to the fact that the creationist scientists conducting them were untrained in experimental geochronology.

In refutation of young-Earth claims of inconstant decay rates affecting the reliability of radiometric dating, Roger C. Wiens, a physicist specializing in isotope dating states: Radiometric dating has been carried out since 1905 when it was invented by Ernest Rutherford as a method by which one might determine the age of the Earth. In the century since then the techniques have been greatly improved and expanded. Dating can now be performed on samples as small as a nanogram using a mass spectrometer. The mass spectrometer was invented in the 1940s and began to be used in radiometric dating in the 1950s. The mass spectrometer operates by generating a beam of ionized atoms from the sample under test. The ions then travel through a magnetic field, which diverts them into different sampling sensors, known as "Faraday cups", depending on their mass and level of ionization. On impact in the cups, the ions set up a very weak current that can be measured to determine the rate of impacts and the relative concentrations of different atoms in the beams.

An organism acquires carbon during its lifetime. Plants acquire it through photosynthesis, and animals acquire it from consumption of plants and other animals. When an organism dies, it ceases to take in new carbon-14, and the existing isotope decays with a characteristic half-life (5730 years). The proportion of carbon-14 left when the remains of the organism are examined provides an indication of the time elapsed since its death. The carbon–14 dating limit lies around 58,000 to 62,000 years.

The rate of creation of carbon-14 appears to be roughly constant, as cross-checks of carbon–14 dating with other dating methods show it gives consistent results. However, local eruptions of volcanoes or other events that give off large amounts of carbon
dioxide can reduce local concentrations of carbon–14 and give inaccurate dates. The releases of carbon dioxide into the biosphere as a consequence of industrialization have also depressed the proportion of carbon-14 by a few percent; conversely, the amount of carbon-14 was increased by above-ground nuclear bomb tests that were conducted into the early 1960s. Also, an increase in the solar wind or the Earth's magnetic field above the current value would depress the amount of carbon-14 created in the atmosphere. These effects are corrected for by the calibration of the radiocarbon dating scale. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Radiometric_dating).

The constancy of the decay rates of isotopes is well supported in science. Evidence for this constancy includes the correspondences of date estimates taken from different radioactive isotopes as well as correspondences with non-radiometric dating techniques such as dendrochronology, ice core dating, and historical records. Although scientists have noted slight increases in the decay rate for isotopes subject to extreme pressures, those differences were too small to significantly impact date estimates. The constancy of the decay rates is also governed by first principles in quantum mechanics, wherein any deviation in the rate would require a change in the fundamental constants. According to these principles, a change in the fundamental constants could not influence different elements uniformly, and a comparison between each of the elements' resulting unique chronological timescales would then give inconsistent time estimates. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Radiometric_dating#Other_methods).

The Flood

The famous story about the Great Flood is perhaps the best known section from the Old Testament to most people (Genesis 6-9). It has always been known to scholars that there were similar stories from Greece and Rome (like the ones by Apollodorus, Ovid, and Hyginus), but in the nineteenth century, several texts from ancient Iraq were added. The first discovery was Tablet XI of the Babylonian Epic of Gilgameš (in 1872), the second the Sumerian original, now called the Eridu Genesis (1914), and the third the Epic of Atrahasis (1956). It is now clear that the Biblical account stays close to a Babylonian model. Much information for this was gleaned from multiple references in – ANDERSON, B. W. (1991) The Living World of the Old Testament, London, Prentice-Hall, (BOADT, L. (1984) Reading the Old Testament, Mahwah, NJ, Paulist Press, pp.45, 62/3, 67, 217/8, 221, 223, 274.) and ACHTEMEIER, P. J., BORAAS, R. S., FISHBANE, M., PERKINS, P. & WALKER, W. O. (1985) Harper's Bible Dictionary, San Francisco, Harper & Row.
The Great Flood is a mythological story about a great destruction that once befell the earth, instigated by God who was disappointed at the behavior of his human creations. There are several variants but the Biblical version is the most famous. The possibility that there is an historical event behind the story (e.g. a large local flood in southern Babylonia circa the twenty-eighth century BCE) cannot be excluded: indeed some scholars now believe that the Black Sea is a remnant of such a flood.

**Genesis 6-9 and its Sources**

Multiple sources can be recognized when we scrutinize the Biblical Flood Story and reconstruct the original text. Throughout the Biblical book of *Genesis* (and in fact the entire Torah) scattered discrepancies and doublets can be recognized. For example, at the very beginning there are two Creation stories (*Genesis* 1-2:4a and *Genesis* 2:4b-3:24) and in the story of the Great Flood itself we can find several contradictions:

- animals enter the Ark in couples (6.19-20, 7.9, 7.15) or in sevenfolds (7.2-3)
- the waters of the Flood are from below the earth (7.10) and by rain (7.4, 7.12)
- Noah and his family twice enter the Ark (7.13 and 7.7)
- the Flood lasts one year (7.11 with 8.13); the Flood lasts forty days (7.17)

As early as the eighteenth century it was proposed that the author of the Torah had used at least two sources. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, this idea, called the Documentary Hypothesis, was elaborated, but no two scholars have agreed upon the exact attribution of every verse, and by the end of the twentieth century, most scholars returned to more modest ambitions. However, the idea that the story of the Great Flood is based on at least two sources remains largely agreed-upon.

The Flood story itself is well-known: Noah builds an Ark, boards the vessel with seven relatives, survives the Flood, lands on a mountain top, sends out birds from the Ark to check if there is dry land, sacrifices to God, and concludes a Covenant with God, in which God promises that mankind will never be destroyed again. The final anecdote, in which Noah gets drunk, is an addition to this story, not from the Priestly Text. The entire story is interlaced with precise chronological indications, which enable us to establish that the day on which God remembered Noah (*Genesis* 8.1) is the Day of Atonement.

This pattern is similar to stories from Babylonia. The main difference is, of course, that in those texts, we encounter more than one God and the characters do not have
Hebrew names. However, the similarities are striking. In texts like the Eridu Genesis, the Epic of Atrahasis, and the Epic of Gilgameš, we read how the gods created earth and man, we encounter the names of the first people (who are incredibly old), and read about the decision to destroy mankind. One man is ordered to build an Ark, survives the Flood, lands on a mountain called Nisir or Nimuš, releases birds from the Ark, sacrifices, and obtains immortality.

The same pattern can be found in the Greek texts, but generally speaking, the parallels between the Priestly Text and the texts from Babylonia are closer. Several times, the author of Genesis actually quotes a Babylonian model, but on two points, the Bible and the Greek texts resemble each other more. These two points refer to giants in the section immediately preceding the decision to destroy mankind, and in the end, the survivor does not obtain immortality, but many children.

The parallels are remarkable, and even when there are differences, they are not what they appear to be. For example, the Biblical Ararat Mountains, plural, is not at odds with the Mount Nisir from the Epic of Gilgameš. The Hebrew word "Ararat" refers to the country directly north and northeast of Mesopotamia (cf. Jereremiah 51.27), a region that is also known as Urartu or Gordyene (Kurdistan), where we can indeed find a Mount Nisir.

The similarities are easy to explain: it was a good story, and people must have told and retold it very often. In fact, we must imagine the written texts as exceptional - the main tradition was, no doubt, oral. Still, there are too many verbal similarities to say that there was no written tradition at all. We can follow the development of the story for more than two millennia, starting in Sumer.

Archaeological evidence

In 1929, the archaeologist Leonard Woolley (1880-1960) announced that he had discovered a 3¾ meter thick clay deposit, which he believed had been laid down by the Biblical Great Flood. On top of this deposit was the stratum that contained the famous Royal Tombs, which belong to the period called Early Dynastic III (c.2600-2400 BCE); underneath it was a settlement from what is called the Late Ubaid period, which ended in c.3100. Unfortunately, no trace of a similar deposit was found at Eridu, 23 kilometers from Ur. At the same time, the excavators of Kiš, situated more to the north, made a similar discovery. They announced evidence for two floods, the younger one, contemporary with Woolley's Royal Tombs, the older one between the Jemdet
Nasr period and Early Dynastic I (c.2900 BCE). Two years later, evidence for a fourth flood came to the surface at Šuruppak; this one was at the end of the Early Dynastic I period, in c. 2750. Finally, in Uruk, there is evidence for a flood between the layers known as Uruk-2 and Uruk-1, i.e., at the beginning of the Early Dynastic I period, roughly the same age as the older flood at Kiš.

Summing up, there are several large clay deposits which can be dated to several periods, varying from the Late Ubaid period (in Ur) to the Early Dynastic III period (Kiš). This is a confused picture, but it certainly proves that in southern Iraq devastating floods were not unheard-of during the first half of the third millennium BCE. As has been mentioned earlier, the story of a great flood has been found in many of the surrounding cultures pre-dating Israel’s entry into the Promised Land - especially Sumerian, Assyrian and Babylonian. Such a legend is also found among the Hindus (Manu), the Chinese (Fah-he), the Hawaiians (Nu-u), the Mexican Indians (Tezpi) and the Algonquins (Manbozho) - all of these agree that mankind was destroyed by a great flood as the result of divine displeasure at human sin, or noise in one case, and that a single man or family was preserved (see Die Flutsagen by Richard Andree 1891).

Although each version of the flood myth has distinctive elements, there are numerous story elements that are common to two, or three, or four versions. The earliest version of the flood myth is preserved fragmentarily in the Eridu Genesis, written in the Sumerian language and dating to the 17th century BCE during the First Dynasty of Babylon, where the language of writing and administration was still Sumerian. Strong parallels have been drawn with other stories, such as the Biblical story of Noah.

The Sumerian story

The biblical story of the Great Flood has its origins in Sumer, the southern part of ancient Babylonia. Even though the younger Epic of Atrahasis and the Epic of Gilgameš, written in Babylonian, change many details, they continue to refer to Šuruppak as the city of the hero of the Flood story, even though the Sumerian name of the hero, Ziusudra, has been changed into Atrahasis or Ut-napištim. In the youngest Babylonian version, by Berossus, we see the original name return: testimony to the vitality of the Sumerian story, which has been called Eridu Genesis by modern scholars.

The story survives on a cuneiform tablet from the seventeenth century BCE, of which only the lower third was found. However, this is sufficient to establish that the pattern
described above was already present. However, there are small differences. The *Eridu Genesis* must have begun with the Creation of Man, but continues with the establishment of kingship and a list of cities. Then comes the list of antediluvian rulers, which confirms the pattern again, and the supreme god Enlil’s decision to destroy mankind. The reason was recorded on a missing part of the text, but may have been the noise men created, as it is in the later, Babylonian texts.

Ziusudra is king of Šuruppak and a seer, who witnesses the gods’ council and decision in a vision, and understands that something terrible is about to happen. After this, the god Enki, speaking from the other side of a wall, explains to Ziusudra what he already has understood.

Enki’s advice, to build a big boat, must have been mentioned in a large lacuna. The story continues with a description of the Flood, which lasts seven days and nights. After leaving the ark, Ziusudra sacrifices and meets the sun god Utu. In a lacuna, the wrath of Enlil, who has discovered the survivors, must have been described. The end of the story is a speech by Enki, and the apotheosis of Ziusudra, who will live forever in the mythological country of Dilmun, in the Far East, where Utu rises. The date of the poem’s composition cannot be established, but it is reasonable to assume that the anonymous author was not the first to describe the Great Flood. He appears to have used older traditions. For example, Ziusudra learns about the coming disaster through both divination and a revelation from Enki. One discovery would have been sufficient. The *Eridu Genesis* is not the oldest text on the Great Flood, and it is likely that we will one day discover fragments of its sources.

Still, we are not completely clueless about the origin of the story. The city of Šuruppak figures prominently in the *Eridu Genesis*, and this may not be coincidental, as we will see when we discuss the archaeological evidence at the end of this section. For the moment, we must turn to the Babylonian versions.

**The Akkadian Atrahasis Epic**

This version tells how the god Enki warns the hero Atrahasis (‘extremely wise’) to build a boat to escape a flood. The *Epic of Ziusudra* does not make it clear whether the flood was a river flood or something else but the *Epic of Atrahasis* tablet III iv, lines 6-9 clearly identifies the flood as a local river flood: *Like dragonflies they [dead bodies] have filled the river. Like a raft they have moved in to the edge [of the boat]. Like a raft*
they have moved in to the riverbank.

The *Epic of Atrahasis* provides additional information on the flood and flood hero that is omitted in *Gilgamesh XI* and other versions of the Ancient Near East flood myth. Likewise, the *Gilgamesh XI* flood text provides additional information that is missing in damaged portions of the Atrahasis tablets.

At lines 6 and 7 of tablet RS 22.421 we are told *I am Atrahasis. I lived in the temple of Ea [Enki], my Lord.* Prior to the Early Dynastic period, kings were subordinate to priests, and often lived in the same temple complex where the priests lived. Tablet III,ii lines 55-56 of the *Atrahasis Epic* state that *He severed the mooring line and set the boat adrift.* This is consistent with a river flood. If Atrahasis severed the mooring lines, the runaway boat would go down the river into the Persian Gulf.

The oldest text is the *Epic of Atrahasis* (text), which survives on three tablets from the reign of king Ammi-saduqa of Babylonia (1647-1626 BCE). It follows the standard pattern. At the beginning, the world is created and the Lesser Gods are forced to work hard, digging rivers and erecting mountains. They are tired, however, and declare war upon the Great Gods, who decide to create mankind to make life easier for the gods. Prior to the *Epic of Atrahasis,* mankind has been created but their population increases and their noise disturbs the gods. The supreme god Enlil decides to wipe out all humans with a Great Flood, but Enki, who has created mankind, betrays the secret to Atrahasis in a dream, and orders him to build a ship. There is a brief description of it, focusing on its roof, and a description of Atrahasis' speech to the Elders of Šuruppak, an element that was not copied by the author of Genesis, but returns in the Quran, where it has become the story's main element. After a fragment on the building and departure of the ark, we still have some lines about the storm, and the very end of it, in which the gods make sure that the noise will remain within limits: they invent childbirth, infant mortality, and celibacy.

This story of an insurrection, shortly after the Creation, by Lesser Gods, may be behind the revolt of the giants in the Greco-Roman version (e.g., Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 1.151ff) and the remarks about the giants in the Bible (*Genesis*, 6.1-4; more explicit in 1 Enoch, 7). It is true, the Biblical Giants are not explicitly mentioned as rebellious or bad, but knowledge about their acts is taken for granted by the author, who does not explain who were *the mighty men that were of old,* and assumes that everyone understands that the giants were evil (6.5). The connection is made very explicit in the
apocryphal *Book of Watchers* (= *1 Enoch*, 6-11), which belongs to the Enochitic literature and dates to the late third or early second century BCE.

**The Epic of Gilgameš**

The second Babylonian text is the *Epic of Gilgameš*, which was composed in c.1100 BCE, and contains much information that was composed earlier. It tells the story of the king of Uruk, Gilgameš, who is on a quest for immortality, and meets Ut-napištim, the survivor of the Flood. He tells essentially the story of the *Epic of Atrahasis*, even quoting it, but this time, the story is told in the first person singular.

There are some interesting differences, though, which betray that the author had read more than just the *Epic of Atrahasis*. For instance, the story from the Eridu Genesis that Enki spoke to Ziusudra indirectly, through a wall, is incomprehensible in the *Epic of Atrahasis*, but has received a funny twist in the *Epic of Gilgameš*: Enki has sworn not to betray the secret to mankind, and therefore he tells it to a house and the wall speaks to Ut-napištim. We also read about the dimensions of the Ark, which is not a ship in our sense of the word, but a large cube with a roof like the firmament that had once divided the primordial waters; in other words, the Ark is to be a copy of the universe. This time, we have a long and beautiful description of the storm/flood, and finally the famous story of the landing on a mountain in what is now Kurdistan. Like any Babylonian sailor would have done, Ut-napištim releases birds to check if there is land in sight, and indeed it is discovered. He sacrifices, and the gods gather "like flies" - an insulting comparison that is not fully explained. In the end, Ut-napištim receives immortality, a gift that he cannot offer to the king of Uruk. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Epic_of_Gilgamesh#Tablet_eleven)

**Berossus' Babylonian History**

Berossus was a very important Babylonian official, the šatammu of the Esagila, or president of the main temple of Babylon, which in his age, the third century BCE, meant that he was the leader of the native Babylonians in a country ruled by Macedonians and Greeks. To explain his own culture to its foreign masters, he wrote a *Babylonian History*, which contains a description of the Great Flood as well.

A new element is that the hero Xisuthrus, who again has his Sumerian name (Ziusudra), has to take care of three tablets containing human wisdom, which he has
to bury in the city of Sippar. They are not mentioned in any other text, except for two Jewish books, Jubilees and 1 Enoch. Another innovation is the reference to the day on which the Flood begins, 15 Daisios; this element can also be found in the Genesis account (Genesis, 7.11). Another similarity with the story in the Bible is that the dimensions of the ark are mentioned, and resemble a real ship. It is not likely that many Greeks read the Babylonian History. In any case, they kept to their own version, which is a bit different from the Babylonian versions, but still has some remarkable similarities.

The Greek and Roman versions

The myth of the Great Flood was not among the most popular stories in Greece and Rome. We find hardly any pictures of Deucalion and Pyrrha, the two heroes of the western version of the myth. One reason is that the Greeks were not afraid of water in a way comparable to the Babylonians whose rivers, the Euphrates and Tigris, flooded when the wheat and barley were ripe: at the wrong moment. A river flood was a catastrophe indeed. Greek agriculture, on the other hand, depended on rainfall, and the Greeks hardly knew what a river flood meant.

The oldest reference to the Great Flood in Greek literature can be found in the works of Epicharmus, a comic poet from Sicily whose activity can be dated to the first quarter of the fifth century BCE (Comicorum Graecorum Fragmenta in Papyris Reperta 85, fr.1). Just as old is Olympic Ode 9 by Pindar. It is possible that Hesiod also referred to the Flood, because in a fragment from his Catalog of Women, he refers to Deucalion. If the Catalog is authentic, which we do not know for certain, the myth of the Flood was current in Greece before c.600 BCE.

In the second century BCE, the story was briefly retold in The Library, a work attributed to Apollodorus of Alexandria, and in the first century CE the Roman author Hyginus did the same in a couple of lines. The longest version, however, was written by the Roman poet Ovid.

Like the Epic of Atrahasis, and the Jewish version in 1 Enoch 7, it starts with an insurrection by lesser supernatural beings -Giants in this case- and an account of human sin, which make Zeus/Jupiter decide to destroy the world. Deucalion, however, has been warned by his father Prometheus, the creator of mankind (cf. the
role of Enki as creator and protector of humanity in all Babylonian versions). Deucalion and his wife Pyrrha build a wooden chest and embark; after the Flood, they find themselves on the summit of Mount Parnassus (Hyginus: Etna; Hellanicus: Othrys). During a visit to the oracle of Delphi (Plutarch, Life of Pyrhus, 1.1: Dodona) they learn how to recreate mankind: they have to throw stones behind their back, from which new people are born. Their ‘real’ son, Hellen, is the ancestor of the Greeks. This story is far removed from the Near Eastern accounts, and contains no verbal similarities, but it is interesting to see that in both the Greek and Biblical versions, the heroes do not gain immortality, but live forever through their children.

In the eleventh tablet of the Babylonian Epic of Gilgamesh, Utnapishtim "the faraway" is the wise king of the Sumerian city state of Shuruppak who, along with his unnamed wife, survived a great flood sent by Enlil to drown every living thing on Earth. Utnapishtim was secretly warned by the water god Ea of Enlil's plan and constructed a great boat or ark to save himself, his family and representatives of each species of animal. When the flood waters subsided, the boat was grounded on the mountain of Nisir. When Utnapishtim's ark had been becalmed for seven days, he released a dove, who found no resting place and returned. A swallow was then released who found no perch and also returned, but the raven which was released third did not return. Utnapishtim then made a sacrifice and poured out a libation to Ea on the top of mount Nisir. Utnapishtim and his wife were granted immortality after the flood. Afterwards, he is taken by the gods to live forever at "the mouth of the rivers" and given the epithet "faraway".

The Babylonian myth of Utnapishtim (meaning "He found life", presumably in reference to the gift of immortality given him by the gods) is matched by the earlier Epic of Atrahasis, and by the Sumerian version, the Epic of Ziusudra.

The similarities between the story of Noah's Ark, the Sumerian story of Ziusudra, and the Babylonian stories of Atrahasis and Utnapishtim are shown by corresponding lines in various versions:

"the storm had swept...for seven days and seven nights" — Ziusudra 203
"For seven days and seven nights came the storm" — Atrahasis III,iv, 24
"Six days and seven nights the wind and storm" — Gilgamesh XI, 127
"rain fell upon the earth forty days and forty nights" — Genesis 7:12
"He offered a sacrifice" — Atrahasis III, v, 31
"And offered a sacrifice" — Gilgamesh XI, 155
"offered burnt offerings on the altar" — Genesis 8:20
"built an altar and sacrificed to the gods" — Berossus.

"The gods smelled the savor" — Atrahasis III, v, 34
"The gods smelled the sweet savor" — Gilgamesh XI, 160
"And the Lord smelled the sweet savor..." — Genesis 8:21

The Hebrew flood story of Genesis 6-9 as written dates to at least the 5th century BCE. According to the documentary hypothesis it is a composite of two literary sources J and P that were combined by a post-exilic editor, 539-400 BCE. Hans Schmid believes both the J material and the P material were products of the Babylonian exile period (6th century BCE) and were directly derived from Babylonian sources.

Hellenized Xisuthros: ("found long life" or "life of long days") of Shuruppak is listed on some versions of the Sumerian king list as the last king of Sumer before the Flood. He then becomes the hero of the Sumerian flood myth. Akkadian Atrahasis ("extremely wise") and Utnapishtim ("he found life") as well as biblical Noah ("Rest") are similar heroes of Ancient Near Eastern flood stories.

We can be a bit more precise. Several of the kings mentioned in the Sumerian King List as rulers after the Flood, can be dated to the Early Dynastic periods II and III. This suggests that the rulers before the Flood can be dated to Early Dynastic I, and the Deluge, accordingly, to c.2750. The Shuruppak flood fits this date, and it is perhaps not a coincidence that the hero of Eridu Genesis, the Epic of Atrahasis, and the Epic of Gilgameš is a king of Šuruppak. It is likely, therefore, that the event that is behind the myth of the Great Flood can be dated to the end of Early Dynastic I period.

The mountain north of Lake Van that today is called Ararat, received its name in the Middle Ages. The author of the second-century BCE Book of Jubilees (5.28, 10.15) states that the Ark landed on "Mount Lubar" in "the land of Ararat", and the Jewish historian Flavius Josephus still knew that "Ararat" referred to a summit south of Lake Van and mentions a tradition that identifies Noah's landing site with Mount Baris in Gordyene (Jewish Antiquities, 1.93). Both Josephus and Berossus refer to the presence of bitumen near the place where the Ark landed. The Quran also renders "Ararat" with the name of a Gordyenian mountain, Al-Gudi.
As it happens, in the southeast of Turkey, there is a mountain called Cudi Dağı, and in the nearby city of Cizre, on the banks of the Tigris, eastern Christians and Muslims venerate the tomb of Noah/Nuh. The Cudi Dağı has a better claim to being the place mentioned in the ancient sources as the Ark's landing site.
Literary Evidence

The Hebrew flood story of Genesis 6-9, according to the documentary hypothesis, is a composite of two literary sources Jand P that were combined by a post-exilic editor, 539-400 BCE. Some scholars believe that the earlier J versions were added to by P from their own material during the exile, and perhaps also from material found there in Babylon. My own researches, gleaned from assessing the findings of many secondary authors, have concluded that the apportionment of the writings in Genesis 6 - 9 between J and P was as follows:

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The story of Noah and the Flood in Genesis is in fact an amalgam of 3 separate sources, hence the disagreement between verses as to the length of the flood -

- Verse 7:11 states, *In the six hundredth year of Noah’s life, in the second month, on the 17th day of the month, on that day all the fountains of the great deep burst forth and all the windows of the heavens were opened. Verse 8:13 says in the six*
hundred and first year, in the first month, the first day of the month the waters were dried from off the earth: - in other words here the flood had lasted 11 months less 16 days, even allowing for the 11- day-shorter lunar year this is still a lot more than the 61 or 150 days of the versions below.

- Verse 7:12 says and rain fell upon the earth forty days and verse 17 states the flood continued forty days upon the earth. 8:6 says At the end of forty days Noah … sent forth a raven and verse *:10 says He waited another 7 days and again he sent forth the dove out of the ark; and the dove came back to him in the evening and lo, in her mouth a freshly plucked olive leaf; so Noah knew that the waters had subsided from the earth. A further dove 7 days later still did not return. In this case then it rained for 40 days and dried up 21 days later.

- However verse 7:24 contradicts this by saying: And the waters prevailed upon the earth a hundred and fifty days, as does 8:3b.

Regarding the confusion about the duration of the Flood, Geisler says - Forty days refers to how long the rain fell and one hundred and fifty days speaks of how long the flood waters prevailed (GEISLER, N. L. (1992) When Critics Ask:, Wheaton, Illinois, Victor Books. p.41-42).

The Gilgamesh Epic, from early Babylon of 2000-1700 BCE. in Arkadian poetic form, had the following tale of Utnapishtim in the 11th of its 12 tablets -

Utnapishtim was told by the god Ea in a dream that he should build a boat and seal it with pitch and take every species of animal into the boat. The Flood lasts for seven days and seven nights, and finally light returns to the earth. Utnapishtim opens a window and the entire earth has been turned into a flat ocean; all humans have been turned to stone. Utnapishtim then falls to his knees and weeps. Utnapishtim’s boat comes to rest on the top of Mount Nimush; the boat lodges firmly on the mountain peak just below the surface of the ocean and remains there for seven days. On the seventh day:

I [Utnapishtim] released a dove from the boat,
It flew off, but circled around and returned,
For it could find no perch.
I then released a swallow from the boat,
It flew off, but circled around and returned,
For it could find no perch.
I then released a raven from the boat,
It flew off, and the waters had receded:
It eats, it scratches the ground, but it does not circle around and return.
I then sent out all the living things in every direction and sacrificed a sheep on that very spot.
When the flood was over he built an altar and sacrificed to the gods because they liked the sweet odour.

You can see quite clearly here that Gilgamesh could well have provided the template for the Noah Saga (those searching for Noah’s Ark should perhaps move from Mount Ararat to Mount Nimush or Nisir). At the very least those who deny any direct relationship between the Babylonian tale and the Biblical one must admit that the presence of other accounts, like the very similar Sumerian one, clearly indicate a human source from a time when other multiple gods were the source of the flood’s instigation and not any “Word of God” (Yahweh/God) origin which would have satisfied the Inerrancy Doctrine. These legends or myths are undeniably the work of human hands originating in lands and cultures who had never heard of the Christian or Jewish God.

Incidentally Utnapishtim goes on to become a great king and further on in the Gilgamesh epic Gilgamesh goes to see him to try and obtain immortality. ‘Utnapishtim’s wife convinces the old man to have mercy on him; he offers Gilgamesh, in place of immortality, a secret plant that will make Gilgamesh young again. The plant is at the bottom of the ocean surrounding the Far-Away; Gilgamesh ties stones to his feet, sinks to the bottom, and plucks the magic plant. But he doesn't use it because he doesn't trust it; rather he decides to take it back to Uruk and test it out on an old man first, to make sure it works. Urshanabi takes him across the Waters of Death. Several leagues inland, Gilgamesh and Urshanabi stop to eat and sleep; while they’re sleeping, a snake slithers up and eats the magic plant (which is why snakes shed their skin and renew) and crawls away. Gilgamesh awakens to find the plant gone; he falls to his knees and weeps: (http://www.wsu.edu/~dee/MESO/GILG.HTM).

**Fundamentalist View of the Flood**

Regarding the origin of the immense volume of water required to flood the whole earth, various suggestions have come from the evangelical side - for example, in their classic *The Genesis Flood* (1961), Henry Morris and John Whitcomb assert: *On the second day of creation, the waters covering the earth’s surface were divided into two great
reservoirs—one below the firmament and one above; the firmament being the “expanse” above the earth now corresponding to the troposphere … With the biblical testimony concerning a pre-flood canopy of waters, we have an adequate source for the waters of a universal flood.


In another harmonization of Scripture and science, Hugh Ross claims that the “expanse” in Gen. 1:6–8 refers to the troposphere and the “waters above” are water vapour. He contends that “God’s ‘separation’ of the water accurately describes the formation of the troposphere, the atmospheric layer just above the ocean where clouds form and humidity resides.” Clearly, both of these concordist interpretations are dependent on the meaning of the term “firmament/expanse,” which appears five times on the second day of creation.

*The Hebrew word raqîa’does not refer to the troposphere or outer space. Ancient Near Eastern astronomers believed that the world was enclosed by a solid dome overhead that upheld a sea of water. In fact, this ancient science is reflected in the etymology. The noun raqîa’ derives from the verb raqa’ which means to “flatten,” “stamp down,” “spread out,” and “hammer out.” That is, this Hebrew verb carries a nuance of flattening something solid rather than forming a broad open space like the atmosphere. Exodus 39:3 and Isa. 40:19 use raqa’ for pounding metals into thin plates, and Num. 16:38 employs riqqua’ (broad plate) in a similar context. The verb raqa’ is even found in a passage referring to the creation of the sky, which is understood to be a firm surface like a metal. Job 37:18 asks, “Can you join God in spreading out the skies, hard as a mirror of cast bronze?” (Lamoureux, Denis O.. Source: Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith, 60 no 1 ,2008, p 4-15). Denis O. Lamoureux is an ASA Fellow and Assistant Professor of science and religion at St. Joseph’s College in the University of Alberta and in his article Professor Lamoureux gives many other examples of what he calls Concordist Hermeneutics. He points out that the idea of “firmament” was still around in King David’s time as Psalm 150 verse 1 indicates – Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in his mighty firmament.*

In answer to the objection that Noah’s Ark could not cope with the number of species of animals available at the time, let alone find more distant ones, bring them in and deal with their feeding and hygiene requirements, Norman Geisler, in his *When Critics Ask*
gives an evangelical explanation - *First, the modern concept of “species” is not the same as a “kind” in the Bible. There are probably only several hundred different “kinds” of land animals that would have had to be taken into the Ark. The sea animals stayed in the sea, and many species could have survived in egg form. Second, the Ark was not small; it was a huge structure - the size of a modern ocean liner. Third, Noah could have taken younger or smaller varieties of some larger animals. Given all these factors, there was plenty of room for all the animals, food for the trip, and the eight humans aboard* (GEISLER, N. L.(1992) *When Critics Ask;, Wheaton, Illinois, Victor Books, pg 42).

Many serious difficulties have been pointed out regarding eight people caring for the requirements of multiple pairs of animals in respect of food, water and the disposal of waste on a vessel the size of an ocean liner, according to Geisler. Such a herculean task for perhaps a year, and sometimes in adverse weather conditions making the larger animals almost impossible to handle, is hard to imagine. Whitcomb and Morris suggested *mass hibernation* as a solution to the problem (WHITCOMB, J. & MORRIS, H. (1980) *The Genesis Flood*, Grand Rapids, Michigan, Baker Book House; p.71) and have reduced the number of individual animals to 35,000 by diverse methods of exclusion (ibid;p.69). Even so the storage of meat and other food, fresh water distribution and the general care and maintenance of so many animals by 8 people, who had to look after themselves for the year as well, is beyond belief. To partially solve this problem Garner Ted Armstrong suggests that *it is quite possible that carnivorous animals subsisted on the same kind of vegetation, such as roots, tubas, fruits, nuts, grains, grasses, vegetables and the like which sustained Noah and his family for the period of the flood.* Armstrong quotes Isaiah 11:7 as suggesting that Christ’s “restitution of all things” may be a return to a pre-flood state in which modern-day carnivores, such as lions and cheetahs, will once again become vegetarians.

An amusing teaser was raised by a gentleman named Custance who mused that the rarified atmosphere at the elevations of Mt. Everest, to which the flood waters presumably rose, would render all but a few creatures insensible for lack of oxygen. Armstrong reasons that atmosphere is measured from sea level and thus as the level of the sea rose so the pressure remained constant (Armstrong, G. T. (2000) *The Bible, Fact or Fiction*, Tyler, The Garner Ted Armstrong Evangelistic Association; p. 48).

Whilst discussing the wickedness of man resulting in a world-side destructive deluge, Armstrong tells us that whist in college he conducted *extensive research* into the
skeletons of Neanderthal and Cro-Magnon man. In many of their skulls he found *fairly neat round holes* which, he concluded, *presented proof of cannibalism, where severed heads were thrown into the fire, and a hole cut into the skull to access the cooked brain inside* (p.31/32). Notwithstanding this imaginative research conclusion, how does he reconcile these early examples of the human developmental line with the Biblical instant creation of Adam and Eve?

Although the clear similarities between the Gilgamesh account of Utnapishtim and the Biblical Account of Noah are inescapable, Gleason Archer decries them because the Babylonian gods are portrayed as being *passion-driven, quarrelsome and greedy* and because Utnapishtim’s cube-shaped ark would have been unseaworthy (ARCHER, G.L., Moody Press, 1975 p.211). To cite these superficial objections in the face of the clear parallels and especially after agreeing that a world-wide flood was implausible anyway is hard to understand.

Kenneth Kitchen is an ancient history scholar, with special interest in Egypt, who is a professed Conservative Evangelical. In his book (KITCHEN, K. A. (2003) *On the Reliability of the Old Testament*, Grand Rapids, Michigan, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co) he opines that the Genesis saga of Noah and the Ark is original. He states - *it is very tempting to think that the Babylonian tale of Utnapishtim, as written on tablet 11 of the Gilgamesh Epic, was the direct basis of the biblical story of Noah as told in Genesis chapters 6 to 9, especially so since the leaders of Israel were resident in Babylon for 50 years from c.587 to 537, and some for much longer* (Kitchen pg. 424/5). However the J portions of the story originated from much earlier, c. 950 BCE or so, which suggests a common ancestor for both sagas with perhaps refinements made by the P school in their redactions during the Babylonian exile and after, as the HQ of Judaism remained in Babylon for some time after a limited return to the Promised Land in c.537/6 BCE.

In addition to the dating of the J writings, a considerable time before the Jewish leaders found themselves in Babylon, the following differences between the Utnapishtim tale and the Noah episode in the Bible, according to Dr. Kitchen, preclude one having been copied from the other, -

- The Mesopotamian gods sent the flood simply because they could not stand the noise made by humanity, whereas YHWH had moral reasons, i.e. humanity’s sins, for sending it
- The Mesopotamian gods hid their plan from all humanity whereas YHWH directly commanded one right-living man to build a boat
The Mesopotamian boat was a cube whereas Noah’s had ship-like proportions

The duration of the flood was given two or three times in the Biblical account but the Babylonian version gave no timing of the abatement

Noah takes only his family aboard whereas in the other version many people are included

The details of the sending out of the birds differ

Utnapishtim left the ark on his own initiative and then appeased the gods with a sacrifice because they were angry at one man’s escape. Noah waited to be called out by God and then offered a sacrifice of thanksgiving.

The Mesopotamian land was replenished after the flood in some measure by divine activity but Noah and his family were left to do the job themselves.


As the above list also corroborates, there were enough similarities in general to propose a common ancestor shared by the Babylonian version and the simpler, more concise Genesis account. Floods were common enough in the Mesopotamian area but because of the widespread and historical inclusion of this story especially in Sumerian and Babylonian tradition, a single more devastating deluge must have occurred at one time sufficient to merit special memory. Was this historical event, having been given legendary proportions in the cultural accounts, the Word of God or merely adapted historical record? Were the J and P authors guided by God in preparing and editing their versions or did they just substitute Judaic characters and change the moralistic emphasis on their own volition? Another salient question is did the P redactions make some attempt to distinguish the biblical version from the Babylonian one thus producing at least some of the differences itemised above; my contention is that they did. Again did P attempt to make good some shortcomings, such as the duration of the event? I think the answer again is yes as P was always a stickler for detail. The P sections are reproduced below so that comparisons can be made with the list of differences above -

Text of the P version (6:9-8:19)

“These are the generations of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation; Noah walked with God. And Noah had three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth. Now the earth was corrupt in God’s sight, and the earth was filled with violence. And God saw the earth, and behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted
their way upon the earth. And God said to Noah, I have determined to make an end of all flesh; for the earth is filled with violence through them; behold, I will destroy them with the earth. Make yourself an ark of gopher wood; make rooms in the ark, and cover it inside and out with pitch. This is how you are to make it: the length of the ark three hundred cubits, its breadth fifty cubits, and its height thirty cubits. Make a roof for the ark, and finish it to a cubit above; and set the door of the ark in its side; make it with lower, second, and third decks. For behold I will bring a flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh in which is the breath of life from under heaven; everything that is on the earth shall die. But I will establish my covenant with you; and you shall come into the ark, you, your sons, your wife, and your sons’ wives with you. And of every living thing of all flesh, you shall bring two of every sort into the ark to keep them alive with you; they shall be male and female. Of the birds according to their kinds and of the animals according to their kinds of every creeping thing of the ground according to its kind, two of every sort shall come in to you, to keep them alive. Also take with you every sort of food that is eaten, and store it up; and it shall serve as food for you and for them. Noah did this; he did all that God commanded him. Noah was six hundred years old when the flood waters came upon the earth. In the six hundredth year of Noah’s life, in the second month, on the seventeenth day of the month, on that day all the fountains of the great deep burst forth, and the windows of the heavens were opened. On the very same day Noah and his sons, Shem and Ham and Japheth, and Noah’s wife and three wives of his sons with them entered the ark, they and every beast according to its kind, and all the cattle according to their kinds, and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth according to its kind, and every bird according to its kind, and every bird of every sort. They went into the ark with Noah, two and two of all flesh in which there was the breath of life. And they entered male and female of all flesh. The flood continued forty days upon the earth. The waters prevailed and increased greatly upon the earth; and the ark floated on the face of the waters. And the waters prevailed so mightily upon the earth that all the high mountains under the whole heaven were covered; the waters prevailed above the mountains covering them fifteen cubits deep. And all flesh died that moved upon the earth, birds, cattle, beasts, all swarming creatures that swarm upon the earth and every man. And the waters prevailed upon the earth one hundred and fifty days. But God remembered Noah and all the beasts and all the cattle that were with him in the ark. And God made a wind blow over the earth, and the waters subsided; the fountains of the deep and the windows of the heavens were closed. At the end of one hundred and fifty days the waters had abated; and in the seventh month on the seventeenth day of the month the
ark came to rest upon the mountains of Ararat. And the waters continued to abate until the tenth month; in the tenth month, on the first day of the month, the tops of the mountains were seen. Noah sent forth a raven and it went to and fro until the waters were dried up from the earth. In the sixth hundred and first year, in the first month, the waters dried from off the earth. In the second month, on the twenty seventh day of the month, the earth was dry, then God said to Noah, Go forth from the ark, you and your wife, and your sons and your sons' wives with you. Bring forth with you every living thing that is with you of all flesh - birds and animals and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth - that they may breed abundantly on the earth. So Noah went forth, and his sons and his wife and his sons' wives with him. And every beast, every creeping thing, and every bird, everything that moves upon the earth, went forth by families out of the ark".

Another famous book from the Evangelical School which insists on the correctness of the Biblical account of the Flood has already been mentioned several times - WHITCOMB, J. & MORRIS, H. (1980) The Genesis Flood, Grand Rapids, Michigan, Baker Book House. In their Preface Whitcomb and Morris state - We believe that the Bible, as the verbally inspired and completely inerrant Word of God, gives us the true framework of historical and scientific interpretation, as well as so-called religious truth. The framework is one of special creation of all things, complete and perfect in the beginning, followed by the introduction of a universal principle of decay and death into the world after man's sin, culminating in a worldwide cataclysmic destruction of the world that then was by the Genesis Flood (p.xxvi).

The Flood could not have covered the whole earth as many times the amount of water we have now would have been required to cover the Himalayas at 29,000 feet. Although Garner Ted Armstrong is of the opinion that the mountains were not nearly so high then as now (see next page for more), there would have been nowhere for the enormous amount of water to drain from a universal flood anyway. The gathering of all animal types at the ark from their widespread distribution in distant lands is another problem. The task of carrying away waste products and bringing, storing and distributing food would have been too much for the small crew of 8 persons on board (Genesis 6:21). A purely local flood is the only possibility. Conveniently ignoring facts like these, the Whitcomb and Morris account goes into breath-taking detail about the biblical texts regarding the Flood saga but so, so sadly, after all that work, falls yet again into the Fundamentalist's demise of continually quoting biblical texts as proof and
evidence for the matters they are trying to verify. How many times must it be pointed out that supernatural and biblical proofs are only valid if one is a Fundamentalist already and thus believe in the Inerrancy of the Bible; they carry no weight whatsoever for those who do not share these beliefs and are thus not ‘evidence’.

Despite all this, we must, in all fairness, and because some evangelicals still believe such explanations, quote Whitcomb and Morris’ conclusions at the end of their chapter on Basic Arguments for a Universal Flood –

1. The Bible says that the waters of the Flood covered the highest mountains to a depth sufficient for the ark to float over them.
2. The Bible also informs us that this situation prevailed for a period of five months and that an additional seven months were required for the waters to subside sufficiently for Noah to disembark on the mountains of Ararat.
3. The expression “fountains of the great deep” points unmistakably to vast geological disturbances that are incompatible with the local flood concept, especially when these disturbances are said to have continued for five months.
4. The construction of the ark with a capacity of at least 1,400,000 cubic feet merely for the purpose of carrying 8 people and a few animals through a local inundation is utterly inconceivable.
5. If the Flood had been limited in extent, there would have been no need for an ark at all, for there would have been plenty of time for Noah’s family to escape from the danger area, to say nothing of birds and beasts.
6. Peter’s use of the Flood as a basis for refuting uniformitarian skeptics in the last days would have been pointless if the Flood had been merely a local one (2 Peter 3:3-7).
7. Biblical reasons for the necessity of a total destruction of humanity in the days of Noah –
   1) since the stated purpose of the Flood was the punishment of a sinful race, such a purpose could not have been accomplished if only a part of humanity had been affected;
   2) the fact that the Flood destroyed the rest of mankind is greatly strengthened by repeated statements in Genesis and 1 and 2 Peter to the effect that only Noah and his family were spared;
   3) the Lord Jesus Christ clearly stated that all men were destroyed by the Flood (Luke 17:26-30);
   4) the covenant which God made with Noah after the Flood becomes meaningless if
only a part of the human race had been involved. In addition to these arguments there are reasons for believing that the human race could not have been confined to the Mesopotamian Valley at the time of the Flood - the longevity and fecundity of the anti-diluvians, the prevalence of strife and violence encouraging wide distribution and the evidence of human fossils in widely-scattered parts of the world. (WHITCOMB, J. & MORRIS, H. (1980) The Genesis Flood, Grand Rapids, Michigan, Baker Book House. p.33/34).

Whitcomb and Morris had declared themselves firmly convinced that these basic arguments, if carefully weighed by Christian thinkers, would prove to be sufficiently powerful and compelling to settle once and for all the long-debated question of the geographical extent of the Flood and that no serious scientific problems can offset the combined force of these biblical arguments. In addition to these arguments being worthless if one is not a Fundamentalist, do these people not realize that these authors could have written equally vehemently in those days that the earth was flat and that the sun rotated around the earth because that was the singular and adamant belief at the time. Just because they wrote and said what they believed at the time does not by any means make it correct. Modern scholarship and scientific knowledge has clearly proved them wrong.

A universal flood wiping out all mankind necessarily would require that all the present inhabitants of the world who followed after were descended from Noah’s three sons. Some critics have suggested that it is pious fiction to believe that Noah had a black son, a brown son and a white son and that it is impossible to derive the races of the entire world from Noah’s sons; Professor Bernard Ramm is one author who in his The Christian View of Science and Scripture, holds these views. Whitcomb and Morris submit the views of R. Laird Harris of Covenant Theological Seminary (Racial Dispersion, Journal of the American Scientific Affiliation, Vol.7, No.3 (Sept. 1955), p.52, as their answer to this dilemma - we need not adopt the view that has sometimes been expressed that the three sons were black, yellow and white. If they were so, what were their wives? Rather we would say that in these six people were all the genes which have separated out into the modern races .... The genes we would have to say, were all there whether in evidence in the body characteristics or not. (Whitcomb and Morris, p.45). Whitcomb and Morris elsewhere in their book propose that all humankind originated in Asia from Noah’s three sons and populated the earth from there after the occurrence of the world-wide flood which they date as about 10,000 BCE. This belief is
far removed from the research findings of the Leakey family in Tanzania (see page 228), and others, which discovered that humans developed in Africa at least a million plus years ago and migrated from there - Three fossil skulls recovered from the windswept scrabble of Ethiopia's dry and barren Afar rift valley lend archaeological credence to the theory that modern humans evolved in Africa before spreading around the world, (by John Roach for National Geographic News, June 11, 2003).

Another evangelistic writer, Garner Ted Armstrong, who opines, regarding Whitcomb and Morris' book, - any serious student of the Bible who has sincere questions about the Flood should obtain a copy of 'The Genesis Flood' by John C. Whitcomb, jnr, and Henry M. Morris...... any doubting scoffer would be turned into a humble believer by reading carefully this collegiate-grade book of 518 pages which answers all the various objections and difficulties concerning Noah’s Ark and the Flood (ARMSTRONG, G. T. (2000) The Bible, Fact or Fiction, Tyler, The Garner Ted Armstrong Evangelistic Association; p.45). This so-called ‘collegiate-grade book’, which avers that human kind originated from Noah’s three sons in Asia and migrated outwards from there acquiring its racial characteristics as it went, is mentioned frequently elsewhere in this thesis further illustrating its multiple inaccuracies and falsehoods.

Regarding the duration and magnitude of the Flood, Armstrong warns it is important to realize that the mountains in the pre-flood period might not have been anywhere near so high as they are today. The flood was not only accomplished by waters from the heavens, but by the gradual subsidence of the land masses, allowing flood waters to cover the land from the nearby oceans. The tectonic plates which form the uppermost part of the earth’s crust may have moved considerable distances as the flood waters covered the earth. Remember, the flood came on over a period of 150 days. While it rained for 40 days, the water prevailed for a much longer time. There was a period of mountain building due to tectonic plate shifts, intrusion of subterranean magma, as well as other areas of the earth, occurring both during and after the flood..... the rocks of the earth, from the Alleutians to Tierra del Fuego, from the Atlas mountains to the Andes, and from the Himalayas to the Alps show massive catastrophes of the past. The rocks cry out “a huge flood did this”. (ARMSTRONG, G. T. (2000) The Bible, Fact or Fiction? Tyler, Texas, The Garner Ted Armstrong Evangelistic Association. p.43). Although Armstrong has latched on to several important geological occurrences of the past, these did not occur over 150 days but more like 150 million years. Also, once again, this writer continually referred to biblical texts such as, 2 Peter 2:5, 3:3-6 as
proof of the occurrence of the world-wide flood described in Genesis. The real point is not that a world-wide flood would have been necessary to carry out the avowed purpose of wiping out sinful humans, or that ancient people believed such a thing to have occurred, but did it actually happen, or perhaps more to the point, could it possibly have happened?

The P writers had an uphill battle to convince the younger members of the exiles that things were more attractive back in their Promised Land. In order to support their plea for tradition and allegiance to Yahweh they lost no opportunity of reinforcing their teaching by examples from the Tetrateuch, either inherited or invented. After all in 2 Kings 5:12 Naaman, an army commander, had been allowed to say – *Are not Abana and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel?* Babylon was blessed with fine rivers, canals and green grasslands.

**Mosaic Authorship of the Pentateuch**

The ultra-conservatives consider that the theory which best accords with the facts about the authorship of the Pentateuch is that of Mosaic Authorship. In his extensive ten-chapter setting out of the Fundamentalist Position, Gleason Archer states, as his first point of argument for Mosaic Authorship - *the Pentateuch itself testifies to Moses having composed it!* (Archer, Moody Press, 1975; p.109). Here we have another example of circular reasoning. He cites Exodus 17:14, 24:4, 34:27, Numbers 33:1-2 as saying *And Jehovah said unto Moses or And Moses wrote all the words of Jehovah* and like statements, and takes that as absolute proof that Moses did indeed write the first 5 books of the Torah. Has Dr. Archer forgotten the literary license abounding in those times? To say that Moses must have written the text because the Text says so is a further example of circular reasoning – *it does no good to build a foundation on the Bible simply because the Bible claims it is true, for only those who believe the Bible in the first place count the Bible’s claims as indubitable* (PERRY, J. (2001) *Dissolving the Inerrancy Debate: How Modern Philosophy Shaped the Evangelical View of Scripture*. Quodlibet Journal, 3 No.4,p.3). The fact that Moses allegedly writes an account of his own death in Deuteronomy 34:5f is a further discouragement for those alleging inerrancy or Moses’ authorship.

To say that Moses must have written the text because the text says so, as Gleason Archer does repeatedly, is totally fatuous and irresponsible in someone writing a text book which is expected to exert some influence on the seekers of knowledge who read
it or refer to it (ARCHER, G.L., Moody Press, 1975); these verifications by the Bible itself of itself have no standing with readers of other persuasions than Evangelicals. The fact that Moses allegedly writes an account of his own death in Deuteronomy 34:5f is a definite snag. Quotations from the New Testament alleging support for Mosaic authorship, such as Matthew 19:8, John 5:46-47, 7:19, Acts 3:22 etc. are either quotations from writings about Moses and what Moses is reported to have done or said, or else they demonstrate that the writer himself believed at that time that Moses had written the words, as people did until comparatively recently (18th century). The fact that an ancient author was of a certain opinion is certainly no proof that it was so, as countless examples from the versions of creation to Paul’s firm opinion that Jesus would return in his lifetime, show (1 Cor.7:29f, Rom.13:11).

Archer then moves to what he calls internal evidences to further enhance his view of Mosaic authorship:

- So-called “eyewitness details” appearing in the text, such as the number of fountains or of palm trees in Exodus 15:27 seemingly prove to Archer that Moses was there and wrote it.

- The use of Egyptian names means to Archer that the author was thoroughly acquainted with Egypt and thus of the Exodus therefrom. The to-be-expected use of a greater proportion of Egyptian words in a section where the action takes place in Egypt (the Jacob Story) does not seem to have occurred to Dr. Archer.

- Consistently foreign or extra-Palestinian descriptions of the seasons, weather, crop sequence, flora and fauna in Exodus and Leviticus are cited as being extra-Canaan and thus prove that the author was not a native of Canaan. Archer seems to have lost sight of the fact that in Exodus and Leviticus the Hebrews themselves were extra-Canaan, i.e. were on the way out of Egypt or in the Sinai, and did not enter Canaan until later, according to the biblical account.

- He states that the atmosphere of Exodus to Numbers is not that of an agricultural people settled in their ancestral possessions and in this he is correct. But instead of going on to say that the sacrifices calling for crop products like cakes and wine, were thus totally inappropriate and thus ‘read backs’ from a later time, he conveniently misses out all these references to a farming way of life and picks out the descriptions of the tabernacle as being appropriate to desert life and thus being Mosaic, as if later authors could not have described the scene just as well from their knowledge of the traditions.
• Why is it that Archer consistently errs in thinking later authors totally incapable of describing past historical situations. He cites correct descriptions of historic customs as being proof that the author was current with them. The later redactors were quite capable of adhering to ancient procedures in their writings of former times from their knowledge of their own history.

• The citing of so-called archaisms of language as any sort of proof of Mosaic authorship, even if the citings per se were not questionable, would be obviously accounted for by the use of quotations from earlier records and writings by the later redactors.

• Even Archer’s own sources concede that the laws of the middle books of the Pentateuch … do not indeed come from the one hand. Archer himself attributes a certain amount of overlapping and restatement as being due to successive stages in revelation during Moses’ writing career of four decades, instead of correctly assigning it to different authorships.


So many things mediate against Mosaic authorship of the Torah, such as:


• Not knowing the nationality of the people to whom Joseph was sold - Ishmaelites in Gen.37:25 and Midianites in Gen.37:28.

• Three separate versions of the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20, 34 and Deuteronomy 5.

• God is portrayed as not knowing what was going on in Sodom and Gomorrah and having to go down and see - Gen.18:21.

• Detailed regulations restricting the powers of a monarch more than 200 years before Israel had a monarchy (Deut. 17)( STARK, T. (2011) The Human Faces of God, Eugene, Oregon, Wipf and Stock Publishers; p.14, note 6).

• The account of his own death in Deuteronomy 34:5f.

• Various formulae, such as – to this day (Deut.34:6), When the Canaanites dwelt in the land (Gen.13:7, 5"beyond the Jordan" (Gen 50:10) and mention of the Philistines, who came much later (26:14).

• The suggestion of there being only the one God responsible for everything, as portrayed in Genesis’ creation narrative, would have been a revolutionary position to take in Moses’ time when polytheism was the norm. It was even startling as a polemic when it was put together during the exile.
A reminder of the literary practices in early times:

- To attach a name to a piece of literature that would enhance its acceptance
- To attribute words to an historical character that he or she may perhaps have said
- To plagiarise freely
- To ‘Read Back’ places and events from the editor’s time into the narrative.
- Historical and Geographic inaccuracies due to the absence of suitable records and reference books
- In the Old Testament certain idioms and codes were understood by the hearers of the time, such as 40 days signifying a long time and the colour code
- A device is known as Eponymous Writing was used by many ancient writers to fix for the reader the exact roots of the heroes
- The embellishments that took place in the repeated telling of the traditional tales in separate places before they were written down.

Certainly some of the horrors and extreme measures attributed to God were in fact echoes of customary practice amongst some at the time or religious regulations ‘read back’ into the tradition account by the P redactors to give them substance on which to demand obedience by those Jews wavering in their faith under the influence of ambient Babylon during the Exile. Such extremes as - *if you blaspheme God you shall be put to death* (Lev.24:16) or *everything that a menstruating woman touched was unclean* (Lev.15:19f) were obviously part of the strict and ‘over the top’ set of Laws that had grown up in Jewry over time; there were, at one time, over 600 laws applying to the Sabbath Day alone.

Quotations from the New Testament alleging support for Mosaic authorship, such as Matthew 19:8, John 5:46-47, 7:19, Acts 3:22 etc. are either quotations from writings about Moses and what Moses is reported to have done or said, or else they demonstrate that the writer himself believed that Moses had written the words, as people did until comparatively recent times (18th century). The fact that an ancient author was of a certain opinion is certainly no proof that it was so, as countless examples, from the versions of creation to Paul’s firm opinion that Jesus would return
in his lifetime, show (1 Cor.7:29f, Rom.13:11).

The Exodus

Another major Biblical event, the authenticity of which cannot be discussed in terms of a superficial inaccuracy such as typology, is the mighty Exodus. Despite the fact that all four authors of the Pentateuch, as accepted in the Documentary Hypothesis by most scholars, contributed to some degree to the biblical story of the Exodus, no archaeological evidence of a major migration into the Canaanite lands of the Middle East from Egypt in the 1200’s BCE has been discovered despite 100 years of searching. The existence of the two cities, Pithom and Rameses, which the Israelites were ordered by Rameses to construct just prior to the alleged Exodus, has been archaeologically verified and gives us an implied date of 1275 BCE, when Rameses became king, as the date before which any Hebrew Exodus did not occur. The locating of Israel in Canaan, stated on the stele of Merneptah, the son of Rameses, in 1224/5 (or 1228 according to some opinions), constitutes the last possible date. Around that time no evidence has been found for any large scale movement out of Egypt, although small groups may have made the journey at various times.

According to the biblical text several cities such as Ai, Hazor, and the most famous of all, Jericho, were destroyed by Joshua and the Hebrews on their way to the Promised Land. Archaeological investigation has shown that these centres were either destroyed or abandoned at dates well before Joshua’s alleged journey, with the possible exception of Hazor, where evidence exists for a severe fire in c.1250 BCE (Amnon Ben-Tor, Archaeologist), (ANDERSON, B. W. (1991) *The Living World of the Old Testament*, London, Prentice-Hall, p.136/137). In the period preceding the alleged movement of the enslaved Hebrews, the Middle East consisted of a significant number of city states owing allegiance to Egypt in a Hegemony and so any exodus would have been a move from Egypt to Egypt. According to the television program eluded to above, many archaeologists feel that the change which occurred in Canaan in the 1200’s was the result of population movements within Canaan itself as the city-state system collapsed and the previously oppressed lower classes seized the opportunity to set up communities of a more democratic nature. Over a period of about 200 years the population, which had been 3 to 5 thousand in 24 city state settlements, increased to 45,000 living in gatherings of simpler dwellings with no suggestion of palaces, temples or other opulent buildings as the lower classes of Canaanites seized the opportunity for a better, more egalitarian way of life casting off oppression as they headed for the hills.
Israel Finkelstein and his students – investigating archaeologists. The simplicity of the houses, given the name of 'Israelite Houses', was also reflected in the pottery and other artifacts. The relatively sharp increase in population indicates a movement stemming from local areas together with some boosting from nearby upheavals (Peter Machinist, Harvard University). It seems therefore that most of the 'Israelites' were originally Canaanites and that the collapse and redistribution of the city state population was the main cause of the so-called 'invasion numbers' and not the result of it.

As the new culture of the simpler ex-Canaanite people developed, new people joined who may well have passed through Midian on their way bringing exciting tales of the Shasu god, YHW (Yahoo), who encouraged individual independence and the retention of personal possessions. Some local archaeologists in the Middle East appearing on television recently, opined that the Israelite God, YHWH (Yahweh), was adopted in this way eventually, after many years of worshipping local gods, graduating to a single deity whose chosen people the Israelites allegedly were (spoken by Michael Coogan, Stonehill College). This monotheism as well as the flight from oppression to freedom was incorporated into the Israelite tradition forming a mighty saga featuring Abraham, who moved the people away from his father’s moon worship, Moses, from the Shasu country of Midian, who allegedly freed the people from captivity in Egypt and Joshua who eventually settled them in their new found freedom in Canaan. The families grew into tribes over the years and by 1000 BCE David rose up to unite the tribes; Israel reaching its largest extent of empire under his son Solomon. No trace has ever been found of Solomon’s opulent temple and palace and even the existence of David was in some doubt until 1993 when an inscription was found at Tel-Dan in Northern Israel by archaeologists from the Hebrew Union College on a victory stele celebrating the conquest of Israel and of the king of the House of David. David is the earliest biblical figure proved by Archaeology to be historical if this is indeed the same David as the biblical one.

Eilat Mazar of the Shalom Centre has unearthed some massive walls indicating a large complex in the City of David, the oldest part of Jerusalem. Using the modified Albright system of pottery dating and Radio-Carbon dating of seeds found at the same levels by Elizabetta Boretto, these walls have been dated to 75 years later than the time of David, i.e. 925 BCE, the time of Omri and Ahab. Although no evidence has been found of Solomon or his Temple/Palace buildings, monumental gates of the same six chambered style, thought to be of David/Solomon’s time, have been found at Hazor,
Megiddo and Gezza suggesting a single governing authority to some.

In Egypt a stele of the Pharaoh Shishak of the 22nd dynasty dating to 925 BCE, was found which told of an invasion of Israel. Shishak had released the refugee, Jeroboam, who had been exiled by Solomon, to lead the seditionist movement after the death of Solomon. *The Egyptian invasion came just five years after the disruption of the United Kingdom in 918 BCE* - ANDERSON, B. W. (1991) The Living World of the Old Testament, London, Prentice-Hall, p.258). All this place Solomon’s death at c.923 BCE. A temple at Ain Dara in modern Syria showed the features described in the first book of Kings as those of Solomon’s mighty temple, and so has been able to be used to model Solomon’s actual temple; the latter being thought to be located beneath the Dome of the Rock and therefore unavailable for excavation.

Excavations just outside Jerusalem by Gabriel Barkay of the Bar-Ilan University accidentally turned up a tiny silver scroll dating to the 7th century BCE. Epigraphers examined the scroll and found one of the earliest written biblical texts, namely the blessing which is to be found in the Bible at Numbers 6:24-26 – *The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious unto you; the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace.* (Solving a Riddle Written in Silver, by John Noble Wilford, New York Times Published September 28, 2004). During the same excavations small figurines were unearthed representing Canaanite deities. This raises the implication that some at least of the Israelite population were not monotheistic shortly before the Babylonian exile. There was mention of other gods in Jewish literature, such as Psalm 96 and an early song ascribed to Moses and his sister Miriam (Ex. 15:11) and even the *first commandment does not deny the existence of other gods, it simply says that other gods are not to be worshipped by Israel …… the fact that Yahweh is a jealous deity (Ex. 20:5) in fact assumes the existence of real competitors for Israel’s affections.* (STARK, T. (2011) The Human Faces of God, Eugene, Oregon, Wipf and Stock Publishers, p.76). It seems therefore that Israel only emerged from the Babylonian exile as a monotheistic group.

The Bible implies that Solomon’s many wives brought their own religious paraphernalia with them, as well as priests, and the King was worryingly thought to have worshipped with some of them. Excavations by William G. Dever of Arizona University at Mount
Gerazim have shown that the Samaritans used animal sacrifice and pagan idols in their worship. Figurines shown there were also known throughout Israel and perhaps Asherah was thought of as Yahweh’s wife (DEVER, W. G. (2005) Did God Have a Wife?, Grand Rapids, Eerdmans). Whatever the situation with these pantheistic tendencies it is thought by many scholars that true Monotheism was not established by the Israelites until the time of the Babylonian exile in 537-587 BCE when the exiles were searching for reasons why Yahweh had punished them, using the Assyrians and then the Babylonians as instruments. They eventually selected the worship of other gods as one main reason and so they established the loyal worship of a universal God, Yahweh, who then orchestrated a new Exodus back to the Promised Land. No idols were found after the Babylonian exile. Ezra re-established the covenant by reading out Deuteronomy, (according to the biblical record) – Eric Meyers, Duke University.

The Book of Isaiah

Until the 18th century it had been presumed that Isaiah of Jerusalem had written all 66 chapters of the book under his name but J.C. Doderlein (1775) and J.G. Eichhorn (1780-83) maintained that chapters 40 to 66 were written by a different author who lived 150 years later during the Babylonian Exile and in 1892 B. Duhrm argued for a separate author of chapters 56-66; these proposed authors were called Deutero- and Trito- Isaiah respectively (BROWN, R. E., FITZMYER, J. A. & MURPHY, R. E. (1993) The New Jerome Biblical Commentary, London, Geoffrey Chapman. p.329).

- Chapters 1 - 39 - were written by the First Isaiah - the OT Prophet (742-701 B.C.) - and contain prophetic material; here Israel is in the Promised Land in the time of Ahaz and Hezekiah.
- Chapters 40-55 - were written by Second Isaiah (539) - and are full of hope on the eve of the New Exodus back to Zion after 50 years of exile in Babylon (587-537).
- Chapters 56-66 - were written by Third Isaiah (530-515) - Israel has returned to a devastated land with no temple and the plain reality of hard survival; third Isaiah berates Israel for her sins which have brought this upon her.

First Isaiah relates to the second half of the eighth century B.C., the Assyrian period, whilst the second is the product of the 6th to the 5th centuries B.C., the Persian period. The distinction based on historical and philological criteria has been confirmed by a computer analysis of the language (Bible Scholar Yehuda Radday of Haifa's Israel Institute of Technology). Second Isaiah knew about the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem and assigned Cyrus to build the new Temple (Is. 44:28, 45:13), the addressees were exiles in Babylon (43:14) - these date the work to the sixth century B.C.E. (ACHTEMEIER, P. J., BORAAS, R. S., FISHBANE, M., PERKINS, P. & WALKER, W. O. (1985), Harper's Bible Dictionary, San Francisco, Harper & Row; p. 427). The literary tone changes from threat and condemnation in Isaiah to consolation and sorrow in Deutero-Isaiah and to sorrow and visions in Trito. First Isaiah's preaching has been full of autobiographical material whereas Deutero and Trito-Isaiah do not even reveal their names. The style of Isaiah has been brief, cryptic and imperious, that of Deutero expansive, redundant, solemn and lyrical and that of Trito lacks originality, fails to sustain images yet, whilst plagued with melancholy and frustration, sees a new vision for the future (BROWN, R. E., FITZMYER, J. A. & MURPHY, R. E. (1993) The New Jerome Biblical Commentary, London, Geoffrey Chapman; p.330).

In his version of this critique Norman Geisler once again reverts to a firm belief in the supernatural to enable the one prophet Isaiah to predict all the happenings in Chapters 40-55 - he says that since God knows the end from the beginning (Is.46:10) it is not necessary to deny the supernatural element in Isaiah's prophecies (When Critics Ask; p.365). The differences that do exist in words and style of writing can be explained as a difference in subject matter and emphasis. He states that a number of phrases found in both sections of the book attest to its unity and are not just phrases carried forward by an Isaian school of religious thought (GEISLER, N. L. (1992) When Critics Ask: Wheaton, Illinois, Victor Books; p.265/6). Giesler's citing of New Testament and other quotations from Isaiah do not prove that Isaiah was a single book; as I have already mentioned this was mistakenly thought to be the case up to the 18th century.

The Book of Daniel

In their article on the Book of Daniel in The New Jerome Biblical Commentary, Louis F. Harman, C.SS.R. and Alexander A. Di Lella, O.F.M. state the modern scholastic view that Daniel is not true history containing genuine prophecy written in c.600 BCE in the time of Nebuchadnezzar, but rather a Manifesto for the Maccabean freedom fighters in
165/4 BCE. The arguments for this date, which the authors describe as overwhelming are -

- the Hebrew and Aramaic used in its original writing are certainly much later than the 5th century BCE when compared with Elephantine Aramaic of that date.
- the theological outlook, angelology, belief in the resurrection of the dead and apocalyptic rather than prophetic vision, point inescapably to a period long after the Babylonian Exile.
- The author's hazy portrayal of Babylonian and Persian events and dates but his much clearer and detailed description of the profanation of the temple in 167 by Antioches IV Epiphanes and the subsequent persecution indicates a composition just before the death of that king in 164.
- The representation of the Book as a prophetic book written in the time of Nebuchadnezzar is clearly in error.


Had the book been written by an author living at the time of the Babylonian exile, he would have known: -

- That the siege of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar did not occur in the third year of the reign of King Jehoiakim of Judah, i.e. in 606 BCE, but in 597 and again in 587 – he seems to have confused 2 Kings 24:1 and 2 Chron. 36:6-8.
- That the “Chaldeans”, in the period of the Exile (1:4, 2:2), were not known as diviners and astrologers but merely as people of Southern Babylonia (5:30).
- It was unlikely that Daniel continued there until the first year of King Cyrus (539), almost 70 years later (1:21).
- History knows of no period of insanity suffered by Nebuchadnezzar such as that described in 4:25 but a later successor, Nabonidus, was absent from his duties for several years “smitten” with illness according to a Jewish document found among the Dead Sea Scrolls.
- That King Belshazzar was not the son of Nebuchadnezzar as stated in 5:2,18 but the son of Nabonidus (556-539 - an usurper who was not descended from Nebuchadnezzar and in fact never became king but only ruled temporarily as a regent.
- That there was no such person as Darius the Mede mentioned in 5:31, it was Cyrus who overthrew Babylon and interestingly Cyrus’ general, Gobyras, was about “sixty
two" when he occupied Babylon.

- That Cyrus did not succeed Darius as King of the Persians as implied in 6:28 but Cyrus II (550-530) was succeeded by his son Cambyses (530-522) who then was succeeded by Darius I (522-486). The historical statements in 9:1 are completely erroneous in that Darius I was not a Mede but a Persian and was not the son of Ahaseurus (Xerxes) but his father.
- That 8 more Persian kings followed Darius not 3 as stated in 11:2.


These glaring errors are very hard indeed to explain if one purports that the author lived and wrote at the very time, but they are understandable if over 400 years actually separated the writer from the historical events, for the accuracy of which he had to rely on word of mouth and legend, and why historical information becomes more and more exact and detailed as one comes up closer to the actual time of writing in 165.

Further ammunition for the later date is that the so-called prophetic predictions of events before the 160’s are stunningly accurate, but the predictions after that date do not come true - the author predicts that Antiochus would be killed in the land of Israel ‘between the sea and the beautiful mountain’. The problem is that Antiochus IV did not die in Israel. If fact he did not die anywhere near Israel. He died in Persia, (STARK, T. (2011) The Human Faces of God, Eugene, Oregon, Wipf and Stock Publishers, p.20).

Also the prediction that after the death of Antiochus Israel would be delivered from bondage to the nations with the help of Michael – did not come to pass (ibid; 21).

The author actually predicts the death of Antiochus in a great battle with Egypt (Dan. 11:40-45). But since this was not the way the king actually died – he perished defending his empire in the east – we can suggest that at least this part of the book was completed by 164, the year before he died (BOADT, L. (1984) Reading the Old Testament, Mahwah, NJ, Paulist Press, p.509).

In response to the suggestion that the Aramaic in which much of the original book of Daniel was written was much later than the period of the narrative, Kenneth Kitchen
has said, The form or stage of the language of Aramaic used in Ezra and Daniel is precisely that used in the Neo-Babylonian and Persian period of the sixth to the fourth centuries and is currently termed Official Aramaic. In the Old Testament the sole difference is that the spelling has been consistently modernized to bring it into line with the Aramaic otherwise in popular use among the Jews by the third century. This was because of sound-shifts in Aramaic from at least the fifth century. For example, the consonant dh had coalesced with plain d. Before this it had been written as z in Old and Official Aramaic, as there was no separate letter in the (original Phoenician) script for the sound dh. But to continue writing a d (as dh had become) with a z, when all other d’s were written as d, could only lead to confusion. Already in the fifth century some scribes began to write the occasional d instead of z in such cases. So the change had to come. Thus with the fall of the Persian Empire, Aramaic largely ceased to be used except by those who spoke it (not just wrote it), and the change took place. But the change only dates itself, not the documents to which it was applied, as elsewhere in the Ancient Near East. There is no good reason to deny the authenticity of the biblical Aramaic correspondence and other usages that we find in the biblical books relating to this period. (KITCHEN, K. A. (2003) On the Reliability of the Old Testament, Grand Rapids, Michigan, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. p.78).

The Scofield Reference Bible, rev. ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1917), 914-5, said of the weeks in Daniel 9:24 - These are ‘weeks’ or, more accurately, sevens of years; 70 weeks of 7 years each…… the 70 weeks are divided into 7 = 490 years; 62 = 434 years; one = 7 years (vs. 25-27). In the 7 weeks = 49 years, Jerusalem was to be rebuilt in troubled times. This was fulfilled, as Ezra and Nehemiah record. Sixty two weeks = 434 years, thereafter Messiah was to come (v.25). This was fulfilled in the birth and manifestation of Christ. Verse 26 was obviously an indeterminate period. The date of the crucifixion is not fixed. It is only said to be ‘after’ the threescore and two weeks. The second event in v.26 is the destruction of the city, fulfilled in AD70 ………… the New Testament reveals that which was hidden from the Old Testament prophets (Matt.13:11-17; Eph.3:1-10), that during this period (‘unto the end’) should be accomplished the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven (Mat.t13:1-50) and the out-calling of the church (Matt.16:18, Rom.11:25). Then follows more complex manipulations of word and number to explain v.27.

The explanations provided by the evangelical writer, Norman Geisler are as follows: The Book of Daniel contains supernatural prophecies that, from Daniel’s time, extend
hundreds of years into the future (2:7). The record of the movement of nations and events is so accurate, it reads as the historical account of an eye witness. The historical accuracy of Daniel’s record confirms a 6th century composition and the best conclusion is that the Book of Daniel is a revelation from God about historical events that were future to Daniel, many of which are still future today; (GEISLER, N. L. (1992) When Critics Ask:, Wheaton, Illinois, Victor Books, p.291).

Nebuchadnezzar’s invasion took place in the summer of 605 BCE, between the months of Nisan and Tishri. This means that according to Daniel’s reckoning (Daniel employed the Tishri calendar system) it was only the third official year of Jehoiakim’s reign, but according to Jeremiah’s reckoning (Jeremiah employed the calendar of the Assyrians) it was Jehoiakim’s fourth official year.

According to cuneiform records Nabonidus departed from Babylon on a long journey, about 553 BCE in the third year of his reign and entrusted the rule of Babylon into the hands of his first-born son, Belshazzar.

Scholars argue that there was no such person as Darius the Mede and that the author of Daniel mistakenly thought that the Medes conquered Babylon and thus confused Darius, the First, King of Persia (521-486BCE), with the conqueror of Babylon and identified this figure as Darius the Mede. Cuneiform texts refer to Darius the Mede as Gubaru who was appointed by Cyrus to be governor over all of Babylonia (ACHTEMEIER, P. J., BORAAS, R. S., FISHBANE, M., PERKINS, P. & WALKER, W. O. (1985) Harper's Bible Dictionary, San Francisco, Harper & Row, p.205).

A more scholarly opinion from John Collins thinks it likely that chapters 2 to 6 already existed as a collection of tales before the Maccabean period and that chapter 1, originally composed in Aramaic, was translated into Hebrew as an introduction. He thought that chapters 8 to 11 may be somewhat later than chapter 7 and come from a different hand; the fact that chapter 7 was in Aramaic served to bind the material from the Maccabean period (Ch. 8-12) to the older tales (Ch.2-6) (COLLINS, J. J. (1993) Daniel, Minneapolis, Fortress Press p.25).

Porphyry (c.230-c.305) in his 12th book denied that Daniel was composed by the person to whom it is ascribed in its title, but rather by some individual who was living in Judea at the time of Antiochus Epiphanes. He did not foretell the future as much as he
related the past, and that whatever he spoke of up to the time of Antiochus, contained authentic history, whereas anything he may have conjured beyond that point was false, inasmuch as he would not have foreknown the future (Tr. R.L. Wilcken, The Christians as the Romans Saw Them (1984), Yale University Press, pp. 140-141). As well as Porphyry’s criticism a second arises from literary-critical observations and concerns the relationship between the tales in chapters 1 to 6 and the revelations in 7 to 12; (COLLINS, J. J. (1993) Daniel, Minneapolis, Fortress Press p.25).

The correspondence between Daniel’s predictions, especially in chapter 11, and the events of the Hellenistic age is most easily explained by the supposition that the predictions were written after the fact. By the end of the 19th century however, there was an established consensus in favour of a Maccabean dating. Conservatives have often argued that the critical position rests on a dogmatic, rationalistic denial of the possibility of the predictive prophecy. For the critical scholar however, the issue is one of probability. That Daniel’s predictions have particular reference to the time of Antiochus Ephiphanes is not in dispute and has been recognized by Josephus and Jerome, but there is no apparent reason why a prophet of the 6th century BCE should focus minute attention on the events of the 2nd century BCE. Moreover the references to Hellenistic history in chapter 11 are essentially accurate whereas those to the Babylonian and Persian periods in the earlier chapters are notoriously confused. Furthermore pseudonymity and ex eventu prophecy are well known conventions of apocalyptic literature and are characteristic of other Jewish writings of the Hellenistic period; in view of these considerations the balance of probability is overwhelmingly in favour of a Maccabean date, at least for the revelations of chapters 7 to 12, which clearly have their focus in that period (ibid; p.26).

The following discrepancies make it likely that the tales in chapters 1 to 6 originally circulated separately, whether in oral or written form, and are to a great degree self-contained units:

- The chronological setting of ch.2 is incompatible with the data of ch.1, as the former is in the second year of Nebuchadnezzar but the latter is in which Daniel had already completed a three year training period in that reign.
- Chapter 3 contains no mention of Daniel
- In chapter 5 Belshazzar, allegedly the son of Nebuchadnezzar, appears unaware of the existence of Daniel and of the experience of his father.
- The sequence of chapters does not follow consistent chronological order as
chapter 5 was set in the reign of Darius the Mede and makes mention of Cyrus the Persian, whereas chapter 7 reverts to the reign of Belshazzar.

- These stories do not reflect the persecution of Antiochus Epiphanes as the later chapters do.


**Summary of the discussed findings regarding the Book of Daniel from the authors referenced.**

The Hebrew-Aramaic text of Daniel evolved through several stages:

1. The individual tales of chapters 2-6 were originally separate in some form or other.
2. The Aramaic tales were collected, with the introductory chapter 1, in the Hellenistic period.
3. Daniel 7 was composed in Aramaic early in the persecution of Antiochus Epiphanes, before the desecration of the temple. Chapters 1-7 may have circulated briefly as an Aramaic Book.
4. Between 167 and 164 BCE the Hebrew chapters 8-12 were added, and chapter 1 was translated to provide a Hebrew frame for the Aramaic chapters.
5. The glosses in 12:11-12 were added before the re-dedication of the temple.
6. The text underwent further developments in its Greek recension.


**The Birth of Jesus**

**The Virgin Birth:**

If Evangelicals are so keen on citing the original documents why do they not discuss one of the most important topics of all in biblical interpretation, namely the alleged virgin birth of Jesus. Reinvestigation of the original documents in the Hebrew Scriptures reveals that the introduction of the term ‘Virgin’ came about during the translation of The Hebrew Scriptures into Greek in c.250 BCE to form the Septuagint. The Greek word *parthenos* was used to translate the Hebrew word *almah: almah*...
means ‘young woman’ and the actual Hebrew word for virgin is betulah (SPONG, J.S., HarperCollins, 1991, ; p.16). Why have the Ultra-conservatives not acknowledged this opinion, since they are so fond of taking refuge in original documents, even when they are not available? In addition to the completely wrong translation of the word almah per se, (by the way, the RSV has corrected this error and its version of the relevant verse 7:14 in Isaiah is - Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold a ‘young woman’ shall conceive and bear a son and shall call his name Immanuel”. Isaiah was actually addressing King Ahaz of Judah about a sign from God concerning the siege of Jerusalem being carried out at the time. The use of this quotation, mis-quoted though it usually is, to predict a virgin birth for a child some 700 years later is highly questionable. Matthew used the Greek version of the Hebrew Text which had the mis-translation parthenos in it to attempt to prove the Virgin Birth tradition. Nowhere in Hebrew Scriptures when the word almah is used is there a connotation of virginity (ibid; p.214).

About the virgin birth Thom Stark writes – The significance of naming the child “God with us” is that the child was a sign to King Ahaz that Yahweh was going to protect the kingdom of Judah from the hostile alliance presently threatening it. The prophecy was completely fulfilled within a few short years after it was given (STARK, T. (2011) The Human Faces of God, Eugene, Oregon, Wipf and Stock Publishers; p.29). Although this refers to the naming of a child ‘Emmanuel’ it does verify that Isaiah was addressing King Ahaz in this section.

In his widely distributed book, When Critics Ask, Norman Geisler puts the fundamentalist view of the Virgin Birth in this way - the word translated ‘virgin’ (almah) refers to a young maiden who has never had sexual relations with a man. Mary, the mother of Jesus, was a virgin even when she conceived and gave birth to Jesus. The physical conception and birth of the son of Isaiah was a sign to Israel that God would deliver them from physical bondage to the Assyrians. But, the supernatural conception and birth of the Son of God was a sign to all of God’s people that he would deliver them from spiritual bondage to sin and death. (GEISLER, N. L. (1992) When Critics Ask, Wheaton, Illinois,Victor Books p. 267).

There is no known written record anywhere of the birth of Jesus and each of the four canonical gospels deal with this in a different way. John's Gospel features a Jesus sent from above (John 1:1-18) but Mark introduces Jesus when he is already an adult
(Mark 1:9). Matthew introduces two complications in that he says *Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the King* (Matt. 2:1) and *and going into the House they (the Magi) saw the child with Mary his mother* (Matt. 2:11). The first quotation causes a problem because Herod the King died in 4 B.C. and so the birth of Jesus must, according to this, have occurred before that date. Since Herod ordered the slaughter of all children aged 2 years and under he obviously thought the birth may even have occurred 2 years earlier than that, perhaps on account of the long length of time it must have taken the Three Magi to interpret the star, prepare for a long journey, travel from Persia and give him the news (Matt. 2:16). A sensible estimate of the date of Jesus’ birth would then be about 6 BCE. The second quotation has the baby Jesus in a house, implying a domicile of the Holy Family in Bethlehem at the time and only the Gospel of Luke has Jesus born in a manger. As Bishop Spong says, *only the Christmas card industry can blend these two accounts together adequately, and they do so by falsifying what they do understand and ignoring what they do not understand* (SPONG, J.S., HarperCollins, 1991, : p.167).

Luke further complicates things when he dates the time of the going out of the decree summoning all people to register as - *This was the first enrolment when Quirinius was governor of Syria*: the historians tell us that Quirinius first became Governor of Syria in 6 A.D. The Governors are listed in the table below:

| BCE 10-9 | M. Titius |
| BCE 9-6  | Gaius Sentius Saturninus |
| BCE 6-3  | P. Quinctilius Varus |
| BCE 3-1  | L. Calpurnius Piso (?) |
| BCE 1-4 CE | Gaius Julius Caesar |
| 4-6 CE  | L. Volusius Saturninus |
| 6-7 CE  | P. Sulpicius Quirinius |

Despite all this the birth of Jesus in a manger has been taken as the most commonly accepted and popular version and features in most of the nativity scenes erected.
around Christendom for veneration, even though there is not one shred of evidence that such a thing took place. In these nativity scenes the three wise men are also often present with the shepherds even though they may not have arrived until later. I must add that there is no harm at all in viewing the nativity scene as an object of piety and veneration if only certain people would not keep insisting loudly that it is historical fact and inerrant.

Many scholars think that the two Synoptic Gospel writers Matthew and Luke who strove manfully to place Jesus’ birth in Bethlehem, did so because of the prophecy in Micah 5:2 - But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah, who are little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose origin is from of old, from ancient days. In placing the baby Jesus in a house there, Matthew seems to imply that the Holy Family lived there at the time of the birth. After their sojourn in Egypt, awaiting the death of Herod and thus avoiding his persecution, Joseph took his family back to Israel after the death but quickly moved up to Jewish Galilee because of another potentially unfriendly ruler in Judea, namely Archelaus (Matt. 2:22), and took up residence in Nazareth (Matt.2:19-23). Luke, on the other hand, presumes that the family lived in Nazareth originally but travelled down to Bethlehem in response to a census requirement which Luke invented, getting the dates etc. wrong in the process as I have mentioned already. Not only did Luke get the dates mixed up but Galilee was an independent Jewish province, with a Jewish Council at Sepphoris, and not subject to Roman Census demands anyway, to say nothing of the arduous journey of many days over rough terrain for a woman well advanced in pregnancy, and so his ruse to get the holy family down to Bethlehem in time for Jesus’ birth is very unlikely. This mix up is another massive blow for Inerrancy! The evangelical response, as epitomized by Norman Geisler, proposes that Luke 2:2 could be interpreted as - this census took place before Quirinius was governing Syria. This would require the Greek word πρωτη to be translated as “before”, whereas its only meanings admitted by scholars are “first” or “former” (ZERWICK, M., GROSVENOR, M. (1993) A Grammatical Analysis of the Greek New Testament, Rome, Editrice Pontifico Istituto Biblico; p.176). Geisler does not attempt to tackle the fact that Galilee was a Jewish province probably not subjected to Roman decrees issued from Caesar Augustus, even to one issued several years after Jesus was born (GEISLER, N. L. (1992) When Critics Ask:, Wheaton, Illinois, Victor Books; p.385).

Luke's statement that Joseph had to travel to Bethlehem because he was descended
from the house and family of David has often been called into question, since it appears to imply that people were required to return to their ancestral home; James Dunn wrote: the idea of a census requiring individuals to move to the native town of long dead ancestors is hard to credit (James Douglas Grant Dunn, (2003) Jesus Remembered, Eerdmans; p. 344). E. P. Sanders considered it unreasonable to think that there was ever a decree that required people to travel to their ancestral homes to be registered for tax purposes, and supplied a number of arguments in support. He writes - For example, that it would require people to keep track of millions of ancestors; tens of thousands of descendants of David would all be arriving at Bethlehem, his birthplace, at the same time; and Herod, whose dynasty was unrelated to the Davidic line, would hardly have wished to call attention to royal ancestry that had a greater claim to legitimacy. He adds that it would have been the practice for the census-takers, not the taxed, to travel, and that Joseph, resident in Galilee, would not have been covered by a census in Judaea, (E. P. Sanders, (1993), The Historical Figure of Jesus, Penguin, p86; see also Bart Ehrman, A Brief Introduction to the New Testament, p103).


In The Birth of the Messiah (1977), a detailed study of the infancy narratives of Jesus, the American scholar Raymond E. Brown concluded of Luke’s birth account that this information is dubious on almost every score, despite the elaborate attempts by scholars to defend Lucan accuracy. (Raymond E. Brown The Birth of the Messiah: A
Commentary on the Infancy Narratives in Matthew and Luke, Anchor Bible; Updated edition (1999), page 413). W. D. Davies and E. P. Sanders ascribe this to simple error: on many points, especially about Jesus' early life, the evangelists were ignorant ... they simply did not know, and, guided by rumour, hope or supposition, did the best they could; (W.D Davies and E. P. Sanders, Jesus from the Jewish point of view, The Cambridge History of Judaism, ed. William Horbury, vol 3: the Early Roman Period, 1984, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Census_of_Quirinius#cite_note-73, footnote 6.

Fergus Millar, on the other hand, suggests that Luke's narrative was a construct designed to connect Jesus with the house of David. Only Matthew and Luke take the story back to the birth of Jesus, and do so in wholly different and incompatible ways. . . Both birth narratives are constructs, one historically plausible [i.e. Matthew], the other wholly impossible [i.e. Luke], and both are designed to reach back to the infancy of Jesus, and to assert his connection to the house of David... and his birth in Bethlehem, Millar, Fergus (1990). Reflections on the trials of Jesus, A Tribute to Geza Vermes: Essays on Jewish and Christian Literature and History (JSOT Suppl. 100) [eds. P.R. Davies and R.T. White]. Sheffield: JSOT Press. pp. 355–81. repr. in Millar, Fergus (2006). The Greek World, the Jews, and the East, Rome, the Greek World and the East (University of North Carolina Press) 3: 140–163.

So-called Messianic predictions, such as Isaiah 49:8, 52:13-53:12, Hosea 11:1 and Jeremiah 31 are not regarded as such in mainstream Judaism and are quite marginal in Jewish reading, (BARTON, J. (1988) People of the Book, London, SPCK; p.14). The prophecy of a forthcoming Messiah in Micah and in Jewish expectations was for a warrior Messiah who would free Jews from Roman oppression and bring about the Kingdom of God. Since Jesus fulfilled none of their expectations in his lifetime, and even associated and ate with sinners and gentiles, the Jews remain expectant of a Messiah and the Christians talked of a second coming when the more militant events would come about.

Baptism was a Jewish rite for the forgiveness of sins, Baptism meaning 'Immersion or dipping', and it was this Jewish Baptism that many scholars think was offered by John the Baptist for the forgiveness of sins for Jews in preparation for the coming of an expected Jewish Messiah (Matthew 3:3, 17, 21). Jesus, who was a full Jew, underwent this baptism but the disciples apparently did not. The alleged descent of the heavenly voice announcing that ‘Jesus was God’s beloved son’ (Matt.3:17, Luke 3:22, Mark 1:11) was probably an invention by the Gospel writers to Christianise the procedure.
The Person and the Nature of Jesus

The historical Jesus would clearly seem, from the Synoptic Gospels, to have been a human creature who came into existence at a certain time and who was limited to one place at a time, thus not being omnipresent. This clearly conflicts with the description of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel as having been a divine creature originating from heaven (Hick, J. (2001). Dialogues in the Philosophy of Religion, New York, Palgrave, p.137). This contradiction is another severe blow to inerrancy. Philippians 2:7-8 clearly states that Jesus adopted human form – *But emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death – even death on a cross.* In other words Jesus was human and not God, as the attributes below clearly support.

The Council of Chalcedon (451 A.D.) asserted that Jesus had *two natures, divine and human, which existed without confusion, change, division or separation. The distinction of these natures was in no way annulled by the union, but rather the characteristics of each nature being preserved and coming together to form one person.* (CHADWICK, H. (1967), The Early Church, London, Penguin Books Ltd, pp. 205-211). They maintained that Jesus had all the divine and all the human attributes but the council did not say how this was possible since they contradict and exclude each other. Friedrich Schleiermacher had an interesting view that each of us has a “God consciousness” and regarding Jesus Christ – *Jesus was not God incarnate but a man who was so close to God, so utterly dependent upon him, that his God consciousness was perfect.* (The Christian Faith, Edinburgh, T. & T. Clark, 1960 p.194). Albrecht Ritschl had another view – *To talk about Christ having two natures or being of one substance with the Father and the Spirit in Trinity does not really tell us anything true or factual about Jesus, but is a reflection of what he means to us.* (Rischl, Albrecht, (1900) Justification and Reconciliation, Edinburgh, T. & T. Clark).

Was Jesus Human or Divine?

It was in Antioch, the second largest city of the region after Alexandria, that the ‘Followers of the Way’ were first called Christians according to Acts 11:26. This title Christ –ians, meaning partisans of Christ, may well have been a derogatory term for those still adhering to the memory of the so-called Messiah who had been crucified as a political criminal some time before – some Messiah he was, they would have said!
Certainly the cross was also a symbol of derision by implication to the death Jesus had undergone. The early Christians did not therefore use the cross for their emblem but the fish, until about 300 AD., after Constantine’s mother had allegedly found part of the original cross in Jerusalem.

The historical record is stark and to the point excluding all biographic, supernatural and superstitious material and telling only of a man Jesus, born in Nazareth, who was crucified for treasonable actions against the Roman administration. The Roman historian Tacitus (56-117 AD) makes reference to Christ in connection with the burning of Rome in 64 AD. - *Nero fastened the guilt and inflicted the most exquisite tortures on a class hated for their abominations, called Christians by the populace. Christus, from whom the name had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilatus, and a most mischievous superstition, thus checked for the moment, again broke out not only in Judæa, the first source of the evil, but even in Rome, (Annals (written ca. 116 AD), book 15, chapter 44.)* The Jew turned Roman historian Flavius Josephus (37-100 AD) was a bit more forthcoming, mentioning Jesus’ death and resurrection, his wonderful works and his following by Jews and Gentiles as a tribe of Christians, so named from him, not extinct at this day (The Works of Josephus, The Antiquities of the Jews (1987), Hendrickson Publishers, 18:3:1, p.480).

Knowing that no records existed, the first of these gospels, Mark, thought to have been written 65-70 AD, does not mention Jesus’ birth but introduces him as an adult. Matthew has Jesus born in a house in Bethlehem which most scholars take to mean that the Holy Family lived in Bethlehem at the time of Jesus birth. Luke has the family living in Nazareth and travelling down to Bethlehem for a census thus allowing Jesus’ birth to occur in the city of David, namely Bethlehem, in a manger there. Both these last two accounts relate that Jesus’ mother, Mary, was a virgin at the time of the birth and that the conception was brought about by the Holy Spirit – *she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit* (Matthew 1:18b). *The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will over shadow you* (Luke 1:35).

What do the Gospel writers say of their own accounts of Jesus’ Ministry? What did the people make of Jesus at the time? Notice that none of them except Peter seemed to recognise that Jesus was something quite new; they all connected him with the famed prophets of old. There had been a plethora of wonder workers, healers, false
messiahs and holy men around in those days and so Jesus was not unique in that respect. This is in contrast to Paul who recognised Jesus as a new representative of God over and above the Old Testament tradition of which Paul took scant notice. Call to mind Marcion (c.140 AD) who thought the God of the Old Testament to be a different God to that of the New.

The Bible for the early Christians was the Hebrew Bible, which had been translated into Greek under the Emperor Ptolemy in 250 BCE and called the Septuagint. The next Canonical writings to appear were the letters of Paul, to the individual recipient churches from about 50 AD until a complete Codex was available to others by about 90 AD. The Gospels began appearing from 65-70 AD or so and were all anonymous for the first 100 years. The early writings did not mention the grave stories, such as the empty tomb or the resurrection appearances, and it does seem that the accounts were added to and embellished as time went on; the later the account the more stories were attached to the event. These later events express the faith of the early church but do not go back to Jesus; the contexts were gradually lost.

According to the Gospel accounts what behaviour did Jesus display that might help to decide whether he was human or divine? Let us consider what might be the attributes of a divine being as opposed to a human being. Looking at these - which set of attributes seems to fit the Jesus of the Gospels best?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Miraculous Events</th>
<th>Human Events</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jesus' asexual conception</td>
<td>Anger at his disciples failures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walking on water</td>
<td>Anger at the Pharisees for hypocrisy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turning water into wine</td>
<td>Weeping on being told of Lasarus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calming storms</td>
<td>Despair in the garden of Gethsemane</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Healing miracles</td>
<td>Jesus disavows acknowledgment as Messiah.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raising Lazarus from the dead</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Appearances after death and burial</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Claiming to be the Messiah)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The “I am” statements in John.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Does the Bible itself provide any explanatory help? - Hebrews 2:17 “made like his brothers in every way”. Phillipians 2:5-8 – “He emptied himself taking the form of a slave”, etc. These would seem to support the human attributes as would be necessary if Jesus was to be accepted without sensation or distraction from his messages and from the free will aspect.

In the 4th century a Presbyter by the name of Arius made the disturbing statement that if Jesus was indeed the Son of God then there must have been a time when the son ‘was not’. In other words to be the Son, Christ had to be born of the father and therefore the father must have been there on his own first of all. This statement caused a furore and split the theological world into two warring camps. There is no time here to go into the insults and atrocities which were levied and committed by both sides but suffice it to say that so serious was the schism that a General Council of all Christian Bishops was called and in 325 AD it convened at Nicea.

It has not proved possible, after some 15 centuries of intermittent effort, to give any clear meaning to the idea that Jesus had two complete natures. In order to be genuinely and fully human, Jesus must have had all the attributes that are definitive of humanity and similarly in order to be God he must also have had all the attributes that are definitive of deity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attributes of humanity:</th>
<th>Attributes of a God</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Being or having a human body</td>
<td>Being a spirit without a body</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being at a specific location</td>
<td>Being Omnipresent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being a creature and not a creator</td>
<td>Being the Creator of all things</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being limited in power</td>
<td>Being omnipotent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being limited in knowledge</td>
<td>Being omniscient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having finite moral qualities</td>
<td>Having unlimited morality.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Whilst the previous list of attributes was somewhat ambivalent the above list seems more indicative of the human Jesus. Consider then the question of omniscience, do we really want to say that the historical Jesus had the infinite knowledge that God has and only pretended ignorance, as in Matt. 24:36 – *But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the sun, but the Father only?* Even if we do want to say this, is it really possible for infinite knowledge to be housed in a finite human brain? Considering omnipotence do we again want to claim that Jesus
pretended not to be as in Mk 6:5 – *And he could to no mighty work there, except that he laid his hands on a few sick people and healed them.* The kenotic theory as suggested in Philippians 2: 5-11 was criticised because by *emptying himself* Jesus would have been a God without the attributes of God; a finite being cannot have infinite attributes and we would have to say that Jesus embodied as much of the infinite divine moral qualities as could be expressed in a finite human life rather than – *in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily* (Col. 2:9). However Jesus being God incarnate can be taken metaphorically to signify that Jesus was so open to divine inspiration, so responsive to the divine spirit and so obedient to God’s will that God was able to act on earth in and through him (ibid; 140) (cf. Schleiermacher and his idea of ‘God consciousness’).

**The Sayings of Jesus**

Although the standard platform on the nature of Jesus in Conservative Evangelical circles is that Jesus is tantamount to God on earth, like many fundamentalist insistences this is coming under fire even from evangelical ranks. Kenton Sparks has written - *Though Jesus was indeed sinless, he was also human and finite. He would have erred in the usual way that other people err because of their finite perspectives. He misremembered this event or that, and mistook this person for someone else, and thought - like everyone else - that the sun was literally rising. To err in these ways simply goes with the human territory. These errors are not sins, nor even black marks against our humanity,* (Sparks, K. L. (2008). *God’s Word in Human Words: An evangelical appropriation of critical biblical scholarship.* Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, pp. 252-253.) This view of Jesus as primarily human may be backed up by the Biblical extracts already mentioned –

Philippians 2:7-8 – *But emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness,* Hebrews 2:17 - *made like his brothers in every way.*

It was standard practice in the ancient world to create speeches for famous or revered figures of the past according to what the author knew of their beliefs and style. In the case of many speeches in John’s Gospel, the writer put words into the mouth of Jesus expressing the theology that had developed in the author’s part of the expanding church. The discourses attributed to Jesus in the fourth Gospel are seen today by most contemporary scholarship as examples of this practice (Hick, J. (2001). *Dialogues in the Philosophy of Religion.* New York, Palgrave; p. 135).
A good example of words probably inserted by an author purporting to come from Jesus himself is to be found in Luke’s Gospel, 24:27 – *Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures.* Luke was not a disciple or an apostle and did not travel with Jesus on his mission journeys. The story of the two disciples on the way to Emmaus is only found in Luke’s Gospel and may well be an insertion of the author’s invention. If true it certainly implies that Jesus believed there to be several references to him in the Old Testament whereas the Jewish writings themselves, and present scholarly consensus, do not acknowledge such references as being to a Messiah - *So-called Messianic predictions, such as Isaiah 52:13-53:12 and Jeremiah 31, are not regarded as such in mainstream Judaism and are quite marginal in Jewish reading,* (p.14). *Christian apologetic is not a matter of showing that Jesus fulfils prophecies, but of finding prophecies for Jesus to fulfill,* (p.15). *Of the Old Testament A. von Harnack in his Marcion says, to continue to keep it as a canonical document after the nineteenth century is the consequence of religious and ecclesiastical paralysis,* (p.11) (MCGOWAN, S.B. & MCGOWAN, A.T.B., Apollos branch of Inter-Varsity Press, 2007,).

Evangelical author Peter Enns explains this by saying – *Jesus is not saying that there are some interesting Old Testament prophecies that speak of him … Rather he is saying that all Scriptures speak of him in the sense that he is the climax of Israel’s story. The Old Testament as a whole is about him, not a subliminal prophecy or a couple of lines tucked away in a minor prophet rather, Christ – who he is and what he did – is where the Old Testament is leading all along* (ENNS, P. (2005) , *Inspiration and Incarnation: Evangelicals and the Problem of the Old Testament*, Grand Rapids, Baker, p.120). This overarching explanation is somewhat contradicted by the words – *he interpreted to them the things about himself* – which seem to indicate that he picked out passages which he alleged referred to him specifically.

The following statements allegedly by Jesus –

* I and the Father are one (John 10:30)  
* He who has seen me has seen the Father (John 14:9)  
* I am the Way, and the truth and the life; no one comes to the Father, but by me (John 14:6).  
* I who speak to you am he (the Messiah) (John 4:26) -

are cited by Fundamentalists as proof that Jesus knew himself to be God. The Liberals see them as words put into his mouth some 60 or 70 years later by a Christian writer
expressing the theology that had developed in his part of the expanding church (HICK, J. (2001) Dialogues in the Philosophy of Religion, New York, Palgrave, p.135). Whilst some conservative evangelicals maintain that these statements imply that Jesus himself claimed deity, Hick quotes some conservative New Testament scholars who do not -

C.F.D. Moule wrote – Any case for a ‘high’ Christology that depended on the authenticity of the alleged claims of Jesus about himself, especially in the Fourth Gospel, would indeed be precarious

The Late Archbishop of Canterbury, Michael Ramsay wrote Jesus did not claim deity for himself, and, The Title Son of God need not of itself be of high significance, for in Jewish circles it might mean no more than the Messiah or indeed the whole Israelite nation, and in popular Hellenism there were many sons of god, meaning inspired holy men.

Professor James Dunn concludes there was no real evidence in the earliest Jesus tradition of what could fairly be called a consciousness of divinity.

Canon Brian Hebblethwaite acknowledges that it is no longer possible to defend the divinity of Jesus by referring to the claims of Jesus.

Professor David Brown writes that there is good evidence to suggest that Jesus himself never saw himself as a suitable object of worship. It now seems clear that Jesus did not claim to be God and even though he said that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins (Mark 2:10), this does no more than suggest that an intermediary, like a ‘Son of Man’, is acting as priests and ministers do today.

The Gospels were written 30 to 40 years after Jesus’ death by people who were not, according to the Titles, themselves present at the events they describe. Whilst Jesus had been regarded as a spirit-filled prophet and healer by his contemporaries (Acts 2:22) and an eschatological prophet by himself, in the decades up to the writing of the Gospels the communal memory had elevated him to divine status. In the ancient world in the much looser concept and language of divinity, many human beings like great philosophers and religious figures were accorded the title of ‘Son of God’ and even Israel (Hosea 11:1), Angels (Job 38:7) and Kings (2 Sam.7:14, Psalm 2:7) were so named. This was clearly intended as a metaphor, as the title could have been when appended to a great charismatic preacher like Jesus, but as he was gradually deified in the minds of Christians the title Son of God, the Second Person of the Divine Trinity, became literal.

So when Jesus says Offer the sacrifices Moses commanded (Mark 7:10), this is alleged to prove that Moses actually wrote the books containing the Law of Moses (see also Luke 20:37) and when he refers to Jonah (Matthew 12:39), this is said to prove the contents of the book of Jonah are literal history. Does Jesus’ statement, Offer the sacrifices Moses commanded (Mark 7:10) really prove that Moses actually wrote the books containing the Law of Moses? I suggest that this is so only if one is already a firm Inerrantist, otherwise all it shows is that Jesus is reported as making a statement which would indicate that he believed the Old Testament to be literal history, a further indication that Jesus was human. This in turn leads to the corollary - either the reporting of Jesus’ statement is inaccurate or Jesus was misinformed about the provenance of the Old Testament according to modern scholarship. In either case Inerrancy is disproved.

It is quite legitimate to question the historicity of the synoptic quotations assigned to Jesus because Luke and Mark were not apostles and therefore not eye witnesses and the alleged words of Jesus in the Gospels were mostly not in the Aramaic language that Jesus spoke. This, taken alongside the obvious paraphrasing, grouping and copying which occurred in the Gospels, must cast some doubt on quotations made thirty or more years later. A good example of this principle is the urge to secrecy in Mark’s Gospel about Jesus’ true identity - See that you say nothing to anyone (Mk.1:44), And he strictly ordered them not to make him known (Mark 3:12) etc. as opposed to the free declarations in John’s Gospel - Jesus said to her ‘I who speak to you am he (the Messiah)’(the italics in brackets are mine) (John 4:26), For I have come down from heaven (John 6:38a), You are from below, I am from above; you are of this world, I am not of this world (John 8:23) etc. Evangelicals when their backs are against the wall will say that - “of course the original documents were infallible and any discrepancies are the result of individual copying errors or alterations”. Unfortunately for this rather lame explanation the whole of Mark’s gospel advocates keeping Jesus true identity secret until his crucifixion (the Messianic Secret) and the whole of John’s Gospel advocates broadcasting the good news of Jesus' divine origins, not just individual errors. Throw in for good measure the fact that Mark, and the other Synoptics, tell of a one year ministry of Jesus with one visit to Jerusalem whereas John has a three year ministry with three annual visits to Jerusalem.
In his teaching Jesus mentioned Psalm 110 as if it were composed by David (Mark 12:35), the journey of Jonah in the belly of a fish as if it had really taken place (Matthew 12:40) and the Old Testament as if it contained multiple references to him as Messiah (Luke 24:27). If these things are not true then the credibility of anything that Jesus is alleged to have said is questionable; he has become untrustworthy. In any event these surely prove beyond all doubt that the biblical texts are not without error.

Throughout this thesis I have quoted, and will quote, multiple instances where there are difficulties in the biblical texts. Whilst each instance can be argued and attempted to be explained away by the inerrantists, not only are some of these so-called explanations fatuous but the accumulated weight of evidence against inerrancy, represented by these difficulties, is so telling as to be conclusive in the opinions of many reputable biblical scholars, such as John Barton - *There are irreconcilable contradictions in Scripture that no amount of careful harmonizing can gainsay* (Barton, John (1988) *People of the Book? The Authority of the Bible in Christianity*, London: SPCK, p.5). It is a main objective of this Thesis to gather together so many of the salient objections to Inerrancy so that collectively they form compelling evidence.

As far as is known Jesus never wrote anything (except John 8:6b) and the earliest written quotations in the Bible were penned thirty- plus years later by authors who did not know first hand of the contexts and so were placed in an artificial framework - all reasons for skepticism as to their accuracy. That framework from Mark’s gospel is said by some scholars to have been based on liturgical usage of the writings. The Gospel of Thomas contained approximately fifty alleged sayings of Jesus without any context; about half of these are to be found in the four canonical gospels. With the possible exception of the Passion Narratives the contexts of the sayings were not recorded along with the sayings themselves.

Jesus is alleged in the biblical text to have accepted several viewpoints that we do not share today -

- The assumption that deaf-muteness results from the tying of the tongue by Satan or Demons (Matt.9:32, 33, 12:22, Luke 11:14)
- Infirmitiy was caused by a binding by Satan (Luke 13:11,18)
- The assumption that David wrote the Psalms (Mark 12:36, Luke 20:42, Matthew 22:43)
- Other medical complaints all caused by the indwelling of a ‘demon’ (Mark 9:18).
As modern science and scholarship would not accept most of these viewpoints today we are faced then with saying either –

- Jesus got things wrong at times and cannot therefore be the omniscient Son of God. According to Mark 13:32 Jesus was completely in the dark about the day and the hour when heaven would pass away; another example of limits to Jesus’ knowledge, or
- Jesus did not say any of these things attributed to him and the text is in gross error - these errors can be errors of reporting or of outright invention by the authors.

Denis Lamoureux offered an alternative amelioration for these difficulties when he was responding to Montgomery’s suggestions that - Spiritual facts (“messages of faith”) cannot be placed in airtight compartments so as to separate them from secular facts (scientific and historical information). (PSCF 62, no. 4 [2010]: 302–3). He then asks, “If the scientific and historical material in the Bible ….. which can in principle be checked for accuracy ….. is not reliable, why should anyone accept the spiritual/faith material set forth there ….. which cannot be checked?” Lamoureux’s response was – the Lord Jesus himself often accommodated to his audience by employing the science-of-day. For his generation the mustard seed was the smallest of all seeds (Mark 4:30–32), seeds die before germinating (John 12:23–24), stars are so small that they can all fall to earth (Matt. 24:29–30), Sheba is at the ends of the earth (Matt. 12:42), and Jesus spent three days and nights in the heart of the earth [i.e, the underworld] (Matt. 12:40). (Lamoureux, Denis O.. Source: Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith, 62 no 2 Je 2010, p 133-138. Publication Type: Article).

It seems from the Biblical texts that Jesus predicted and expected the final judgment to take place within the lifetime of his generation. The texts clearly state there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God or before they see the son of man coming in his kingdom. Jesus has been described by some, such as in Loftus’ Failed Apocalyptic Prophet, as incorrect in that these final events did not occur (Mark 8:34-9:1, Ch.13, Matt.16:24-28, 24:1-44 and Luke 9:23-27, 21:5-36). Others have argued that the coming of the kingdom of God refers to a series of events other than the end times, such as the miracles and exorcisms of Jesus, the transfiguration, the resurrection of Jesus and the outpouring of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost, (STARK, T. (2011) The Human Faces of God, Eugene, Oregon, Wipf and Stock Publishers p.171). However, these events had either already occurred, or took place within a very few days, but in any case were not accompanied with the angelic fanfare described elsewhere (Matt.16:27).
According to the statements above you cannot have it both ways - either Jesus was sometimes wrong and therefore not the Son of God, or the Biblical Text is wrong and someone else wrote these sayings or misquoted them. Evangelicals want it all ways that Jesus did say these things and that he was never in error, that the text is inerrant but you can see that their position is once again completely unsustainable, SPONG, J. S. (1991) *Rescuing the Bible from Fundamentalism*, San Francisco, HarperCollins Publishers, p. 22-23). Unless all these implications are rethought in ways consistent with our understanding of reality, then, in the opinions of some, regarding the evangelical insistence on Inerrancy, *the Christian religion will go the way of Mount Olympus religion*. (ibid, 31).

**The Writings of Paul**

More than a quarter of the writings of the New Testament are attributed to Paul, the most effective missionary to the Gentiles in the early church and sometimes called the “second founder” of Christianity. Thirteen letters are seemingly ascribed to Paul but modern scholarship relies on only seven as genuine Pauline sources - Romans, 1 & 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, 1 Thessalonians and Philemon (Achtemeier et al.Harper & Row,(1985), *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, London, Geoffrey Chapman; p.757). There are a further three letters referred to as Deutero-Pauline which are of doubtful authenticity - 2 Thessalonians, Colossians and Ephesians and three more written under a false name but ascribed to Paul by the author and so referred to as Pseudonymous writings - 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus. These are probably best classified as letters and only Romans comes close to being an epistle (i.e. a letter-form treatise or essay intended to be instructive or polemic in the discussion of some theme and probably intended for publicity). Whether letter or epistle these writings are best thought of as ‘The Word of Paul’ rather than ‘The Word of God’. Paul wrote as a means of spreading his understanding of the Christian Gospel and applying it to the concrete problems that arose in areas which he could not visit at the time. Incidentally Paul did not mention anything about Jesus’ alleged virgin birth nor much in the way of quasi-historical/ biographical material but he did append the title Christ (Messiah or Anointed One) to Jesus so frequently that it became like a second name.

With practices and customs like circumcision, strict food regulations, religious laws and Sabbath observances the Jews had survived as a separate ethnic group bound together by the Torah. Those letters which, whilst titled to Paul but are not thought by the scholars to have been written by him, are so judged because –
• The vocabulary, thought forms and conclusions are not Pauline
• They reflect a structure in the Christian church which did not exist in Paul’s time
• They deal with issues not prevalent in Paul’s time
• They appear to have been written by Paul’s disciples a generation or so after his death in c.62.

Even so the second letter to the Corinthians is regarded as a composite of 4 or 5 letters and there is some doubt about Romans chapter 16 and parts of Colossians. Paul is not known to have had any direct contact with Jesus but probably learned a lot from Peter, James, John (Gal.2:9), Luke and Mark (Col.4:10,14, Phil.23). The earliest NT writings were the uncontested letters of Paul - Romans, 1-2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, 1 Thessalonians and Philemon. These were all responses to particular problems and situations in the mid first century churches of Asia Minor, Greece and Italy but viewed as having universal value. The Deutero-Pauline letters were all imitations of Paul’s style and language and these, together with the genuine 7, were gathered together in a corpus of Pauline texts by the end of the first century. Prior to that time the Christians’ bible had been a translation of the Hebrew Bible called the Septuagint (so named because 70 scholars were allegedly involved in the translation). Paul is the hero of Luke’s second volume, the Acts of the Apostles, appearing first in 7:58 and continuing to the end at 28:30. However, although Acts was probably written around 85 A.D., there is no mention of Paul’s letters but there are dramatic tales of his various journeys and appearances before Roman governors, these in turn not mentioned by Paul himself. These facts, together with discrepancies in accounts of mutual content such as the apostolic counsel in Acts 15 versus that in Galatians 2 and the length of time spent in Ephesus, cast doubts on the veracity of the accounts. Whatever the facts may be concerning the detailed authorship of the various portions of the alleged Pauline writings, the variation in style, theology and argument mediates against the writings being directly God-inspired or Inerrant.

Some anomalies from the tomb accounts in the Gospels:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EVENT</th>
<th>PAUL</th>
<th>MARK</th>
<th>MATTHEW</th>
<th>LUKE</th>
<th>JOHN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>'Who went to the tomb on the first day at dawn?</td>
<td>Said nothing</td>
<td>Mary Mag., Mary mother of James, Salome</td>
<td>Mary Mag. And the other Mary</td>
<td>Mary Mag., Mary mother of James, Joanna and others</td>
<td>Mary Magdalene alone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What was found at the tomb?</td>
<td>No comment</td>
<td>A young man in white</td>
<td>An angel of the Lord in an earthquake</td>
<td>2 men in dazzling apparel</td>
<td>no messenger on first visit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Did the women see the risen lord</td>
<td>no hint of the location of appearances</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location of Resurrection appearances</td>
<td>No hint</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>in Galilee</td>
<td>In Jerusalem</td>
<td>Jerusalem and Galilee</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When it comes to passages like Mark 16:9-20 where no one is certain whether it was part of the original autograph or not, how can it count as inspired Holy Scripture? The processes of passing on an oral tradition, converting it to a written medium, sometimes translating it into another language, producing a final text, copying and preserving that text and adding exegetical comments at any of these stages can run into one another and form one total complex of tradition, making verbal inspiration decisions irrelevant. The thing that stretches the doctrine of verbal inerrancy to breaking point is the notion of the inclusion of the Hebrew Vowel Points. As all scholars know the vowel points were not added to written Hebrew by the Massoretes until after 500 AD, whereas the fundamentalists maintain that the Pentateuch was written by Moses in c.1200 BCE. This makes nonsense of connecting inerrancy with the original autographs or tying inspiration with the actual writing of the books as the decisions of the final form of the text were made by the later Massoretes (BARR, J., The Westminster Press, 1978 ; p. 285, 297f).

Anomalies and contradictions such as these do not bother the occasional church goer who only hears one version from one gospel at any one time, or the same meld each
year, and so is not troubled by disagreements but it is a different matter for those who insist on Inerrancy.

The Synoptic Copying

The fact that cross-copying has occurred between the Gospel writers has been established earlier. The fact that only 24 of Mark’s 660 verses are not to be found in any of the Gospels, and that many of those copied are identical in the Greek, shows unequivocally that copying, and copying with some alterations at times, did occur. Approximately half of the sayings in the Gospel of Thomas are to be found in the canonical Gospels. Whether those words were Thomas’s and whether they were truly reported has been discussed above.

Identical quotations from the texts of the Old Testament (Septuagint) may also be said by some to be simultaneous quotations of God’s Word, but the function of cross-copying enters a different class when we consider descriptions and details of events and matters not related to sacred sayings. These copyings must have been made from identical descriptions made by another human author and were not a separate identical inspiration from God. The wordings again are notably identical or at least similar with changes being largely a matter of preference of the copier. This illustrates that the inspired Gospel writers did not consider the writings of other inspired writers to be sacred and inviolate or the actual words of God as they felt free to alter them to suit their own agendas.

The Synopsis of the Four Gospels, produced in English as - ALAND, K. (1982) Synopsis of the Four Gospels, United Bible Societies, and in Greek as - ORCHARD, J. B. (1983) A Synopsis of the Four Gospels, Edinburgh, T. & T. Clark Limited, are priceless as sources of this information and they show that many descriptions, as well as quotations, are to be found in multiple Gospels, for example here are just a few –

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Matthew</th>
<th>Luke</th>
<th>Mark</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Baptism of Jesus</td>
<td>3:16-17</td>
<td>3:21-22</td>
<td>1:9-11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James and John follow Jesus</td>
<td>4:18-22</td>
<td>5:1-11</td>
<td>1:16-20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temple cleansing</td>
<td>21:12-13</td>
<td>19:45-46</td>
<td>11:15-17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Event</td>
<td>Luke</td>
<td>Matthew</td>
<td>Mark</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where John's Baptism from?</td>
<td>21:25-27</td>
<td>20:5-8</td>
<td>11:31-33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jesus' knowledge</td>
<td>13:53-58</td>
<td>4:22-24</td>
<td>6:1-6a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Paralytic Rises</td>
<td>9:4-7</td>
<td>5:22-25</td>
<td>2:8-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Call of Matthew (Levi)</td>
<td>9:9-13</td>
<td>5:27-32</td>
<td>2:13-17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The grain from the grainfields</td>
<td>12:1-4</td>
<td>6:1-4</td>
<td>2:23-26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The cleansing of the Leper</td>
<td>8:2-4</td>
<td>5:12-14</td>
<td>1:40-44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Discussion of Interpretations:**

The Gospels were certainly not free of error and much cross-copying occurred as the Synoptic Problem section made clear. There are also many errors which are not just ‘typos’ or errors in copying, such as -

- Did the cleansing of the temple occur at the beginning of Jesus’ ministry as in John (2:13-17) or in the last week of his life as in Matthew (12:12-13) and Mark (11:15-19)?
- Did the miraculous catching of the fish occur in the Galilean phase of Jesus; Ministry as in Luke (5:4-7) or was it a post-resurrection event as in John (21:4-8)?
- Did Jesus’ ministry last 1 year as the Synoptics suggest or 3 years according to John?
- Was the last supper a Passover Meal as Matthew (26:17f), Mark (14:12f) and Luke (22:17f) or a preparation for the Passover as in the Fourth Gospel (13:1-9, 12-16)?

Most evangelicals in the West seem to believe that Christ died for everyone but people have to take the decision to accept him; God will not save automatically but only if the gospel is preached and then is accepted. The biblical passages about election and pre-destination then are not to be taken literally, for example - *he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. He destined us in love to be his sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will* (Ephesians 1:4-5) is totally ignored and constitutes another case where theological difficulties mean that the Bible is not to be taken literally.

Some of the sayings of Jesus are either wrong or wrongly quoted - in either case those passages are not inerrant, e.g.
• Jesus implied that there were many items in the Old Testament which referred to him (Luke 24:27).

• In his teaching Jesus mentioned psalm 110 as if it were composed by David (Mark 12:35) and the journey of Jonah in the belly of a fish as if it had really taken place (Matthew 12:40).

• It's like a mustard seed, the smallest of all seeds (Matt.13:31, Mark 4:31) - the mustard seed is not, in fact, the smallest of all seeds.

• whoever blasphemes against the holy spirit will not be forgiven, either on earth or in heaven, this would seem to contradict the Christian policy of forgiveness.

• Jesus said, A person cannot mount two horses or bend two bows - The disciples went and did as Jesus had directed them; they brought the donkey and the colt, and put their cloaks on them, and he sat on them (Matt. 21:6-7).

If these things are not true then the credibility of anything that Jesus is alleged to have said could be questionable; he has become untrustworthy, or the reporting of his sayings has. In any event these surely prove beyond all doubt yet again that the biblical texts are not without error (BARR, J., The Westminster Press, 1978 . p.40ff).

Geisler also has an answer for the mustard seed dilemma when he says - Jesus was not referring to all the seeds in the world but only those that a Palestinian farmer sowed in his field (GEISLER, N. L. (1992) When Critics Ask:, Wheaton, Illinois, Victor Books; p.345). Regarding the two animals mentioned in Matthew 21:7 Geisler states categorically that the pronoun αυτων refers to the garments and not to the animals. Daniel J. Harrington says - it is not clear whether “them” refers to the garments or to the animals, though ultimately both are meant (HARRINGTON, D. J. (1991) The Gospel of Matthew, Collegeville, Minnesota, The Liturgical Press; p.293). As Greek scholars will know the genitive plural is the same in all genders. Of the matter of the journey of Jonah in the belly of a fish, which Jesus refers to as if it had really taken place (Matthew 12:40), the evangelical answer, as written by Normal L. Geisler, is - As far as Jesus was concerned, the historical fact of his own death, burial and resurrection was on the same historical ground as Jonah in the belly of the fish. To reject one was to cast doubt on the other . Likewise, if they believed one they should believe the other ........ Because of the testimony of Jesus, we can be sure that Jonah records literal history. (GEISLER, N. L. (1992) When Critics Ask:, Wheaton, Illinois, Victor Books; p.307-8). On this topic Carnell said - Jesus recognized the authority of the Old Testament and to deny its accuracy is to destroy the credibility of Jesus in all regards
(E.J. CARNELL, (1959) The Case for Orthodox Theology, Philadelphia, The Westminster Press. Much is made in some groups of the alleged references in the Old Testament to the forthcoming Anointed One. Even unbiased reading of the biblical texts clearly places most of these in the category of local events and references - So-called Messianic predictions, such as Isaiah 52:13-53:12 and Jeremiah 31, are not regarded as such in mainstream Judaism and are quite marginal in Jewish reading, p.14. (BARTON, J. (1988), People of the Book, London, SPCK; p.15).

According to John Perry the heart of the Inerrancy disagreement is the accuracy of the Bible’s account of items not integral to salvation and how the Bible reports scientific, geological and similar information as well as whether it contains any internal inconsistencies about historical events. He also states, as mentioned earlier, in the late 1970s and early 1980s the controversy among evangelical theologians about biblical inerrancy reached its height. However, the relative silence among these theologians since that time should not suggest the controversy was ever resolved. The controversy quickly became an impasse and the impasse quickly became unspoken. (PERRY, J. Quodlibet, Journal 3, 2001.. p. 2).
CHAPTER 15

THE LIMITATIONS OF THE DOCTRINE OF INERRANCY

We have seen many examples in previous chapters of anomalies and inaccuracies in the biblical texts and so now may be the time to decide where we stand in this debate regarding the inerrancy or otherwise of the Bible. It is now appropriate to draw definite conclusions from the evidence gathered and interpreted and this is what I shall do in this chapter.

To contend that the Bible is inerrant, i.e. contains no errors at all, is, in view of the evidence already provided in this thesis, manifestly incorrect, and ignores the fact that the Bible was originally written, and later edited, by human authors without recourse to accurate records for historical, scientific or geographical guidance. It also ignores the fact that a much freer literary license was available then as has been detailed earlier. The statement that the church had always considered the Bible to be inerrant has also been shown to be untrue. I feel that allowance should be made in the Inerrancy discussion for those statements which, although erroneous, reflected the best knowledge available at the time. I refer, for example, to scientific errors, such as the idea that the earth was flat which prevailed for many centuries or the medical diagnoses which we now see were in error. Any attempt, supernatural or otherwise, to correct these errors and/or provide modern knowledge at the time would have caused consternation and detracted completely from the intended message.

God’s contribution in all this was in the inspiration provided in the first place to faithful men to bend themselves to the task of writing the books we now have, as Bishop Haverland explained in a previous chapter (see page 236). However inspiration per se cannot be used as a fixed criterion because Montanus and his 2 prophetesses in the 170’s AD claimed direct inspiration from the Holy Spirit Himself who “spoke actual words through them” urging puritanical and revivalist themes coupled with an imminent return of Christ (CHADWICK, H. (1967) The Early Church, London, Penguin Books Ltd; p.52). This was one of multiple claims of veracity which lead to the formation of a Christian Canon of acceptable Scripture, first fully and acceptably annotated in 367 AD. by Athanasius, Bishop of Alexandria, in an Easter encyclical letter. Let us remember that the original authors had no notion of their books being eventually combined into a
single book and read 2000 years later. The biblical books were produced in an age when few people could read and fewer still could afford to possess a codex or scroll. The books were meant to be read aloud to people and some local and religious knowledge was presumed in the hearers by the writers.

My concern in making this stand against Inerrancy is the integrity of publicly-funded Religious Education in our state schools - our object is to open young minds not to close them. Debate, and the consideration given to other points of view, is to be encouraged but the unopposed presentation of untrue statements or the exclusive teaching of beliefs not known to be true should be discouraged. Let us now look at how serious a problem exclusivism and adamant Inerrancy doctrine might be in the area of Religious Education.

A popular evangelical belief is that a real person called Noah survived an actual world-wide flood and, through his three sons, gave rise to all the races and peoples on earth, emanating from Asia. This view, strongly purported throughout an evangelical literary pillar, namely the book *The Genesis Flood*, by WHITCOMB, J. & MORRIS, H. (1980), Grand Rapids, Michigan, Baker Book House, is held by many, despite the overwhelming archaeological and geological evidence that there was no world-wide flood. There were significant local floods in the Middle East, one perhaps accounting for the formation of the Black Sea, but no world-wide deluge. When one adds to that the palaeological and anthropological evidence of the evolution of Homo sapiens over many thousands of years through many stages from the first groups in Africa to later groups having migrated to Europe, then the complete descent from Noah appears most unlikely. Homo erectus and Neanderthals may have overlapped, to be eventually overwhelmed by Homo sapiens. The valuable findings by the Leakey family in the Olduvai Gorge in Tanzania seem to locate the first humans firmly in Africa - *In 1960, Mary Leakey and son Jonathan found another, smaller form of hominid at Olduvai that they believed was different and more advanced. They called it Homo habilis (handy human) because it appeared to be the first human to use tools. The designation of these two new groups raised a great deal of controversy. Zinjanthropus has since been put by most scientists into the Australopithecine genus, which the South African finds also belong to, though in different species. Homo habilis is now widely accepted, dating back about 2 million years. The 1972 discovery by the Leakeys' son Richard of another Homo habilis (often called Turkana Boy or ER-1470), dated to 1,900,000 years ago, helped confirm this. It also supported L.S.B. Leakey's startling suggestion that the*
Homo genus did not evolve from Australopithecus, but that parallel lineages of hominids were developing at the same time

The theory that Adam and Eve were the first, instantly created, human beings whose descendants, apart from Noah's family, were totally wiped out afterwards in a massive deluge, seems to be totally disproved by these significant findings. The biblical statement that Adam's son Cain went off and found a wife elsewhere is a decided embarrassment to the 'Adam and Eve as first humans' theory (Genesis 4:16-17). Many Evangelicals completely fail to realize that, according to the Bible, Adam and Eve's whole lineage was destroyed in the so-called world-wide deluge that they insist occurred in the later time of Noah. Is it really possible that Indoctrination is strong enough and pervasive enough to sustain these beliefs despite massive scholarly denials, scientific findings and natural reason? Where and how does such profound indoctrination begin and how can it possibly be sustained given the availability of evidence to the contrary?

Even earlier than this, I have already shown that the creation stories in Genesis could not have been written as a polemic against pantheism until all Israel had accepted monotheism and that did not occur until the 50 year exile in Babylon beginning in 587/6 BCE. The genetic difficulties in proposing that the races of all colours and characteristics were descended exclusively from Noah's three sons in Asia, as Whitcomb and Morris do, are mentioned elsewhere.

In addition to the claim that the church has always viewed scripture as inerrant, which is not substantiated by the evidence as provided earlier in this thesis, the other so often repeated claim from Fundamentalists is - the Bible is authoritative, inspired and inerrant because it itself says so. This can lead on to such statements as I would rather believe Jesus than you, meaning that Jesus himself said that the Bible was without error and so it must be so, but were the sayings of Jesus reliably reported, since they were all written down much later by authors who had not accompanied Jesus? Did Jesus say that Scripture was without error? In his teaching Jesus mentioned psalm 110 as if it were composed by David (Mark 12:35), whereas it consists of two divine oracles to the Davidic King through a prophet (BROWN, R. E., FITZMYER, J. A. & MURPHY, R. E. (1993) The New Jerome Biblical Commentary, London, Geoffrey Chapman; p.545). He treats the journey of Jonah in the belly of a fish as if it had really taken place (Matthew
12:40) and other examples of false or misleading statements mentioned in the previous chapters. If these things are not true then the credibility of anything that Jesus is alleged to have said is open to question; he has perhaps become untrustworthy or, more likely, the reporting has. If the statements about Davidic authorship of Psalm 110 (Mark 12:35) and the sojourn of Jonah inside a large fish (Matthew 12:40) are not true, as modern scholars affirm, then the statements are obviously mistaken. The mistake could have been one of misquoting of all that Jesus said, it could have been a mistaken opinion of Jesus the man, or it could have been an invention of the author. Whichever of these it was, does not alter the fact that it proves the biblical text itself to be ‘in error’. There seems no doubt that some of the sayings of Jesus, were separated from their context and passed along by word of mouth for many decades and in many places, receiving some elaboration and exaggeration along the way. The difference in lengths of the early manuscripts indicates some manipulation of the texts. The fact that no two manuscripts of the same parts of the New Testament, of which around 5000 exist, are identical really makes fundamental inerrancy unsustainable in itself.

Since the first gospel account of Jesus’ ministry was not written until at least 30 years after his death (Mark in c.65 A.D.), and the author was not an apostle who accompanied Jesus, it is not beyond reason to suppose that inaccuracies in reporting occurred. Many of these inaccuracies were copied by Matthew and Luke as already explained in the Synoptic Problem section. So important is Inerrancy in formulating Fundamentalist doctrine and dogma that I have devoted much time to explaining, by historical, cultural and political backgrounds, what this blinkered adamancy is and how it came about. Inerrancy is a mindset perpetrated through the generations by already committed adherents acting as parents, professional teachers, elders, pastors or peers, i.e. from positions of psychological strength. These persons teach exclusive beliefs and actively discourage any alternate versions or evidence to the contrary, thus shielding believers from alternative views - indoctrination by any standard. I am sure that any unbiased person shown the Bible for the first time and having discrepancies such as those listed below, pointed out to them would never consider suggesting that it was inerrant:

- Much of the Synoptic Gospels’ text was cross copied and then some was adapted or corrected, thus disproving inerrancy of some of the original material, or of the copies, or of both.
- Luke and Matthew disagree about the facts of Jesus' birth. The Gospel of Luke clearly declares that ‘Quirinius was governor of Syria when Joseph and Mary
went down to Bethlehem’ and Matthew declares, of the same event, that ‘Herod was on the throne at the time’, then manifestly, since Quirinius was Governor in 6 AD and Herod died in 4 BCE both accounts contain actual errors - they are obviously mistaken and contradictory and the Bible text in those cases is not Inerrant! This situation alone proves the case against Inerrancy!

- There are multiple numerical data disagreements between Samuel/Kings and Chronicles when presenting the same material.
- The methodology of the creation of the earth and the first human family are absolutely refuted by established and proven modern scientific information.
- Many of Jesus’ sayings are either incorrect or incorrectly recorded; in either case the text is not inerrant.
- The discrepancy in size of the known early copies of the biblical texts proves absolute inerrancy on its own.

So troublesome is the upholding of the Doctrine of Inerrancy against many challenges that Norman Geisler published When Critics Ask: A Popular Handbook on Bible Difficulties in 1992. This book was a widely used tome to provide defenders of Inerrancy with what to say to some of the tricky questions inevitably fired at them. Despite it having been labeled skillful footwork and unpersuasive argument I have used some quotations from this book to illustrate Fundamentalist answers and the seeming weaknesses in their reasoning.

Many evangelical authors are coming to realize that trying to maintain Fundamentalist doctrines of Inerrancy in the face of overwhelming scientific and scholarly evidence is damaging to the ongoing credibility and existence of Evangelism. For example, to revisit some significant scholars - James Orr held a high view of Scripture but rejected Inerrancy as the most suicidal position for any defender of revelation to take because unless we can demonstrate inerrancy of the biblical record down even to its minutest details, the whole edifice of belief in revealed religion falls to the ground. (ORR, J. Duckworth, 1909,, p.197-198).

John Barton wrote - There are irreconcilable contradictions in Scripture that no amount of careful harmonizing can gainsay (Barton, John (1988) People of the Book? The Authority of the Bible in Christianity, London: SPCK, p.5)

Self-confessed evangelical, Martin Noll, wrote - Francis Bacon and Galileo Galilei, Protestant and Catholic respectively, felt that we
should avoid -

- a wooden interpretation of Scripture which had retarded a God-honouring understanding of nature.
- not using the senses, language and intellect that God had given us and setting aside the information we can acquire with them
- interpreting the Bible on scientific questions without employing a dialogue between natural and biblical observations these were all to guarantee misunderstanding of the scriptures.,


However, the prominence of Bible-only-ism, at the expense of well-articulated theology, meant that when new conditions arose, like the social changes at the end of the 19th century, the Great Depression, extreme religious pluralism, World War II and the rise of communism, there was little ground from which to reason. Habits of patient study were far less well exercised than habits of quick quotation, and proof-texting was only good so long as the culture as a whole held to general Christian values. (ibid, p.107).

Richard Hooker (1553-1600) - True it is concerning the word of God, whether it be by misconstruction of the sense or by falsification of the words, wittingly to endeavour that any thing may seem divine which is not, or any thing not seem which is, were plainly to abuse, and even to falsify divine evidence; which injury offered but unto men, is most worthily counted heinous. Which point I wish they did well observe, with whom nothing is more familiar than to plead in these causes, 'the law of God', 'the word of the Lord', who notwithstanding when they come to allege what word and what law they mean, their common ordinary practice is to quote by-speeches in some historical narration or other, and to urge them as if they were written in most exact form of law. What is to add to the law of God if this be not? When that which the word of God doth but deliver historically, we construe without any warrant as if it were legally meant, and so urge it further than we can prove it was intended; do we not add to the laws of God and make them in number seem more than they are? (quoted in BARTON, J. (1988) People of the Book, London, SPCK; p.73).

Of the Old Testament - to continue to keep it as a canonical document after the nineteenth century is the consequence of religious and ecclesiastical paralysis. (ibid; p.11).
Can we definitely say that, based on today’s knowledge, and current majority scholarly opinion about it, that the Doctrine of Inerrancy has been conclusively shown to be false? I firmly believe that - Yes we can! Here are some further examples from the biblical texts:

**Examples from the Old Testament:**

- Moses is actually a murderer and bearer of false witness (Ex.2:11f, 5:1, 9:27),
- Abraham and Isaac, were both willing to pass their wives off as their sisters so that they could be used sexually by Abimelech (Gen. 20:1-18, 26:6-11),
- The many examples of bloodthirsty tribal cruelty and violence, often encouraged or even ordered by God (e.g. Joshua 10:40-42, 11:14-16, 20) -
  - “hardening the heart of Pharaoh” so that more plagues could be brought down on the Egyptians (Ex.10:1f)
  - killing the first born in every Egyptian Household (Ex.11:4-6)
  - rejoicing in the drowning of the Egyptians in the Reed Sea (Ex.14:17-18, 26-27)
  - The Lord being a man of war (Ex.15:3)
  - The destruction of anyone sacrificing to another god
  - The killing of any prophet who speaks other than what the God approves of,
  - The ordering of wholesale destruction of life and property (Joshua 11:20f) does not represent the fair, just and loving God worshipped in the Christian churches of today.

These cannot surely be put forward as a way to behave in today’s society even though “it says so in the Bible”. Many persons during the Enlightenment and even before, e.g. Marcion, felt that the God of the Old Testament was not the God they worshipped who was portrayed in the New Testament. Certainly some of the horrors and extreme measures attributed to God were in fact statements of Jewish Law at the time or religious regulations ‘read back’ into the tradition account by the ‘P’ redactors to give them substance on which to demand obedience by those Jews wavering in their faith under the influence of ambient Babylon during the Exile. Such extremes as - *if you blaspheme God you shall be put to death* (Lev.24:16) or *everything that a menstruating woman touched was unclean* (Lev.15:19f) were obviously part of the strict and ‘over the top’ set of Laws that had grown up in Jewry over time; there were, at one time, over 600 laws applying to the Sabbath Day alone.
Reliable sources, such as the New Jerome Biblical Commentary, join others in denying Mosaic authorship for many reasons, such as:

- The recording of Moses’ death in Deuteronomy 34
- Various formulae suggesting a time after the Mosaic period - e.g. until this day (Deut. 34:6), when the Canaanites dwelt in the land (Gen. 13:7), the designation of the land East of the Jordan as “the other side” or “which is beyond the Jordan” (Gen.50:10), indicating a point of view of a resident of Palestine which Moses never entered,
- Various anachronisms, such as mention of the Philistines (Gen.26:14-18) and the land of Dan (Gen.14:14), neither of which were applicable until much later.
- Requirements of the Laws which could not be fulfilled by nomadic herd-followers but required a farmed crop.


The Israelites certainly believed that their God had ordered many severe retributions against their enemies, such as ‘dashing the heads of the children of the Edomites against the rocks’ (Ps. 137:7-9), ‘slaying every male member of Midian’ (Num.31:7,17). Even Moses was allegedly ordered to take all the chiefs of the people and hang them in the sun before the Lord, that the fierce anger of the Lord may turn away from Israel” (Num.25:4): here, as in many other cases, the instructions came as “the Lord said to … and so the recipient may have mis-heard, or imagined what God said or had even been reported incorrectly or, in extreme cases, the statement may not have had a divine origin at all but had been inserted by the author or a later editor to prove a point or to reinforce a later edict.

In summary, if the deeds of a warring, marauding, vengeful and murdering band of Hebrews, who came to think of themselves as God’s chosen ones, were in accord with the literal Word of God then most of us would feel disinclined to worship such a deity. Passages from the Bible of the type outlined above have been used to justify nationalistic wars and the persecution of certain groups, such as homosexuals and mediums, and cannot, by any reasonable person, be proclaimed as the literal and inerrant Word of God.

Once again Evangelicals will probably retreat to their repeated cry that “the original documents were inerrant”. The Bible is the original document because if not then
someone else wrote it and misquoted Moses’ words, and once again inerrancy falters. If Evangelicals are so keen on citing the original documents why do they not mention one of the most important topics of all in biblical interpretation namely the use of the word *virgin* to describe Mary’s state before the conception of Jesus? As explained earlier investigation of the original documents in the Hebrew Scriptures reveals that the introduction of the term *Virgin* came about during the translation of The Hebrew Scriptures into Greek when the Greek word *parthenos* was mis-used to translate the Hebrew word *almah*: *almah* means “young woman” and the actual Hebrew word for *virgin* is *betulah* (Spong HarperCollins Publishers 1991) p.16. Why have the Ultra-conservatives not taken notice of this fact, since they are so fond of taking refuge in original documents, even when they are not available? In addition to the completely wrong translation of the word *almah* Isaiah was actually talking to King Ahaz of Judah about a sign from God concerning the siege of Jerusalem being carried out at the time. The use of this quotation to predict a virgin birth for a child some 700 years later is highly questionable, as already pointed out.

Those who insist on biblical literalism in a professed love of the Bible and the Christian Religion are, in fact bringing the religion they allegedly love into ill repute. *Even Martin Luther, when translating the Bible into German in 1521, remarked that ‘there were some contradictions in the text’. (Spong, J. S. (1991) Rescuing the Bible from Fundamentalism, San Francisco HarperCollins Publishers; p.31)*. The Bible relates to us the way our ancestors understood and interpreted their religious world, trying to make sense out of the great mysteries of life and death; it is not a scientific or historical book. Like them we must interpret our religious world in terms of our present knowledge and culture. We seek and delve into the same things as those ancient forebears but our suppositions and explorations are vastly different in this age when even colonizing another planet is seriously muted.

The Creation Stories in Genesis 1 and 2 clearly suggest that God created man in his present recognizable Homo sapiens form and does not take into account what we now know as the evolution of man through many stages. Towards the end of man’s evolution Homo erectus evolved into Homo sapiens over a period of approximately one and a half million years. Where in this chain of events did humans really emerge and when did they possess a soul? Is the civilization of the human race as we know it merely the suppression of our animal instincts and urges to survive, reproduce and satisfy our needs for food and water? Do not these urges quickly emerge when
humans are placed in circumstances of extreme privation, such as the abandoned survivors of a plane crash? The Bible describes sin as having entered human life in the Garden of Eden and further that Christ can save us from sin and arrange forgiveness for those sins we have already committed. Are not these sins the result of the urges already referred to as part of our animal heritage and genetic makeup? Certainly a Christian way of life as portrayed by Christ himself is very hard to emulate. The traditional dating of the “Fall” into sin is at the time of the Garden of Eden story. This sudden emergence of sin requires an equally sudden creation of the human being and the traditional portrayal of Christ as being the divine rescuer from this sinful state and restoring the true believer to his or her pre-fall goodness is not really based on a reality we can accept in this day and age. To quote Bishop Spong once again - The Christian Church is living now on the basis of capital from the past; traditional patterns of thought that have not yet been challenged sufficiently in the minds of the masses. That will not long endure (SPONG, J.S., HarperCollins, 1991, p.35).

The only churches growing today are the Charismatic and Fundamentalist Protestant groups and the rigidly conservative Catholic traditions. These groups do not engage in the intellectual and important issues already mentioned but either completely ignore, or baselessly deny, all modern biblical scholarship and continue on in their blinkered and ultimately damaging way. A Baptist Minister told me just recently that the average tenancy of church membership in the “happy-clappy churches”, as some refer to them, is only 4 years. It is society’s responsibility to maintain a mainline church whose theology is based on sound modern principles for when these persons come to their senses and look for an intellectually satisfying church to belong to.

According to the Documentary Hypothesis the first writings in the Bible were not penned until c.950 BCE; who then would claim inerrancy for something passed down by word of mouth around many campfires for over 800 years? There is evidence within the archaeological findings at Mari, Ebla and Ugarit that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob may have been Canaanite holy men connected with the religious sites of Hebron, Beersheba and Bethel (ANDERSON, B. W. (1991) The Living World of the Old Testament, London, Prentice-Hall, p.34-35). The ancients did not know about the Ice Ages or Neanderthals or the age of the Dinosaurs and yet some extremists still use biblical ages of persons to calculate and insist that the world is only 6000 years old; a statement so misguided as to defy comment. Statements like this and other dogmatic insistences on Biblical Inerrancy and denial of evolution, despite overwhelming
evidence to the contrary and clear common sense, are deterring many from religious beliefs and bringing religion as a whole into disrepute. In many regions these beliefs can be freely taught in our schools under the umbrella of Religious Education and in institutions funded by the Australian Taxpayers.

Many Christians can accept that the Old Testament is not the irrevocable Word of God because, for one thing, many acceptable or advocated practices from that text are no longer upheld, such as -

- No work of any kind on the Sabbath
- No eating of Pork products
- Polygamy practiced from Abraham to Solomon
- Acceptance of slavery
- The lowly state of women
- An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth
- A vengeful and bloodthirsty God.

Of course the Bible must be errant in some scientific matters because the correct scientific knowledge was not available at the time of writing and, as has already been pointed out, for God or the Holy Spirit to use scientific facts not known then would have resulted in confusion and alarm to the hearers of that time and dramatically diverted attention away from the main messages. In my view the Bible is a collection of the writings of religious men wanting to describe their salvation history, their feelings of religiosity and their worship of their God, often using myth, legend and adopted notions from surrounding cultures to do so. These writings were affected by the beliefs of the age in which they were written and later, in the New Testament, by the target audience.

More recently Peter Enns has joined the ranks of Conservative Evangelical authors who have been inclined towards trying to find some middle ground; he says – *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. This way of thinking of Christ is analogous to thinking about the Bible. In the same way that Jesus is – both God and human, the Bible is also a divine and human book* (ENNS, P. (2005) *Inspiration and Incarnation: Evangelicals and the Problem of the Old Testament*, Grand Rapids, Baker; p.17). By this statement he is trying to guide away from the evangelical view of Jesus as God walking the earth.
Examples from the New Testament

The New Testament is not immune from textual problems either as, for example, Jesus exhorted people - *Whoever says, ‘You fool,’ shall be liable to the hell of fire* (Matthew 5:22) and yet goes on later to exclaim against his enemies - *You brood of vipers* (12:34) and to call gentiles *dogs* (15:26), whilst elsewhere he advocates forgiveness and turning the other cheek. He destroyed a whole herd of pigs, presumably someone’s entire livelihood, in order to exorcise a demon (Mark 5:13), he cursed a fig tree because it did not bear out of season fruit (Mattt.21:19), he believed in Hell and damnation for the “worthless servant” (Matt.25:30) - *is weeping and gnashing of teeth in hell the will of a merciful God?* Jesus is portrayed in places as anti-Semitic and those passages from the Bible have been used to support outrages from the ancient pogroms to the Holocaust - passages such as the crowd of Jews at Pilate’s house saying - *His blood be on us and on our children* (Matt.27:25) and Jesus to the Jews - *You are of your father, the devil, and your will is to do your father’s desires* (John 8:44f).

When John uses the term *The Jews* instead of *the Jewish Leaders* he usually infers bigotry and prejudice. Are all these insults and accusations to be taken literally? Are Paul’s remarks about the Jews that - *God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes that should not see and ears that should not hear* (Rom.11:8) to be taken as literal and inerrant? (SPONG, J. S. (1991) *Rescuing the Bible from Fundamentalism*, San Francisco Harper Collins Publishers: p.22). If we are not to form a very different and damaging impression of an unworthy Jesus and of a despicable Jewry, then we must abandon Biblical Inerrancy as an untenable position.

The Gospel of Thomas contained approximately 114 alleged sayings of Jesus without any context; about half of these are to be found in the 4 gospels as sayings placed in a framework mostly based on that of Mark. Remember that of Mark’s 660 verses, 606 are in Matthew and about 350 in Luke, only 24 of Mark’s verses are not in either gospel. 200 - 250 verses are common to Matthew and Luke but not in Mark and only 330 verses in Matthew and 550 in Luke are original to those gospels. In other words much of the same material has been circulated between the evangelists and been subjected to changes according to the persuasion of the authors, e.g. Matthew addressing the Jews and Luke the Gentiles (so much for inspired inerrancy). (See the section on the Synoptic Problem).

The passage of news relied on the memory of the observer, after which it was filtered through other people, inevitably being changed and embellished, and the circumstances in which the event took place being forgotten. This explains why in
Mark’s gospel for example Jesus’ miracles tend to be gathered together in one section and parables in another as though Jesus had selectively performed them in groups. Only perhaps in the Passion Narrative has the sequence and location of events been preserved. Another thing which mediates against the historical accuracy of biblical material is the tendency for history to be coloured by the persuasions of the authors. For example in our present day we would not expect the Japanese account of the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki to read the same as the American account. How much less can we rely on the absolute accuracy of Bible history when we consider their very limited grasp of science, reality or world geography and their susceptibility to myth, legend and magic. These inaccuracies, and the insistence by evangelicals that the Bible is the inerrant Word of God, are a prominent reason for younger, thinking individuals leaving, or not joining, the church.

Jesus is alleged in the biblical text to have accepted several viewpoints that we do not share today as listed first on page 350 they were:

- The assumption that deaf-muteness results from the tying of the tongue by Satan or Demons (Matt.9:32, 33, 12:22, Luke 11:14)
- Infirmitiy was caused by a binding by Satan (Luke 13:11,18)
- The assumption that David wrote the Psalms (Mark 12:36, Luke 20:42, Matthew 22:43)
- That Moses wrote the Torah (Mark 7:10, 10:3, Luke 5:14).

According to the statements above you cannot have it both ways - either Jesus was wrong and not therefore the Son of God, or the Biblical Text is wrong and someone else put in these sayings or misquoted them. Evangelicals want it all ways that Jesus did say these things and that he was never in error that the text is inerrant but you can see from the above that their position is once again completely unsustainable.

The main argument used by standard apologists for traditional authorship is an appeal to the testimony of Christ. CARNELL, E. J. (1959) The Case for Orthodox Theology, Philadelphia, The Westminster Press. opines that purely literary questions cannot be settled by an appeal to Christ’s testimony … they are questions of criticism, not Christology. A vast amount of conservative argumentation is therefore a waste of time. What of the places in the Bible where the words were the speeches of Satan or of false prophets or other enemies of God - all one can say in such circumstances is that inspiration gives us an infallible account of error and the same goes for discrepancies in details given in Samuel/Kings as opposed to those in Chronicles - one is an infallibly
accurate reprint of erroneous figures (p.281). If the phrase as it is written when used in the New Testament is taken as evidence of acceptance of the truth of something in the Old Testament, as Conservatives believe, then when that accepted truth is in error, as in 1 Cor. 3:19 which refers to a statement by Eliphaz contradicted by God (Job 42:7) but taken to establish doctrine in the New Testament, then Inspiration is ludicrous.

Scott McGowan writes - I have gradually become concerned that some ways of defining and using Scripture within evangelicalism are open to serious criticism and could do us more harm than good if we continue to maintain them in their present form. Through a failure to understand the differences between evangelicalism and fundamentalism, through a failure to engage with biblical scholarship, and sometimes through sheer obscurantist and anti-intellectual approaches, evangelicals have often damaged rather than helped the case for a high view of Scripture (MCGOWAN, S.B. & MCGOWAN, A.T.B., Apollos branch of Inter-Varsity Press, 2007, p.11).

Despite all the reliable, persuasive and sometimes overwhelming evidence of the non-divine provenance of many of the biblical texts, no approach has been made to communicate this evidence and these findings to the lay public and old concepts are still being perpetuated by Ministers of all persuasions. No effective effort has been made to confront our educational system with this knowledge or to communicate this evidence and these findings to those responsible for education policy in respect of religious instruction. Many decisions regarding the presentation of religion in our schools seem to be made by persons with little or no theological training. In their attempts to show impartiality these decision makers have always included representatives of all groups claiming to be religious persuasions, many of whose platforms include the exclusion of views which do not coincide with their own and the discouragement of literature and speakers who hold these alternative beliefs. How can these policy makers claim impartiality when they recommend and include parties who are anything but impartial? In my experience, writing to the Government Department of Education either results in the letter being ignored or a fatuous or stereotyped reply being sent from a lowly interlocutor. Most school Principals, with whom the final decision rests, do not have any theological or religious training.
CHAPTER 16

WHERE DOES THE MATTER OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN OUR SCHOOLS REST NOW?

Now that we have investigated the backgrounds and presentations of the two main persuasions, Evangelical and Liberal, we are in a position to consider their respective suitability or otherwise for inclusion in a system of Public Education, especially that directed at the young and vulnerable minds of our school children. We have outlined the characteristics and beliefs of these two main groups and their output and activity. This background has enabled us to assess the effects of their teaching methods and the likely method of presentation in our schools. The undesirability of indoctrination and exclusivity in a balanced educational policy has been well supported earlier. Religious persuasions relying on, or including, these features do not represent desirable teaching for our young pupils whom we would want to acquire a reliable critical apparatus to be able to judge and decide for themselves. I will go on, in the chapter after this, to discuss whether a new kind of curriculum in the area of Religious Education in our schools which would be more acceptable and less disputaceous and polemical. In this chapter, however, it will be useful to see where RE is presently at and what regulations govern it.

The Present Situation

Under the Education Act 1990, Sections 26, 30, 32, 33 and 33a, together with the accepted Rawlinson Report (1980) public schools in New South Wales provide religious education in three forms:

1. General religious education (G.R.E.), which is taught through the Board of Studies syllabuses and includes what people believe in all major and indigenous religions and how these beliefs affect their lives. This is an HSC examinable subject.

2. Special religious education (S.R.E.), which is provided by representatives of approved religious groups to students whose parents have nominated that religion or denomination. The list of approved religious groups is extensive (I counted 108 on the Government website) and covers a full range of theologies from Fundamentalist to Liberal.

3. Section 33a of the Education Act added the introduction of classes in ethics for
students whose parents had exempted them from Special Religious Education. Only a limited number of teachers are currently trained to teach this subject.


On 3rd July 2007 the NSW Department of Education and Training implemented a new Religious Education Policy based on -

- The Education Act of 1990, Sections 26 and 30-33


Schools are to support S.R.E. by ensuring that no formal lessons or scheduled school activities occur during time set aside for S.R.E. Such activities may create conflict of choice for some parents and for some students attending S.R.E. On average, not more than one hour per week should be allocated for S.R.E. At enrolment, schools record a specific religion or “no religion” on the enrolment record. Parents/care givers are to be advised that schools are to provide appropriate care and supervision at school for students not attending S.R.E. This may involve students in other activities such as completing homework, reading and private study. These activities should neither compete with S.R.E. nor be alternative lessons in the subjects within the curriculum or other areas, such as, ethics, values, civics or general religious education. When insufficient teachers or accommodation are available, the school’s policy on minimal supervision will operate.

The school is not responsible for, and should not disseminate details of, lesson content for S.R.E., but may indicate the name and method of contacting the approved provider or their local representative. The authorisation of personnel to teach S.R.E. is the sole responsibility of each individual religious persuasion or denomination. The various churches are not to authorise any person as an S.R.E. teacher who has not signed a prohibitive employment declaration or who has a criminal conviction for:

- a crime against a minor; or
- violence; or
- sexual assault; or
- the provision of prohibited drugs.

It is the responsibility of the approved religious persuasion to:
a) authorise representatives to teach S.R.E.
b) authorise materials and pedagogy used by S.R.E. teachers
c) ensure that the school is informed of the names and contact details of authorised S.R.E. teachers.
d) provide information about the content of lessons when requested by parents/caregivers.

Where appropriate, a member of staff should be appointed as the school’s S.R.E. coordinator. Duties of the co-ordinator could include:

- arranging consultations by the middle of Term 4 between the school and representatives of the approved religious persuasions to determine the S.R.E. organisation for the ensuing year
- liaising with S.R.E. teachers to:
  - familiarise them with the procedures and operations of the school, especially at the beginning of the year
  - advise them of any variations of school routine affecting S.R.E.
- maintaining S.R.E. records, including:
  - obtaining an up-to-date list of the authorised S.R.E. teachers from the approved religious persuasions
  - ensuring that S.R.E. teachers are given a list of the names of students in their class
- preparing advice for parents/caregivers on the organisation and composition of S.R.E. classes and informing them of any changes.

Under the Education Act 1990 Section 32 there is a legislative requirement that In every government school, time is to be allowed for the religious education of children of any religious persuasion. Only those persons authorised by approved religious persuasions may be involved in the provision of S.R.E. On the Website, 51 church groups are approved to give religious education of which at least 18 contain churches which promote Inerrancy as a fundamental part of their platform. This requirement is not being met in some schools where no religious education is provided.

**The Rawlinson Report**


The Rawlinson Report, which was presented in Sydney in November 1981, largely
directs the Educational Policy of New South Wales. Part 1.3 Section 7 of the Act requires government schools to include "General Religious Teaching" as part of the curriculum. Section 17 permits "Special Religious Instruction" to be provided for pupils by the clergymen or other accredited religious teachers of their "persuasion". Section 18 makes provision for parents to object to their children receiving general or special religious instruction. The Rawlinson Committee Report Religion in Education in NSW Government Schools (1980) Recommendations 36-72 were adopted by the government of the day as an agreement between the churches and the government for the provision of S.R.E..

While the Committee recognized that spiritual development can take place without religion, it acknowledged that for many people the ultimate achievement of spiritual development is only realised through a belief in, and relationship to, a supreme supernatural being or power, a God or gods. For them, this religious belief and relationship has its full expression in a commitment of one's whole life. What distinguishes such commitment from other forms of commitment (e.g., political, ideological) is the element of worship. In most traditions this will mean personal communion with God. It is not the role of the school as such, to produce commitment to any particular belief. The Committee considers, however, that it is the school's role to provide opportunity for understanding of the issues that underlie such beliefs. Such observances in schools have been mainly of an undenominational Christian character and have taken a variety of forms in differing situations, particularly at the different school grade levels. At one end of the continuum are corporate school activities focused on major cultural events, such as nativity plays and carols prior to Christmas, one-minute silence on Remembrance Day, together with hymns and prayers, as also on Anzac Day and at Easter. Then there are the daily/weekly assemblies with some regular religious component, such as school prayers, hymns, songs and Bible readings.

General Religious Education follows a curriculum laid down for its HSC examination and both it and Special Religious Education follow guidelines set down in the Rawlinson Report into Religion in Education in NSW Government Schools which was accepted in November 1981. A standard letter is supposed to be sent out to parents allowing them to nominate religious persuasions or elect for “No Religion” and “Non S.R.E.”. The regulations seem to call for an allocation of one hour per week for Religious Education. Neither of these latter requirements are carried out in some places.
The Rawlinson Committee is of the opinion that the following considerations should be taken into account when determining the eligibility of a religious group to provide Special Religious Education:

(a) The claimant group should have a religious identity based on a belief in immanence and/or transcendence; a recognition of a Being or beings, of a Power or powers, beyond the human dimension, of an ultimate goal or purpose, possessing the absolute right to make exclusive demands on the believers and evoking, by nature, a response of commitment which includes the element of worship and is concerned with the spiritual development of the believers.

(b) The claimant group should have an established means of authorization of representatives to teach S.R.E. on their behalf.

(c) The claimant group should be an established community of faith, expressing that faith publicly through worship and fellowship, and having a reasonable body of beliefs held in common and a substantial membership with some form of general organization and leadership.

(d) The claimant group should have a clearly stated educational program, which is designed to contribute to the spiritual development of children.

(e) The claimant group should be prepared to adhere to the long established conventions and courtesies of behaviour for S.R.E. teachers in schools.

Several words and phrases are important here; among them –

Having a reasonable body of beliefs, contribute to the spiritual development of children and adhere to the long established conventions and courtesies of behavior.

I strongly contend that the exclusive teaching of doctrines like Inerrancy, which I have shown to be highly questionable, and pursuing policies like refusing to consider the findings of modern biblical scholarship, are in clear contravention of these requirements as set down by the Rawlinson Committee, as well as the required equitability of good education (Rawlinson Report, 6.13 - Notwithstanding the above considerations, the Committee takes the view that:(a) there must be safeguards to ensure that groups which are inimical to education or subversive in nature, but which disguise their purposes with religious appearances or nomenclature, are not eligible to provide
Special Religious Education in schools). These should therefore be excluded from Religious Education in NSW schools when presented unopposed or in a manner denigrating of other religions or beliefs. They are exclusive and deprive students of the development of critical apparatus.

No religious beliefs are evidentially provable, according to Michael Hand (HAND, M. (2002) Religious Upbringing Reconsidered, Journal of Philosophy of Education Society of Great Britain, 36, 545-557) and so must be accepted by faith and inculcated by indoctrination in those willingly and knowingly exposing themselves to Special Instruction. However, when it comes to instruction about something written down as literature and available for study, such as the Christian Bible, then evidence is there to be seen and used. Biblical scholars, who have spent their lives perfecting Biblical Interpretation, can well provide evidence to the validity of certain biblical texts, aside from their concepts, as well as admitting when the jury is still out on some matters. I have spent considerable time and space in this thesis discussing the history and current meaning of Inerrancy and I have surely proved its unsustainability in the light of modern scholarship and scientific knowledge and provided many examples of undoubted errancy in the biblical texts. Despite these facts, the Doctrine of Inerrancy can be freely taught to the receptive and uncritical minds of the schoolchildren in our Government schools, indoctrinating and mistakenly prejudicing them into the future. From my own knowledge the Young Earth notion and anti-evolutional concepts are being freely taught in some schools. Unfortunately nothing in the above Rawlinson requirements has been used to prevent Conservative Evangelicals from peddling a doctrine of total Inerrancy because the clause which states ‘requiring a reasonable body of beliefs’ would be satisfied in evangelical eyes by their belief in inerrancy.

Conservative Evangelicals are the group most committed to spreading the Gospel and the Word of God, as it is in their platform to do so; they are dedicated to “saving” as many people as they can persuade to be “born again”. It is not surprising therefore that a large proportion of those persons offering to teach scripture in the schools are Evangelicals. Many of the churches included in the Rawlinson Report’s list of approved providers are strongly evangelical and thus have Inerrancy as a pillar of their beliefs, which fact they are sure to convey, either directly or by implication, to any classes they may teach, purposely excluding the discussion of any alternative.

The present state of Religious Education in the schools is somewhat varied with some institutions not offering it at all and others in many cases employing poorly trained or
heavily biased external teachers. These teachers, although hopefully presumed by the Rawlinson Report to be approved and qualified, are, in fact, often untrained persons sent in by the churches, who find it very hard to find anyone willing to undertake the task. Although these persons are ‘approved’ by their Ministers this approval really amounts to their willingness to volunteer. The vast majority are untrained formally but are presumed to know something about their church’s religion which means, of course, that this is what they teach - their own church’s beliefs.

During the course of its deliberations the Committee became increasingly aware of the difficulties and shortcomings associated with the present arrangements, particularly with regard to Special Religious Instruction in secondary schools. For example, there have been insufficient visiting clergy and teachers of religion and some have been irregular in attendance; students have shown apathy and in some cases hostility to these programs; and some minority religious groups have been denied access to schools. Administrative difficulties have occurred in relation to parental withdraw rights, particularly in schools with large non-Christian migrant groups. On the other hand, it would appear that consultative procedures and experimental approaches have improved the situation in some schools. The Committee has been especially mindful of these factors in bringing forward its proposals and recommendations for future action. In considering whether approval should be given to a minority group, the Department has usually relied upon legal judgment from the Crown Solicitor to decide whether a particular religious faith could be regarded as a "religious persuasion". Three criteria have been consistently used in such advice -

(a) Whether the body concerned is a society of persons having a reasonable unity of doctrine;

(b) Whether it consists of a sufficient number of persons and has some form of general organization; and whether the person claiming to be a clergyman, within the meaning of the section, has been ordained or has an appointment of a spiritual as distinct from a purely secular character.

None of these criteria or any other take note of the quality or verifiable content of what these persons may teach.

In section 6.18 of the Rawlinson Report the Committee considers it desirable that every child should have the opportunity to be acquainted with the religious heritage of our culture, with particular reference to the Bible. Furthermore, in the light of the pluralism
of Australian society, there would seem every justification for incorporating, especially in secondary schools, a treatment of a range of religious tradition and viewpoints, including those of the Australian Aboriginal culture, and for contrasting these with non-religious stances, on a graded basis relative to the child's stage of development. Indeed, the very diversity of ethnic, cultural and religious traditions within our society, makes it essential that, instead of vague and often inaccurate impressions, haphazardly gained, children should possess an informed acquaintance with the religious aspects of various traditions.

ICCOREIS
ICCOREIS is the Inter-Church Commission on Religious Education in Schools, a group that exists to facilitate consultation and cooperation between member organisations aimed at the support, promotion and ongoing development of quality Religious Education (General and Special) in government schools in New South Wales, whilst respecting the integrity of each member organisation and other approved providers.

The group provides:

- Bible Memory Verse Calendar - suitable for 7 to 12 year olds
- An A-Z guide for children starting high school
- SRE Employment Board Guidelines - for member churches and schools undertaking the employment of a paid SRE teacher.
- The Lost Sheep series - to introduce the stories of the Bible to children
- Regional sub-groups offer training courses for SRE teachers
- Advice to Inter-church boards on the selection of new SRE teachers.

Membership: The member churches of ICCOREIS are:

- Dioceses of the Anglican Church of Australia from the Province of NSW
- Assemblies of God affiliated with Australian Christian Churches
- Baptist Churches of NSW and ACT
- Christian Brethren Assemblies
- Christian Reformed Churches of Australia
- Churches of Christ in NSW Conference
- Fellowship of Congregational Churches
- Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Australia
- Lutheran Church in Australia, NSW District
- Presbyterian Church of Australia in NSW
- Dioceses of the Roman Catholic Church Province of Sydney and Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn (NSW and ACT)
- The Salvation Army (Eastern Australia Territory)
- Serbian Orthodox Church in Australia and New Zealand - NSW and ACT Deaneries
- Uniting Church in Australia, Synod of New South Wales and ACT.

Because of the evangelistic outlook of many of the member churches, and the keenness on evangelism of those church members, teachers of that persuasion are frequently appointed and so their beliefs, including the Doctrine of Inerrancy continue to be perpetrated. At least 50% of the above list subscribe to Inerrancy. The tenets of ICCOREIS are noble but alas not enforceable nor widely known and publicised. There are smaller regional groups, calling themselves various names related to Christian Education and varying in their connexion with ICCOREIS, but nevertheless many teachers of Religion enter the schools directly following their approval to do so by their respective ministers.

**Objectives and Policy Statement of NSW Government Policy**

**Key Features:**
- Schools are required to provide religious education of two distinct types: General Religious Education (GRE) and Special Religious Education (SRE).
- This provision is the responsibility of the Principal of the school.
- School Education Directors monitor its implementation and resolve issues
- The Director-General’s Consultative Committee on SRE (on which there are eight ICCOREIS representatives) provides advice on the policy and its implementation

A web page provides:
- a list of approved providers of SRE
- a letter to parents
- a sample letter for combined arrangements and cross-authorisation of SRE teachers
- the Education Week Order of Service
- a memorandum concerning the Australian Governments National School Chaplaincy Program.

**Audience and applicability:**
2.1 This policy applies to all schools, Department officers and providers of SRE
Religious persuasions, on approval by the Minister, provide Special Religious Education (SRE) for students in Government schools. The provision of SRE at a school is dependent on parents/caregivers nominating, at or subsequent to enrolment, that particular persuasion for the purpose of SRE given to their child.


These implementation procedures are based on the Recommendations 36-72 of the report Religion in Education in NSW Government Schools (Rawlinson 1980) which were adopted by the Government as the basis of an agreement with the churches about the implementation of SRE. They clearly define the respective responsibilities of the school, religious persuasions and parents/caregivers, and emphasize the need to implement SRE in a flexible way based on consultation and co-operation.

At enrolment, schools record a specific religion or “No religion” on the enrolment record. Parents/caregivers are to be advised of -

a) the nature of SRE at the school, including the religious persuasions providing SRE and the arrangements which will be made for those students whose parents/caregivers indicate that they are not to attend SRE;

b) that they may nominate an alternative persuasion, where SRE is not offered for students of a particular religious persuasion or for other reasons.

c) Parents/caregivers are to be advised annually of the organisation of SRE classes. This advice should inform the parents/caregivers of the religious persuasions that will be providing SRE for particular class or year groups.

My comment - Parents being given no details of the content of SRE lessons being offered, and most Principals having little specialized religious expertise, it is possible that either the children may be being taught inappropriate things or that parents find it easier to say ‘no’ than to try and investigate what exactly their child will be learning. Churches will naturally approve teachers who teach according to their own beliefs and agenda which Principals are not generally qualified to assess.
Responsibilities of providers

The authorisation of personnel to teach SRE is the sole responsibility of each individual religious persuasion.

Every approved religious persuasion must provide, annually to the Department, a written assurance that they have procedures in place to ensure compliance with the legal requirements.

Comment – I seriously doubt that this requirement is being followed by all providers.

It is the responsibility of the approved religious persuasion to:

a) authorise representatives to teach SRE
b) authorise materials and pedagogy used by SRE teachers
c) ensure that the school is informed of the names and contact details of authorised SRE teachers.
d) provide information about the content of lessons when requested by parents/caregivers.


Groups Approved to provide SRE in Government Schools

The official S.R.E. Update, volume 15, Number 1 of January 2008, issued by ICCOREIS (NSW) Inc., states that all religious persuasions represented authorize the program which is to be taught by its teachers who are to follow it as closely as appropriate. Presumably this is to be offered only to those children whose parents have nominated that persuasion in response to an enquiry letter sent out. Nevertheless many Conservative Evangelical Churches are freely admitted and allowed to teach in a manner which I am suggesting is attempting to inculcate information based on false premises, which is not in accord with proper educational policy of impartiality and truth and which amounts to indoctrination. Not only is some of the information provided and approved of by the evangelical persuasions highly suspect, but a constant recommendation of the Rawlinson Report that other religious views and theological standpoints should be given consideration and discussed will be
contravened by these persuasions, as it is their policy to do so. On this matter the Rawlinson Committee says - The State should have no say in the doctrine of S.R.E. teaching. Each religious group should be responsible for the formulation of its own curriculum, in conformity with the broad statement of objectives for S.R.E. outlined above, suited to the pupils' needs, ages and stages of development, and to the capabilities of the teaching personnel. Therefore, the Committee is of the view that S.R.E. should be taught only by visiting personnel, that is, the clergy and/or lay teachers, and that the appointment of such teachers should be the sole responsibility of each individual religious group. This seems to give free reign to any persuasion to teach what it likes and appoint whomsoever it likes to teach it. However the Committee goes on to say –

6.13 Notwithstanding the above considerations, the Committee takes the view that: (a) there must be safeguards to ensure that groups which are inimical to education or subversive in nature, but which disguise their purposes with religious appearances or nomenclature, are not eligible to provide Special Religious Education in schools; (b) the Minister for Education should reserve the right to exercise discretionary authority with regard to the eligibility of any religious group to provide Special Religious Education in government schools. Since I firmly believe Inerrancy to be false and unsustainable I therefore consider the teaching of it to be definitely “inimical to education” and thus it ought to be deemed ineligible by the Minister for Education, together with one or two extreme views detailed later.

6.70 The school must reserve the right to intervene in the event of unreasonable disruption to the school, alleged teaching inefficiency or alleged distortion of religious doctrine. It is expected that matters of such major concern would be pursued by the Principal in collaboration with the relevant S.R.E. authorities and, if necessary, officers of the Department of Education. In this area I consider the forced manipulation of biblical texts to conform to inerrancy doctrine, the young earth theory and anti-evolution teaching to be cases where there has been a distortion of religious doctrine. On this ground these presentations should not be allowed unopposed.

General Religious Education (G.R.E.) is recommended to be taught as a separate entity from S.R.E. and is a highly commendable instruction about religion and religions, their history, objectives, ethics, morality and spirituality. This is recommended as a curriculum subject, examinable at HSC, and can be taught by those staff teachers with suitable training and impartial knowledge.
The Rawlinson Report makes clear the role of parents in deciding what is best for their children in the area of religious education. However in talking to practising teachers, it seems that the sending out of letters to parents seeking information on the religion of their child and their preference for the child’s religious exposure is sometimes unreliable in respect of its:

- Not being sent out at all
- Not extracting sufficient information about the parents' precise requirements
- Not containing sufficient information about the S.R.E. classes available
- The parental wishes not being carried out appropriately.

The Committee said - *Evidence from the submissions and surveys indicates four fundamentally different viewpoints about religious education which are, for the time being at least, irreconcilable. These four kinds of opinion about religious education are held not only in the community, but also amongst professional educators. While people may have different reasons for supporting particular stances, it is the viewpoints themselves which are of prime importance when considering solutions to the question of religious education in government schools.*

The four viewpoints may be summarised as follows:

(a) People who want Special Religious Education only: For these people the only legitimate form of religion in schools is the study and experience of their particular religious tradition or confession. Any notion of a 'general' kind of religious education is completely rejected.

(b) People who want General Religious Education only: The aim of religious studies, according to this view, is to introduce students to a study of the various major forms of religious thought and expression. Any form of Special Religious Education is considered the task of the home and church, and has no place in the public school.

(c) People who want both Special and General Religious Education: These people see value in ensuring provision in government schools for both General Religious Education and teaching in the particular beliefs of the home and family. The two facets are seen as distinctive but complementary.

(d) People who want no religious education of any kind: According to this approach, there should not be any form of religious education allowed in government schools. Not only should church and state remain separate, but religion and state are seen as
irreconcilable.

For those choosing options a) or c), it is necessary that they be fully informed as to the content of the religious classes offered and not just do you want S.R.E. or not. If this information is not in the letter can it be obtained? Some parents, if they were told that the classes would teach that the Bible is without error of any kind, or that only a certain number of already nominated people can be “saved”, or that the world is only 6000 years old, might not wish their child to attend. To be fair to school Principals they may not even be aware of the theological content being brought in by the outside teachers or of the indoctrinational leanings of some S.R.E. classes. The Rawlinson Report states - The school is not responsible for and should not disseminate details of lesson content for S.R.E., but may indicate the name and method of contacting the approved provider or their local representative. The authorisation of personnel to teach S.R.E. is the sole responsibility of each individual religious persuasion. The persuasions are not to authorise any person as a S.R.E. teacher who has not signed a prohibitive employment declaration.

As far as trying to verify the accuracy, authenticity or veracity of what is being taught the Rawlinson Report states - The authorizing authority of each religious faith should therefore ensure that its teachers possess knowledge of the relevant doctrine and possess adequate levels of teaching competence.

6.66 Each religious group should aim to establish a reserve of appropriately trained teachers and supporting personnel, to overcome the teacher shortage problem which now exists in many areas and to restrict dependence on school staff for supervision of S.R.E. classes to genuine emergencies.

Making each religious persuasion responsible for authorizing the suitability of its own SRE teachers in effect gives them carte blanche to send in so-called ‘fully authorized teachers’ who will faithfully teach and inculcate the beliefs and practices of that particular church, having no formal training and knowing no other beliefs. The only way out of this impasse is to issue clear guidelines on what cannot be taught by any teacher coming in to the school, no matter what his or her authorizing persuasion may be. The guidelines should make clear the mandatory exclusion of false or misleading doctrines such as Inerrancy, Pre-destination, Transubstantiation, Anti-evolutionism and Creationism. These matters can be dealt with denominationally in church groups where such material may be offered to those persons who voluntarily and knowingly
seeking out that persuasion and its beliefs but not in a publicly-funded government school educational program. Outside of these excluded false doctrines then each SRE group can put forward its own dogma whilst fully acknowledging that no religious belief can be proved and whilst being open to discussion and debate of other points of view.

**Religion as a Facet of Education in Government Schools**

As already mentioned the Rawlinson Committee stated - *The Committee considers it desirable that every child should have the opportunity to be acquainted with the religious heritage of our culture, with particular reference to the Bible. Furthermore, in the light of the pluralism of Australian society, there would seem every justification for incorporating, especially in secondary schools, a treatment of a range of religious tradition and viewpoints, including those of the Australian Aboriginal culture, and for contrasting these with non-religious stances, on a graded basis relative to the child's stage of development. Indeed, the very diversity of ethnic, cultural and religious traditions within our society, makes it essential that, instead of vague and often inaccurate impressions, haphazardly gained, children should possess an informed acquaintance with the religious aspects of various traditions.*

Religion therefore has a valid and distinctive part to play in the education of children. In the context of the current debate in Australia, therefore, there would seem no logical or historical ground for challenging the conclusion that it is the right of parents to ensure that religion has some place in the total education of their children at government schools. Historical evidence further shows that religion has always had a place in public education in N.S.W. and that this place has been ensured by certain legislative provisions. However, the Committee was aware that it could not rely on the precedent of history alone to answer the basic question: How should religion fit into education in government schools in N.S.W. today?

The place of religion in education may be justified through its potential contribution to individual development in the context of society. In the following sub-sections the potential influence of religion is considered in relation to four aspects of individual development - intellectual, social, moral and spiritual -

The Committee supports the view that a study of religion, as a distinctive field of knowledge, can make a contribution to the intellectual development of children, and that opportunities for such study should therefore be available in the context of
education in government schools. This point, long-acknowledged in N.S.W., was well made in the Wyndham Report (1957) when it recommended religion as one of the core subjects in secondary education. The influence of religion in past human societies cannot be denied, even though its importance has varied across time and place. In our own Australian society the Judeo-Christian tradition has helped shape the warp and woof of our culture: it is interwoven with our law, customs, history, architecture, art, music, literature and so on. Furthermore, in recent times different ethnic groups have extended the range of religious influences on our way of life. On the other hand, there has been an increasing indifference to 'traditional' religion and a trend towards secularization. Nevertheless, Mol 11971 concluded from his investigation of religious patterns and values of the Australian population, that religion is still popularly seen to be a force for cultural, social, institutional and personal integration (Section 5:42 of the Rawlinson Report).

5.33 The Committee supports the view that it is not possible to have a full understanding of any society in the world today without some awareness of its religious traditions and developments. Understanding and appreciation of the ways and beliefs of others are particularly important in a society such as ours. While it must be acknowledged that it is possible, in principle, to engage in moral education without necessarily making direct reference to religion, the relevance of both the religious and the moral domain to human thought and development is apparent.

5.37 The Committee supports the view that an appreciation of religious issues, together with moral issues, is of direct relevance to any education which claims to have a concern for the wholeness of the learner's experiences.

In its broadest sense, spiritual development refers to development of the ability to be inspired by issues which transcend the individual's material needs or desires. Central to this development are themes of "ultimate meaning" - questions and concerns which engage man's attention throughout life,

5.39 Questions such as these are of so deep, lasting and universal a nature that they cannot be ignored in the school context. The sense of wonderment at the extensiveness, majesty and mysteries of life can easily be 'lost' in the pressures of daily living. Schools have a responsibility to keep students 'open' to these kinds of questions and concerns by providing opportunities for consideration of the various answers which man has offered. A study of religion can contribute to spiritual
development, as can a study of the various non-religious philosophies, or of nature and life itself.

5.40 While the Committee recognises that spiritual development can take place without religion, it acknowledges that for many people the ultimate achievement of spiritual development is only realised through a belief in, and relationship to, a supreme supernatural Being or power, a God or gods. For them, this religious belief and relationship has its full expression in a commitment of one's whole life. What distinguishes such commitment from other forms of commitment (e.g., political, ideological) is the element of worship. In most traditions this will mean personal communion with God. It is not the role of the school to produce commitment to any particular belief. The Committee considers, however, that it is the school's role to provide the opportunity for understanding of the issues that underlie such beliefs.

Many reports studied by the committee have recommended that General Religious Education, given by public school teachers as part of the general curriculum, should progressively replace the traditional church-oriented Special Religious Education programs. In some Australian states there have been significant attempts to implement such recommendations. Although the final outcomes are not yet clear, these moves have not been made without some difficulty. In Tasmania, for example, a trial program in general religious studies at the primary level was subsequently abandoned after public protests. The resulting solution was for "information about religion" to be given as part of the social science course and the "right of entry" of the clergy to be retained. In South Australia, a group called "keep Our State Schools Secular" has claimed that the department project team is trying to impose Christianity on the schools under the guise of general religious studies.

The Russell Committee in Victoria recommended that visits to schools by representatives of religious groups be phased out. While the authorities of the major churches were willing to accept such a decision, many people, especially from rural areas, protested so strongly that the Minister for Education announced that, whatever else happened, the rights of religious groups to visit the schools would not be denied. In examining the different reports and in noting further developments, it became apparent to the Committee that, of all the systems it examined, none had worked ideally in its place of origin and none would necessarily constitute the ideal practical solution in N.S.W. Evidence from the submissions and surveys indicates the four fundamentally different viewpoints about religious education, already listed, which are,
for the time being at least, irreconcilable.

**Conclusion**

At the present time there is inconsistent confusion about what should be offered in the SRE category and what should not. Ethics has been generated, and is being expanded, to offer an alternative and perhaps, after all, the teaching of the material of an individual religion, or faction of a religion, is best left to the churches themselves outside of any government school curriculum. It is certainly not fair to expect a school principal to adjudicate between groups of parents insisting on different religious persuasions and equally it is unacceptable to force any student into classes inculcating particular beliefs. There are certain truths and universally acceptable messages in the Bible and a class on ‘The Bible as Literature’ could certainly be introduced by those correctly trained to teach it. Other alternatives are presented below.
CHAPTER 17

WHAT CHANGES MIGHT BE CONSIDERED IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN THE SCHOOLS?

Having thoroughly explored the development and stances of the two main groups in the Christian church today, is there any hope of true church unity? Much lip service is paid to the topic of ecumenism but, if the truth be known, the two sides are as far apart as ever, as John Perry said of this dispute between Conservatives and Liberals - *Given that one side in this debate doubts the other's orthodoxy, and the other side in the debate doubt's the first's faithfulness to scholarship, the impasse seems permanent.*

He went on to say - *The controversy quickly became an impasse and the impasse quickly became unspoken. As a result, evangelical theologians have, for the past twenty years, held widely divergent views of Scripture's authority with no apparent hope of coming to a common understanding.* *(Dissolving the Inerrancy Debate: How Modern Philosophy Shaped the Evangelical View of Scripture, Perry, John, (2001) Quodlibet Journal: Volume 3 Number 4. p.1).* The same difficulties that beset attempts at church unity also apply to the search for a universally acceptable curriculum for the teaching of religion in government schools.

It must be realized that some religious groups consider it their God-given right and duty to perpetuate their religious views in the misguided mind-set that their views alone will be of lasting and incalculable benefit to any who can be thus converted. Fundamentalist groups will not countenance alternative views and so are very hard to please regarding what is to be taught in public schools. Professor James Barr has made an in-depth and informed study of the Christian Fundamentalist group and has concluded –

*Fundamentalists are people who:*

- *Put a strong emphasis on the inerrancy of the Bible*
- *Show a strong hostility to modern theology and critical study of the Bible*
- *Feel that those who do not share their views are not real Christians and they view criticism of their position to be a criticism of Christianity itself.*


It will be very difficult to restrain these fundamentalist groups and confine them to any
guidelines suggested, as their very platform insists on evangelism of their own beliefs as a major requirement.

A neo-evangelical response to the question of inerrancy might be similar to that of Professor Gregg Allison who stated - *Christian educators should learn .... that the mechanical dictation theory of inspiration is bankrupt and should be avoided strenuously. Not that the view is common; often, it is more a charge leveled against evangelicals by (post) liberals or neo-orthodox scholars and theologians who disagree with our doctrine of Scripture. As their charge is worded, evangelicals believe that God dictated the Bible to its human authors, because this mode of inspiration was the only way God could ensure an inerrant text. But the mechanical dictation theory cannot account for the many differences in personalities, writing styles, theological emphases, grammatical capabilities, genre, and the like that are very evident in Scripture. Instead, many evangelicals embrace what Warfield (1948) called "concursive" or "confluent" inspiration: God the Holy Spirit and the human authors collaborated together in the writing of Scripture so that their product - the Word of God - is both fully divine and fully human. If educators could inculcate this idea of biblical inspiration among their audiences, I believe it would go a long way toward fostering a well-grounded doctrine of Scripture. (Gregg R. Allison, A Theologian Addresses Current Theological Issues Impinging on Christian Education, *Christian Education Journal*. Glen Ellyn: Spring 2011. Vol. 8, Iss. 1).

*There is a case for teaching religion because of its content and the roles it has played and still plays in human life, and because of its connections with other educational disciplines. Religion is to be elucidated and discussed but not advocated or inculcated; this, Simone Weil believes, would abolish the polemical confrontation between the two opposing camps of the secular schoolmaster and the priest, and imbue the population with some spirituality (WEILL, Simone, *The Need for Roots*, trans. Wills, A.F., Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1952; p.246ff)*.

To allow schoolchildren to graduate having received no benefit of religious education in its finest and unsectarian spirituality and knowledge, is bordering on being unkind, leaving a large gap in childrens’ education and horizons. The first amendment in the American Constitution has been used in that country as a reason for excluding religion from school curriculums; surely the exclusion of religion, whilst allowing other doctrines to remain such as Republicanism and Democracy, amounts to Secular Indoctrination.
Along the lines of thinking that perhaps religion could be taught without reference to a specific religion but more in consideration of its qualities of character, ethics, spirituality, morality and lifestyle, an interesting Journal Article by G.B. Askarova opined that religion harmoniously synthesized the culture of the world and universal human values and also served to mitigate the harsh influence of many social doctrines and moral upbringing of the rising generation. He described the ultimate purpose of religion as being to educate the kind of individual who possesses moral convictions, who is decent and virtuous and the carrier of high humanistic ideas (ASKAROVA, G. B. (2007) The Religious and Ethical Education of Students in a Secular School. Russian Education and Society, Vol.49 (See Appendix 2).

Russian schools are ill equipped for religious education as such, which is undertaken at private religious institutions such as Orthodox Gymnasiums and Theological Seminaries, but to compensate, the author and his colleagues developed classroom lessons, debates, wall newspapers, student essays, competitions and field trips to churches, mosques and other houses of worship.

Religiously orientated subjects were introduced such as -

- The Existence of God,
- Mysticism,
- Early Forms of Religion,
- History of the World’s Religions, religious customs and rituals,
- The moralities of Islam and Christianity.

Of special interest were in depth discussions of the meanings and applications of the Christian Ten Commandments, which constitute the foundation of human existence. Consideration of each commandment separately led on to valuable discussions of such things as personal uniqueness, life and death, social relations, ownership, honesty, attitude towards one’s parents and moral attitude to the world around us.

For example, the commandment “Honour thy father and thy mother” can serve as a measure of one’s morality. Parents are not chosen and honouring them must not depend on what they represent in terms of morality. Not for nothing is it said that, “God gives a person a soul, but the parents give that soul life.” One should be thankful to one’s parents for giving one’s soul the opportunity to be born and to know life in its diversity. (ASKAROVA, G. B. (2007) The Religious and Ethical Education of Students in a Secular School. Russian Education and Society, Vol.49: see Appendix 2 for a fuller
transcript). I am sure we could learn some valuable lessons from his experience and channel our teaching about religion into some of these areas.

Looking at the Bible as a series of religiously orientated narratives designed to convey a lifestyle or moral message may well be a denominationally neutral way of teaching religion thus escaping sectarian criticism, providing there can be agreement on the messages. A massive example is represented by the Creation stories in early Genesis. Scientists are ready and able to criticize severely the scientific basis of the six days of creation but if the Bible were regarded, not as a textbook of science, astronomy and geology, but as a mythical expression of the belief in one God who is responsible in some way for creating the world we see around us, then it becomes more acceptable. The notion of one God responsible for everything was indeed revolutionary in a time when most cultures entertained Poytheism and was eons ahead of the good god/bad god notions of earth's beginnings. Those who believe absolutely in the science and history of Genesis have got to turn around and accept the mythical basis of it, that is to say an inspiring attempt to explain a wonderful and esoteric mystery in the culture and limited knowledge of the time.

Professor Copley feels that religious education must at least dare to teach the possibility of God and the individual student then be invited to engage with evidence and experience to reach his or her own conclusion (COPEY, T. (2008) Non-indoctrinatory Religious Education in Secular Cultures. The Religious Education Association, p.103). The whole key to religious education is to teach about religion, not advocating the particulars of any specific system. The latter area can be dealt with denominationally by the churches themselves in their own groups but has no place in an unbiased educational program. In order to forestall this happening, religious teachers in schools must be provided with a definitive curriculum to teach which fulfils the non-indoctrinational guidelines of sound educational policy. The curriculum should be along the lines of:

- Instruction about religion itself including all the major and indigenous religions from which examples should be drawn and to which instructional visits can be made.
- Teaching on the Bible as literature - its history, culture, presentation as a library, explanation of its content, its timeless messages, together with the myths and legends used to illustrate these messages.
- The life of Jesus as presented variously in the Synoptics and John and the
letters of the diaspora apostles, compared with Roman historical records.

- Spirituality and metaphysics - man’s search through the ages for something greater than himself, some higher agency to worship and appeal to.
- A course on religious writings as well as the Bible - the Apocrypha, the Koran, the Book of Mormon etc.
- What lessons are present in our present day lives that we must thank the Biblical writers for; such as the Ten Commandments.

Looking at the Bible as a series of religiously orientated narratives designed to convey a lifestyle or moral message – ‘the great Biblical verities’ as Carl F.H. Henry described them in 1947, can be productive; for example the Parable of the Prodigal son from Luke’s Gospel (Luke 15:11-32) can be seen to present three messages depending on whose part you identify with. From the Father’s perspective the message is one of parental love overcoming unworthy behaviour on the part of children; from the prodigal’s point of view the message is first of all not to be an irresponsible wastrel and then to be repentant and humble if you have been. The second son, whom most of us feel some sympathy with, needs to show empathy with both his father and his brother in order to experience the generosity of spirit to forgive them both for what he originally saw as unfair conduct; this is perhaps the hardest task. Whether you regard this section of the Bible as an historically true narrative or as a symbolic representation of Christian principles does not detract from the moral and human messages it contains.

Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768-1834) wanted to overcome the stalemate between Protestant insistence on the Literal Inerrancy of Scripture and Roman Catholic subjection of Biblical Interpretation to certain unchangeable dogmatic assertions – he cherished the hope for one absolute and authoritative reading of the scripture. Full agreement certainly seems a forlorn hope at this time in our history but if agreement can be reached about what the biblical messages are, then the road to getting there, the reasoning or interpretation behind the arrival at the message, can perhaps be left to the individual. For example if the message behind the story of Adam and Eve is agreed to be that ‘mankind eventually matured to sufficient sophistication to be able to envisage God abstractly and communicate with him in prayer and worship’ then this can be taken as what the author intended to convey. Whether one believes that Adam and Eve were a miraculous one-off creation by God at one moment in time leading to our ancestral heritage then so be it; providing one does not insist on trumpeting this as being the absolute and exclusive truth because it came from the Bible. If one believes
the story to be merely an ancient, mythical explanation of the advent of man’s new relationship with God, perhaps hinted at in Gen.4:26 - *at that time men began to call upon the name of the Lord*, then that is alright too. Both contexts of belief arrive at the same satisfactory and meaningful message. However, as evangelical geologist Davis A. Young has observed - *evangelical commentaries on Genesis hardly ever address the problems of anthropology .... the church is afraid to look into paleoanthropology* (*Theology and Natural Science*, Reformed Journal, May 1988; 13). Others have said – you must choose - “Genesis or Geology”.

This method can be applied to all the major messages of the Bible and, provided persons are not concerned to interfere with each other’s beliefs, do not insist on trying to convert others to their way of thinking to the exclusion of all others, do not broadcast their version of events with the intention of indoctrination, do not insist on inerrancy of the texts, then perhaps a presentation of the bible emphasising the messages only, would be acceptable to religious educators and would allow new students to access the wonderful morality and human understanding available in the biblical texts.

Seemingly we have learned several things about religious education;

- Absolute religious beliefs should not be taught with the notion of inculcation
- Material should not be offered as fact when no proof exists as to its veracity
- Discussion of all alternatives and encouragement to investigate all possibilities should be given free reign.
- Comparative Religion, or a subject with similar aims, such as ‘the Religious Literature of Word Religions’, should form the basis of any examinable religious course.

To re-vist the interesting views of some theologians already mentioned and referenced earlier –

Religious Education is, and should be, a *bona fide* part of any educational program in our schools and because of this, and because it is publicly funded, we must be confident that what is taught is genuine and accountable, well taught and can be seen to be true or false. *Some extreme religious groups will not allow any questioning of their religious rules and views and so their presentations do not fall within the criteria of a sound and equitable educational policy* (BARR, J., The Westminster Press, 1978 ; p.122/3).

*God the Holy Spirit and the human authors collaborated together in the writing of*
Scripture so that their product - the Word of God - is both fully divine and fully human. If educators could inculcate this idea of biblical inspiration among their audiences, I believe it would go a long way toward fostering a well-grounded doctrine of Scripture. (Gregg R. Allison, A Theologian Addresses Current Theological Issues Impinging on Christian Education, *Christian Education Journal*. Glen Ellyn: Spring 2011. Vol. 8, Iss. 1).

Religion is to be elucidated and discussed but not advocated or inculcated; this, Simone Weil believes, would abolish the polemical confrontation between the two opposing camps of the secular schoolmaster and the priest, and imbue the population with some spirituality (WEILL, Simone, *The Need for Roots*, trans. Wills, A.F., Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1952; p.246ff).

Religion harmoniously synthesized the culture of the world and universal human values and also served to mitigate the harsh influence of many social doctrines and moral upbringing of the rising generation. He described the ultimate purpose of religion as being to educate the kind of individual who possesses moral convictions, who is decent and virtuous and the carrier of high humanistic ideas (ASKAROVA, G. B. (2007) *The Religious and Ethical Education of Students in a Secular School*. Russian Education and Society, Vol.49).

In his discussion of these matters Professor Copley of Oxford University advocates Religious Education to be educational rather than religious and the teacher’s role to promote awareness and understanding, not to promote belief. He states that neutrality is humanly impossible but skilled training in knowledge and understanding of the religious and secular values being presented in each case should enable the teachers to present the material in a manner satisfactory to each code (COPLEY, T. (2008) *Non-indoctrinatory Religious Education in Secular Cultures*. The Religious Education Association, p.103).

By distinguishing between the centre and the periphery in Scripture Kuyper and Bavinck’s tradition allowed for the central saving message to be received in faith without waiting for scholarly reasons, leaving the supporting material of human language and culture open to scholarly investigation which could bring greater deepening of faith later. No human mistakes could frustrate God’s intention to reveal saving truth and so it was wrong to equate human accuracy with error in the biblical sense of intent to deceive. The Bible’s function was to give people encouragement in
salvation not information about science: scientific findings were not an obstruction to
faith but an occasion to understand more fully the ways in which God had revealed
himself through human needs.

Augustine and Chrysostom sought the intention of the author and the meaning of his
thought. Error was a matter of deliberate deception from which the Bible was free.
Human limitations of thought and speech were matters for scholarly study (Rogers, J.B.
& McKim, D.K., Harper & Rowe, 1979, ; p.54). This is certainly a definition of errancy
which could decrease the extent of the dispute over Inerrancy. However many modern
connotations of Inerrancy include any error whatsoever and that is indeed what many
former protagonists, such as the Princeton Theologians meant.

The Bible should be looked at in a more reflective and scholarly fashion rather than
treating it as a given scientific truth or textbook of some kind, often rendered with
emotional disregard for the facts; as Augustine said on this matter - The Bible was not
a textbook of science or an academic tract – God desired us to become Christians, not
astronomers (Proceedings with Felix the Manichee, 1, 10, cited in Polman, p.59)
(Rogers & McKim; p.26).

The truth in the Bible however can be metaphorical, akin to Pilgrim’s Progress.

John Calvin thought that the fact of the message getting through was more important
than the actual wording. This more lenient view, sweeping aside petulant argument
over wording, could indeed be an important suggestion to the warring parties.

Schleiermacher wrote in The Christian Faith that religion is a matter of feeling, that
religious affections are a form of self-consciousness and that Christian doctrines are
accounts of the Christian religious affections set forth in speech (Schleiermacher, The
Christian Faith, pp. 3, 5, 15). This is called experiential-expressive religious language.
For example the doctrine of creation does not describe God’s acts in creating the
universe but expresses the Christian’s awareness of the dependence of all things upon
God. Christian dogmas rest on the given of an inner experience which cannot be
brought about by scientific means and so lie outside the realm of reason. Thus science
and religion have nothing to do with each other and so findings of design can provide
no support for religious beliefs but on the other hand theology cannot conflict with
science even in the area of the creation of the universe; religion is content to feel that
the entire universe depends on God: the compatibility is ensured by the compartmentalization. However there is no harm in borrowing language like the boundless activity and process of evolutionary biology to better analogise thinking of God. A Liberal may describe the Bible as a record of the historical development of spiritual experience, attitudes, such as faith and trust, and private moral convictions. A Conservative may describe it as a record of divine action.

The literary forms of the Bible reflect its own times and if the stories turn out to be legends it would simply mean that the past expressed its religious attitudes and convictions by the use of legend which should be accepted in that vein.

**Can we suggest a schema that may be acceptable to all?**

I believe that the word “Inerrancy” is inappropriate in these discussions and directs peoples’ minds into the wrong channels. The Bible is never guilty of deliberate lies or purposely misleading statements. There are undoubted variations from the facts as we now know them but these are the result of limitations of knowledge at the times of writing. Had any attempt to relate modern scientific or other knowledge, only acquired in modern times, been made in former times by mysterious revelation it would have caused a sensational diversion of attention from the matters in hand and resulted in confusion. The use of parable, myth, legend and saga to illustrate messages or points being made was an acceptable method of communication in biblical times and should not be either cited as unbelievable, wrong or inappropriate. For example many criticise the creation accounts in Genesis saying that the world was not made in 6 days by God; whether the ancients got their account from the Persians, who had a ten day version, or Egyptians or elsewhere, the whole point was that Yahweh alone created everything and that there was no moon god or sun god or other reasons for things being there. In other words the whole thing was a polemic against Polytheism; this was revolutionary enough at the time of writing. I believe that ancient authors had no conception that their writings would be combined into a single work such as the Bible. Their contributions often came from different sources at different times and with different emphases, even if about the same event. They could not know that their works would be placed alongside each other allowing easy comparison, such as the case of the books of Samuel/Kings and Chronicles, and so no attempt should be made to clumsily harmonise differing accounts.

Conservatives must accept the literary permissions of the times, among them the use
of mythological narrative to explain the inexplicable, and Liberals must acknowledge
the element of inspiration and spirituality present in the desire of biblical authors to
convey to others their delight and enthusiasm for their religious experiences. It does
not really affect the message whether there were ‘x’ number of persons involved or ‘y’
or whether Jesus sat or stood to deliver his message. Perhaps Philippians 2:7 may
give us a clue when it tells that Jesus – *emptied himself, taking the form of a slave,*
*being born in human likeness.* Jesus spoke the language and used the knowledge and
idioms of his day to be an acceptable contemporary person without detraction from his
message and so allowances must be made. Similarly Old Testament authors wrote to
their hearers in the idiom and milieu of their times and could make no adjustment to our
modern sensibilities. To cite an extreme case, human sacrifice is an abomination to us
but in ancient times it was practised in many cultures and societies as an appeasement
or intercession to their gods.

Two further authors we have encountered have made suggestions as to how to attempt
to bridge the acrimonious gap between Conservatives and Liberals. Scott McGowan
writes:

*First, we must not give to the Scriptures a place they do not give to themselves; and
second, we must not attribute to the Scriptures a nature and character they do not
claim for themselves.* The Scriptures are human documents, written by human beings,
with all this entails. At the same time, however, these documents were ‘breathed out’
by God. *We must hold these truths in tandem, not emphasizing one over against the
other.* The Inerrantists so emphasize God’s action that the authors often become mere
ciphers, whereas the old liberals so emphasized the human side that the Scriptures lost
their place of authority in the church. *We must seek to restore the balance,*
(MCGOWAN, S.B. & MCGOWAN, A.T.B., Apollos branch of Inter-Varsity Press, 2007, ,
pp.121/122).

Then Nancey Murphy suggests:

Theology’s success as a discipline answerable both to the church and to the academy
depends on the answer to the question – “How to speak intelligibly to those in other
frameworks - how can we justify our framework when we recognize the existence of
competing frameworks”. An important ingredient here would need to be the
development of a theory of truth appropriate to the new epistemology.

She holds that Liberals should embrace a more robust doctrine of divine action
(prevenient divine acts in revelation and salvation history) although there may be a range of views on the extent or frequency of such action between liberals and conservatives. It should also be possible to claim that God acts through all natural processes, including the evolutionary process. Any special acts in the creation of humans would necessarily be invisible to science because they would not be violations of natural laws. Also theology is necessary to answer questions like 'what evolutionary value is there in the evolution of a species capable of a relationship with God'? New philosophical approaches to conceptions of the nature of the theological task ought to form more of a continuum or spectrum of theological opinions rather than a dichotomy. (MURPHY, N. (1996) Beyond Liberalism and Fundamentalism, Valley Forge, Trinity Press International p.5/6).

So vehement and entrenched are the views of some extremist groups, regarding the freedom from error of the biblical writings, that the only explanation for such adamancy in the face of overwhelming evidence to the contrary is 'Indoctrination', and indoctrination from the very start at that. Again not enough attention has been given to this aspect both as a cause and an area of remedy for unreasonable, divisive and misleading interpretations. Another aim therefore is to reveal the indoctrinatory basis of many evangelical interpretations which fly in the face of modern scholarship, science and reason. Surely there can be no other reason for the holding of such extreme and false views as the historical veracity of Noah’s Ark and the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, and even the Doctrine of Inerrancy itself, other than strong indoctrination which not only implants set and blinkered false beliefs at the outset but also prevents that person's consideration of any alternative.

Professor D.Z. Phillips interestingly points out that the discussion concerning religious education in schools too often takes the form of a battle for the minds of the young between enlightened and progressive parents, movements and authorities attempting to purge education from indoctrination and superstition, and those defending basic values, such as the permeation of the whole life by religion. This results in the issue being discussed, namely education, being made subordinate to the cause being supported - Phillips, D. Z. (1971). Faith and Philosophical Enquiry. New York, Shocken Books Inc. p.148.

Professor Paul H. Hirst in his article Morals, Religion, and the Maintained School, British Journal of Educational Studies, 14; 1965-6, argues that religious beliefs are
unconfirmed conjectures, matters of personal decision and have no objective standards of validity. Phillips counters by saying that the terms “belief” and “truth” connote differently in religious discussion and an elucidation of the values and ideals, conceptions of worship, love and the nature of religious beliefs, the kinds of belief they are and the role they play in peoples’ lives form a very valid area of education. For example “I believe there is a loaf in the cupboard” this expresses a measure of doubt as to whether there is a loaf there, whereas “I believe in God” is a positive statement that there certainly is a God there. Private beliefs which lack rational justification may be true, but we cannot know that they are true without there being some public justification. (Phillips, D. Z. (1971). Faith and Philosophical Enquiry. New York, Shocken Books Inc. pp.149-160). Professor Hirst concludes that religion is a domain of mere beliefs .. .. and therefore there is no justification for State-maintained schools to teach religion. He cites that there being no agreed public tests whereby true and false can be distinguished in religious claims there is therefore little justification for the inclusion of religion in an educational syllabus. Phillips concludes that there are good educational reasons for discussing the relations between religious statements and scientific statements, between religious beliefs and factual beliefs and between the notion of empirical truth and truth in religion. Whether such discussion is called religious education or philosophy of religion does not matter as all the concepts mentioned above will arise as well as history and religious variation. This statement, in fact, supports my earlier view that the way forward is to teach about Religion, i.e. to teach Religion rather than preach it.

In his book Faith and Philosophical Enquiry (1971) New York, Shocken Books Inc., Professor Phillips states, on page 153, that what Professor Hirst claims about religion is not true. He maintains that there are various criteria recognized by religious believers for what can and what cannot be said to God and about God, and that it is not true that there are no tests for what is truly religious, or what is to count as religious, as opposed to hallucinatory beliefs. He says that Professor Hirst failed to give any place to the notion of ‘community in religion’ and thus he could find no starting place to distinguish between what is of God and what is not. Phillips said that if not coming up to a required educational standard, by which Hirst means there is no guarantee that people will agree about them, was to be the test then much else besides religion would have to disappear from the school curriculum - for example English Literature and History. Disagreements about literary and historical matters do not lead to general skepticism about history and literature.
As I have mentioned elsewhere, many educators feel that the decision to withhold religious education from school children either intentionally or by omission would be to deny them a significant part of an all-round education. As Simone Weil says, we do injury to a child if we bring it up in a narrow Christianity which prevents it from ever becoming capable of perceiving that there are treasures of purest gold to be found in non-Christian civilizations. Lay education does an even greater injury to children; it covers up these treasures and those of Christianity as well. One would talk about dogma as something which has played a role of the highest importance in our countries, and in which men of the very greatest eminence have believed whole-heartedly; without hiding the fact either that it has been the pretext for inflicting any number of cruelties. But, above all, one would try to make the children feel all the beauty contained therein. If they ask, 'is it true', we should answer: 'it is so beautiful that it must certainly contain a lot of truth. As for knowing whether it is, or is not, absolutely true, try to become capable of deciding that for yourselves when you grow up. (Weill, Simone, The Need for Roots, trans. Wills, A.F., Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1952 pgs. 87-89).

There is a case therefore for teaching religion because of its spiritual and moral content and the roles it has played and still plays in human life, and because of its connections with other educational disciplines. I question the inclusion of any form of indoctrinational teaching in our schools, as it is a betrayal of the openness of a good educational policy. Should the teaching of the Doctrine of Inerrancy be accepted, especially in an unopposed presentation, as modern biblical scholarship and scientific knowledge show it to be false and unsustainable? The negative view is at present the most satisfactory one in light of the evidence to hand. Religion should not be taught in any exclusive way as the important object is to develop in students a balanced presentation and critical evaluation from which they can form their own conclusions.

What can be done about the Schismatic Dispute between the Fundamentalists and the Liberals?

Inerrancy is at the heart of this dispute and as it has gone on, each side has become more entrenched and its claims more vociferous and extreme. The truth of the matter is that a new way of looking at the Biblical texts is needed. They are not meant to be a textbook of science or history but an imaginative vision of Israel's God illustrated with borrowed, remembered or imagined sagas, in other words myths, of the historicity and traditions of God's relationship with Israel. Limitations in knowledge of the writers of
the time must be realized and acknowledged: inspiration was in the form of impetus to write, not a form of divine dictation.

Religion is to be elucidated and discussed but not advocated or inculcated; this, Simone Weil believes, would abolish the polemical confrontation between the two opposing camps of the secular schoolmaster and the priest, and imbue the population with some spirituality (PHILLIPS, D. Z. (1971) Faith and Philosophical Enquiry, New York, Schocken Books Inc.; p.164).

Professor Gregg R. Allison of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky shows clearly the fixation of those of evangelical persuasion on Jesus being God rather than Man when he writes As some theologians have argued, once we have established that Jesus is God and once we have determined his view of Scripture, then anyone who claims Jesus is Lord is obligated to adopt Jesus' view of Scripture as his/her doctrine of Scripture. (Gregg R Allison, A Theologian Addresses Current Theological Issues Impinging on Christian Education; Christian Education Journal. Glen Ellyn: Spring 2011. Vol. 8, Iss. 1; pg. 84). Even the Gospel writers had not established Jesus as God since two told of a human birth, one did not venture an opinion at all and only the fourth Gospel had a divine origin for Jesus.

Other evangelical authors have seen the error of this sweeping statement and have countered If Jesus was fully human, as orthodoxy demands, then it is likely that he learned - along with other ancient Jews - that Moses, Isaiah, and Daniel wrote their books, irrespective of factual and historical realities. Moreover, even if Jesus knew the critical fact that Moses did not pen the Pentateuch, it is hardly reasonable to assume that he would have revealed this information to his ancient audience. To the extent that Jesus drew upon his omniscience in everyday life and conversations, it would have been constantly necessary for him to pass up opportunities to tell those around him what he knew. (Sparks, K. L. (2008). God’s word in human words: An evangelical appropriation of critical biblical scholarship. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, p. 165).

Then Professor Allison comes back with how can Sparks's explanation account for the fact that even after the removal of Jesus' so-called "human limitations" - that is, after he was crucified and resurrected from the dead - Jesus was still found to be affirming the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch (Luke 24:44-47)? And for same reasons!
And so the dispute continues over this enormous gulf of Inerrancy. Perhaps those who come closest to my own view are J.K.S. Reid and Scott McGowan. Reid summarises his overall position by saying, *The word becomes authoritative and is received when, by the operation of the Holy Spirit, it is made the word of the living God and the living word of God ….. making itself felt and heard in religious experience.* This is distinct from the path followed by Protestant Scholasticism which held that the Bible was an inspired book, a fixed and external standard and text book of what may be believed. Orthodoxy falls into the trap of making Scripture self-contained; the sovereign action of God in making Scripture the vehicle and occasion of his word is excluded. In a nutshell, the difference was that Calvin and other reformers held the doctrine of Scripture to be a flexible and dynamic means by which human beings encounter God whereas the Protestant Scholastics reduce this to a literalist and rigid inerrantist position (REID, J. K. S. (1957) *The Authority of Scripture*, Connecticut, Greenwood Press, p.68).

McGowan writes - *inerrancy is not a biblical doctrine but an implication drawn from another biblical doctrine (inspiration)… and (therefore) could not be insisted upon as a test of Christian discipleship*; (MCGOWAN, S.B. & MCGOWAN, A.T.B.,Apollos branch of Inter-Varsity Press, 2007, , p.115). He goes on to suggest what he calls an evangelical alternative - *Scripture, having been divinely spirated, is as God intended it to be having freely chosen to use human beings. He did not give us an inerrant autographical text but one that reflects the humanity of its authors with clear evidences of its origin in the divine speaking. This obviates the necessity of consideration of the autographa. We do not have to be forced into a stark choice between Rogers and McKim’s errantist text and John Woodbridge’s inerrantist one. This alternative choice serves well to explain Calvin’s apparent vacillations as both Calvin and Luther gave a much higher place to the humanness of the Scriptures than later writers in the Reformed tradition; they were quite dismissive of minor textual discrepancies for varying accounts and spoke freely of ‘accommodation’. We can see from this that removal of the term ‘inerrancy’ from the discussion and the substitution of this alternative view together with the appending of ‘infallibility’ to the text presentation of the topics of:*

- The knowledge of the will of God for our salvation in Jesus Christ
- Instruction in the way of Holiness
- The hope of Eternal Life
This may well help in mutual understanding.

The most fertile areas which I have been able to uncover for ecumenical understanding are those of language, the recognition by Conservatives that myth was legitimately used to aid description and explanation in former times and the Liberal reader not viewing the Bible as a textbook of science, history or technology nor expecting it to be accurate in these matters when they crop up.

**Language**

Many writers are of the opinion that “Inerrancy” is a polemical, restrictive and disputaceous word which has no place in modern biblical hermeneutics; Scott McGowan has suggested the following: *Evangelicals ought to abandon the word ‘inerrancy’ and use language that is more biblically accurate and theologically constructive.* He opines that *nowhere in Scripture itself is there a claim to the kind of autographic inerrancy Warfield taught* (ibid; p.114). McGowan puts forward other changes in vocabulary, such as - *the decision was made to opt for the word spiration defined as “the creative function of the deity conceived as the action of breathing”* (ibid.41).

In respect of the vocabulary used in discussing Scripture, Scott McGowan went on to say - *The problem with divine inspiration is the interpretation of θεοπνευστος which literally means ‘God-breathed or God-spirited’; this is poorly translated by the word “inspired” which does not properly convey the meaning. Also the use of the word “inspired” often connotes the enabling of a remarkable heightening of natural powers implying that the Biblical writings were a work of genius. The Greek word is actually not speaking primarily about the authors but about the Scriptures themselves* (ibid.39). Although ‘expiration’ clearly has the connotation of breathing out, it also has the connotation of a terminal event and so the decision was made to opt for the word ‘spiration’. The doctrine of divine spiration is the affirmation that at certain times and places God the Holy Spirit caused men to write books and His supervisory action was such that although these books are truly the work of human beings they are also the work of God (ibid.43).

To describe McGowan’s vocabulary changes in his other words - *The word ‘illumination’ implies that the Scriptures need to have light shed upon them before they can be understood whereas it is the human mind which needs to be given understanding and*
so the word ‘recognition’ could be used instead (ibid.43ff).

We are told that all human beings have a true knowledge of God at some level but deliberately suppress this knowledge because of their sinful condition (Gen. 3 and Romans 1:18-25). We need therefore, to ‘recognise’ the scriptures as the word of God.

Perspicuity can be understood to imply an access to the Scriptures that is entirely human and natural whereas only God the Holy Spirit can give us understanding of the Scriptures and so the word ‘comprehension’ would be better (ibid.48), (1 Cor. 2:11-16, Matt. 16:16-17, Acts 13:48, 16:14).

In discussing the authority of Scripture the word ‘authenticity’ should perhaps be used implicating the internal work of the Holy Spirit who interprets spiritual truths to those who are spiritual (1 Cor. 2:13); a factor lost by many Liberal interpretations (ibid.48).

The final vocabulary suggestion is opting for the word ‘infallibility’ instead of ‘inerrancy’ because it is a more dynamic and less mechanical view of authority (ibid.48). Interpretations of infallibility have varied from equality with inerrancy to a restriction of application just to those sections dealing directly with salvation and the Christian way of life. Overall, the distinction lies in the strictness of application and the restriction of inerrancy to a verbal truth whereas infallibility embraces a concept.

Whilst infallible is a more suitable word in the available armory, if he were starting from scratch McGowan would use the word “authentic” when describing the nature of Scripture. Inerrancy can only be applied to propositional statements and cannot, for example, be used in reference to a Psalm or a Parable whereas authentic, meaning does it have its origin in the divine speaking or does it bear the undeniable marks of the Creator’s handiwork, can be so applied. This word can also be applied to texts extant today and does not have to revert to the non-existent autographs - as McGowan states - God himself authenticates the Scriptures to our hearts and minds by the work of his Holy Spirit (ibid.31). When speaking of the authority or nature of Scripture the term authenticity should be used which focuses more on the internal testimony and work of the Holy Spirit in interpreting truths to those who are spiritual (1 Cor. 2:13): a point lost sight of by many Liberals. The word authentic can also be applied to non-propositional text, such as Psalms or Parables, whereas Infallible cannot; it can also be applied to
today’s texts without the need to bring in the unavailable autographs (McGowan, p.213). *Inspiration* should be replaced by *spiration, perspicuity* by *comprehension*, inerrancy by infallibility, authority by authenticity and *illumination* by *recognition*. Changing the vocabulary used and defining its meaning clearly should, by limiting infallibility to matters of salvation and the Christian Life, allow most believers to agree.

McGowan makes another telling contribution when he points out that had God included modern scientific knowledge in the biblical writings, such new knowledge would have detracted from the message by startling and diverting the original readers or hearers. Any criticism therefore of mistaken scientific statements should not be counted against the Bible but rather understood as being necessary so as not to unnerv the early readers: this point could well be taken on board by the severe critics of Inerrancy.

Regarding groups eventually making concessions, Peter Enns reminds us that the Catholic church was instrumental in sending Galileo to prison for his heretical view that the sun and not the earth was at the centre of the universe; the church later came to accept the external view of science, (ENNS, P. (2005) *Inspiration and Incarnation: Evangelicals and the Problem of the Old Testament, Grand Rapids, Baker, p.14*).

**Acceptance of Myth and more Flexibility**

Myth, in its least pejorative connotation as ‘an imaginative vision of how things might have been’, must be acknowledged by all to have been a large part of the biblical texts as Israel in the Babylonian exile attempted to explain its situation and its relationship to God as the chosen people when they had been deprived of the Promised Land and sent into punishing exile. The saga of Israel’s history and traditions attempted to show God as all powerful, all knowing and a just judge who had eventually tired of Israel’s wayward ways.

Nancey Murphy had a couple of helpful insights to contribute to smoothing over the impasse between the stances of Liberals and Evangelicals – *The literary forms of the Bible reflect its own times and if the stories turn out to be legends it would simply mean that the past expressed its religious attitudes and convictions by the use of legend. Myth is a figurative representation of a reality that eludes precise description or definition. The biblical writers began with historical facts but added mythological allusions thus giving more significance - a vehicle by which*
objective intrusion of God into history is described (MURPHY, N. (1996) Beyond Liberalism and Fundamentalism, Valley Forge, Trinity Press International; p.46).

With regard to biblical passages that portray God in a vengeful, bloodthirsty or other detrimental guise, of these we need to keep these passages as "condemned" Scripture that is Scripture that is not a testament to the true nature of God, but rather of what happens when people make God in their own image. These condemned passages are the human faces of God, written by humans in all their sinful glory. (Izbicki, Michael J. Anglican Theological Review, Spring 2011, Vol. 93 Issue 2, p362-363), a useful catch phrase for these blood thirsty passages in the conquest narratives is "God made in the image of Man".

To restrict the Bible’s revelatory or ethical truths to a dependency on verbal accuracy, when they have been written by human authors with no real pretense to academy, is inappropriate and damaging to the excellent messages to be found therein. In the matter of ecumenism, John Perry feels that it is unreasonable to deny the inspiration of such a book as the Bible, because one sacred writer says that on a given occasion twenty-four thousand, and another says that twenty-three thousand, men were slain. Surely a Christian may be allowed to tread such objections under his feet. (PERRY, J. Quodlibet, Journal 3, 2001. No.4. p.3). Some flexibility on both sides will undoubtedly be necessary to get even close to unity.

Once the totally universal and inviolate use of the King James Bible had begun to wane, the implication was that there can be many translations and no English version could be taken as a direct transcript of the mind of God; even the Greek or Hebrew texts cannot. The New Bible Commentary Revised seems, in some areas, such as the numbers mentioned in Num. 1:46 or the ‘long day’ of Joshua (Josh. 10:12f), to read the Bible as the Commentary would like it to mean, in contradiction of almost all other translations, including the AV and the RSV (GUTHRIE, D. A. M., J.A. (1970) The New Bible Commentary, London, Inter-Varsity Press). The matter of the choice of a translation of the Bible may be a fertile area for some move towards ecumenism.

J.K.S. Reid published The Authority of Scripture in 1957 in which he wrote - In earlier ages, a view of the Bible was held that possessed enough suppleness to accommodate such critical discrepancies as were discovered, and still to retain the authority of the Bible. In the later period, the Bible was regarded in terms of a type of
literal inerrancy which, when the discoveries were remade and extended, made it impossible for biblical authority to survive. If the authority of the Bible be construed in the sense that every isolated word of Holy Scripture is inerrant, then to call in question even one of these points is enough to shatter that authority. Neither Luther nor Calvin was subject to either of these errors, rather, they interpreted the authority of the Bible in a living way as a means through which God makes his word heard in the present day (p.65). In a nutshell, the difference was that Calvin and other reformers held the doctrine of Scripture to be a flexible and dynamic means by which human beings encounter God whereas the Protestant Scholastics reduce this to a literalist and rigid inerrantist position. Reid continued, Luther stands at the cross-roads and from the point he occupied, at least two paths lead forward. One is that which he himself and also Calvin followed, according to which the Bible is a living authority making itself felt and heard in religious experience. The other is the path followed by Protestant Scholasticism, which, holding no less that the Bible is an inspired book, regarded it as a fixed and external standard and text book of what may be believed REID, J. K. S. (1957), The Authority of Scripture, Connecticut, London, Greenwood Press, p.29-54).

John Perry feels that it is not inconceivable that when some former writers, such as Charles Hodge, described the Bible as free from all error he had some other form of inerrancy in mind; for example the definition of error which implies the intentional provision of misleading information (PERRY, J. Quodlibet, Journal 3, 2001, No.4, p.3).

There has been at least one evangelical author who has been prepared to reconsider the evangelical attitude towards inerrancy and inspiration. Scott McGowan has suggested the following: I have gradually become concerned that some ways of defining and using Scripture within evangelicalism are open to serious criticism and could do us more harm than good if we continue to maintain them in their present form. Through a failure to understand the differences between evangelicalism and fundamentalism, through a failure to engage with biblical scholarship, and sometimes through sheer obscurantist and anti-intellectual approaches, evangelicals have often damaged rather than helped the case for a high view of Scripture (MCGOWAN, S.B. & MCGOWAN, A.T.B., Apollos branch of Inter-Varsity Press, 2007, p.11).

Scott McGowan’s argument is that Scripture, having been divinely spirated, is as God intended it to be, having chosen to use human beings as his vehicle. He did not give us an inerrant autographical text but one that reflects the humanity of its authors with
clear evidences of its origin in the divine speaking. This obviates the necessity of consideration of the *autographa*. If *textual inerrancy* is so vital to the doctrine of *Scripture*, why did God not preserve the *autographa*? Since we do not possess any of the original documents, applying inerrancy to them is a somewhat pointless argument; if everyone accepts that there are errors in the extant manuscripts and translations what is the point of insisting that there once existed perfect versions of these texts and what was the point of God acting supernaturally to provide inerrant text providentially if it ceased to be inerrant as soon as copies were made? So many of the biblical texts contained additions, alterations and rearrangements that to discover an actual autograph would be extremely difficult and complex. To insist on the necessity of an inerrant autograph, as Greg Bahnsen does, implies that God has no further interest in, nor control over, the biblical text after the autographa have been produced; (ibid 109f).

We do not have to be forced into a stark choice between Rogers and McKim’s errantist text and John Woodbridge’s inerrantist one. This alternative choice serves well to explain Calvin’s apparent vacillations as both Calvin and Luther gave a much higher place to the humanness of the Scriptures than later writers in the Reformed tradition; they were quite dismissive of minor textual discrepancies for varying accounts and spoke freely of ‘*accommodation*’ (where God talked ‘down’ to his followers using human language and thought). We can see from this that removal of the term ‘inerrancy’ from the discussion and the substitution of this alternative view together with the appending of ‘infallibility’ to the text presentation may well go some way to at least decreasing the heat in the hermeneutical debate. *It is worth asking whether “inerrant” is really the most appropriate word to use to describe Scripture. It needs so much qualification, even by its defenders, that it is in danger of dying the death of a thousand qualifications.* (I. Howard Marshall, (1982), *Biblical Inspiration*, London: Hodder & Stoughton, pp. 72-73). Nancey Murphy has opted for a new philosophical attitude as mentioned earlier on page 133 - she said that Philosophy was largely responsible for the intellectual bifurcation of Protestant Christian thought, i.e. into liberals and conservatives, in the following manner:

Rene Descartes (1596-1650) -> John Locke (1632-1704) -> David Hume (1711-1776)-

Thomas Reid (1710-1796) -> Princeton Theology (c.1820) -> Fundamentalism

Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) -> Schleiermacher (c.1820) -> Liberalism
G.B. Askarova in a Journal Article entitled The Religious and Ethical Education of Students in a Secular School opined that religion harmoniously synthesized the culture of the world and universal human values and also served to mitigate the harsh influence of many social doctrines and moral upbringing of the rising generation. (ASKAROVA, G. B. (2007). The Religious and Ethical Education of Students in a Secular School. Russian Education and Society, 49, 34-46). He described the ultimate purpose of religion as being to educate the kind of individual who possesses moral convictions, who is decent and virtuous and the carrier of high humanistic ideas.

Askarova went on to delineate the functions of religious and ethical education as:

- **Upbringing** - the moral development of the personality to enable the individual to master the system of universal human values and social activity
- **Worldview** - focuses on questions about the existence of God, life, death and immortality for the purpose of experiencing active questing and spirituality and bringing into harmony their perception of the world. Included is the Meaning-Formation function to determine the meaning of human life, the purpose of the natural world and society, an understanding of the deeper meanings of the universe enabling students to gain an understanding of the essential oneness of mankind and the world on the basis of faith and knowledge. Under the influence of religious and ethical education a child gains an awareness of the immortality of the spirit, an understanding of his or her own actions and deeds leading him to attain spiritual harmony and enabling him consciously to choose the path of mercy, goodness, love and justice.
- **Communicative Function** - to create the necessary conditions for school students to interact, to affirm and instill the kinds of moral norms and forms of interaction in keeping with religious precepts.
- **Value Orientation Function** - to shape a positive attitude towards sacred values and norms and to have an orientation map in the huge world of values and meanings
- **Normative-Regulative Function** - to cultivate behavior that is in keeping with the basic norms and requirements of religious morality
- **The Cognitive Function** - to instill a solid interest in problems of spirituality,
morality and religion and expand horizons of diverse theological conceptions, theories and systems

- The Hedonistic Function - to give students a sense of satisfaction or pleasure as a result of entering into transcendence, religious values, sublime concepts and ideas. Appreciation of art on religious themes opens emotional feelings and aesthetic satisfaction.

Regarding the practicalities of teaching religion he said -

Schools also lack the necessary scientific and methodological support for religious and ethical education. To compensate, we have developed and tested diverse forms of upbringing work, including classroom lessons and debates, publication of thematic wall newspapers, students’ essays, competitions to select the best drawings that depict Bible stories, evening get-togethers devoted to solved and unsolved mysteries (“The Mysteries Around Us,” “Field of Miracles,” and so on), tests, and field trips to various places of worship, such as churches, mosques, or Baptist houses of worship. After students are given guidelines about how to behave in such places, we arrange meetings with various clerics, visit Sunday school classes, watch movies and cartoons, discuss popular science and religious literature, and other activities. (See Appendix 2 for a full transcript).

As John Barton in his book *People of the Book? The Authority of the Bible in Christianity*, has observed - It is clear that there are irreconcilable contradictions in Scripture that no amount of careful harmonizing can gainsay. The importance of the Bible as one of the earliest witnesses to the events concerning Jesus is the key to its importance; it is a human book in which human beings reflect upon their experiences of God. The resolution of truth-questions raised by the Bible cannot be settled by appeal to the Bible (BARTON, J. (1988) *People of the Book*, London, SPCK. p.42f).

Herman Bavinck, as quoted earlier, summed up this debacle rather well whilst suggesting a more reasonable attitude to be taken – he affirmed that the Scriptures have come into existence because God is their primary author with no mention of inerrancy or of a mechanical inspiration failing to do justice to the activity of the secondary authors. These writers retain their own character, language and style as the Holy Spirit employed and led them. This position is between the inerrantists and the errantists by recognizing that God ‘breathed out’ the Scriptures but used human authors with all their humanity intact who in turn used all the normal skills, tools and practices including research, reflection and deliberation and the exercising of freedom
of the will as they worked (ibid.148). Scriptures are thus infallible, not in the sense of inerrant autographa, but that they will infallibly achieve God's purpose in giving them. Where there occurs the dilemma of apparent contradiction the dogmatician must let the truth stand side by side rather than trying to force them into some artificial agreement. It is better to seek to understand the difficult and obscure passages and even to admit that we do not understand how two passages relate to one another rather than to try and force harmonization (BAVINCK, H. (2003) Reformed Dogmatics - Volume 1, Grand Rapids, Baker, pp.149/150).

To refer to what was said previously - the whole key to religious education in schools is to teach about religion, not advocating the particulars of any specific religion. The latter area can be dealt with denominationally by the churches themselves in their own groups who can teach those who voluntarily and knowingly expose themselves to their particular beliefs, but it has no place in an unbiased, publicly funded, educational program. Section 33a of the Education Act has introduced classes in Ethics to be made available to those students opting out of Religious Education as such. Teachers are being trained for these at the moment. Religion advocates are objecting to the substitution of Ethics classes as an abrogation of the Christian Religion, whereas the subject matter is often common to each. Although much better than no morality at all, ethics does not cater for the lack of spirituality which the absence of religion leads to.

‘Primary Ethics’, a separate organisation established by the St James Ethics Centre, is the authorised provider of special education in ethics classes. As of April 2011, Primary Ethics had trained sufficient volunteer teachers and appointed enough volunteer coordinators to enable 128 primary schools in NSW to offer special education in ethics classes. The Department of Education and Communities has drafted an updated religious education policy and updated religious education implementation procedures that will make allowance for an ethics course in New South Wales government schools. Draft Special Education in Ethics Implementation Guidelines has also been developed. The department has developed a transparent policy framework in consultation with the Director-General's Consultative Committee on Special Religious Education and the St James Ethics Centre to address any future requests to deliver ethics courses in government schools. In his letter, Religious Education in Schools, Dr. Simon Longstaff defined the purpose of Ethics Classes in the following terms: what we proposed is a program with the following aims, to:

- Provide a secular complement for the discussion of the ethical dimension of
students’ lives.

- Offer a secure, non-judgemental space to explore the question, "What ought one to do?"
- Introduce the language of ethics and in doing so, to provide the tools to survey the values and principles we live by.
- Incorporate an ethical dimension to the students’ decision-making.
- Inspire an appreciation of virtues and ideals.
- Develop the intellectual capacity and the personal attitudes needed for participating in ethical reflection and action.
- Encourage an openness towards important personal and public issues.
- Introduce dialogue as a means of resolving ethical issues.
- Develop students’ ability to identify the relevant stakeholders and thoroughly explore, among other things, the consequences of proposed resolutions to the ethical dilemmas which they are considering.
- In short, to deepen the ethical sense of the future generation.

(Dr Simon Longstaff is Executive Director of St James Ethics Centre).

Conclusion

I understand that we are taking what is considered to be true today by the majority of reputable Biblical scholars as ‘givens’, regardless of what may be discovered in the future; what else can we do? The entire biblical texts portray what people thought at the time and we have no alternative but to do the same. In most cases present day knowledge is quite adequate to refute exclusive Fundamentalist dogma regarding scriptural inerrancy no matter what further developments await us.

So important is Inerrancy in formulating Fundamentalist doctrine and dogma that I have devoted much time to explaining, by historical, cultural and political backgrounds, what this persuasion is and how it came about. I am sure that any unprejudiced person shown the Bible for the first time and having its discrepancies pointed out would never consider suggesting that it was inerrant. Inerrancy is a mindset perpetrated through the generations by already committed adherents acting as parents, elders, pastors or peers and preceding and precluding any attempts at interpretation, thus colouring those future forays from the very start. The historically incorrect and conflicting accounts of the event of Jesus’ birth in Matthew and Luke should be enough to disprove Inerrancy, to say nothing of the extensive copying and altering as
demonstrated in the Synoptic Problem and the one hundred or more examples quoted in Appendix 1 and the differing lengths of the early manuscripts.

The authority and credulity of the Biblical texts should not rest on the absolute accuracy of every word and statement but rather on the morality, ethics and spirituality which they convey in their timeless messages. Legends and myths used to illustrate these messages were the acceptable explanatory vehicle used at the time and should not be critically examined for their veracity but rather for their connotations. As John Barton in his book ‘People of the Book, The Authority of the Bible in Christianity’ has observed - *It is clear that there are irreconcilable contradictions in Scripture that no amount of careful harmonizing can gainsay. The importance of the Bible as one of the earliest witnesses to the events concerning Jesus is the key to its importance; it is a human book in which human beings reflect upon their experiences of God. The resolution of truth-questions raised by the Bible cannot be settled by appeal to the Bible. The Bible is an important witness to the knowledge of God and has an important place in the life of the church, especially in worship. The Christian gospel existed before there ever was a Bible and could survive if every Bible was destroyed. Barton sees the Bible as reflecting spiritual experiences of a community rather than having come from God through human authorship (BARTON, J. (1988) People of the Book, London, SPCK. pp. 58-60).* 

One of the two main objectives of this thesis is therefore to strongly urge that the irrefutable evidence that the Bible as we have it is not free of all error but is a collection of presentations by different authors using their own knowledge, sometimes limited, and modes of expression. Absolute inerrancy of the Bible should not be allowed to be taught to our school children to the exclusion, and often negation of other views. The second main objective is that I want to present a curriculum that could be presented firmly, evidentially and in the earnest hope that it gives to all religious persuasions a satisfactory middle road enabling religious education to be made available in the schools.

Admittedly both left and right groups would need to make some concessions but that would be necessary in any case if there is any hope of the benefits of religion being enjoyed by all. The points to be satisfied in such a curriculum are listed below together with some supporting authors whose important work has already been mentioned but is worthy of recapitulation:
1. The term inerrancy should no longer be used in the discussion of hermeneutics.

There has been at least one evangelical author who has been prepared to reconsider the evangelical attitude towards inerrancy and inspiration. Scott McGowan has suggested the following: *Evangelicals ought to abandon the word ‘inerrancy’ and use language that is more biblically accurate and theologically constructive.* He opines that *nowhere in Scripture itself is there a claim to the kind of autographic inerrancy Warfield taught* (MCGOWAN, S.B. & MCGOWAN, A.T.B., Apollos branch of Inter-Varsity Press, 2007, ; p.114).

James Orr held a high view of Scripture but rejected Inerrancy as *the most suicidal position for any defender of revelation to take because unless we can demonstrate inerrancy of the biblical record down even to its minutest details, the whole edifice of belief in revealed religion falls to the ground,* (ORR, J. Duckworth, 1909, 197-198). *Inerrancy should be dropped from the vocabulary used in theological discussions and the word Infallible used instead, with the clear understanding that it applies to God’s achieving his purpose in communication, particularly in the areas of -*

- The knowledge of the will of God for our salvation in Jesus Christ
- Instruction in the way of Holiness
- The hope of Eternal Life

(ibid; p.217).

*There are irreconcilable contradictions in Scripture that no amount of careful harmonizing can gainsay* (Barton, John (1988) *People of the Book? The Authority of the Bible in Christianity*, London: SPCK, p.5)

I too believe that the word “Inerrancy” is inappropriate and directs peoples’ minds into the wrong channels. The Bible is never guilty of deliberate lies or purposely misleading statements but there are undoubted variations from the facts as we now know them; these are the result of limitations of knowledge of the times of writing. Had any attempt been made to introduce modern scientific or other knowledge in former times by revelation it would have caused a sensational diversion of attention from the matters in hand and resulted in confusion. Perhaps Philippians 2:7 may give us a clue when it tells that Jesus – *emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness.* Jesus adopted the appearance, spoke the language and used the knowledge of his day to be an acceptable contemporary person and so allowances must be made.
It is misguided to claim that enquiries into the Bible as a literary work, or as an historical record, destroy its value as the Word of God, because it should be obvious to all that there are human author-generated mistakes and contradictions in the Bible which must be acknowledged and satisfactorily accounted for if the Bible is to be made relevant and acceptable to today's readers. All that these enquiries destroy is the misguided concept of total inerrancy. These understandable mistakes do not detract in any way from the fundamental messages of the Bible nor do they prevent the religious person from deriving spiritual benefit from his or her readings; however they are of paramount importance to Inerrantists and of some concern to intelligent enquirers. As E.J. Young points out - If the evangelists were guilty of trifling errors and evidences of carelessness in so-called minor matters, we cannot escape the conclusion that they might have been just as careless in more important things. (E. J. Young (1963), Thy Word is Truth, London; The Banner of Truth Trust, p.131).

Inerrancy is a fundamental bastion of belief for the Conservative Evangelical but, as we have seen, the belief varies from “the Bible being totally free of error of any kind as we have it now”, to “only the Autographs were without error and then only in matters of faith and salvation”. The feelings, the emotion, the spiritual nourishment and uplifts that are generated in a receptive person are not destroyed by intellectually satisfactory explanations of the anomalies which liberal scholars and observant readers have found. The reflections of even appreciative readers however may well be interrupted by the intellectual intrusion of obvious, unexplained contradictions or errors. Even Martin Luther, writing his translation of the Bible into German in 1521, noted that there were apparent contradictions in the text, but because of the power of the Church’s insistence that it alone could and should interpret the Holy Writ correctly this finding was not followed up for 200 years.

2. The use of myth should be recognised and accepted in the biblical texts as an appropriate method of expression by the ancient authors.

The use of parable, myth, legend and saga to illustrate messages or points being made, was an acceptable method of communication in biblical times and should not be denigrated as unbelievable, wrong or inappropriate. Bultmann expressed his view of myth as the real purpose of myth is not to present an objective picture of the world as it is, but to express man's understanding of himself in the world in which he lives. Myth should be interpreted not cosmologically, but anthropologically, or better still

3. Contradictions and variations of accounts of the same event should be understood as variations in sources and not as outright errors. Embellishments resulting from long periods of oral transmission at different religious sites should be expected.

I believe that ancient authors had no conception that their writings would be combined into a single work such as the Bible. Their contributions often came from different sources at different times and with different emphases, even if about the same event. They could not know that their works would be placed alongside each other in the future allowing easy comparison, such as the case of the books of Samuel/Kings and Chronicles and so no attempt should be made to clumsily harmonise differing accounts or be surprised if numbers vary between one account and another. They also told of current practices, such as human sacrifice, which are an abomination to us but in ancient times were practised in many cultures and societies, and some writers saw no problem in it and even expected God to follow the same methods.

4. The literary standards at the time of biblical authorship have been quoted earlier in the thesis and should allow arrangements which would not be acceptable today, e.g. plagiarism to stand. Conservatives must accept the literary permissions of the times, such as the use of mythological narrative to explain what seemed inexplicable to ancient people, and Liberals must acknowledge the element of inspiration present in the desire of biblical authors to convey to others their spiritual delight in and enthusiasm for their religious experiences.

5. It does not really affect the message whether there was this number of persons involved or that, or whether Jesus sat or stood to deliver his sermon. Similarly Old Testament authors wrote to their hearers in the idiom and milieu of their times and had no reason to make adjustment to our modern sensibilities.

*When discrepancies occur in the Holy Scriptures and we cannot harmonise them, let them pass, it does not endanger the articles of the Christian faith* (cited in Shelton, p.181 from *Weimarer Ausgabe*, XLVI, 727).

Augustine said - *the sentiment (and the intention of the speakers) and not the jots and tittles of letters ought to be looked at* (*Harmony*, II, xxviii, 67, *Nicene and post-Nicene*...
Fathers by Schaff, 6:135).

Neither Augustine nor Luther predicated the trustworthiness of Scripture in communicating its saving message on the technical accuracy of its human-accommodated form but on its divine function and its success in accomplishing it.

Calvin affirmed that - They (the apostles) were not over scrupulous in quoting words provided they did not misuse Scripture for their convenience. We must always look at the purpose for which quotations are made … but as far as words are concerned, as in other things which are not relevant to the present purpose, they allow themselves some indulgence (Commentary on Hebrews 10:6 CNTC. p.136).

6. Israel borrowed large sections of their traditions and religious practices from their neighbours and not from God. The people who eventually made up the historical Israel may already have had these beliefs and practices. Even some of their laws may have links to the Law Code of Hammurabi from the 1700’s BCE., as many scholars believe (Anderson, Longman Group, 1991; p.150). Some of Israel’s sacrificial language and ritual are to be found on tablets from an earlier time in Canaan and the ANE.

Peter Enns lists the following issues which, he says, have not been handled well in evangelical theology –

Why does the Bible in places look a lot like the literature of Israel’s ancient neighbours?
Is the Old Testament really unique? Does it not just reflect the ancient world in which it was produced?
If the Bible is the word of God, why does it fit so nicely in the ancient world?
Why do different parts of the Old Testament say different things about the same thing?
Why do the New Testament authors handle the Old Testament in such odd ways and often out of context?


7. Biblical scholarship should be given its due appreciation by all persuasions and discussion of its findings should be freely allowed.

Dr. Hubbard, when President of Fuller Theological College stated - Where a rigid

8. Spirituality, revelation and inspiration must be acknowledged and accepted by the Liberal side.

Martin Luther himself wrote - the Scriptures did not speak about scientific, technical or philosophical questions, rather the Scriptures spoke with clarity about salvation and the life of faith (Luther, Weimarer Ausgabe 18, 653.28-35).

J.K.S. Reid wrote, There appears over the years a recurrent movement from living authority to literal authority; a rigid torpor that replaced a living voice (REID, J. K. S. (1957) The Authority of Scripture, Connecticut, London, Greenwood Press, p.25).

It has not been my intention in this thesis to denigrate the Conservative movement, as everyone who loves the Bible should be loved and cherished in return, but they must be discouraged from introducing things about the Bible which are highly questionable and for which no reliable evidence exists, i.e. amounting to indoctrination. Like John Locke and Charles Augustus Briggs, I do not object to privately held beliefs, it is the broadcasting of these beliefs with the objective of persuading others to adopt these problematic, non-evidential interpretations that I descry. These things must be excluded from any curriculum of religious education not only because they indoctrinate but also because they cause harmful disputation and discourage those seeking religion by their obvious errors and misleading interpretations. Liberalism also comes in for some criticism in its concentration on historical, cultural, geographic and scientific facts at the expense of spirituality and God, but at least, from an educational point of view, it offers verifiable evidence.

If we accept the crystallised definition of Indoctrination as “the inculcation of beliefs that are not known to be evidentially true” then the presentation from the Fundamentalists, relying on an Inerrant Bible, is not acceptable in that it clearly falls within the classification of Indoctrination. For example their persistence in the support of Mosaic Authorship of the whole Pentateuch and the infallibility of all of Jesus’ recorded sayings, not only without proof of the truth of these beliefs but despite convincing proof to the contrary, clearly shows this. Further, if we consider all religious/spiritual beliefs
to be un-provable then any attempt to inculcate these beliefs is also indoctrination. When we come down to scientific, geographic, cultural or historical material in the Bible then we are on a different ground and the presentation of proofs becomes much more realistic. The Liberal offering does produce evidence as to the veracity of its statements which are largely concerned with these areas. In the case of the Synoptic Problem, for example, no matter which gospel is eventually agree to be the first, considerable cross-copying has undoubtedly occurred putting an end to notions of inviolate or inerrant text as alterations of previous ‘inspired writings’ by other ‘inspired writers’ certainly occurred.

The objections raised by schoolchildren’s parents, if Religion is not presented in a manner agreeable to their denominational view, have resulted in the teaching of religion or the Bible being withdrawn in some instances as the easiest way out. As a result, some of our school children receive no religious input at all which, according to many educationalists, is a grave loss. Another sad feature of the parent/school communication regarding RE is that sometimes the requisite letters are not sent out at all. Many, perhaps most times, the information for parents to go on, about what is being offered in RE, is inadequate. Despite what the Rawlinson Report recommends I think that information about how the content of SRE classes is arrived at and what they contain is necessary for parents to know. Recently Ethics Classes have been introduced to provide an active alternative to RE classes and, as of last April, I understand that sufficient teachers have been trained for 106 schools.

G.B. Askarova described the ultimate purpose of religion as being to educate the kind of individual who possesses moral convictions, who is decent and virtuous and the carrier of high humanistic ideas. He goes on to describe the benefits of religious education in these terms - Under the influence of religious and ethical education a child gains an awareness of the immortality of the spirit, an understanding of his or her own actions and deeds leading him to attain spiritual harmony and enabling him consciously to choose the path of mercy, goodness, love and justice. a religious and ethical instruction of students that should transmit a system of knowledge about religion, acquainting students with various theological conceptions of the universe in order to expand their cognitive intellectual horizon and teach them how to think and to deal with religious and ethical categories, shaping a moral and cultural personality who is able to live in accordance with the norms of universal human morality. And religion, moreover, thanks to its practical and effective morality and its firmly established system
of moral norms, has every potential to turn into a force that is able to withstand the spiritual corrosion that has blighted the society and to bring relative harmony back into our lives.


Regarding the moral corruption that has invaded society I am put in mind of the aggressive adversing now prevalent whose object is to obtain money from those watching by the promotion of frankly bogus products and claims or at best proposing products with disappointing results. Very seldom are all the advertising claims born out by the experience of the purchaser.

In September 1991 Lord Sacks succeeded Lord Jakobovits as Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth. Lord Sacks is a well respected theologian and an interesting comment from him fits in well here; he said – Religion is the redemption of solitude – we are not alone (from Howard Jacobson’s SBS television program on the Bible).

Is the animosity between denominational groups partly due to:
1. Fear of a threatening alternative position, and/or
2. Identification with the stance so strong that any threat to it is felt as a personal one.

Liberalism concentrates too much on academic matters of dates, authorship, historicity and setting at the expense of God and spirituality. Fundamentalism, hidebound by inerrancy, perpetuates falsehoods and matters known by reason or science to be unacceptable - these should not be taught as facts.

The Epistemology of Power, a phrase coined by Professor Ron Laura in his book Empathetic Education: Stanley Fish described Liberalism and Religion as “two forms of faith striving for power”. Could this striving for power be the driving force of the pursuing of some religions and the threat to its power be the reason for violent resistance to other regimes?

The noble but superficial and unworkable safeguards envisaged in the NSW Religious Education Policy are failing in the following areas:

- Parents are not being reliably notified what provisions each school has for
Religious Education to enable an informed choice.

- There is insufficient direction being obtained from parents as to what sort of Specific Religious Education they want from the school, resulting in some students being instructed in doctrines, such as Inerrancy or Creationism, which the parents would not want if they knew the details about it; but without specific instructions teachers cannot withdraw students from unsuitable classes.

- Outside teachers of religion are frequently ‘anyone the churches can get’, and there is often no direction as to what they should or should not teach. Especially there is no direction about what they should not teach! Admittedly ICCOREIS does produce suitable transdenominational teaching materials but their influence is limited.

- Outside teachers are not required to have any qualifications whatsoever in religious studies and so they frequently teach what they have picked up in Sunday School or in conversation with other members of their denomination. Some regional panels set up to monitor Christian Education do vet teachers as to their ability to teach but because of the representation on these panels of all major persuasions then the teachers’ theology is likewise and again their influence is limited.

- The churches approved for supplying teachers of Religion are selected on the flimsy grounds of their having a minister ordained somewhere and a set of known beliefs to teach, regardless of the value or truth of these beliefs or the depth of that ordination.

In the broader picture what would be the damage to religious life if some of the elementary concepts of biblical criticism, like - the Book of Isaiah was written by two or three people, Deuteronomy was written not by Moses but some considerable time after his death and only 7 of Paul’s letters are thought to be his genuine solo work - were to be accepted? Not much if any, and here is an area where Evangelical Conservatives could let their hair down a bit, and some have. However the fundamentalist sees the critical scholar as setting his own critical judgment against the intrinsic, God-given harmony of the Bible and its doctrines and because he cannot see how varying elements hang together it means that they disagree. Instead they feel that the scholar should persevere in studying and comparing until the fullness of truth as willed by God becomes apparent to him. Jumping straight away to the conclusion of different sources is a threat to the unity, authority and effectiveness of Holy Scripture, they say. Similarly any grading of biblical books, such as saying that Esther and Ecclesiastes are not as
useful as say John’s gospel, although they may do it themselves, is rejected by fundamentalists when outsiders do it, in case they are setting out to deprive them of their status as the absolute Word of God.

The main areas in which progress towards ecumenism in hermeneutics and pedagogy may be possible seem to be -

- Changing the descriptive vocabulary - for example, removing the word Inerrancy and substituting Infallible whose meaning is applied only to matters of salvation and the Christian life, would produce agreement amongst many. In the view of some the term inerrancy carries significant “fundamentalist baggage”, with all the negative associations that go with the word fundamentalism (e.g. narrow, obscurantist, anti-scholarly, unsophisticated). (BEALE, G. K. (2008) The Erosion of Inerrancy in Evangelicalism, Wheaton, Illinois, Crossway Books; p.21).

- Herman Bavinck claimed that use of the term ‘Infallibility’ allowed affirmation of a strong view of Scripture without involving the autographs which we do not possess and have not seen. However he held to an ‘organic’ view of scripture whereby the ‘impression’ was important rather than sterile textual arguments; God will infallibly achieve what he had determined to through his Word as now portrayed. Infallible implies achieving the goals but does not invoke the strict restrictions of textual accuracy invoked by Inerrancy. The argument that God could not have given us errant documents in the autographs fails because God chose human beings as secondary authors with all their human frailty and tendency to error. Bavinck’s view offers a middle way between the errantists and the inerrantists p.162 (BAVINCK, H. (2003) Reformed Dogmatics - Volume 1, Grand Rapids, Baker).

- Teaching about religion and its qualities, rather than specific beliefs, has been mentioned before as a bastion of impartial religious instruction. Discussions around religion such as those suggested by Askarova may be very suitable in this regard: he reported - Many classroom lessons were devoted to religion, such as: “The Existence of God: Illusion or Reality?”; “Mysticism as Faith in the Supernatural and Divine” (many assume that mysticism “feeds” religion; this topic was especially interesting to the students); “Early Forms of Religion”; “A Brief Excursion into the History of World Religions—Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam”; “The Most Important Postulates of Christian Morality”; “Islam and Morality”; “Religious Holidays”; “Religious Customs and Rituals”; and “The ‘New’ Religious Currents.”
• Allowing the free discussion and informed debate about other religions and their precepts, including visits to their places of worship and talks with their ministers.
• Allowing books and speakers of other persuasions to be available.
• Strict limitations of the teaching of Religious Education in Schools to those teachers trained and committed to the above principles
• School excursions to various places of worship to observe different approaches.

The assertion that Scripture is ‘infallible’ focuses attention instead on what Scripture teaches, and asserts that its authority therefore is paramount over tradition (particularly confessions) and human reason (Noble, Thomas A. European Journal of Theology, 2010, Vol. 19 Issue 1, p82-83).

Summary of Recommendations

1. Teach about or from Religion, not by inculcation of specific religious beliefs.
2. Leave SRE to the churches outside the school curriculum.
3. Reduce the use of polemic language, like Inerrancy and Fundamentalism.
4. Admit that myth and legend were genres used by biblical authors to illustrate concepts and not to represent scientific or technological fact.
5. Acknowledge Scripture’s rightful place in the areas of salvation, eternal life and Christian behavior.
6. Recognise that Israel freely borrowed some traditions, notions and rituals from surrounding cultures and not from God.
7. Recognise God’s hand in developing the Scriptures (faith) whilst acknowledging that by trusting Inspiration to human authors variations in transmission were inevitable.
8. Tolerate the ignorance of ancient writers, particularly in scientific matters.
9. Acknowledge the multiple examples of cross-copying among the Gospel writers.
10. Reduce the amount of adamant, exclusive preaching, in particular the denigration or denying of the spirituality and worship of other beliefs.
11. Allow free and open debate of other points of view by all sides.
12. Encourage school excursions to various places of worship to learn about them.
13. Teach around religion along the lines specified in Askarova’s curriculum.

Because of its fixed and narrow beliefs and its total rejection of critical scholarship, or
alternative views of any kind, Fundamentalism does not follow the above suggestions and falls into the category of Indoctrination by:

- teaching material which is highly questionable, or at the very least not known to be true,
- not permitting any argument to be heard against its doctrines by -
  - engaging only speakers committed to its own precepts,
  - encouraging its students to read only material which supports its cause
  - limiting debate to a pseudo-discussion featuring topics and conclusions designed to arrive at a conservative conclusion and further or support its beliefs.
  - Considering those who do not follow its teachings to be 'not proper Christians'.

These teaching methods and practices should not be supported in our public school education policy. It seems to me that we have learned several things about religious education;

- Absolute religious beliefs should not be taught with the notion of inculcation
- Material should not be offered as fact when no proof exists as to its veracity.
- Religious teaching should be around and about religions and their beliefs.
- Due cognizance should be taken of the limitations in knowledge of the early writers and their legitimate use of myth and legend as aids to description.
- It should be recognized that to write modern scientific information into the biblical texts would have thrown the readers and hearers of the time into confusion and detracted from the messages intended.
- Discussion of all alternatives and encouragement to investigate all possibilities should be given free reign and no unopposed, exclusivism tolerated.
- Strict sectarian teachings should be left in the realm of the respective churches and be offered only to persons who knowingly and willingly expose themselves to it.
- Religious Education should be just that, i.e. education, to enable a catholic understanding and building a critical apparatus for the students to decide religious things for themselves.

I strongly suggest that all religion teachers, regardless of their persuasion, should acknowledge scholarship and rectitude by adhering to the following pointers –
1. Bible stories, especially those in the Old Testament, should be viewed as myth, legend or tribal saga and not as accurate history. This applies especially to the stories of the Patriarchs and the Flood.

2. The age of the earth should be calculated on scientific grounds not biblical ones.

3. Jesus' ministry details are based largely on Mark’s format and do not represent an accurate context, although the healings and miracles may have occurred at some time and place.

4. The advent and development of the human race should take into account the fossil record and the African findings, especially those of the Leakey family.

5. There being no written record of the birth of Jesus, the accounts in the Gospels relating to it, which are all at variance, should be viewed as conjecture on the part of the authors.

6. The succession details in the genealogies and Patriarchal narratives are not verifiably true and do not represent historical or chronological accuracy.

7. Israel absorbed much from its surrounding cultures and the saga of its history, religious rituals and traditions contain much borrowed material.

8. Archaeological findings, such as the abandoned ruin that was Jericho at the time when Joshua is alleged to have sacked it, should be considered.

9. Whilst mistakes of a scientific or technical nature in the Bible are understandable, due to lack of knowledge at the time, variations in provenance, such as those of Isaiah and Daniel must also be acknowledged.

If these suggestions were to be adopted, I believe Religious Education could again achieve its rightful and respected position in our Schools Education Curriculum and Policy. The damaging and polemical disagreements could be reduced leaving a more neutral and acceptable situation. It is indeed a great shame and loss if children have to go without any religious input because of squabbling among adults and if seekers after religion should be discouraged by the bitter and adamant disagreements between churches as to who has the right of it.
APPENDIX 1

An illustrative list of some of the many inaccuracies and difficulties in the Biblical Texts-

This list is not meant to be a destructive criticism of the Bible but is provided to show that, however inspired they may have been, the authors of the Biblical material were human and thus subject to human errors, especially in the absence of maps or historical records. These 100 or so anomalies also show clearly that many books were added to later and that sometimes the new material contained things and places from the new editor’s time which were not appropriate to the original time of writing, like the references to grain crops and the elaborate tabernacle construction whilst the Israelites were still simple, unskilled nomads following the flocks in the wilderness, and the references to a tribal organisation before one was in place.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reference</th>
<th>Anomaly</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Genesis 1:1-2:4a</td>
<td>Two separate creation stories written in different. styles and with a different sequence of events.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vs. 2:4b-25</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genesis 1:26a</td>
<td>Then God said, let us make human kind in our image - who was God talking to?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genesis 7:2,3</td>
<td>In the first reference Noah is instructed to take 7 pairs of clean animals and 1 pair of unclean whereas in the second, 1 pair of all is required.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vs. 7:24, 8:3b</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genesis 7:4,12,17</td>
<td>The flood lasted 40 days and 40 nights in the first version and 150 days in the second (There is also a third).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vs. 7:24, 8:3b</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genesis 12:11-20</td>
<td>The same story of pretending that one’s wife is one’s sister in order to avoid her abduction by the local king is used in all three segments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vs, Gen. 20:2-18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vs. Gen 26:6-11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genesis 14:14</td>
<td>..... and went in pursuit as far as Dan – the tribal territories were not marked out until over 600 years later.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genesis 15 vs. 17</td>
<td>Two parallel accounts of God’s covenant with Abraham.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genesis 21:14-21</td>
<td>The fate of Hagar and Ishmael here told contrasts with</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
that described in Chapter 16.

**Genesis 21:32,34**  
*Abimelech …… returned to the land of the Philistines* – this allegedly followed a covenant with Abraham in c.1800 BCE whereas the Philistines did not arrive in the area until c.1200 from the Aegean region.

**Genesis 25:18**  
*In the direction of Assyria.* Assyria did not arise as an entity until c. 1356, 400 years later.

**Genesis 26:1,8**  
Abimelech king of the Philistines – the Philistines were not to arrive in the land for another 600 years or so.

**Genesis 26:15,18b**  
The Philistines had filled in all the wells that Isaac's father Abraham had dug – this took place in c. 1800-1700 whereas the Philistines did not arrive from the Aegean until c.1200.

**Genesis 37:22-24,28**  
Reuben pleaded with his brothers not to kill Joseph but to put him in a pit, from which Midianite traders lifted him, whereas in the 2nd section it is Judah who pleads for Joseph and then sells him to the Ishmaelites.

**Gen 42:37 vs. Gen. 43:9**  
The Judah vs. Reuben stories continue as both brothers apparently go surety for their youngest brother.

**Gen 46:33-34 vs. Gen 47:3,6**  
Joseph urges his brothers not to tell Pharaoh that they are Shepherds as "every shepherd is an abomination to the Egyptians". The brothers spill the beans in 47:3 but in v.6, rather than being offended, Pharaoh is generous to them.

**Genesis 47:11**  
*Joseph settled his father ……. in the land of Rameses* c. 1600 BCE. This land was named after Rameses II who reigned much later in c. 1290-1224 BCE.

**Exodus e.g. 2:1f**  
In the laws allegedly brought to the people in the wilderness from the Lord by Moses are sacrifices of grain and flour which require the growing of crops; a situation not possible until the Israelites had settled in the PL later.
Exodus 3:1-4:17
Two versions of the call of Moses and appointment of Aaron, the first occurring in the Land of Midian and the second in Egypt; different in style and emphasis.

Exodus 3:18, 5:3
Moses requests a 3 day excursion only (see also 5:1,4, 8, 8:8,25,27-28) and Pharaoh thought their departure was merely to sacrifice to their God in the wilderness for a day or two (8:27-28). Moses lied.

Exodus 4:20,29
In 4:20 Moses returns to Egypt and in 4:29 Moses and Aaron address the Elders in Egypt, but in the verses in between Moses is back in the wilderness on his journey.

Exodus 12:37
About six hundred thousand men on foot, besides children – the total, with elderly, women and young would have been about 2,500,000; the wilderness (+ 2 midwives of Ex. 1:15) could not have supported so large a group. An army of 600,000 would have not only crushed the pursuing Egyptians but also most of the known world. The large number probably comes from the census in Num. 1:17-46.

Exodus 11:2, 12:35
Although the Hebrews left Egypt in a hurry (12:39) much is made of the strange insistence upon taking jewellery, gold and silver from the Egyptians – could this have been a later addition to try and explain how the Hebrews managed to find all the rich materials for construction of the Tabernacle?

Exodus 13:17
…… the land of the Philistines ….. see notes above about Genesis.

Exodus 15:22,27; 16:1; 17:1,6-8; 19:1-2
Much confusion exists over the route the fleeing Hebrews took after crossing the Reed Sea. 15:22, 17:7-8 suggest that they went directly East through Shur and that Meribah and Rephidim were located at, or near Kadesh. 15:27, 16:1,17:1,6-7,19:2 suggest that they turned south down to the wilderness of Sin and that the places were located there (see Numb.33:14-15). Whatever the route,
19:1 states that it took them at least 2 months to reach Sinai from Egypt, a distance of c.500km.

Exodus 18:5 Moses was stated to be encamped at the mountain of God, whereas he did not arrive there until 19:2.

Exodus 20 vs. 1-17 Two separate versions of the Ten Commandments.

Deuteronomy 5:7-21 The second set presupposes settlement in the Promised Land (PL).

Deuteronomy 5:9 vs. Deut. 24:16 and 2 Kings 14:6 5:9 states that the sins of the fathers shall be visited upon the children to the 3rd and 4th generations, whereas others say the children shall not be punished.

Exodus 24:1-2,9-11 In the first J account the covenant is made effective without stipulations, where Moses and some others saw God on top of the mountain, whereas the second E account has the whole assembly of Israel taking part in a ceremony at the foot of the mountain to enact the same covenant.

Exodus 24:4 ...... and set up twelve pillars, corresponding to the twelve tribes of Israel – the multitude which had escaped from Egypt was not yet the nation of Israel and was not yet organised into 12 tribes (see Judges 5:14-18).

Exodus 25-31, 35-40 Tabernacle in the midst of the camp vs. far outside the camp, served by numbers of Levites vs. Joshua the Ephraimite the only minister, Aaron and priests officiate vs. sacrificial feasts 3 times a year, elaborate costly materials vs. a simple nomad tent, hollow portable altar of wood vs. an altar of earth or unhewn stones.

Exodus 31:6 I have appointed with him ...... of the tribe of Dan – the tribal structure was not put in place until the Judges' time.

Numbers 2:17f vs. 10:17f Discrepancies as to the order of the tribes.

Numbers 10:11-28 vs. 10:33 These two accounts of the departure from Mt. Sinai after the giving of the Law differ in that in the first “the standard of the camp of the men of Judah” led the way and in the
2nd the Ark of the Covenant did.

**Numbers 14:45** vs, 21:3
Two different results of the battle with the Amalekites and Canaanites at Hormah which was not named Hormah until later in any case – see Judges 1:17.

**Numbers 20:2-13 (P)** vs **Ex. 17:1-7 (J)**
There seem to be two accounts of the same incident most scholars believe that the springs of Marah, were Massah, and Meribah located at Kadesh (? = Rephidim – Ex. 17:8, Numb. 27:14 [RSV], 33:14).

**Numbers 20:12 & Deut. 32:51-52 vs. Deut. 4:21-22**
The first two refs. cite Moses’ failure to give God the due credit for producing water from the rock as the reason for his not being allowed into the Promised Land, whereas the third cites something the people did as the cause (see also Ex. 17:6, Numb. 20:12, 27:12-14, Deut. 1:37, 3:26, 4:21-22 [these 3 refls. in Deut. blame the people], 32:51.

**Numbers 22:9,22**
Illustrations of God’s impotence in that He did not know who the men with Balaam were and was angry because Balaam had gone with the officials of Moab. There are further inconsistencies between the two accounts of Numb. 22:1-21,35-40 (E) vs. 22:22-34 (J) but the accounts do show that even before the advent of Israel the local people worshipped a supreme God and sacrificed in a similar way to that the Israelites adopted.

**Deuteronomy 2:23**
Caphtorim refers to the Sea People (Philistines who did not occupy that land until after 1200).

**Deuteronomy 26:5**
A wandering Aramean was my father – The land of Aram was not established until 500 years later!

**Deuteronomy 34:5-12**
Even the early Rabbis writing the Talmud questioned whether Moses wrote the account of his own death.

**Joshua 10:36f**
claims that Joshua took Hebron while Judges 1:10 has the tribe of Judah capture it much later.
Joshua 10:38f has Joshua take Debir whilst Joshua 15:17 ascribes the victory to Othniel and the reports of the same conquest in the north in Josh.11 and Judges 4 do not agree in all particulars.

Judges 1:8 vs. 1:21 Verse 8 states that "the people of Judah fought against Jerusalem and took it" whereas 21 states that the Jebusites remained in Jerusalem and later David and his men went to extraordinary lengths to capture it. (2 Sam 5:6-9).

1 Samuel 2:5c vs. 2:21 2:5c states that Hannah had 7 children whereas 2:21 declares 6.

1 Samuel 6:15 The Levites did not become priestly assistants until a later period.

1 Samuel 7:1 Should be numbered 6:22.

1 Samuel 7:13 “So the Philistines were subdued and did not again enter the territory of Israel” – this was patently not true since after the time of Samuel, Saul and David both spent much time fighting the Philistines within Israel (e.g. 1 Sam. 13:3,23, 14:23,31, 2 Sam. 3:18, 5:17-25, 8:1-14).

1 Sam. 10:1,21,24 Four times, by four methods, Saul is made King of Israel.

1 Samuel 11:8 The muster of Israel and Judah whereas the split into Northern Israel and Southern Judah did not occur until after the reign of Solomon, 200 years later.

1 Sam. 16:14-23 vs. 17:1-18:5 Two entirely different accounts as to how David entered the service of king Saul.

1 Sam.17,19:5,21:9 vs. 2 Sam. 21:19 In 1 Samuel, David slew Goliath, but in 2 Samuel it was Elhanan.

1 Sam. 31:4 vs. 2 Sam. 1:10 Two differing accounts as to how Saul met his death on Mount Gilboa.
2 Samuel 8:4  1700 horsemen; Chron. 18:4 - 7000 horsemen

2 Samuel 10:6  33000 men; 1 Chron. 19:7- 32000 chariots

2 Samuel 10:18  David slew 700 chariot fighters of the Arameans, whereas 1 Chron. 19:18  he slew 7000 in the same battle.

2 Samuel 15:35  Abiathar was High Priest during David's reign but earlier, 1 Samuel 21:1  at the time David ate the consecrated bread, his father Mark 2:26  Ahimelech was the Priest.

2 Samuel 24:9  Census of Israel 800,000 and of Judah 500,000, 1 Chron. 21:5  Israel 1,100,000 and Judah 470,000.

2 Samuel 24:24  Price of Threshing Floor 50 shekels, 1 Chron. 21:25 - 600.

1 Kings 2:26-27  In the first reference the Priest Abiathar is banished to his estate at Anathoth; in the second he is priest with Zadok.

1 Kings 4:26  Stalls for Horses 40,000, 2 Chron. 9:25 - 4000

1 Kings 7:26  Capacity of the sea 2000 baths, 2 Chron. 4:5 - 3000 baths

1 Kings 12:24  Shemaiah had told Rehoboam not to fight against Israel so he heeded the word of the Lord and went home again but in 14:30 there was war between Rehoboam and Jeroboam (of Israel) continually.

2 Kings 24:6  So Jehoiakim slept with his fathers whereas in Chron. vs.

Pekah’s dates are c.736-732.

Pekah …... reigned 20 years – according to the scholars

In Ch. 15 he reigned …… in the twentieth year of Jotham (732) but in 17:1 Hoshea began his reign in the twelfth year of King Ahaz (723).
2 Chron. 36:6b Nebuchadnezzar bound him in fetters to take him to Babylon.

2 Kings 24:14 vs. 2 Kings 24:16 and Jeremiah 52:28
Verse 24:14 says that 10,000 plus men were taken away in the exile of 597, whereas 24:16 says 8,000; Jeremiah in 52:28 gives the number as 3023.

1 Chron. 3:19 vs. Ezra 3:2,8; 5:2
has Zerubabel as the son of Pedaijah, whereas Ezra has him as the son of Shealtiel, as does Haggai 1:1,12.

2 Chron. 24:20, 22 vs. Matt. 23:25
The father of Zechariah was the priest Jehoida but Matthew mistakenly has Barachia as his father.

Ezra 2:1-67 vs. Nehemiah 7:6-69
The list of people who returned with Ezra is given as practically the same as those who returned with Nehemiah.

Ezra 2:64 & Nehemiah 7:66
These two identical verses put the number of those who responded to Cyrus' edict and returned to Judea at 42,360; this is undoubtedly an expanded census list from the time of Nehemiah several generations later because in Neh. 7:5 it is explicitly stated that Nehemiah published the list; only 5000 or so took advantage of the first return.

Ezra 3:6-7
The 7th month would be Tishri (Sept/Oct) of 520 BCE in the 2nd year of Darius I (Hag. 2:14); the Chronicler has mistakenly dated the laying of the foundation in the 2nd year of Cyrus II in Babylon (537).

Ezra 3:6, 8, 11 vs. 5:16
Zerubbabel, the leader of the second wave of returnees had not yet laid the foundations of the temple whereas in a later verse, Sheshbazzar, the leader of the first wave had already laid the foundations of the Temple.
Ezra 4:6-23  This section is obviously out of place as it deals with the reigns of Xerxes (Ahasuerus) and Artaxerxes I, who were kings who succeeded Darius.

Ezra 7:1 vs. Ezra is identified as the son of Sereah who in Chron. 1 Chron. 1 Chron. 6:14-15 is reported to have lived in the time of Nebuchadnezzar.

Ezra & Nehemiah  Both these men wrote diaries which were combined with Mixtures of 1 & 2 Chron. at first and are still mixed in that Neh. 7:73b to 10:39 is the second half of the memoirs of Ezra and Neh. 8 originally stood between Ezra 8 & 9 and Neh. 9:1-5 stood between Ezra 10:15 & 16.

Prov.26:4 vs.26;5  “Do not answer fools” vs. “Answer Fools”.

Psalms 116:15  “Precious (distressing, rarely allowed to happen) in the sight of the Lord is the death of his faithful ones” - this suggests that God is not in control of who dies and who doesn’t.

The Book of Daniel - Had the book been written by an author living at the time of the Babylonian exile, he would have known: -

1) That the siege of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar did not occur in the third year of the reign of King Jehoiakim of Judah, i.e. in 606 BCE, but in 597 and again in 587 – he seems to have confused 2 Kings 24:1 and 2 Chron. 36:6-8.

2) That the “Chaldeans”, in the period of the Exile (1:4, 2:2), were not known as diviners and astrologers but merely as people of Southern Babylonia (5:30).

3) It was unlikely that he continued there until the first year of King Cyrus (539), almost 70 years later (1:21).

4) History knows of no period of insanity suffered by Nebuchadnezzar such as that described in 4:25 but a later successor, Nabonidus was absent from his duties for several years smitten with illness according to a Jewish document found among the Dead Sea Scrolls.

5) That King Belshazzar was not the son of Nebuchadnezzar as stated in 5:2, 18 but the son of Nabonidus (556-539) and in fact never became king but only
ruled temporarily as a regent.

6) That there was no such person as Darius the Mede mentioned in 5:31, it was Cyrus who overthrew Babylon and interestingly Cyrus’ general, Gobyras, was about sixty two when he occupied Babylon.

7) That Cyrus did not succeed Darius as King of the Persians as implied in 6:28 but Cyrus II (550-530) was succeeded by his son Cambyses (530-522) who then was succeeded by Darius I (522-486), the historical statements in 9:1 are completely erroneous in that Darius I was not a Mede but a Persian and was not the son of Ahaseurus (Xerxes) but his father.

8) That eight more Persian kings followed Darius not 3 as stated in 11:2.

These glaring errors are very hard indeed to explain if one purports that the author lived and wrote at the very time, but they are understandable if over 400 years actually separated the writer from the historical events. In that case he had to rely on word of mouth and legend for accuracy, which also explains why historical information becomes more and more exact and detailed as one comes up closer to the actual time of writing in 165 BCE.

The Book of Jonah - There is a reference to the king of Nineveh (3:7) but there was no king of Nineveh; archaeology indicates that the city was 7 miles across not 3 days journey (3:3b) – 3 days was the traditional duration of a journey in ancient literature and was the interval chosen for Jonah’s journey inside the fish and for Christ’s journey into the earth at his death (Matt. 12:40).

Matthew 2:11 vs Luke2:12 And going into the house they saw the child with Mary his mother – the wise men in Matthew found the baby Jesus in a house in Bethlehem, whereas the shepherds, in Luke’s Gospel, found the babe in a manger.

Matthew 10:6 & 28:19,15:24 In the first 2 references Jesus states that the mission is to be To the House of Israel only whereas in the 3rd it is to all nations – could this be a later redaction?

Matthew 12:40b States that Jesus would be 3 days and 3 nights in the heart of the earth whereas he was only 1 day and 2
nights (36 hrs.) before being resurrected.

Matthew 21:7  
Jesus apparently sits on both the ass and the colt at the same time – a failure by Matthew to properly interpret the synonymous parallelism of Zech. 9:9.

Matthew 23:35 vs. 2 Chron. 24:20  
The father of Zechariah, the priest murdered in the Temple Court, is given as Barachiah in Matthew but Jehoida in Chronicles.

Mark 5:1, Luke 8:26  
They came to ……. the country of the Gerasenes.
Gerasa was a great Roman city 33 miles south east of the Sea of Galilee in the mountains of Gilead and could not have been the location of Jesus’ healing of the demoniac which probably took place at Gadara, as some alternative MSS state. Matt 8:28 however does have Gadara but he also has two demoniacs instead of one.

Mark 4:10  
And when he was alone, those who were about him with the Twelve asked him concerning the parables.

Mark 7:27 vs. 5:11,14  
In the first quotation Jesus tells the Syro-Phoenician woman that his mission is to Israel only, whereas previously he had been working in Gentile lands (note no Jews kept pigs).

Mark 7:31  
Then he returned from the region of Tyre, and went through Sidon to the Sea of Galilee – Sidon lies 25 miles north of Tyre, whereas the Sea of Galilee lies to the south-east; also the Decapolis lay beyond (i.e. East) of the Lake. There was in fact no road from Sidon to the Sea of Galilee in the first century, only one from Tyre.

Mark 13:7b vs. 29  
The time is not yet vs. …..he is near, at the very gates.

Mark 13:30 vs. 32 …  
this generation will not pass away before all these
things take place vs. but of that day or that hour no one
knows ....".

Luke 2:2  Quirinius was Governor of Syria from 6 to 7 CE whereas Jesus was born during the last years of the reign of Herod (Matt 2:1) who died in early 4 BCE.

Luke 4:23  A reference to events in Capernaum before they have occurred in the narrative at 4:31.

Luke 4:38  A report of the healing of Simon's mother-in-law before Simon has been introduced to the readers at 5:3f.

Luke 9:18  Now it happened that as He was praying alone the disciples were with Him, and He asked them ......

Luke 17:11  On the way to Jerusalem He (Jesus) was passing along between Samaria and Galilee – on His North to South Journey; he would apparently here be travelling East-West.


Examples of other problematic texts not easily amenable to citing as copying errors or other superficial explanations:

Scholarly opinion regarding the book of Jonah runs along these lines -

‘After the Restoration, under Ezra and Nehemiah, laws were passed making it a crime to live in Judah unless you could show a pure Jewish blood line back for 10 generations; half-breed wives and children were banished. In the midst of these political purges Jewish story tellers once again took up their pens to comment against injustice. Stories about heroes such as Jonah and Ruth lead the readers into making judgments against the common wisdom of the day in profound and provocative ways. Jonah for his part could not believe that God could care for the gentiles of Nineveh who fell outside the limits the Jews had placed round God’s love and favour. He finally saw that there was something amiss in his being more compassionate towards a tree than to the people of Nineveh’ (Jonah 4:10-11). Ruth, of course, was a Moabite woman who married the Jew Boaz and whose son

**The Flood Story**

- The Flood could not have covered the whole earth as 8 times the amount of water we have now would have been required to cover the Himalayas at 29000 feet. There would have been nowhere for the enormous amount of water to drain from a universal flood anyway. The procuring of all animal types for the ark from their widespread distribution in distant lands is another problem. The task of carrying away waste products and bringing food for a long period would have been too much for the small crew of 8 persons on board. A purely local flood is the only possibility as the inspiration for this story. The story of Noah and the Flood is in fact an amalgam of 3 separate sources, hence the disagreement between verses as to the length of the flood.

- Verse 7:11 states *In the six hundredth year of Noah’s life, in the second month, on the 17th day of the month, on that day all the fountains of the great deep burst forth and all the windows of the heavens were opened*, in other words the vast amount of water required did not just come from rain but also from the underground water.

- Verse 8:13 says *In the six hundred and first year, in the first month, the first day of the month the waters were dried from off the earth*: - in other words here the flood had lasted 11 months less 16 days, even allowing for the 11-day-shorter lunar year this is still a lot more than the 61 or 150 days of the versions below.

- Verse 7:12 says *and rain fell upon the earth forty days* and verse 17 states *the flood continued forty days upon the earth*. 8:6 says *At the end of forty days Noah … sent forth a raven which was apparently destined to fly back and forth until the waters dried up ; then in 8:8 he sent a dove which returned to him having found nowhere to settle. In 8:10 a further dove was sent out 7 days later which came back with an olive leaf in her mouth. Verse 8:12 says He waited another 7 days and again he sent forth the dove out of the ark; and the dove did not return so Noah knew that the waters had subsided from the earth. A further dove 7 days later still did not return. In this case then it rained for 40 days and dried up 21 or 28 days later.
• However verse 7:24 contradicts this by saying - *And the waters prevailed upon the earth a hundred and fifty days,* as does 8:3b.

**Summary and Gathering Together of Fundamental Errors**

Let us just point out one or two other examples where the errors are so fundamental and all pervasive as to be beyond any explanation of transmission alterations:

1. **Scientific** - Jesus repeatedly ascribes illness to the presence of “demons” and proceeds to cast them out as a cure-all, for example -
   a) The man called Legion; who wore no clothes and dwelt among the tombs (Luke 8:27-39, Mark 5:5-19), we would today presume to have a mental illness or at the very least to have lost touch with reality. According to the Bible however a complete cure was affected by Jesus *commanding the unclean spirits to come out of him.*
   b) A dumb man was cured by *casting out a demon that was dumb* (Luke 11:14).
   c) A woman who was bent over allegedly had a *spirit of infirmity* whereas now we would diagnose ‘ankylosing spondylitis’ or osteoporosis or something similar (Luke 13:11-13).
   d) A young boy, seemingly suffering from Grand Mal Epilepsy according to the symptoms as described in Matt. 17:14-21, Mark 9:14-29 and Luke 9:37-43, was completely cured by *the rebuking of an unclean spirit.*

   Jesus’ allusion to the mustard seed in Matt.13:32 as *the smallest of all the seeds* is mistaken.

2. **Geographical** –
   a) Mark 7:31 reads - *Then he returned from the region of Tyre, and went through Sidon to the Sea of Galilee through the region of the Decapolis.* Sidon is North of Tyre and so Jesus would not have gone through it on his way South from Tyre to the Sea of Galilee and the Decapolis was on the far side of the Lake from him.
   b) Genesis 14:14 has Abraham going in pursuit of his nephew’s abductors as far as Dan. The tribal territory of Dan was not allotted as such until many centuries later.
   c) After making a convenant with Abraham at Beer-sheba, Abimelech returned to
the land of the Philistines; the Philistines did not land in that place until approximately 600 years later.

3. **Biblical** –

a) Stephen's speech relating to Abraham's chronology in Acts 7:1-4

b) Paul's writings contain contradictions concerning women. On the one hand he argues for women’s submission and subordination (1 Cor.11; 14; 1 Tim. 2; Eph. 5) on the other, he recognizes the egalitarian thrust of redemption (Gal. 3:28), bringing into effect a new creation (cf. Gen.1:26-27).

c) Differences in biblical numbers – Num. 25:9; 1 Cor. 10:8.

d) Difficulty concerning Pekah’s reign – 2 Kings 15:27.

e) The frequent use of allegory by early church fathers, such as Origen, Gregory of Nyssa and Augustine, clearly implies difficulty in interpreting problematic texts literally, as some strong Inerrantists would have us do. *Such interpreters ..., have concluded that if they are to continue to be of any use to the church, the literal interpretation must be rejected in favour of a metaphorical reading that produces a message more worthy of God’s character and Christian discipleship*, (STARK, T. (2011) *The Human Faces of God*, Eugene, Oregon, Wipf and Stock Publishers, p.209). The Song of Songs is a classic example of this.

Critical scholarship believes that the book of Isaiah was written in 3 parts -

*The Three Isaiahs or schools of persons, at 3 different times in history when, at each time, Israel found itself in very different circumstances* (Brown et al.Geoffrey Chapman1993) - p.230) (Achtemeier et al.Harper & Row,(1985); p.130).

Chapters 1 - 39 - were written by the First Isaiah - the original Prophet (742-701 B.C.E.) - and contained prophetic material; here Israel is in the Promised Land in the time of Ahaz and Hezekiah.

Chapters 40-55 - were written by Second Isaiah (c.539) when Israel was in captivity in Babylon and are full of hope on the eve of the New Exodus to go back to Zion after 50 years of exile in Babylon (587-537). This section was written with Babylon in the past.

Chapters 56-66 - were written by Third Isaiah (c.530-515) - Israel has returned to a
devastated land with no temple and the plain reality of hard survival; third Isaiah berates Israel for her sins which have brought this upon herself. (Coggins and Houlden SCM Press (1990) p.327).

Jesus accepted several viewpoints that we do not share today -

- The assumption that deaf-muteness results from the tying of the tongue by Satan or Demons (Matt.9:32, 33, 12:22, Luke 11:14)
- Infirmity was caused by a binding by Satan (Luke 13:11,18)
- The assumption that David wrote the Psalms (Mark 12:36, Luke 20:42, Matthew 22:43)
- That Moses wrote the Torah (Mark 7:10, 10:3, Luke 5:14)
- That Jonah's sojourn in the belly of a large fish was historical fact (Matthew 12:40)

Modern science and scholarship would not accept any of these viewpoints today. We are faced then with saying either -

- Jesus got things hopelessly wrong and cannot therefore be the omniscient Son of God, or
- Jesus did not say any of these things attributed to him and the text is in gross error.

According to the statements above you cannot have it both ways - either Jesus was wrong and not therefore the Son of God, or the Biblical Text is wrong and someone else put in these sayings or misquoted them. Evangelicals want it all ways that Jesus did say these things and that he was never in error that the text is inerrant but you can see from the above that their position is once again completely unsustainable. Some of the sayings of Jesus are clearly either wrong or wrongly quoted - in either case those passages themselves are not inerrant.

However when cases arise where the anomaly is strictly due to ignorance of the facts by people of those times, Scott McGowan strikingly points out that many scientific facts were totally unknown to the biblical authors and so they could not have been expected to present them. In answer to the question “why did the Holy Spirit”, which was allegedly controlling their writing, “not tell them the correct thing to write”? McGowan again scythes through the debate by pointing out – to use as
yet unknown judgments or scientific facts would have distracted the hearers’ attention from the intended revelational point (MCGOWAN, S.B. & MCGOWAN, A.T.B., Apollos branch of Inter-Varsity Press, 2007, ; p.31). Shall we say that the passages are errant in absolute terms but understandably so?

Most evangelicals in the West seem to believe that Christ died for everyone but people have to take the decision to accept him; God will not save automatically but only if the gospel is preached and then is accepted. The biblical passages about election and pre-destination are, in that case, not taken literally, for example - *he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. He destined us in love to be his sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will* (Ephesians 1:4-5) is totally ignored and constitutes another case where theological difficulties mean that the Bible is not taken literally.

The anomalies in the birth story of Jesus must inevitably contain errors since Luke maintains that the decree summoning Jews to return to their birth place for a census occurred *when Quirinius was governor of Syria* (Luke 2:2). Historical records tell us that Quirinius became governor of Syria in the year 6AD. (JOHNSON, L. T. (1991) *The Gospel of Luke*, Collegeville, Minnesota, The Liturgical Press; p.49) which states *Luke simply has the facts wrong*; this places Jesus’ birth shortly after 6 A.D.

Matthew’s account of Jesus’ birth contains the statement that *Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the King* (Matt. 2:1). History records that Herod died in the year 4BCE, and if Herod ordered the killing of all infants of 2 years of age or younger (Matt.2:16) he must have had the idea that Jesus may have been born as early as 6 BCE. All this gives us a range of 12 years from 6 BCE to 6 AD for the date of Jesus’ birth. Mark and John wisely contain no accounts of the birth of Jesus because there are no reliable written accounts of the event. The date of 6 AD is also the time of the failed revolt lead by Judas the Galilean but Luke in Acts 5:37 places Theudas chronologically before him whereas Theudas’ rebellion actually came later on and he was executed by Fadus the procurator in c.44 AD. (MUNCK, J. (1967) *The Acts of the Apostles*, New York, Doubleday,p.48) These are actual before-your-eyes mistakes and cannot be waved away by inerrantists.

Others assert that believing in the Virgin Birth is a "core doctrine" of Christianity, but
scholars can now demonstrate quite conclusively that both Paul and Mark seem
never to have heard of it; and John, who was among the last writers in the New
Testament, appears to have specifically rejected it since he refers to Jesus on two
occasions as the "son of Joseph," to say nothing of the prologue in the 4th Gospel
suggesting that Jesus was sent directly from heaven. If Evangelicals are so keen
on citing the original documents why do they not mention one of the most important
topics of all in biblical interpretation namely the use of the word “virgin” to describe
Mary’s state before the conception of Jesus? As explained elsewhere investigation
of the original documents in the Hebrew Scriptures reveals that the introduction of
the term ‘Virgin’ came about during the translation of The Hebrew Scriptures into
Greek when the Greek word *parthenos* was used to translate the Hebrew word
*almah*: *almah* means “young woman” and the actual Hebrew word for virgin is
Scriptures when the word almah is used is there a connotation of virginity.* (ibid;
p.214). Why have the Ultra-conservatives not acknowledged this fact, since they
are so fond of taking refuge in original documents, even when they are not
available? In addition to the completely wrong translation of the word *per se*, (by
the way the RSV has corrected this error and its version of the relevant verse 7:14
is Isaiah is - *Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold a young
woman shall conceive and bear a son and shall call his name Immanuel*) Isaiah
was actually talking to King Ahaz of Judah about a sign from God concerning the
siege of Jerusalem being carried out at the time. The use of this quotation, mis-
quoted though it usually is, to predict a virgin birth for a child some 700 years later
is highly questionable. Matthew used the Greek version of the Hebrew Text which
had the mis-translation *parthenos* in it to attempt to prove the Virgin Birth tradition

Other matters too large to be attributed to copying or translational error -

- Did the cleansing of the temple occur at the beginning of Jesus’ ministry as in
  John (2:13-17) or in the last week of his life as in Matthew (12:12-13) and Mark
  (11:15-19)?

- Did Jesus’ ministry last 1 year as the Synoptics suggest or 3 years according to
  John?

- Was the last supper a Passover Meal as in Matthew (26:17f), Mark (14:12f) and
  Luke (22:17f) or a preparation for the Passover as in the Fourth Gospel (13:1-9,
12-16)?

- Did the miraculous catching of the fish occur in the Galilean phase of Jesus; Ministry as in Luke (5:4-7) or was it a post-resurrection event as in John (21:4-8)?

- The Synoptic Problem and the verbatim passages which proved second hand inspiration and others that prove alterations and corrections showing no sense of God-given inerrancy.

- The conflicting manner of entry and conquest of Canaan (Joshua versus Judges).

- Jesus recognized the authority of the Old Testament and to deny its accuracy is \textit{to destroy the credibility of Jesus in all regards} (CARNELL, E. J. (1959) \textit{The Case for Orthodox Theology}, Philadelphia, The Westminster Press p.35f).

- Consider then the question of omniscience, do we really want to say that the historical Jesus had the infinite knowledge that God has and only pretended ignorance, as in Matt. 24:36 – \textit{But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the sun, but the Father only}. Even if we do want to say this, is it really possible for infinite knowledge to be housed in a finite human brain? Considering omnipotence as well as omniscience, do we want to claim that Jesus pretended not to be as in Mk 6:5 – \textit{And he could to no mighty work there, except that he laid his hands on a few sick people and healed them.}

The defence employed by Fundamentalists of declaring that the Bible is inspired and inerrant because it itself says so is certainly circular reasoning and only works for those who are Fundamentalists already. Professor James Barr suggests that it is circular because it is meant to be. \textit{It forms a tight, exclusive circle into which an outsider can break only by totally abandoning his objections and accepting in entirety the world-view of those within. It also encloses those already within and makes escape only possible at the cost of deep and traumatic shattering of their entire religious outlook.} (Barr, J. (1978). \textit{Fundamentalism}. Philadelphia, The Westminster Press p. 266).

The evangelical demands for proofs of discrepancies and errors in the Bible were completely biased in a conservative direction. Their position of inerrancy required no proof at all to them, was merely quoting from the Bible was sufficient. The onus of proof of errancy on the other hand became so ridiculous as to require proof that
each such erroneous statement occurred in the autograph, i.e. the original
document written by the hand of Moses or Paul, and that the interpretation is the
one which the passage was intended to bear (ibid.; 268) and further that this was
irreconcilable with other known truth or facts. Warfield stiffened the conditions for
possible demonstration of error to the point where it becomes impossible to attempt
it. When it all boils down, authentication of inspiration of the Biblical Tests from the
Biblical Texts themselves requires an absolute belief in the inerrancy of the texts; in
other words you have to be a Fundamentalist in the first place for the proof to have
any effective meaning.

When was the moment when the scriptural item was originally given and to which
inspiration could be uniquely attached, according to Fundamentalism? Sources,
multiple previous editions, changes of text and additions of explanatory matter,
some lasting a generation or more, complicate the identifying of the one inspired
text. The Westminster Confession answers the problem partly by stating that the
Hebrew and Greek texts were immediately inspired by God and by his singular care
and providence kept pure in all ages. By the 19th century the known substantial
variation of manuscripts made it impossible to sustain the Westminster
Confessional position. It was the words as in the original autograph and they alone
that were inspired. When it comes to passages like Mark16:9-20 where no one is
certain whether it was part of the original autograph or not, how can it count as
inspired Holy Scripture? The processes of passing on an oral tradition, converting
it to a written medium, sometimes translating it into another language, producing a
final text, copying and preserving that text and adding exegetical comments at any
of these stages run into one another and form one total complex of tradition making
verbal inspiration decisions irrelevant.

It is all very well to maintain that the original documents were inerrant but there are
many instances where the original document or documents are hard to envisage.
Take the saga of the Exodus for example. As the Dictionary of Biblical
Interpretation puts it - the tradition was first formulated orally by reciters within the
liturgy of the central sanctuary of the tribal league. It was embellished with stock
narrative motifs like sojourn, conscription, plagues and flight. It was further
developed orally by popular narrators by the addition of semi-nomadic wilderness
traditions showing knowledge of the watering-places and caravan routes between
Egypt and Canaan. The Pentateuchal documents represent adoption of these
traditions with many narrative links such as genealogies and itineraries, into the
literary works of sustained theological reflection, attributable to authors. What is certain historically is that the eclipse of Egyptian power over the Near East coincided with the change from Bronze Age to Iron Age in the 13th and 12th centuries BCE and with the ingress of the Semitic semi-nomads from the East and the Sea Peoples from the West - all around the time of the Hebrew entry into the Promised Land in c. 1250. The saga of the Exodus from Egypt is so entrenched and persistent in the tradition that it must have some sort of basis but it is thought by the experts that there were probably many such departures from the tyranny of Egypt and many other entries into Canaan of Hebrews and others (compare the entry version in Joshua). There seem also to have been others in the Hebrew exodus itself (Numbers 11:4). These groups may also have joined the Israelite annual covenant renewal meetings at Shechem and adopted the new religion there. Where are the original, inerrant documents in all this; or in the mythical accounts of the Patriarchal Ancestors or The Tower of Babel or other sagas? The original documents in some of these cases seem to have been in other neighbouring cultures.

There were other major large scale problems, such as Adam being purported to have been the first man on earth and yet his son Cain, having been banished to the land of Nod after killing his brother, - knew his wife and she conceived and bore Enoch (Genesis 4:17). This clearly implies that there were other species, at least compatible with humans, living elsewhere on the earth at the time of Adam, to the East in the Land of Nod in this case, for Cain to have found a wife. This and the genealogy that follows in Genesis 4:17-22, although in a different form and from a different pen, do not reckon with the Flood and the annihilation of all living beings soon to follow (VON RAD, G. (1987) Genesis, London, SCM Press Ltd, p.67f).

The historical Jesus would clearly seem, from the Synoptic Gospels, to have been a human being who came into existence at a certain time and who was limited to one place at a time, thus not being omnipresent. This clearly conflicts with the description of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel as having been a divine creature originating from heaven (Hick, J. (2001). Dialogues in the Philosophy of Religion. New York, Palgrave; p.137). This contradiction is another severe blow to inerrancy. Philippians 2:7-8 clearly states that Jesus adopted human form – But emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death – even death on a cross. In other words Jesus was human and not God, as the
The Council of Chalcedon (451 A.D.) asserted that Jesus had two natures, divine and human, which existed without confusion, change, division or separation. The distinction of these natures was in no way annulled by the union, but rather the characteristics of each nature being preserved and coming together to form one person. They maintained that Jesus had all the divine and all the human attributes but the council did not say how this was possible since they contradict and exclude each other.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attributes of humanity:</th>
<th>Attributes of a God</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Being or having a human body</td>
<td>Being a spirit without a body</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being at a specific location</td>
<td>Being Omnipresent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being a creature and not a creator</td>
<td>Being the Creator of all things</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being limited in power</td>
<td>Being omnipotent</td>
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<tr>
<td>Being limited in knowledge</td>
<td>Being omniscient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having finite moral qualities</td>
<td>Having unlimited morality.</td>
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</tbody>
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Brief Summary of Major Objections to Inerrancy.

Old Testament:

Two accounts of creation
Jacob was a liar and cheat
Moses was a murderer and deceiver
The genealogy in Genesis 5 seems unaware of the total annihilation to come in Genesis 7.
A world-wide flood over-topping all mountains was not possible
Abraham's God was an earlier God than Yahweh?
No record of the Exodus
No trace of Solomon's temple or palace have been found
Archeology has shown that the sites of Jericho and Ai were deserted ruins at the commonly accepted time of Joshua.
Much of Israel's tradition, law and worshipping rituals were ‘borrowed’ from
surrounding cultures and were not, therefore, new commandments from God.

The Documentary Hypothesis scholarship shows that 4 main authors contributed to the Pentateuch not Moses.

The Holiness Code is an insert from yet another author (Lev.17-26)

Items like agricultural crop products, e.g. cakes and wine, for offerings could not have been produced by wanderers in the wilderness

The phenomenon of the Ten Tribes was applicable to a much later period

Many reasons why Pentateuch was not written by Moses, such as the description of his death in Deuteronomy

The use of allegory shows some biblical passages to be problematical

Joshua’s different account of the entry into the Promised Land

The multiple disagreements over time and numbers between Kings and Chronicles

Multiple authorships of the Psalms

The triple authorship of the book of Isaiah

The date of composition of the book of Daniel

Jonah’s episode inside a big fish

Goliath was probably slain by Elhanan (2 Samuel 21:19)

**New Testament:**

The Synoptic Problem – multiple cross-copying occurred among the Evangelists.

Mark’s artificial framework of the order & grouping of the miracles and healings etc.

The different agendas and intended audiences of the four Gospel authors, e.g. Mathew’s Jewishness and Luke’s Gentile sophistication.

Doubts over the accuracy of the translation of “almah” as “Virgin” by the Septuagint translators.

Only 24 of Mark’s 606 verses are not in either Matthew or Luke

Luke’s correction of Mark’s Greek

Did the cleansing of the temple occur at the beginning of Jesus’ ministry as in John (2:13-17) or in the last week of his life as in Matthew (12:12-13) and Mark (11:15-19)?

Did the miraculous catching of the fish occur in the Galilean phase of Jesus; Ministry as in Luke (5:4-7) or was it a post-resurrection event as in John (21:4-8)?
Did Jesus’ ministry last 1 year as the Synoptics suggest or 3 years according to John?

Was the last supper a Passover Meal as Matthew (26:17f), Mark (14:12f) and Luke (22:17f) or a preparation for the Passover as in the Fourth Gospel (13:1-9, 12-16)?

Paul believed that Jesus would return in his lifetime (1 Cor.7:29f, Rom.13:11).

Paul’s letters – only 7 are thought to be genuinely from him

The provenance of Revelation – from John of Ephesus, not the Apostle John.

Jesus’ healings consisted mainly of the casting out of a “Demon” even when the symptoms of a medical condition, like Grand Mal epilepsy or a Spinal condition, were clearly described (Mark 9:18 and Luke 13:11-13).

Jesus believed in an immanent apocalypse (Matt.24:34).

Jesus’ offer on the road to Emmaus to explain all the references to him in the Hebrew Bible - Most, if not all, the so-called Messianic predictions in the Old Testament, such as Isaiah 49:8, 52:13-53:12, Hosea 11:1 and Jeremiah 31 were comments about local issues taken out of context.

By the 19th century the known substantial variation of manuscripts in content and length made it impossible to sustain the Westminster Confessional position. Today the fact that no two manuscripts of the New Testament, of which about 5000 exist, are identical really makes fundamental inerrancy unsustainable (MCGOWAN, S.B. & MCGOWAN, A.T.B., Apollos branch of Inter-Varsity Press, 2007, p.103/6).
APPENDIX 2

The Askarova Paper

The Religious and Ethical Education of Students in a Secular School

For a long time in Russia, education was conducted in isolation from any fundamental theological conceptions of the universe. However, religion not only harmoniously synthesized in itself the culture of the world and universal human values, it also served to mitigate the harsh influence of many social doctrines on the spiritual and moral upbringing of the rising generation. This has continued to be true at the present time as well, a time in which people are coming to be exposed to universal human values under the conditions of market relations, which, all too often, are warped and anti-human. And religion, moreover, thanks to its practical and effective morality and its firmly established system of moral norms, has every potential to turn into a force that is able to withstand the spiritual corrosion that has blighted the society and to bring relative harmony back into our lives. To the extent that the ultimate purpose of religion is to educate the kind of individual who possesses moral convictions, who is decent and virtuous, the carrier of high humanistic ideas, it must not go contrary to the aims of present-day upbringing, which has a worldview orientation.

In regard to the general education school, it would not be right to talk about conducting religious indoctrination of students in school, inasmuch as the principle of secular education is fundamental in our system. Any religious instruction has to be conducted in religious schools, such as Orthodox gymnasiums, Sunday schools, theological seminaries, or madrasses. It is obvious that it would not be desirable to conduct religious instruction in secular general education schools, owing to its intrinsic mystical and sacred orientation. That would not be in keeping with a religious and ethical instruction of students that should transmit a system of knowledge about religion, acquainting students with various theological conceptions of the universe in order to expand their cognitive intellectual horizon and teach them how to think and to deal with religious and ethical categories, shaping a moral and cultural personality who is able to live in accordance with the norms of universal human morality.

In the teaching and upbringing process, religious and ethical education is called upon to carry out the following functions: the upbringing function, the worldview (meaning-
formation) function, the communicative function, the value orientation function, the normative-regulative function, the cognitive function, and the hedonistic function.

The first function is oriented toward the moral development of the personality for the purpose of enabling the individual to master the system of universal human values and a body of knowledge of effective means of social activity, and the inculcation of a felt need to act on them.

The second focuses the students’ attention on philosophical and worldview questions about the existence of God and the possibility of knowing Him, questions about life, death, and immortality, for the purpose of enabling them not only to engage in active questing but also to experience spirituality, and bringing harmony to processes of their perception of the world, their sense and understanding of the world.

In the context of the shaping of the students’ worldview it is reasonable to focus on the meaning-formation function, the essence of which is to determine the meaning of human life, the purpose of the natural world and society, an understanding of the deeper meanings of the universe, enabling the students to gain an understanding of the essential oneness of mankind and the world on the basis of faith and knowledge. Under the influence of religious and ethical education, a child gains an awareness of the immortality of the spirit, an understanding of his own actions and deeds, leading him to attain spiritual harmony and enabling him consciously to choose the path of mercy, goodness, love, and justice. It is religion that can serve as the moral foundation that is capable of strengthening the social existence of the human being by providing a solid basis in the search for the meaning of life.

The purpose of the communicative function is to create the necessary pedagogical conditions for school students to interact, to affirm and instill the kinds of moral norms and forms of interaction that are in keeping with the precepts of a particular religion.

The value orientation function is reflected in the fact that the process of learning religious knowledge helps the students to have an orientation in the huge world of values and meanings, to shape their positive attitude toward sacred values and norms, to map out a scale of values of a universal human character.

The normative-regulative function is designed to cultivate and encourage behavior that is in keeping with the basic norms and requirements of religious morality.

The cognitive function serves to instill a solid interest in problems of spirituality, morality, and religion; it expands their intellectual horizon in acquainting them with
diverse theological conceptions, theories, and systems, and backs these up with a system of spiritual and value principles.

The *hedonistic function* of religious and ethical education is intended to give the students a sense of satisfaction or pleasure as a result of entering into transcendence, into the world of religious values, of sublime concepts and ideas. Appreciation of art on religious themes opens students to profound emotional feelings and aesthetic satisfaction.

To a large extent, the effectiveness of religious and ethical education depends on the system of principles by which it is organized, principles that determine the orientation and the character of the individual’s activity. Here below Askarova listed the starting conditions that the teacher can use as a guide in order to achieve the desired success in moral teaching:

- *the choice has to be voluntary*: religious instruction must not be imposed; as a worldview discipline, it is essential to obey the will of the students;
- *awareness*, the conscious perception of information simplifies gaining an understanding of a particular faith, the laws that govern its development, its ethical norms and principles;
- *tolerance* toward those who hold opposite worldview precepts and religious beliefs;
- *interiorization*, taking upon oneself the ideals of religious morality and building one’s own activity in life in accordance with the norms of that morality;
- *clarity* fosters full-fledged understanding and mastery of the information;
- *consideration of the students’ age and individual characteristics*, using methods, techniques, and forms of religious and ethical education that are in tune with the interests of the students in the particular age category;
- *catharsis*—the teacher should try to widen the boundaries of the child’s understanding, from the individual scale to the global scale, helping the child to shed crude, base instincts, rethink false values, and turn to true and profound meanings of existence.

The success of this kind of spiritual and moral development depends on the unity of the objectives, the content, and the forms of upbringing work. In present-day pedagogical
reality, sadly, we have not yet developed a sufficient diversity of methods of religious and ethical education. Many teachers avoid this aspect of upbringing, because they are influenced by the precepts of atheism. Schools also lack the necessary scientific and methodological support for religious and ethical education. To compensate, we have developed and tested diverse forms of upbringing work, including classroom lessons and debates, publication of thematic wall newspapers, students’ essays, competitions to select the best drawings that depict Bible stories, evening get-togethers devoted to solved and unsolved mysteries (“The Mysteries Around Us,” “Field of Miracles,” and so on), tests, and field trips to various places of worship, such as churches, mosques, or Baptist houses of worship. After students are given guidelines about how to behave in such places, we arrange meetings with various clerics, visit Sunday school classes, watch movies and cartoons, discuss popular science and religious literature, and other activities. Many classroom lessons were devoted to religion, such as: “The Existence of God: Illusion or Reality?”; “Mysticism as Faith in the Supernatural and Divine” (many assume that mysticism “feeds” religion; this topic was especially interesting to the students); “Early Forms of Religion”; “A Brief Excursion into the History of World Religions—Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam”; “The Most Important Postulates of Christian Morality”; “Islam and Morality”; “Religious Holidays”; “Religious Customs and Rituals”; and “The ‘New’ Religious Currents.”

Children have always been fascinated by whatever is mysterious and hard to explain. The upper-grade students were asked to conduct an evening gathering on the topic “The Mysteries Around Us.” This was not just to talk about “boogie men” and other frightening things such as goblins, water nymphs, poltergeists, witches, apparitions, vampires, and other evil spirits. Quite the contrary: the discussion was about phenomena that actually take place in real life, that exist objectively but have not yet been explained from the standpoint of materialist philosophy—spiritualism, levitation, reincarnation, clairvoyance, telekinesis, teleportation, poltergeist activity, and so on.

In preparation, the class was broken into small creative groups, and some members formed a Council of the Wise (the class advisor was assigned to play the role of The Wisest of All). Usually, the Council did the job of “seeking out mysteries” and put them together into a “treasure box of mysteries,” after which each of the small groups was assigned the task of selecting some subject from the box for further study: “The Mystery of Black Holes in the Universe”; “The Problem of Reincarnation in the Light of the Experiments of S. Groff: Hoax or Reality?”; “Vampirism as an Object of Theological and Modern Scientific Analysis”; “The ‘End of the World’ as a Problem of Theological,
Astrological, and Scientific Exploration”; “The Werewolf: Medical Diagnosis, Mystical Fabrication, or Supernatural Reality?”; “The Interpretation of Dreams”; “The Problem of ‘Wandering Spirits’ (Ghosts and Apparitions), from the Standpoint of Modern Physics, Chemistry, and Biology”; “The Mystery of Death and Immortality”; “Are There Such Things as ‘Parallel Worlds’ in the Universe?” In subsequent class lessons we discussed not so much the history of religions but rather their ethical teachings, attempting to instill in students an orientation toward these models of behavior. Then we explore these issues using Christianity as the example. The choice itself is not of fundamental importance; this religion came into being earlier in time than Islam did. The upbringing potential of Christianity is substantial. Learning the most important Christian commandments helps the individual to gain a moral self-awareness, a sense of his purpose in life.

From an early age a person has to be exposed to the age-old Christian truths; to gain a deep understanding of the Ten Commandments, which constitute the foundation of human existence. Obeying the very important Christian commandment Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image leads the adolescent to an understanding of his own personal uniqueness, because the true value of that commandment consists not so much of its religious essence (God created us in His own image and likeness, and it is only to Him that we must strive to be similar in our own moral development), but rather the profound humanistic content of the requirement itself: any desire to approach the ideal can be nothing more than a poor simulation, a copy of the original; every individual is unique and original, every person is unique in terms of his individuality.

An immutable and absolute truth for children and young people is the commandment “Honour thy father and thy mother.” One’s treatment of and attitude toward one’s parents can serve as the measure of one’s morality. Parents are not chosen, and honouring them must not depend on what they represent in terms of morality. Not for nothing is it said that “God gives a person a soul, but the parents give that soul life.” One should be thankful to one’s parents for giving one’s soul the opportunity to be born and to know life in all its diversity. An individual who does not love his parents, the people closest to him, will not be able to obey the commandment “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.”

The important biblical commandments “Thou shalt not kill,” “Thou shalt not steal,” “Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor,” “Thou shalt not commit adultery,” and “Thou shalt not covet the things that are thy neighbor’s . . .,” or “Thou shalt not envy,” make up the individual’s moral attitude toward the world around him
and instill humanistic morality.

In contemplating the commandment “Thou shalt not kill,” the child must realize that these requirements proclaim that it is not just human life that has to be inviolable, but that it extends to everything that is, to the whole world. Any person who has been able to take the life of a small innocent being (a kitten, say, or a bird or dog) will find it easier to take a human life. The younger generation must understand and accept the following truth as indisputable: everything that lives comes into the world with a definite purpose, with a specific mission in life, which should be accomplished in full; it is not man who decides the question of life or death. From an early age children have to be taught the idea of the harmonious interconnection of the world, and that disrupting it can lead to discord, tragedies, and misfortunes. I remember one lesson during which the class advisor, while discussing with fifth-graders the commandment “Thou shalt not kill,” cited a newspaper item about a very kind and good woman who, while walking along the seashore, fell and sustained internal injuries. All of a sudden, a seagull flew down to her as she lay helpless. She had regularly fed the bird, and after circling her once the seagull flew off. It was reported later that the seagull flew to the home of the victim’s sister, knocked at the window with its wings and beak, and finally made the woman understand that she had to follow the bird. She followed the seagull and found her sister, who was given treatment and was soon restored to health. The teacher emphasized this point: “And so the woman lived, and think of all of the good deeds she did for other people, how many hungry birds and animals she helped! But what would have happened if some evil person had taken the life of that seagull? There would be less good in the world.”

From the children’s reaction it was clear that they had gained an understanding of these profound inner interconnections that exist in the world. In interacting with students and discussing with them, in particular, the biblical commandment “Thou shalt not kill,” you often hear statements like this: “Yes, but it is death that calls the tune in this world. There are fewer births than deaths. Take a look around you: every second, something or someone dies. The leaves of the trees die when someone happens to tear them off, and that same merciless someone kills flowers. Rivers dry up, insects are exterminated, human beings, animals, and birds die, and this process is unending and irreversible. Just in order to survive and function, a human being has to kill something—an animal, a bird, or a fish. . . . In that case, what are we to say about the commandment ‘Thou shalt not kill’? We violate that commandment just about every day!” Many young people have not figured out that not all deaths are the same.
Consider, for example, the death of a human being: suppose that he does not die just by accident, senselessly and without purpose, but rather deliberately, for the sake of some idea. It is obvious that to some extent his death is justified, because such a person has fulfilled his duty; it may be that he has fulfilled his purpose in life, and death itself does not fill him with horror or despair. Rather, he may derive moral satisfaction from the realization that while his death might be tragic it is not in vain. In the same way, animals that are taken to slaughter so that human beings can continue to live have also fulfilled their purpose, and their death is also rationally justified. Even a flower that has been picked not just to please someone for a moment and cast aside, but rather, to offer a touch of beauty, even for a short time (to raise people's spirits, to add a touch of beauty to someone lying alone and ill)—that flower has not died without purpose. It has lengthened the life of another living being and made it more cheerful and interesting.

While the commandment “Thou shalt not kill” has been well understood and accepted by the younger generation, the commandment “Thou shalt not steal” tends to evoke skepticism and rejection. This is due to the prevailing social relations: our society is heading in the direction of the market and private property ownership; there is a drastic change in the priorities of values, and people are generally interested in material values, not spiritual values. Most people are convinced that stealing and cheating rule in the world. They are convinced that no matter where you look it’s “dog eat dog” and that “If you don’t cheat them they’ll cheat you.” That is why the commandment “Thou shalt not steal” is so hard for young people to understand. It is not enough to bring the concept to their attention; they have to be encouraged to accept it as their guide to action. And no matter how difficult we may think that job is, it is possible to accomplish it. In going along with the religious method of upbringing, it is useful to talk as often as possible with young people and children about the relevant topic, “Do not touch what is someone else’s.”

At a language and literature class I once visited, the teacher asked her fourth-grade students a question that none of them were able to answer intelligently. She was beginning to despair when a boy stood up and gave a reasonable answer. Then a boy next to him exclaimed plaintively, “That’s what I was going to say! But Sasha heard me say it and gave the answer instead! That is not honest!” To this the teacher responded “Timur, you should be ashamed of yourself! You shouldn’t be so greedy! When you know something you should share it with your classmate. Some other time he will help you.” The rest of the students hooted in disdain at Timur for being so “individualistic,”
and the practice teacher, very satisfied with herself, continued the lesson. That would have been a wonderful opportunity to discuss the issue of “the right of ownership,” whether it is right or wrong to take something that belongs to another—perhaps not during the lesson, but at some other appropriate time. Still, a different assessment of the incident might have been made, for example: “It is wrong not to want to help your friend, but Sasha did the wrong thing too by taking Timur’s idea. The best solution would have been to say that the answer was found by Timur, but that you, Sasha, agreed with him.”

It is vital to cite specific examples from real life and literature so that the students can have a sense of the destructive power of stealing: it is not possible to be truly happy if you steal from people; if you cause them grief, hurt, or disappointment; if you make them feel the pain of loss. Happiness built on someone’s tears can never yield good fruit. In inculcating young people with a sense of moral consciousness it is essential to stress these elementary truths continually, because otherwise they will take in values of a different order. If young girls in school, in emulation of their favorite pop stars’ revelations” in song, unthinkingly sing along with “If they ask me ‘Where did you get that sweet hunk?’ I will tell them that I stole him the same way, just like stealing someone’s cool car.” Or they go on monotonously, “I will steal you from everyone, who cares whether it is sinful or makes everyone laugh?” Only at first glance can one view singing such words as innocent: words that are repeated over and over, according to psychologists, can become firmly fixed in the mind and shape the life stance of the kind of woman who is a “thief.” There can be no reason to avoid discussing these issues.

More than once in debates with young people on the topic “Let Us Talk About the Curiosities of Love,” it has come up as one of the most pressing problems to them. Despite their categorical stance, intolerance, and extremism, discussion of this topic can promote understanding. Life is unpredictable and anything can happen, but to insist deliberately that “other people’s honey is sweeter” is immoral. It is gratifying to find that later on, the adolescents acknowledged this axiom to be indisputable and worthy of emulation.

When we come to the next biblical commandment, “Thou shalt not bear false witness,” the overwhelming majority of the students acknowledge its moral value and indisputability, although they do not always obey it. Most important, all of them agreed that to denigrate and slander someone just for one’s own aggrandizement or to save oneself is shameful and sinful. A well-known Islamic hadith is: “Speak the truth always, even if it is not to your advantage.” The same idea is expressed in the Bashkir folk
saying “You may sit crooked, but you must speak straight.” These moral postulates should serve as universal personal principles.

Difficulties arose when we tried to persuade young people that it is essential to obey the commandment “Thou shalt not commit adultery.” They might agree with its religious interpretation, from the standpoint that a person cannot be true to God if he is unable to remain faithful to another person. However, when presented as a basic principle that governs people’s lives, many young people do not want to acknowledge that it should be fundamental in their own lives. They argue that life would be boring, monotonous, and less interesting. Many of them are inclined to account for their rejection of this commandment as follows: everything must be understood via comparison, and the commandment “Thou shalt not commit adultery” deprives us of that opportunity because it limits our spiritual potential. They say that there are so many interesting people, and by understanding them you can develop both spiritually and physically. Thus the commandment only interferes with the “comprehensive” and “harmonious” development of the personality. A survey that we conducted among 135 first-year college students at the Sterlitamak State Pedagogical Institute (just yesterday still in secondary school!) yielded interesting results. The questions included this: “If you were asked to choose between marriage based on love or a marriage based on calculation, which one would you choose, and what would be the reasons for your choice?” Their answers cannot fail to cause concern: 84 percent chose a marriage based on calculation! And yet, as the poet said, youth “is a time of hope and tender sorry,” a time of illusion, a time of dreams. Every human being, including a young person, wants to love and be loved.

The changes in the life of society have brought in their wake a shift in public consciousness. If the sphere of values of a substantial portion of society is determined by avarice, wealth accumulation, and greed, then the scale of values of young people will have the same qualities. We cannot help asking ourselves this question:

“If the foundation of marriage is not love but rather material calculation, is it even reasonable to say that married partners ought to obey the commandment ‘Thou shalt not commit adultery’?” It is unquestionably essential to teach people to love and to value this feeling above all else, because it is love alone that is the real foundation of the universe. Perhaps it is not even necessary to teach love, it is only necessary to cure people’s social amnesia, and they will then remember what Love is, how beautiful it is, how boundless and incorruptible! And then, Fidelity and Devotion will be restored to life.
Vast humanistic meaning is also to be found in the commandment “Thou shalt not covet the things that are thy neighbor’s,” you must not be envious. It is customary to say that envy is the mother of all human vices. Recall the wise folk saying, “The man who envies is the most unhappy man in the world, because he does not get much joy in life; instead, he suffers more, because of the joys, achievements, successes, and victories of others.” I remember discussing this commandment with fifth-graders. We had them list in their class notebooks the things that they like or do not like. There were not that many things that they didn’t like; there were many more things that they did like. One student mentioned a wonderful friend, another mentioned parents who understood him or a favorite little sister. One student had a faithful dog; others mentioned an interesting collection of stamps, coins, or records. One said he had received “four grades of 5” [A] that day. The question arises, why be envious of someone else if your own life is pretty good?

The youngsters were encouraged to not focus on their own failures or be jealous of what others have. They were encouraged to think, “How bad it is when not everything is good, but how good it is when not everything is bad!” In that way, your own life is nicer and there is less envy in the world. By teaching a person to think in that spirit it is possible to help him to find his way and to work out a solid moral position in life. Thus, the religious and ethical education of adolescents can help fill substantial gaps in their knowledge about the “eternal questions” of life and stimulate their active cognitive and exploratory involvement in thinking about global worldview problems such as the existence and nature of God; the meaning of human life; life after death; and the nature and origin of good and evil. Religious education can serve to correct the social and moral orientations of students who, by thinking, perhaps for the first time, about the meaning of their existence, are now able to take a different view of the world around them and their own place in it. We can assert with full justification that religious and ethical education encourages students to take an active interest in exploring and understanding problems of philosophy and worldview.


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