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SCRIPTURE, AUTHORITY AND THE FORMATION OF DOCTRINE

Evangelical reflections

I. Introduction

The purpose of ecumenical dialogue, as we conceive of it, is, first, to acquaint Christians of different confessions with viewpoints other than their own; and, second, to enable the dialogue partners to enter sympathetically into the processes of thought whereby Christians with whom they disagree reach conclusions they find unacceptable. Such dialogue, we believe, not only fosters mutual understanding and respect, but also indirectly aids the cause of reconciliation by laying bare the roots of longstanding disagreements¹.

In the following, we attempt to explain systematically what evangelicals believe about the subjects of Scripture, authority, and the formation of doctrine; and evangelicals' rationale for so believing. Naturally, we shall have frequent occasion to advert to differences of opinion among evangelicals. In view, however, of our obligation to familiarize the Catholic participants not only with what evangelicals believe, but with why, we have also sought, without glossing over differences of opinion, to present one, coherent perspective on these subjects.

¹ An earlier version of this paper was delivered at the annual meeting of the Evangelical-Catholic Dialogue, sponsored by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, which met at the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul, Minn. on Oct. 6–8, 2006. Together with a paper by Fr. Michael Keating, which presents a Catholic perspective on these subjects, it formed the basis for discussion at the meeting.

II. Private judgment

Evangelical Protestants, as a rule, do not celebrate private judgment, and we raise the issue in this context not so much to discuss it as to dispatch it. Like Catholics, sincere evangelicals seek to believe whatever truths God has revealed „not on account of the intrinsic truth of the revealed things perceived by the natural light of reason, but on account of the authority of God himself revealing”². All genuine evangelicals strive to subject their private judgment unconditionally to God’s revelation.

The same God who demands this subjection of private judgment to revelation, however, has framed human beings in such a way that they cannot place their trust in the Bible, the Church, or any other claimant to divine revelation, without first judging it trustworthy by an act of private judgment. As Adolphe Tanquerey explains: „If promulgation by the church [as a ground of belief] were required by the nature of faith itself, then no act of faith, not even the first, could occur without such promulgation; and yet the first act of faith can be and must be without the infallible promulgation of the church. For before we accept the definitions of the church as infallible, it is *logically* necessary that we believe by divine faith, from our own study, without any [such] public promulgation, that the Church is infallible; otherwise, a vicious circle appears”³.

The faith of Catholics, therefore, depends quite as much as that of evangelicals on the exercise of private judgment. The propriety of applying this judgment to matters of faith, therefore, forms no proper subject of dispute between adherents of the two communions.

III. God

Because all Scripture is God-breathed (2 Tim 3:16), most evangelicals consider the Bible comprehensively true. In light of the preceding considerations, it is important to observe that the accuracy of the inference, „The Bible is God’s Word; therefore the Bible is completely true”, is not simply self-evident. One can find such an inference persuasive, rather, only if one regards God as omniscient and unfailingly honest. If one is to avoid reasoning in a circle, moreover, one must learn that God is such from the natural revelation to which one has access be-

² These words are taken from the First Vatican Council’s Dogmatic Constitution on Catholic Faith, chapter 3 (*Kompendium der Glaubensbekenntnisse und kirchlichen Lehrentscheidungen* [=DH], [ed. Heinrich Denzinger; rev. Peter Hünermann; 37th ed.; Freiburg-im-Breisgau: Herder, 1991] §3008). Cf. the Westminster Confession of Faith 14.2: „By this [saving] faith, a Christian believeth to be true whatsoever is revealed in the Word, for the authority of God himself speaking therein” (*Creeds of Christendom*, ed. P. SCHAFF, 3 vols., New York 1877, 3:630).

³ *Synopsis theologiae dogmaticae* (3 vols.; 27th ed.; Paris: Desclée, 1926) 2:94–95, §157(b).

fore one comes to accept the authority of Scripture. Although many evangelicals would be loathe to admit it, therefore, evangelical faith in the authority and inerrancy of Scripture presupposes quite a robust natural theology.

IV. Special revelation

In addition to the natural revelation that God has granted to all human beings in all ages, God, according to evangelical belief, has revealed himself progressively to a subset of the human race. This revelation, usually referred to as special because of its spatio-temporal particularity, occurs in a kaleidoscopic variety of modes: e.g. the alighting of a dove on Christ's head, the turning of the Nile to blood, the appearance of a blinding light on the road to Damascus, a bush that burns and yet is not consumed, and a still, small voice. The belief, sometimes imputed to evangelicals, that special revelation consists exclusively in the verbal communication of data, therefore, is utterly alien to mainstream evangelical views of the subject.

Equally alien to evangelical conceptions of special revelation is the view that this revelation is in some way impersonal. Admittedly, evangelicals do not limit special revelation to events of personal encounter in history and religious experience. They ascribe a significant propositional component to special revelation, rather, and believe that, precisely by so doing, they safeguard the distinctively personal character of this revelation. For, as John Goldingay correctly observes, „The acts of a person do not alone reveal the person. Their words are needed to reveal the meaning of their acts”⁴. In the view of evangelicals, consequently, their conception of revelation as partially propositional is eminently personalistic.

V. Scripture

Most evangelicals recognize, moreover, that Christianity, in the sense of a body of divinely revealed doctrine centering in the person and work of Jesus Christ, first came into existence when God preached the *protevangelium* to Adam and Eve (Gen 3:15), thousands of years, at the very least, before Moses penned the first words of Scripture. Christianity existed for thousands of years, therefore, with no Scripture whatsoever and if, *per impossibile*, Scripture were destroyed from the earth, Christianity presumably could exist without Scripture again. The majority of evangelicals, accordingly, do not mistake the Bible for the essence of Christianity or even a condition *sine qua non* of Christian faith.

⁴ *Models for Scripture*, Grand Rapids 1994, 302.

Most evangelicals do, however, consider Scripture the only infallible, perspicuous, and, in matters of faith and morals, sufficient rule by which the church can guide her doctrine and life. Although tradition, reason, and experience play essential roles in virtually all theological decision-making, therefore, Scripture alone constitutes an authority from which one cannot appeal.

1. Inspiration

Scripture constitutes an indisputable authority in all matters about which it speaks, first and principally, because it is inspired. Inspiration consists in the process whereby God originates speech or writing in such a way that he constitutes the literary author of this speech or writing. God constitutes the literary author of inspired writing or speech, and not merely its originator or cause, first, because Scripture characterizes itself, directly and indirectly, as the equivalent of divine speech. The human authors of the New Testament, for example, ascribe statements to „Scripture” that Scripture itself ascribes to God (Rom 9:17; Gal 3:8). The same authors, likewise, assign to God or the Holy Spirit scriptural statements not identified in their original contexts as divine (Matt 19:4, 5; Acts 4:24, 25; Acts 13:34, 35; Heb 1:5–12). Scripture is designated „the oracles of God” (Rom 3:2; Heb 5:12; 1 Pet 4:11), is said to be „God-breathed” (2 Tim 3:16), etc.

Second, and no less importantly, he „who works all things after the counsel of his will” (Eph 1:11); of whom, to whom, and through whom are all things (Rom 11:36); who is the sole, uncaused cause of the universe to whom all other causes trace their origin; and who preserves the universe by a virtual *creatio continua*;⁵ is, in a certain sense, the cause of everything that occurs, not excluding the sinful deeds of human beings⁶. Merely identifying God as the originator or the cause of the statements of Scripture, therefore, would not meaningfully distinguish these statements from those of uninspired authors. We prefer, therefore, to designate God the literary author of Scripture in order to indicate that God not only causes

⁵ The doctrine that God preserves the universe by a virtual *creatio continua* does not commit its advocates to the occasionalistic thesis that God continually creates the universe anew. The doctrine of a virtual *creatio continua* states, rather: first, that creation does not and cannot, in any sense, sustain itself in existence; and, second, that creation’s continued existence, therefore, depends on the unabated exertion of the same power by which God initially brought it into existence. „The preservation of things by God,” in the words of Thomas Aquinas, „is a continuation of that action whereby he gives existence” (*Summa Theologiae* 1, 104, 1 ad 4).

⁶ God’s causation of sinful acts involves God in no moral culpability. For God causes human acts only insofar as these acts exist and not insofar as they are evil and thus deprived of necessary elements of their being. God’s causality of sinful acts, to borrow an illustration from Leibniz, resembles the causality exercised by a river current on vessels of differing mass; the relative slowness with which the bulkier vessels move derives solely from their own bulkiness and not from any defect in the current that moves them (cf. Leibniz, *Theodicee* §1.30).

Scripture to be written, but also takes responsibility for what Scripture says. It is this divine acceptance of responsibility that legitimates the standard, evangelical inference from Scripture's plenary, verbal inspiration to its inerrancy. Scripture cannot err, most evangelicals reason, because God cannot lie (Num 23:19; 1 Sam 15:29; Titus 1:2).

a. Objective vs. subjective inspiration. In order properly to grasp mainstream evangelical understanding of biblical inspiration, furthermore, one must understand the distinction between subjective inspiration and objective inspiration: a distinction the vast majority of evangelicals at least implicitly acknowledge even if they do not verbalize it in the same terms⁷. Subjective inspiration constitutes the influence whereby God moves the human authors of Scripture to write the words that they do. This subjective element of inspiration admits of several forms and numerous degrees. It can involve some elevation of consciousness and perhaps even divine dictation; it need not, however, include any such element and, in fact, seems frequently to have involved no alteration whatsoever of the writer's ordinary patterns of thought.

Objective inspiration, by contrast, is absolutely uniform in kind and degree. It consists simply in God's ensuring that the sentences of Scripture are sentences: a) that communicate the beliefs he desires to inculcate through them; and b) that he can honestly vouchsafe to be true. Objective inspiration, it cannot be sufficiently emphasized, concerns the sentences, i.e. the very words, of Scripture and not its human authors. Paul states in 2 Tim 3:16 – „All Scripture is God-breathed”; he says nothing whatsoever about the human authors of Scripture. The biblical and evangelical doctrine of Scripture's objective inspiration, therefore, is in no way inconsistent with the radical variability of the subjects by whom and the circumstances in which Scripture is written. The distinctively human, individual, and occasional character of a book is irrelevant to the question of whether it is objectively inspired.

Critics of evangelical understanding of inspiration, however, not infrequently assert that if inspiration (by which they mean subjective inspiration) of precisely the same kind and precisely the same degree extended to every human author of Scripture whatsoever, then: a) all Scripture would be composed in a basically uniform, heavenly style; and b) the personalities, educations, quirks, and faults of the human authors would not stamp themselves indelibly onto virtually every verse of the text. Because propositions a) and b) are notoriously false, such critics reason, the normative evangelical doctrine of inspiration must be false as well. Such misapprehensions occur, as Louis Gaussen observes, „because people have almost always wished to view [objective] inspiration in the man, while

⁷ We derive the terminology of subjective and objective inspiration from Tanqueray, *Synopsis* 1:760, §1154.

it ought to have been seen only in the book”⁸. One believes that all of Scripture is subjectively inspired, albeit in radically varying modes and measures, primarily because subjective inspiration constitutes a logical correlate of objective inspiration. It is objective inspiration that Scripture identifies as equally present in every portion of itself and that entails Scripture’s universal truthfulness. Subjective inspiration, by contrast, is an ill-defined postulate that, although logically necessary and scripturally attested, is relatively unimportant to evangelical Christian faith.

If one does not grasp the distinction between subjective and objective inspiration, it seems, evangelical views on biblical inspiration can hardly fail to appear preposterous at the outset. We have addressed this issue, therefore, before explaining why evangelicals ascribe to Scripture plenary, objective inspiration. Although one may legitimately reach this conclusion by a number of routes, the least circuitous seems to be that which originates in the testimony of Jesus.

b. The testimony of Jesus. The Gospels, first, constitute sufficiently credible witnesses to Jesus’ teaching and ministry that, even if one prescind from their inspiration, it would be unreasonable to doubt their testimony, at least in its broadest outlines. Unless the Gospels are a tissue a lies (and they are not), second, Jesus claimed, at least vaguely and implicitly, to be very God and very man in such a way that his words carried divine authority. By resurrecting Jesus, third, God vindicated the truthfulness of this claim; and no one who is not a prisoner to naturalistic presuppositions can fail to be impressed by the historical evidence that Jesus’ resurrection did occur.

Without presupposing the New Testament’s inspiration, therefore, one may know that God himself has testified that Jesus is God incarnate. The light of nature indicates, fourth, that God is all-knowing and incapable of telling a lie. It seems, therefore, fifth, that if Jesus declares the Bible inspired in its totality, then it must be such. One can complete an argument from the testimony of Jesus to the inspiration of Scripture, therefore, by demonstrating, seventh, that Jesus vouches for the inspiration of Scripture’s two Testaments.

Before addressing Jesus’ testimony on this subject, however, we should like to address an objection to this manner of verifying Scripture’s inspiration. Evangelicals, according to James Barr, commit „a simple literary function-mistake” when they appeal to the authority of Jesus as a guarantor of the truthfulness of Scripture⁹. In Barr’s view, that is to say, evangelicals draw „no adequate distinction (...)between that which Jesus seeks to teach, the message which he seeks to communicate, and any or all of the elements which are found in his utterance”¹⁰.

⁸ *The Divine Inspiration of the Bible*, Grand Rapids 1971 (orig. 1841), 47.

⁹ *Fundamentalism*, Philadelphia 1977, 74.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

Barr is correct when he observes that evangelicals rarely advert to the distinction between Jesus' central message and what might seem like *obiter dicta* on his part. Evangelicals rarely advert to this distinction, however, not because they confuse Jesus' references to minutiae of Old Testament history with the gospel, but for the following four reasons.

First, Jesus' God-manhood is a central component of the gospel. If Jesus were not man, he could not obey the moral law on human beings' behalf and suffer the punishment they deserve. If he were not God, however, he could not atone for their sins by offering an infinitely meritorious sacrifice to God. Second, Jesus' God-manhood entails that Jesus' words are uttered by a divine, omniscient person who could not utter a falsehood without sinning. Third, Jesus' sinless obedience to the moral law, his active obedience, is indispensable to the accomplishment of his salvific mission. Fourth and finally, therefore, a Jesus who uttered even a single falsehood could not constitute the Savior of the world. Evangelicals consider even incidental remarks by Jesus infallible, consequently, not because they confuse them with the gospel, but because they could not do otherwise without implicitly denying that Jesus is the Savior of sinful human beings.

i. The inspiration of the Old Testament. To return, now, to our argument from Jesus' testimony to the inspiration of the Old and New Testaments: the Gospels admit of little doubt that the Jesus portrayed therein considers the Scriptures of the Old Testament accurate in all that they teach. In particular, Jesus confides absolute trust in the Hebrew Bible's testimony even to relatively minor historical details. He states confidently, for instance, that no rain fell in Israel for more than three years during the lifetime of Elijah (Luke 4:25; cf. 1 Kings 17:1, 18:1); that God sent Elijah during that time to a widow of Zarephath (Luke 4:26; cf. 1 Kings 17:9); that Naaman the Syrian was cleansed of his leprosy through the ministry of Elisha (Luke 4:27; 2 Kings 5:1-13). Jesus ascribes to Moses the Pentateuchal regulations concerning the sacrifices to be offered by recovered lepers (Matt 8:4; Mark 1:44; Luke 5:14; cf. Lev 14:1-32). He ascribes authorship of Ps 110 to David (Matt 22:43, 45; Mark 12:36-7; Luke 20:42, 44). Jesus credits the testimony of 1 Sam 21:3-6 that David and his companions ate hallowed bread from the tabernacle (Matt 12:3-4; Mark 2:25-6; Luke 6:3-4). He not only acknowledges the historical existence of Sodom and Gomorrah (Matt 10:15; 11:23-4; Mark 6:11; Luke 10:12), but explicitly testifies that „on the day that Lot went out from Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all” (Luke 17:29; cf. Gen 19:23-5). He implicitly accepts the historicity of the turning of Lot's wife into salt, moreover, when he commands his disciples, „Remember Lot's wife” (Luke 17:32; cf. Gen 19:26). He accepts the historicity of Noah, the flood, and the ark (Matt 24:37-9; Luke 17:26-7; cf. Gen 6:1-8:19); of Abel and his murder (Matt 23:35; Luke 11:51; cf. Gen 4:8); of Moses' lifting up the brazen serpent in the wilderness (John 3:14; cf. Num 21:9); and of the manna from heaven (John 6:49, 58;

cf. Ex 16:15, 35, etc.). Jesus states unequivocally that „Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the sea monster” (Matt 12:40; cf. Jonah 1:17) and that „the men of Nineveh (...) repented at the preaching of Jonah” (Matt 12:41; Luke 11:32; cf. Jonah 3:5-10). He testifies that „the queen of the South (...) came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon” (Matt 12:42; Luke 11:31; cf. 1 Kings 10:1-10, 13; 2 Chron 9:1-9, 12), and that God spoke to Moses by the bush, saying „I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob” (Matt 22:32; Mark 12:26; Luke 20:37; cf. Ex 3:6). This uncritical acceptance of Scripture’s testimony bespeaks an attitude of wholehearted trust in the accuracy of the Hebrew Scriptures’ statements. In Jesus’ view, as he tells his Father, „your word is truth” (John 17:17).

Jesus’ reverence for the Hebrew Bible, moreover, extends well beyond a mere acceptance of its *de facto* truthfulness. Jesus seems to believe, that is, not only that Scripture’s statements are accurate, but that the very presence of these statements in Scripture guarantees their accuracy. Hence he frequently claims that events predicted in Scripture not only will, but must come to pass, precisely because they are predicted in Scripture. „All things which were written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and the psalms,” Jesus declares, not only will, but „must [dei=] be fulfilled” (Luke 24:44). Likewise, Jesus rebukes Cleopas and his fellow disciple on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:25-6): „Oh foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary for the Messiah to suffer these things and to enter into his glory?” Jesus, in fact, ascribes a quasi-causal force to scriptural predictions and employs them as explanations of why events occur. At his arrest, he explains, „All this has taken place to fulfill the Scriptures of the prophets” (Matt 26:56). The hatred Jesus suffers from his own nation, he explains, was „to fulfill the word that is written in their law, ‘They hated me without a cause’” (John 15:25; cf. Ps 35:19, 69:4). Of Judas’ betrayal, he asserts, „it is that the Scripture may be fulfilled, ‘He who eats my bread has lifted up his heel against me’” (John 13:18; cf. Ps 41:9). „You will all fall away because of me this night,” Jesus tells his disciples, „for it is written, ‘I will strike down the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered’” (Matt 26:31; Mark 14:27; cf. Zech 13:7).

Jesus’ reverence for Scripture, in fact, is such that he takes unusual and sometimes costly steps to obey what he considers its teaching. He suffers unspeakable agony, in particular, at least in part because he believes that the Hebrew Bible demands this of the Messiah. In the garden of Gethsemane, for instance, Jesus explains to Peter that he can escape from his captors, but refuses so to do in order to accomplish the tasks assigned to him in the Bible (Matt 26:53-4). „Do you think,” Jesus asks Peter, „that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels? How then will the Scriptures be fulfilled, which say that it must happen this way?” Likewise, when Je-

sus' disciples ask him why he speaks to the crowds in parables, Jesus explains, „I speak to them in parables; because while seeing they do not see, and while hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand” (Matt 13:13; cf. Isa 6:9). In a parallel passage, Jesus explains the meaning of these words to his inner circle. „To you,” he says, „has been given the mystery of the kingdom of God, but those who are outside get everything in parables, so that while seeing, they may see and not perceive, and while hearing, they may hear and not understand, otherwise they might return and be forgiven” (Mark 4:10-12; cf. Isa 6:9-10; Luke 8:10). In obedience to Scripture, therefore, Jesus seems to frame his message in such a way as to guarantee its rejection: a rejection that will lead, as he knows, to his ignominious death.

In the throes of this death, moreover, „Jesus, to fulfill the Scripture, said ‘I am thirsty’” (John 19:28; cf. v. 29 and Ps 69:21). Even during the inexpressible anguish of his dying moments, therefore, Jesus remains conscious of his duty to fulfill the very letter of Scripture. While one does find Jesus prefacing scriptural quotations with „It is written” (Matt 4:4, 7, 10; Luke 4:4, 8), a shorthand expression in both Testaments for „these words are inspired by God;” and while Jesus does aver in John 10:35, „Scripture cannot be broken;” these statements, along with those listed above, testify less powerfully to Jesus' total devotion to Hebrew Scripture than does his life. In the words of Roger Nicole: „At the very threshold of his public ministry, our Lord, in his dramatic victory over Satan's threefold onslaught, rested his whole defense on the authority of three passages of Scripture. He quoted the Old Testament in support of his teaching to the crowds; he quoted it in his discussions with antagonistic Jews; he quoted it in answer to questions both captious and sincere; he quoted it in instructing the disciples who would have readily accepted his teaching on his own authority; he referred to it in his prayers, when alone in the presence of the Father; he quoted it on the cross, when his sufferings could easily have drawn his attention elsewhere; he quoted it in his resurrection glory, when any limitation, real or alleged, of the days of his flesh was clearly superseded. Whatever may be the differences between the pictures of Jesus drawn by the four Gospels, they certainly agree in their representation of our Lord's attitude toward the Old Testament: one of constant use and of unquestioning endorsement of its authority”¹¹.

The most natural explanation of all this is that Jesus considered the Old Testament the very Word of God. Jesus shared, that is to say, the reverential attitude towards the Hebrew Scriptures that Josephus ascribes to first century Jews in general: „It is an instinct with every Jew, from the day of his birth, to regard

¹¹ *New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, in: C.F.H. HENRY, *Revelation and the Bible: Contemporary Evangelical Thought*, London 1958, 137-151 at 140-141.

them [the Scriptures] as the decrees of God, to abide by them, and, if need be, cheerfully to die for them" (*C. Ap.* 1.42).

ii. The inspiration of the New Testament. Now, as to the New Testament: Jesus implicitly guarantees the objective inspiration of the New Testament Scriptures by his comprehensive endorsement of the Apostles' doctrine. The Jesus of the Gospels conveys this endorsement in at least two ways: first, by characterizing the Apostles as divinely sent; and, second, by prophesying that his true sheep will follow the Apostles' teaching¹².

As we have just noted, Jesus testifies to his approval of apostolic teaching, first, by characterizing the Apostles as divinely sent. In John 17:18, for instance, Jesus states, „As you [the Father] sent me into the world, I also have sent them [the Apostles] into the world." Likewise, in John 20:21, the risen Jesus tells the Apostles, „Peace be with you; as the Father has sent me, I also send you." These remarks in themselves, admittedly, hardly constitute comprehensive endorsements of the Apostles' teaching. When considered in the context of Jesus' claims about his own divinity and the authority of those divinely sent, however, John 17:18 and 20:21 amount to verbal guarantees of the apostolic doctrine's infallibility.

For Jesus testifies that God requires human beings to believe those whom he has sent: „This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent" (John 6:29). Likewise, Jesus asserts that whoever does not believe those sent by God thereby incurs moral culpability. „You do not have his [i.e. God's] word abiding in you," Jesus tells a group of his opponents, „for you do not believe him whom he sent" (John 5:38). When Jesus tells the Apostles, „as the Father has sent me, I also send you," therefore, he declares that God requires human beings to believe and obey the teachings of the Apostles. Insofar as God requires no one to believe falsehoods, then, Jesus implicitly guarantees the infallibility of the Apostles' doctrine by the very act of proclaiming them divinely sent.

Jesus testifies to his approval of apostolic doctrine, second, by prophesying, on at least one occasion, that his authentic disciples will assent to the Apostles' teaching. In John 15:20, specifically, Jesus says to the Apostles, „Remember the word that I said to you, 'A slave is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they kept my word, they will keep yours also." In isolation, naturally, this text may seem not to ascribe to the Apostles any extraordinary charismas. Jesus specifies how his disciples will respond to apostolic teaching; he does not so much as advert to the content of that teaching. When

¹² Obviously the miracles („signs of an Apostle" [2 Cor 12:12]), which Jesus empowered the Apostles to perform, also lent credibility to their teaching. Considering, however: a) the sharp disagreements among contemporary evangelicals about the significance of miracles for the life of the church; and b) the difficulties attendant upon efforts to develop criteria for distinguishing between divinely wrought and demonic miracles; it appears inopportune to discuss signs and wonders in this context.

viewed in the context of Jesus' earlier remarks concerning the belief and behavior of his genuine disciples, however, Jesus' words in John 15:20 exude a notable confidence in the accuracy of the apostolic proclamation and, therefore, in the accuracy of the New Testament itself.

For at various points in this Gospel, Jesus ascribes a sort of spiritual sense to true believers that enables them to distinguish the words of God, sc. the words of Jesus, from merely human utterances. In John 10:3-5, particularly, Jesus explains: „The sheep hear his [i.e. Jesus', the good shepherd's] voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he puts forth all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him, because they know his voice. A stranger they simply will not follow, but will flee from him because they do not know the voice of strangers.” If Jesus' sheep, who follow no voice but his' own, follow the voice of the Apostles, then, this must mean that the Apostles themselves speak with Jesus' voice. Jesus' declaration that those who have obeyed his words will obey theirs as well thus amounts to an implicit acknowledgment that the Apostles' words will carry the same authority as his own.

On the basis, then, of: 1) Jesus' statements concerning his authentic disciples' loyalty to apostolic doctrine; and 2) his characterization of the Apostles as divinely sent; one can reasonably conclude that Jesus considers the Apostles' teaching divinely authoritative and infallible in every respect: the Word of God in the words of men. To the extent that the New Testament Scriptures consist either in apostolic writings or in writings approved by the Apostles, therefore, it seems that Jesus at least indirectly ascribes objective inspiration to the teachings of the New Testament.

2. Sufficiency

To all of this, a conservative Catholic might respond, „I find myself largely in agreement. It is not you evangelicals' claim that Scripture is inspired that we Catholics contest, but your belief in its sufficiency as a rule for faith and life.” To this comment, an evangelical would presumably reply that if the evangelical doctrine of biblical inspiration is, indeed, correct, then the Bible cannot fail to be sufficient as a guide in matters of faith and morals. Scripture itself testifies, that is to say, that it teaches clearly all things necessary to salvation and pious living.

This does not mean that the teaching of every verse of Scripture is perspicuous. In the letters of Paul, Peter writes, there are „some things hard to understand” (2 Pet 3:16). Nor does it mean that extrascriptural data about the language, background, and environment of the biblical authors can play no legitimate role in biblical exegesis. Nor, again, does the doctrine of Scripture's sufficiency imply that uninspired explanations of Scripture are useless. For, first, not only the clear, but also the obscure passages of Scripture, whose meaning one can grasp

more easily with the aid of an expositor, are „profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, [and] for training in righteousness” (2 Tim 3:16). Second, and more importantly, even the clear and fundamental teachings of Scripture are scattered about „a little here, a little there” (Isa 28:13) in such a way that persons who either will not or cannot bestow the labor necessary to discern the truth can learn what is necessary for salvation only with the aid of an uninspired guide (cf. Acts 8:31). Third and finally, God has instituted the office of pastor in the church and commands pastors to „preach the word” (2 Tim 4:2). Both the office of pastor and the activity of preaching, however, would be superfluous if uninspired explanations of Scripture could not edify the church.

The doctrine of Scripture’s sufficiency, likewise, does not imply that Scripture constitutes the sole instrumental cause of human acknowledgment of its authority. Manifestly, the church’s preaching constitutes one of the instruments by which believers usually come to accept the inspiration of Scripture. This does not imply, however, that the church’s preaching constitutes the authority on account of which believers acknowledge Scripture’s inspiration. The church resembles, rather, the woman of Sychar (John 4:4-42), whom inhabitants of that city believe, not because of any real or pretended authority on her part, but simply because her testimony is credible.

When one declares Scripture a sufficient guide in matters of faith and morals, furthermore, one in no way detracts from the authority of the Apostles’ unwritten commands. „Stand firm,” writes Paul to the Thessalonians, „and hold to the traditions which you were taught, whether by word of mouth or by letter from us” (2 Thess 2:15). The doctrine of Scripture’s sufficiency merely affirms with the Apostle Paul that the Scriptures are able to give human beings „the wisdom that leads to salvation” (2 Tim 3:15) and so render them sufficiently knowledgeable to attain that holiness „without which no one will see the Lord” (Heb 12:14).

Evangelical belief in the sufficiency of Scripture, finally, does not imply that all revealed and consequently binding propositions are explicitly stated, albeit perhaps in other words, in Scripture. The thesis that no doctrine or directive can qualify as revealed unless it is explicitly formulated in some written or oral revelation, in fact, logically precludes the formal, or even the material, sufficiency of Scripture¹³.

¹³ One who asserts that Scripture is materially sufficient holds that all revealed doctrines are contained at least virtually in Scripture. Numerous Catholic theologians have come to accept the material sufficiency of Scripture since middle of the last century. One who considers Scripture formally sufficient believes that Scripture not only virtually contains all revealed doctrines, but also that it suffices to evince its own inspiration and to communicate to human beings the doctrines it teaches without the intervention of an infallible authority external to the text. Naturally, only a Protestant can consider Scripture both materially and formally sufficient. For an account of the evolution of Catholic thought on these subjects between the Council of Trent and Vatican

That is to say: if sound inferences from Scripture constituted mere speculation and not binding truth; then a church that refused, as a matter of principle, to command its members to believe or do anything not mandated by Scripture, could not justly insist on the veracity of the doctrine of the Trinity; the permissibility of female participation in the Eucharist; the impropriety of repeating baptism; or the lawfulness of conducting public worship on Sunday instead of Saturday. If sound inferences from Scripture did not qualify as revealed, therefore, no Protestant church could function.

For, if a Protestant church admitted the permissibility of insisting on adherence to non-revealed teachings, then the Roman church's insistence on adherence to such teachings would cease to justify separation from Rome. If a Protestant church held fast to the principle that one ought not to insist on non-revealed teachings, however; and refused to acknowledge as revealed any doctrines or precepts not explicitly stated in divine revelation; then it could not regulate its own faith and life without having recourse to putatively revealed, unwritten traditions. In this case, again, the Protestant church would forfeit its rationale for separation from Rome.

One can hardly help admiring the ingenuity of whichever Counter-Reformation polemicist devised the *prima facie* plausible doctrine that only what is explicitly stated in revelation can qualify as revealed¹⁴. The doctrine, however, suffers from a number of faults. First, the reason why one refrains from crediting human beings with belief in every implication of their statements is that human beings do not know all implications of their statements. This reason does not apply to God. Being omniscient and incapable of deceiving, rather, God cannot reveal any set of propositions whose implications are not universally true¹⁵. It seems, accordingly, that one ought to repose in the logical consequences of Scripture the same confidence one places in explicit biblical statements.

Second, and more importantly, the doctrine trivializes the moral imperatives individual Christians must apply in their lives. The statement, „Harry G. ought not to murder Frank M.,” after all, is not explicitly stated in Scripture. Harry G., rather, can reach this conclusion only through a process of reasoning: „Scripture states that human beings ought not to murder other human beings; I, Harry G., and Frank M. are human beings; therefore I, Harry G., ought not to murder Frank M.”

This inference, naturally, is elementary, but it is an inference. Specifically, it is a „mixed syllogism”: a syllogism in which one combines a revealed major premise with a non-revealed minor premise in order to reach a conclusion that

II, cf. R. DAUNIS, *Schrift und Tradition in Trient und in der modernen römisch-katholischen Theologie*” *KD* 13 (1967), 132-158, 184-200.

¹⁴ Francis Turretin identifies Jacques du Perron (1556-1618) as the doctrine's originator (*Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, trans. G.M. Giger, ed. J. DENNISON; 3 vols.; Phillipsburg 1992-97, I:37, §1.12.1).

¹⁵ Cf. *ibid.* I:42, §1.12.29.

possesses the full force of revelation.¹⁶ If only that which is explicitly stated in revelation were revealed, and all else were mere speculation, then „I, Harry G. ought not to murder Frank M.” would constitute a merely speculative conclusion. This would not necessarily imply that Harry G. may disregard this imperative; it would, however, imply that Harry G. should regard the proposition, „Tola (...)lived in Shamir in the hill country of Ephraim” (Judges 10:1), which is explicitly stated in revelation, as objectively more authoritative than the statement, „I, Harry G., ought not to murder Frank M.” This consequence, it seems, is not only counterintuitive, but perverse.

It appears necessary, therefore, to admit not only propositions explicitly contained in Scripture’s text; and, indeed, not only propositions inferable therefrom; but also the conclusions of mixed syllogisms, as revealed and consequently binding. The fallibility of the human reason by which one reaches such conclusions, it is important to note, need not detract from these conclusions’ revealed, and therefore infallible, character. For the senses, by which one perceives the very words of Scripture, are quite as fallible as human reason. Yet one who reads Scripture with sufficient care to ensure that he does not mistake Scripture’s meaning, can legitimately claim to learn infallible truths through the operation of fallible senses. Likewise, it seems, one can reasonably regard the conclusions of mixed syllogisms as infallible as long as one ensures: a) that the non-revealed minor premise of the syllogism is true; and b) that the reasoning by which one reaches the syllogism’s conclusion is valid. One can, that is to say, reach an infallible conclusion through the fallible power of human reason if the reasoning by which one reaches the conclusion is not fallacious¹⁷.

In summary, then, the evangelical doctrine of the sufficiency of Scripture implies neither: a) that all revealed truths are explicitly stated in Scripture; nor b) that the Apostles’ oral instructions are devoid of authority; nor c) that Scripture constitutes the sole instrumental cause of human acknowledgement of its authority; nor d) that uninspired explanations of Scripture are superfluous; nor e) that extrascriptural information cannot assist in the task of biblical exegesis. The doctrine of Scripture’s sufficiency states, rather, that anyone who possesses the requisite mental and linguistic capacities, and is not blinded by prejudice, can, with diligent study, extract from Scripture those truths that are essential to salvation and godly living.

Evangelical Christians’ rationale for professing this doctrine is quite simple. First, 2 Tim 3:15 teaches that Scripture is capable of imparting to one „the wisdom that leads to salvation.” Second, Paul tells the Ephesians in Acts 20:27 that he preached to them „the whole purpose of God” and then tells Agrippa in Acts

¹⁶ Cf. *ibid.* 1:40, §1.12.16.

¹⁷ Cf. *ibid.* 39-40, §1.12.13.

26:22 that he proclaims „nothing but what the prophets and Moses said was going to take place.” Even if one allows for some degree of hyperbole in the former text and mental reservation in the last, the texts when combined seem to imply that Moses and the prophets alone supply information sufficient for salvation and righteous conduct. Third and finally, Luke praises the Christians of Berea for testing even the Apostle Paul by Scripture (Acts 17:11). Such an act would appear foolhardy, however, if the Scriptures the Bereans possessed either lacked fundamentally important doctrines or were insufficiently perspicuous for the Bereans to discern their teachings. This passage, therefore, seems almost certainly to presuppose Scripture’s perspicuity and its sufficiency as a rule of doctrine and life.

3. Integrity of the text

In view of these considerations, most evangelicals consider Scripture an infallible, sufficient, and perspicuous guide for the church in matters of faith and morals. One might retort, however, that the inerrancy, sufficiency, and perspicuity of Scripture avail the church nothing if the church does not possess some reasonable approximation of Scripture’s authentic text: the words, that is to say, that Scripture’s inspired authors actually wrote. Since the autographs of all scriptural texts have presumably perished, the task of verifying that Scripture’s apographs, sc. copies of the texts that derive ultimately from the autographs, contain the authentic text of the autographs might seem insuperably difficult. As we shall see, however, one can confirm the correspondence of autographs and apographs indirectly with the aid of circumstantial evidence.

As to the Old Testament, first: if the original text of the Old Testament has been corrupted to such an extent that it supplies insufficient guidance for salvation and righteous conduct, then this must have occurred either before, or during, or after Christ’s sojourn on earth. Such corruption could not have occurred either before or during Christ’s earthly career, however. For the earthly Christ seems to have believed, like most of his Jewish contemporaries, that the apographic Scriptures used in first century Palestine were comprehensively reliable. It seems exceedingly unlikely, moreover, that the apographs of the Old Testament were corrupted after Christ’s ascension. For, since opposed parties, viz. Christians, Samaritans, and Jews, have possessed numerous manuscripts and versions of the same books for two millennia, no corruption, realistically speaking, could have crept its way into the entirety of manuscripts and versions¹⁸.

¹⁸ This is a slightly modified version of a familiar argument in both Reformed theology. Cf. e.g. TURRETIN, *Institutes*, 1:107–8, §2.10.6; and R.A. MULLER, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics: The Rise and Development of Reformed Orthodoxy, ca. 1520 to ca. 1725*, 4 vols., 2d ed., Grand Rapids 2003, 416.

As to the New Testament, second: the more than 5,000 extant, New Testament manuscripts display a measure of uniformity that appears inexplicable on any other hypothesis than that the text of the New Testament has been preserved largely intact. The revolution in New Testament textual criticism begun in the eighteenth century has, admittedly, dislodged a number of passages, most notably Mark 16:9–20, John 7:53–8:11, and 1 John 5:7, from contemporary Greek New Testaments¹⁹. Textual criticism of the New Testament, however, has undermined not a single evangelical doctrine; and its results, on the whole, have tended to confirm, rather than disprove, the integrity of the New Testament text received by the ancient and the contemporary church alike.

4. Canonicity

One can be reasonably confident, therefore, that the evangelical church possesses the authentic text of the books it receives as Scripture. The question remains, however, of whether the evangelical church receives all of those books, and only those books, that it ought to receive as Scripture. This question divides itself naturally into three sub-questions: first, whether evangelicals ought to acknowledge as canonical the so-called deuterocanonical books; second, whether, evangelicals are right to include the Tanakh in their canon of Scripture; and, third, whether evangelicals are justified in receiving as canonical the entirety of the New Testament. Since debates about the biblical canon frequently revolve around definitions of the term, incidentally, we should like to note before proceeding further that we use „canon” in the sense of the set of books that the church ought to receive. In this sense of the term, the church has never been without a canon, and cannot properly be said to „canonize” books, but rather to acknowledge the canonicity of those books that are already canonical of themselves.

a. The deuterocanonical books. As to the first question: certain of the deuterocanonical books labor under a heavy burden of internal evidence against their inspiration: a prerequisite *sine qua non* of canonicity. The author of Judith, for example, portrays Nebuchadnezzar as a king of Assyria (1:1, 7, 11; 2:1, 4; 4:1), who reigns in Nineveh (1:1, 16), and orders an invasion of Judah in the post-exilic period (4:3; 5:18, 19). The author of the Wisdom of Solomon affirms the disembodied existence of human souls prior to their bodies’ conception (8:19, 20). The author of 2 Maccabees celebrates the suicide of Razis as a heroic act (14:37–46); and the author of Sirach (i.e. Ecclesiasticus) makes remarks such as „Any iniq-

¹⁹ For a full enumeration of New Testament passages deemed inauthentic by mainstream textual critics, cf. KURT and BARBARA ALAND, *The Text of the New Testament: An Introduction to the Critical Editions and to the Theory and Practice of Modern Textual Criticism*, trans. Errol F. Rhodes; 2d ed., Grand Rapids 1989, 298–311.

uity is small compared to a woman's iniquity" (25:19), and „Better is the wickedness of a man than a woman who does good" (42:14a)²⁰.

These considerations, however, are not ultimately decisive. If evangelical scholars discovered a difficulty to which, after diligent inquiry, they could find no solution in, say, Ecclesiastes, they would not cease to regard Ecclesiastes as canonical; rather, they would redouble their efforts to resolve the difficulty in question. Likewise, seeming errors such as those to which we have just referred do not suffice to prove the deuterocanonical books uninspired. In order to determine the true status of these books, rather, one must consult external evidence, which, in our view, tells decisively against these books' canonicity. Specifically, unless the combined testimony of Josephus (*C. Ap.* 1.37–41), 1 Maccabees (4:44–6; 9:27; and 14:41), 2 Baruch (85:3), and the Babylonian "Talmud (esp. *Yoma* 9a, b; 21b; *Bab. Bat.* 12a, b) radically misrepresents typical Jewish opinion in the period c. 200 B.C.–A.D. 200; then the Jews of this time, on the whole, believed that prophecy, at least of the sort that carried scriptural authority, ceased with the death of Malachi c. 400 B.C.²¹ At this time, it is important to recall, one could hardly be regarded as an author of canonical Scripture if one were not also regarded as a prophet²².

Since Jesus: a) fearlessly and unsparingly rebukes his Jewish contemporaries for all manner of religious abuses and yet nowhere faults them for truncating the biblical canon; and b) employs phrases such as „Scripture," „the law," and „the law and the prophets" without specifying precisely which books he means; it appears that Jesus shares the consensus of his first century Jewish contemporaries as to the contents of the biblical canon. If the Jews of Jesus' day rejected the canonicity of works composed after 400 B.C., and Jesus shared these views, however, then Jesus must also have rejected the canonicity of works composed after this date: a class that embraces all of the deuterocanonical books. Evangelicals seem, therefore, to have implicit dominical warrant for excluding from the Old Testament all books not contained in the Tanakh.

²⁰ Quotations from apocryphal books are taken from the NRSV.

²¹ We derive these references from R. BECKWITH, *The Old Testament Canon of the New Testament Church and Its Background in Early Judaism*, London – Grand Rapids 1985, 370–372. All, or virtually all, of our argument concerning the Old Testament canon derives at least indirectly from this work.

²² Josephus, accordingly, ascribes the composition of all scriptural books to prophets (*C. Ap.* 1.37). The author of Hebrews, likewise, sums up all divine revelation before Christ with the words, „he spoke long ago to the fathers in [through] the prophets" (Heb 1:1). Peter characterizes Scripture as a whole as „the prophetic word" (2 Pet 1:19); and Paul refers to the Bible as „the Scriptures of the prophets" (Rom 16:26). Cf. the remarks of Erich Zenger on this subject in his, *Der Psalter im Horizont von Tora und Prophetie: Kanongeschichtliche und kanonhermeneutische Perspektiven*, in: *The Biblical Canons*, ed.: J.-M. AUWERS, H.J. DE JONGE, BETL 163; Leuven: Peeters 2003, 111–134 at 115.

b. *The Tanakh*. Appeal to Jesus' sympathy with his contemporaries' views on the scriptural canon, likewise, seems sufficient to establish the canonicity of the Old Testament books evangelicals do regard as canonical. In defense of these books' canonicity, moreover, evangelicals can appeal to Jesus' remarks in Luke 24:44 and Matt 23:35 (par Luke 11:51). In the first passage, Jesus seems implicitly to affirm the inspiration of all three of the traditional divisions of the Hebrew canon: the *Torah*, the *Nevi'im*, and the *Ketuvim*: „All things which are written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and the psalms,” he asserts, „must be fulfilled.” Admittedly, Jesus' endorsement of the *Ketuvim* in this passage is ambiguous at best. However, in view of the data: a) that Jesus evidently does not regard Psalms as the only inspired book in the *Ketuvim* (witness his allusions to Daniel); b) that the *Ketuvim* at this point has probably not yet received a universally accepted title (hence the ambiguity in the prologue to Sirach and Philo, *Cont.* 3.25); c) that the Jews of Jesus' time and later display a penchant for naming books by their first word (Genesis, accordingly, is *Bereshit*); it seems probable that Jesus employs the word „psalms” as a title for the entirety of the *Ketuvim*²³.

In Matt 23:34, 35, Jesus asserts: „I am sending you prophets and sages and scribes; some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will scourge in your synagogues, and persecute from city to city, so that upon you may fall the guilt of all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar”.

Jesus seems to refer here not to the minor prophet, Zechariah the son of Berechiah, whom Scripture does not characterize as a martyr, but to Zechariah, son of the high priest Jehoiada, who was stoned to death in „the court of the house of the Lord” (2 Chron 24:21): sc. the priests' court, which was located between the sanctuary and the altar of burnt offerings. Jesus presumably follows either: a) a tradition, which may be reflected in *Tg. Lam.* 2:20, of identifying Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada, with the canonical prophet Zechariah; or b) a tradition, re-

²³ Cf. *ibid.* 110-118. Arie van der Kooij asserts that the leaders of the Qumran community c. 150 B.C., in their so-called Halakhic Letter (4QMMT at C:10), may designate the *Ketuvim* by the title „David,” which is presumably a shortened version of „the psalms of David” (*The Canonization of Ancient Books Kept in the Temple of Jerusalem*, in: *Canonization and Decanonization*, ed. VAN DER KOOIJ, K. VAN DER TOORN; SHR 82; Leiden – Boston – Köln 1998, 17–40 at 26–28). If this is the case, he observes, then the Qumran leaders expect the addressees of the letter, who seem to be Hasmoneans, to understand the phrase „the book of Moses and the books of the prophets and David” as a reference to the tripartite canon of the Hebrew Bible. If they could reasonably have expected this c. 150 B.C., moreover, then Jesus' statement in Luke 24:44 would probably have constituted, at least in its original context, an unambiguous endorsement of the traditional Hebrew canon. One should be aware, however, that Van der Kooij's hypothesis is moderately speculative and that it has faced severe criticism from Eugene Ulrich in his *Qumran and the Canon of the Old Testament*, in: *Biblical Canons*, 57–80 at 67–71.

flected in *Qoh. Rab.* 3:16, *b. Mak.* 24b, and *Pesiq. Rab Kah.* 15.7, of identifying Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada, with Zechariah, the son of Jeberechiah (LXX: ui9o_n Baraxiou), one of the two faithful witnesses of Isa 8:2²⁴. In any event, he identifies Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada, with another Zechariah with whom the son of Jehoiada could not have been actually identical, presumably for homiletical purposes.

While this kind of homiletical identification of persons with another may seem strange to modern readers, it appears relatively frequently in Jewish literature. In *m. Sheq.* 5.1, for example, Pethahiah, who presided over the bird-offerings in the temple, is identified with Mordecai, in spite of Mordecai's Benjamite lineage and residence in Persia. The two are identified presumably in order to associate the vast knowledge traditionally attributed to Mordecai (cf. *b. Meg.* 13b) with one whose office required expertise in the tremendously complex laws of bird-offerings²⁵. Again, R. Isaac (*b. Meg.* 14a) identifies Sarah with Iscah, although a comparison of Gen 11:29 to Gen 20:12 shows that the two cannot be identical, in order to reinforce his ascription to Sarah of discernment: *hksy* constitutes a form of the verb *hks*, to discern. Jesus, consequently, does not err when he asserts that „Zechariah, the son of Berechiah” was slain between the sanctuary and the altar.

Why Jesus would allude to Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada, in this context, however, is not immediately evident. Certainly, Jesus does not intend to assert that his audience will not be held responsible for his own death and other martyrdoms that occurred after that of Zechariah, son of Jehoiada. Chronologically speaking, moreover, the last martyrdom recorded in the Tanakh is not that of Zechariah, son of Jehoiada, but that of Urijah, the son of Shemaiah (Jer 26:23). If, however, Jews in the first century ordered the books of the Bible in the same sequence as they do today, which does not seem improbable; then Zechariah, son of Jehoiada, would have been the last martyr mentioned in the sacred text. In this case, speaking of all of the blood shed from that of Abel to that of Zecha-

²⁴ We owe the references in a) and b) to Frédéric Manns, „Le Targum Lamentations: Manuscrit Urbinati 1: Traduction et commentaire,” *LA* 43 (1993), 141–180 at 174, 179. It seems that Jesus associates the son of Jehoiada with the Zechariah of Isa 8:2 rather than the canonical prophet. For, first, the authorities that attest the identification of the son of Jeberechiah with the son of Jehoiada outnumber and significantly antedate the one witness for an association of the son of Jehoiada with the minor prophet: viz. *Targum Lamentations*, the final redaction of which Manns dates to the post-Byzantine period (*ibid.* 180). Second, Jewish writers ordinarily refer to the canonical prophet Zechariah as the son of Iddo; this is the name used, in fact, in *Targum Lamentations* (*ibid.* 14, 176). It seems, therefore, that if Jesus wished to associate the son of Jehoiada with the canonical prophet, he would have referred to him as the son of Iddo.

²⁵ We owe this example to БЕСКВИТН, *Old Testament Canon*, 218. Our entire argument concerning Matt 23:35 and Luke 11:51 follows that of БЕСКВИТН, *ibid.* 212–222.

riah, the son of Jehoiada, would constitute a metaphorical means of referring to the blood of all martyrs.

If the Jews ordered their canonical books already in Jesus' day as they do at present, however, then the entirety of the Tanakh, from Genesis to 2 Chronicles, must already have been acknowledged, by Jesus and his audience, as canonical. The only hypothesis that makes sense of Jesus' enigmatic words in Matt 23:35 (par Luke 11:51), therefore, implies that Jesus and his fellow Jews acknowledge a scriptural canon that extends from Genesis to 2 Chronicles and no further²⁶. Since Jesus' views on these subjects are authoritative, accordingly, the canon of the Old Testament embraces all of the Tanakh and only the Tanakh, as evangelicals believe.

c. The New Testament. In our defense of the New Testament's inspiration above, we argued that the words of the Apostles carry divine authority so that any book either authored or sanctioned by an Apostle qualifies as objectively inspired. The propriety of evangelicals' accepting the 27 books of the New Testament as canonical, therefore, hinges on whether one can reasonably assert that each of the 27 books either has an Apostle as its author or the approval of an Apostle. In order to ascertain this, it seems necessary, first, to determine whether the witness of the documents themselves and the early church as to their authorship is trustworthy; and, second, whether those works whose authors are identified as non-Apostles have a reasonable claim to apostolic sanction.

As to the first point: the authors to whom the books of the New Testament are traditionally ascribed almost certainly are the actual authors. For the church came to recognize the inspiration of works either penned or approved by Apostles quite early. Peter, for example, unmistakably identifies the letters of Paul as canonical Scripture in 2 Pet 3:15-16: „Our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you, as also in all his letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction.”²⁷ Peter, it is important to note, does not announce to his readers that Paul's writings constitute Scripture as if they had not known this before; he rather presupposes that his audience acknowledges this unquestioningly, and he reveals his presupposition only through a parenthetical remark about the perversity of „the untaught and unstable”.

²⁶ Cf. *ibid.* 212–222. „Virtually all exegetes,” writes H.G.L. Peels, who is unsympathetic to the consensus view of this subject, „believe that Matt 23,35 and Luke 11,51 mirror the structure and scope of the Old Testament canon of that time” („The Blood from Abel to Zechariah (Matthew 23,35; Luke 11,50f.) and the Canon of the Old Testament”, ZAW 113 (2001), 583–601 at 586).

²⁷ That Peter actually wrote these words is widely contested. Cf., however, M. KRUGER, *The Authenticity of 2 Peter*, JETS 42 (1999), 645–671.

Remarks by Paul in 1 Tim 5:18 and 2 Tim 3:16, likewise, seem to indicate that he too regards at least certain New Testament writings as inspired Scripture. In 1 Tim 5:18, specifically, he writes, „the Scripture says, ‘You shall not muzzle the ox while he is threshing,’ and ‘The laborer is worthy of his wages.’” In the first citation, Paul manifestly quotes Deut 25:4. In the second, by contrast, Paul at least appears to quote a saying of Christ recorded in Luke 10:7 as Scripture. The maxim that he cites possesses no clear parallel in the canonical Old Testament, the Apocrypha, or the pseudepigrapha, and yet matches Luke 10:7 in every particular: vocabulary, word order, and grammatical construction. Paul seems, therefore, implicitly to acknowledge in 1 Tim 5:18 that the Gospel of Luke constitutes divinely inspired and authoritative Scripture no less than Deuteronomy.

Paul’s testimony to the canonicity of Luke in 1 Tim 5:18, especially in connection with 2 Tim 3:16, thus testifies powerfully to the early church’s acceptance of at least some New Testament writings as canonical already during the apostolic period. Indeed, when coupled with early patristic identifications of New Testament writings as Scripture (cf. e.g. Ign. *Phld.* 8.2; Pol. *Phil.* 12.1; Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.22.1, 2.27.2, 3.12.9, and 3.12.12; and the documents quoted in Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 5.1.58 and 5.16.3), the testimony of Peter and Paul seems to warrant the conclusion of Everett Ferguson that „there is no time when Christians did not treat the writings that would become the New Testament as Scripture”²⁸.

This acceptance of the New Testament as Scripture, it seems, would have supplied Christians of the apostolic age and immediately thereafter with ample reason to study, copy, and circulate this literature and to authenticate its authorship and/or attestation. One cannot reasonably suppose, moreover, that the early church would have knowingly accepted any pseudepigraphal work as inspired. Such acceptance would have contravened the New Testament’s injunctions to honesty; the early Christians’ belief in the comprehensive truthfulness of inspired documents; and the evident opposition of early Christian writers to the falsification of authorship²⁹. Since the earliest Christians possessed both the

²⁸ „Factors Leading to the Selection and Closure of the New Testament Canon: A Survey of Recent Studies,” in *The Canon Debate*, ed. L.M. McDONALD, J.A. SANDERS, Peabody 2002, 295–320 at 298.

²⁹ As to the early church’s abhorrence of forgery, cf. the patristic texts examined by Armin Daniel Baum in his „Literarische Echtheit als Kanonkriterium in der alten Kirche,” *ZNW* 88 (1997), 97–110. Even if one prescind from such evidence, moreover, the *a priori* likelihood that Christians would have knowingly acknowledged the inspiration of forgeries is quite low. For, as Lewis R. Donelson, who considers certain New Testament books pseudonymous, explains: conscious acceptance of pseudepigraphal works as religiously authoritative would have been virtually unprecedented in the ancient world. „No one,” writes Donelson, „ever seems to have accepted a document as religiously and philosophically prescriptive which was known to be forged. I do not know of a single example. We have instead innumerable examples of the opposite” *Pseudepigraphy and Ethical Argument in the Pastoral Epistles*, HUT 22, Tübingen 1986, 11.

means and the motive to acknowledge as inspired only those documents, which they knew to have been composed by Apostles or with apostolic sanction, then; evangelicals seem abundantly justified in crediting their judgment as to the authorship of the New Testament's books.

As to the second point: assurance that the New Testament accurately identifies the authors of its contents does not, in and of itself, guarantee the canonicity of all 27 New Testament books. For neither Mark, nor Luke, nor James the brother of Jesus, nor Jude the brother of Jesus seems to have belonged either to the original apostolic college or to the Seventy³⁰. The Gospel of Mark, however, seems to constitute Mark's record of Peter's preaching and, therefore, to carry at least the implicit sanction of Peter³¹. Paul, as we have seen, implicitly recognizes the Gospel of Luke as canonical Scripture in 1 Tim 5:18. The same Apostle, moreover, at least arguably identifies James the brother of Jesus as an Apostle in Gal 1:19. Since Jude, the brother of Jesus, is at least closely associated with James and the other Apostles; since Jude would have been at least a prime candidate for apostleship; since the majority of Jude's epistle is incorporated into 2 Peter; and since Jude was presumably one of those marked by the Holy Spirit as a prophet on the day of Pentecost, furthermore; it seems reasonable to regard the epistle of Jude as written under divine inspiration.

The epistle to the Hebrews, admittedly, is somewhat problematic. If, in order to verify a document's canonicity, one must establish the work's apostolic authorship or approbation, it might seem impossible to determine this letter's status, because its human author does not identify himself within the text. It is important

³⁰ James, the brother of Jesus, was, according to Richard Bauckham, „the only man in the primitive church who could be called simply 'James' without risk of ambiguity" (*Jude, 2 Peter* [WBC 50; Waco: Word, 1983], 21). Jude's identification of himself as a brother of James, therefore, amounts to a claim that he is also a brother of Jesus. Presumably, Jude does not reveal this relation more directly out of modesty.

³¹ Papias' identification of Mark's Gospel as a summary of Peter's preaching (*Eus., Hist. eccl.* 3.39.16) is, in the view of Martin Hengel, probably historically accurate for at least four reasons. First, Papias, who expresses some degree of disdain for Mark, Matthew, and written records in general, seems to possess no motive to bolster the authority of Mark's Gospel by fabricating a Petrine origin for it (*Studies in the Gospel of Mark*, trans. John Bowden, Philadelphia 1985, 3, 4, 47-49, 151-154). Second, the author of the Anti-Marcionite Prologue to Mark, who appears not to have used Papias as a source, also associates Mark with Peter (*ibid.* 3). Third, internal evidence, such as the unusual frequency with which Mark mentions Peter, the clustering of these references at key points in Mark, and Mark's placement of Peter as both the first and the last disciple to be mentioned in his Gospel, tends to confirm Mark's Petrine origin (*ibid.* 50, 51, 155, 156). Fourth and finally, it is unlikely that Matthew and Luke would have relied on Mark as heavily as they did in the composition of their own Gospels unless they attributed Mark's account to a significant, eyewitness authority such as Peter (*ibid.* 52). While the assertion that Mark constitutes a summary of Peter's preaching runs contrary to the prevailing scholarly consensus, therefore, it is by no means unreasonable.

to remember, however, that a letter, which lacks such explicit identification, need not, therefore, be anonymous (witness the case of 1 John). The addressees of the letter seem to be quite aware of its author's identity (cf. Heb 10:34; 13:18, 19, 23). Since early Christians regarded the writings of the New Testament as inspired even in the apostolic age and, therefore, carefully preserved the documents and information about their origins, then; the consensus of the early church as to the authorship of Hebrews ought to be trustworthy.

The consensus of the early church, especially in the East, seems to have been that the Apostle Paul constitutes the primary human author of the epistle to the Hebrews. As Paul Ellingworth, who does not regard Paul as the author of Hebrews, testifies, „The ancient testimony to the Pauline authorship of Hebrews is incomparably stronger than [that to] any other”³². Eusebius of Caesarea (*Hist. eccl.* 3.3.5), accordingly, asserts that „Paul's fourteen [!] epistles are well known and undisputed” although he acknowledges in this context and elsewhere (ibid. 6.25.14) the existence of uncertainty about the letter to the Hebrews' authorship. P⁴⁶, the oldest collection of Paul's letters in existence, moreover, places the letter to the Hebrews between Romans and 1 Corinthians. Indeed, writes J. K. Elliott, „it seems as if there are no Greek manuscripts of the Pauline corpus extant that excluded Hebrews”³³. In spite of the letter's absence from the Muratorian canon and widespread skepticism about Pauline authorship in the ante-Nicene West, therefore, the balance of external evidence seems heavily to favor Pauline authorship.

Substantial internal evidence, admittedly, appears to point to someone other than Paul as the letter's primary human author. In Hebrews 2:3, for example, the author of the epistle writes: „How will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard.” Some find it inconceivable that one who wrote such words as these could also write in Galatians 1:11, 12: „the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ”³⁴.

It is important to note, however, that the author of Hebrews does not state in 2:3 that he heard of the salvation wrought by Christ initially or exclusively from other human beings. Nor does he deny that he had ever seen or heard the Lord Jesus in the flesh. He asserts, rather, that the message of salvation through Christ has been confirmed to him by those who heard of it when „it was at the first spoken

³² *The Epistle to the Hebrews: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC), Grand Rapids – Carlisle 1993, 13.

³³ *Manuscripts, the Codex and the Canon*, JSNT 63 (1996), 105-123 at 109.

³⁴ Cf. e.g. H.W. ATTRIDGE, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Hermeneia), Philadelphia 1989, 2b and P.E. HUGHES, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, Grand Rapids 1977, 77.

through the Lord” (Heb 2:3b), sc. during Christ’s ministry on earth. One who had „seen Jesus our Lord” (1 Cor 9:1; cf. 15:8) first in the Damascus road experience and received the gospel he preached initially in the same experience, it seems, could speak, without contradicting himself, of having his faith confirmed by the testimony of persons who had heard Christ preach the gospel during his earthly ministry. Paul, in fact, asserts in Gal 2:1, 2, 6–9 that he sought and received precisely such confirmation: „Then after an interval of fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along also. It was because of a revelation that I went up; and I submitted to them the gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but I did so in private to those who were of reputation, for fear that I might be running, or had run, in vain (...). But from those who were of high reputation (what they were makes no difference to me; God shows no partiality) – well, those who were of reputation contributed nothing to me. But on the contrary, seeing that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been to the circumcised (for He who effectually worked for Peter in his apostleship to the circumcised effectually worked for me also to the Gentiles), and recognizing the grace that had been given to me, James and Cephas and John, who were reputed to be pillars, gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, so that we might go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised”

The epistle to the Galatians, therefore, so far from proving that the Apostle Paul could not have written Heb 2:3, actually verifies that Paul could have stated, without prevaricating, that the message of salvation „was confirmed to us by those who heard”. Heb 2:3, therefore, hardly proves that Paul could not have authored the Epistle to the Hebrews.

This difficulty, naturally, hardly exhausts the range of objections to Pauline authorship that might be drawn from internal evidence. The literary style of Hebrews, for example, differs considerably from that employed elsewhere by Paul, and the letter’s author treats different themes than one might expect from the Apostle of the Gentiles. Since amanuenses frequently constituted virtual co-authors in the ancient world, however, one might be able reasonably to ascribe the rhetorical polish and the calm, somewhat impersonal style of Hebrews to the influence of a secretary³⁵.

The letter’s neglect of standard Pauline themes such as justification by faith alone and the salvation of the Gentiles seems relatively problematic for Pauline authorship, but not especially so, because the Pauline corpus includes other letters,

³⁵ „The influence of the secretary on the author’s vocabulary and style,” writes E. Earl Ellis, „varied from a minimal degree in syllable-by-syllable dictation to a very great degree as the author gave him greater freedom in composing or enlisted him as a co-author. The role of the secretary, then, renders questionable any judgments about authorship based solely on internal literary criteria” *The Making of the New Testament Documents* (Biblical Interpretation Series 39), Leiden – Boston – Köln, 1999, 326-327.

such as 2 Corinthians, that also contain no discussion of these issues. When one considers this neglect of Pauline themes alongside the letter's focus on Christ's high priesthood, Melchizedek, and the Old Testament cultus, all of which seem peripheral at best to Paul's theology, however; one can perceive quite a substantial difficulty for Pauline authorship. Simply put, it is difficult to envision a scenario in which Paul, even if aided by the most accomplished of literary stylists, would find it necessary or desirable to compose a work such as the epistle to the Hebrews. On this score at least, internal evidence does tell strongly against Pauline authorship.

L.D. Hurst, moreover, who does not consider Paul the author of Hebrews, observes that both this author and Paul treat Abraham as an exemplar of faith; that both reprove their readers for needing milk rather than meat; both compare the Christian life to a race; both describe Christians as children of Abraham; both refer to a righteousness that comes by faith; and both refer to conversion as a kind of enlightenment³⁶. The Christology of Hebrews, furthermore, strikingly resembles that of Phil 2:6–11. According to Otfried Hofius, who does not consider Paul the author of Hebrews, for example, the epistle contains numerous elements: „that approximate in the closest manner expressions of the Philippians hymn. I name: the glory and elevation of the preexistent one (Heb 1:3a, b); his humiliation (2:7a, 9a), which allows him to become equal to a human being (2:14a, 17a) and leads him to the suffering of death (2:9c); the free obedience to God that already indicates the „yes” of the preexistent one to Incarnation and death (10:5ff) and in which the Incarnate one grasps suffering and death (5:8; 10:7, 9f); the exaltation as the answer of God to suffering and death obediently endured (2:9; 5:7ff; also 1:9); the understanding of exaltation as enthronement (1:3 end; 1:13; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2 end); the bestowal of a throne-name on the enthroned (1:4); [and] the certainty that the exalted is the king and Lord of the whole world (1:2, 5ff; 2:7ff) (...). If one holds the numerous correspondences before the eyes, the conclusion is, in my opinion, inescapable: the same Christology that shapes the Christ hymn of Philippians has also found expression in the letter to the Hebrews”³⁷

To the extent, then, that similarities in thought and expression between two authors evidence their identity, significant internal evidence does point towards the identity of Paul with the author of Hebrews. Even if Paul is not the author of Hebrews, however, the marked Pauline influence on this author and his association with „our brother Timothy” indicate that he was almost certainly an asso-

³⁶ *The Epistle to the Hebrews: Its Background of Thought* (SNTSMS 65), Cambridge 1990, 108.

³⁷ *Der Christushymnus Philipper 2, 6–11: Untersuchungen zu Gestalt und Aussage eines urchristlichen Psalms* (WUNT 17), 2d ed., Tübingen 1991, 15, 16. Hofius finds a similar correspondence, incidentally, between the Christology of Hebrews and that of 1 Timothy 3:16 (*ibid.* 14, 15). For further discussion of the relationship between Hebrews and the *corpus Paulinum*, cf. Knut Backhaus' „Der Hebräerbrief und die Paulus-Schule,” BZ 37 (1993), 183–208.

ciate of the Apostle Paul. The most plausible non-Pauline candidates for authorship of Hebrews, e.g. Luke, Apollos, Barnabas, Silas, and Epaphras, all fit this description. Whether or not one can reasonably ascribe apostolic authorship to Hebrews, therefore, one can ascribe apostolic sanction to it without unduly stretching the bounds of credulity.

All 27 books of the New Testament thus appear to qualify as probably authored or sanctioned by an Apostle. Evangelical acceptance of the entirety of the New Testament canon as Scripture, on a basis other than the putatively infallible authority of a living tradition, consequently, seems neither unwarranted nor unreasonable.

d. Objections. Two objections, admittedly, might seem to invalidate this conclusion. First, an objector could note that the foregoing arguments establish, at best, that evangelical convictions concerning the canon are probably true; and that these arguments thus fail to warrant the absolute assent to the authority of Scripture that is characteristic of vital and thoroughgoing Christian faith.

This objection derives its plausibility from the principle that arguments from probability warrant at most incomplete and uncertain assent. Setting aside the question of whether this principle confuses acts of inference with acts of assent, however: a glance at ordinary human decision-making suffices to render the principle itself incredible³⁸. For human beings constantly and with abundant justification make absolute commitments on the basis of less than apodictic evidence. The imperfection of the evidence with which he must work notwithstanding, a human being must marry only one person, choose only one job, live in only one city, etc.

It is a staple of Christian apologetics, moreover, that if merely probable arguments can warrant absolute commitments in mundane affairs, they can warrant such commitments in the religious sphere as well. Just as a person can reasonably decide to accept a job on the basis of imperfect evidence, so a person who

³⁸ John Henry Newman argues persuasively that inference, sc. the conditional acceptance of a proposition, differs essentially from assent: i.e. simple belief, which, being undifferentiated, must also be absolute even when it is not rooted in profound conviction (cf. NEWMAN, *Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent*, London 1979; [orig. 1870], 140-156). If Newman's arguments suffice to establish this contention, then „probable assent” is a *contradictio in adiecto*, and the idea that probable evidence can warrant nothing more than probable assent is correspondingly incoherent. As to the bearing of mundane decision-making on the credibility of this principle, cf. the following remarks of Joseph Butler: „What will be the success of our temporal pursuits, in the common sense of the word Success, is highly doubtful (...). Indeed, the unsatisfactory nature of the evidence, with which we are obliged to take up, in the daily course of life, is scarce to be expressed. Yet men do not throw away life, or disregard the interest of it, upon account of this doubtfulness. The evidence of religion then being admitted real, those who object against it, as not satisfactory, i.e. as not being what they wish it, plainly forget the very condition of our being (...) Satisfaction, in this sense, does not belong to such a creature as man” *The Analogy of Religion*, London 1902 (orig. 1736), 296.

recognized: a) that his future blessedness or misery might possibly hinge on his acceptance or rejection of Christianity; and b) that a merely nominal acquiescence in Christianity is tantamount to outright rejection of it; might easily possess adequate rational grounds for embracing Christianity unreservedly. Admittedly, the question of what views one ought to adopt about the biblical canon is of less existential weight than the question of whether one should accept or reject Christianity. Nevertheless, in order to subject oneself fully to God speaking in Scripture, one must reach some determination as to the contents of the scriptural canon. If probable arguments constitute the only means by which one can determine the exact boundaries of the canon, then, such arguments must suffice to warrant the absolute assent of contemporary Christians to the truth about this subject.

The second, principal objection one could raise to the case for the Protestant canon mounted above is that arguments of probability are precisely not the only means by which the church can or should determine the canon of Scripture. The church, both as a whole and in its members, correctly relies, instead, on that anointing from the Holy One, which abides in her and teaches her all things (cf. 1 John 2:20, 27). The principal factor in determining the limits of the canon, that is to say, is and ought to be the testimony and providential guidance of the Holy Spirit.

It would be foolish and, indeed, irreverent to deny the fundamental correctness of this objection. The Holy Spirit unquestionably enables Christians to recognize in Scripture itself the inspiration of the whole. The Holy Spirit, nevertheless, does not testify so unmistakably to the inspiration of each particular book of Scripture that one can determine the precise limits of the scriptural canon without appealing to historical evidence. For, first, certain passages of Scripture bear remarkable similarities to uninspired literature: the genealogies for example, numerous historical accounts, certain of the Psalms, the less intelligible prophecies, etc. Second, certain uninspired writings seem more edifying than some portions of Scripture. *Pilgrim's Progress*, for example, vastly excels 1 Chron 1-9 in its power to edify the average reader; and yet no orthodox Christian would deem it canonical Scripture.

Third, as a matter of historical fact, eminently pious Christians have both acknowledged books to be canonical that are not; and denied the canonicity of works whose canonical status the church now universally recognizes. Athanasius of Alexandria (*Ep. fest.* 39.7) and Gregory of Nazianzus (*Carm.* 1.1.12), for example, rejected the canonicity of Esther.³⁹ Augustine of Hippo once acknowl-

³⁹ „The colophon to Greek Esther,” explains Sid Z. Leiman, „indicated that it was the only Greek translation of a Biblical book, included in the LXX, and yet not part of the original LXX translation. The church fathers were under the impression that all of Greek Scripture, not only the Pentateuch, was translated by the seventy Jewish elders” (*The Canonization of Hebrew Scripture: The Talmudic and Midrashic Evidence* [2d ed.; Transactions 47], New Haven 1991, 160, n. 239). Athanasius and Gregory's error in denying Esther's canonicity is thus quite understandable.

edged the canonicity of 1 and 2 Maccabees, Judith, Tobit, Wisdom, and Sirach (*Doctr. Chr.* 2.8.13; cf. *Civ.* 18.36). John of Damascus once acknowledged the so-called Canons of the Apostles as canonical (*Exp. fid.* 90); and Martin Luther notoriously contested the canonicity of Hebrews, James, Jude, and Revelation (cf. his *Vorreden* to each of these works). All of these persons seem to have been authentic Christians who studied God's word with great care; and yet the Holy Spirit evidently did not lead them to recognize the actual limits of the canon of Scripture. Fourth and finally, one could hardly settle disputes about the extent of the canon argumentatively if one regarded the internal testimony of the Holy Spirit to a work's inspiration as the sole criterion of canonicity.

Since the church, then, needs to know the extent of the scriptural canon in order faithfully to execute her mission, she must have recourse to historical evidence in order to determine its limits. Since God does not command the absolutely impracticable (1 Cor 10:13), moreover, the evidence available to the church must be adequate for this task. The church, therefore, not only can, but must determine the canon's boundaries by the kind of historical reasoning that we have employed.

Neither of the two objections to the arguments outlined above, therefore, suffices to overturn the arguments' most significant conclusion: viz. that evangelicals can rationally embrace the Protestant biblical canon without validating that canon by appeal to an extrascriptural, infallible authority.

VI. The Church

Most evangelicals, then, can be said reasonably to believe that the 66 books received as canonical Scripture by Protestants jointly constitute an infallible rule, which is sufficiently clear and full to communicate to its readers all information necessary for salvation and a righteous life. This does not imply, it is important to note, that evangelicals consider the promulgation and enforcement of uninspired doctrinal standards by the visible church to be unlawful or unnecessary. Such disciplinary measures are not only consonant with, but mandated by, the Bible.

On the whole, moreover, evangelicals realize that even persons who sincerely acknowledge Scripture's absolute authority may practically repudiate that authority by teaching doctrines manifestly at variance with Scripture's authentic sense. On such occasions, evangelicals believe, the church possesses both the right and the duty to suppress error by condemning it along with those who fail to repent of its advocacy. It is the church's prerogative, most evangelicals believe, to deprive those who propagate false doctrines of the emoluments of ecclesiastical office; to depose them from such office; to bar impenitent errorists from participation in the Eucharist; and, if necessary, solemnly to expel such persons from Christ's visible church.

Evangelicals, naturally, ascribe no infallibility to the church, whether visible or invisible, in matters of doctrine. They do ascribe to the visible church, however, the authority: a) to discern the system of doctrine taught in Scripture; b) to promulgate that system of doctrine in uninspired language; and c) to enforce conformity to it among its members. Like many Catholics, in fact, evangelicals tend to regard the vigorous exercise of ecclesiastical authority in such matters essential to the wellbeing of the visible church.

Evangelicals part company with Catholics, however, by acknowledging that all merely earthly authorities may err, even when they speak with unanimity, after due deliberation, and with the intention of solemnly defining an article of Christian faith. The holiest and most august institutions, as scriptural examples prove, may, by unrighteous teaching and conduct, divest themselves of legitimate authority over human beings. „The lips of a priest should preserve knowledge, and men should seek instruction from his mouth” (Mal 2:7). Yet no one should heed the iniquitous counsel of an Annas or an Alcimus.

VII. Conclusion

While evangelical and Catholic perspectives on Scripture, authority, and the formation of doctrine resonate and even harmonize with each other at certain conspicuous points, therefore, the chasm separating Catholics and evangelicals remains profound. In order to attain mutual understanding, and perhaps even eventual reconciliation, it seems, the two parties must address each other’s legitimate concerns about the plausibility of their respective positions. Evangelicals, for example, ought to be able to show why their understanding of scriptural inspiration does not constitute an obscurantist barricade against scholarly inquiry into Scripture’s human origins; why an unsophisticated Christian, who cannot grasp complicated rationales for an evangelical doctrine of Scripture, can, nevertheless, rationally embrace such a doctrine; and why the evidence for certain scriptural books’ integrity and canonicity is not tenuous in the extreme. Above all, evangelicals involved in ecumenical dialogue with Catholics ought to be able either: a) to identify the „fundamental articles” of the Christian faith, sc. those dogmas whose mutual acceptance by two communions ought to suffice for visible, organic unity between them; or b) to show how Christians divided by significant doctrinal disagreements can achieve visible unity without either sacrificing their principles or answering this question.

Catholics, likewise, ought to be able to show why the authority of Scripture over human beings is not impaired by the putative ability of human beings to legislate its true interpretation infallibly; how the Catholic Church can justly demand religious submission to magisterial teachings even when these teachings are false; and why the reversals in Catholic teaching, and especially those that have

occurred since the death of Pius XII, do not compromise the institution's credibility⁴⁰. Above all else, Catholics engaged in ecumenical dialogue with evangelicals ought to be able to show how a Christian, who, following the pattern set by the Bereans, tests the Roman magisterium's claims by the standard of Scripture, can reasonably submit to its authority.

Neither of the parties to this dialogue, we suspect, will fully answer the questions posed to it in this venue. If either of the two positions is worthy of belief, however, the questions posed to it must be answerable.

Pismo św., autorytet i kształtowanie się doktryny. Ewangelikalne refleksje

Streszczenie

Artykuł stanowi próbę systematycznego przedstawienia stanowiska chrześcijan ewangelikalnych odnośnie do rozumienia Pisma św., autorytetu i kwestii formowania się doktryny wiary. Mimo że niektóre poglądy wśród samych chrześcijan ewangelikalnych podlegają zróżnicowaniu i występuje wśród nich pluralizm opinii, celem Autora artykułu było przedstawienie jednorodnego stanowiska. Adresowane było ono przede wszystkim do katolików, w kontekście dialogu katolicko-ewangelikalnego. Według Autora, poglądy katolików i chrześcijan ewangelikalnych we wspomnianych kwestiach nierzadko pozostają zbieżne, a jednak przestrzeń podziału pomiędzy obiema konfesjami pozostaje bardzo szeroka. Aby osiągnąć wzajemne porozumienie obie strony winny więc uznać znaczenie i doniosłość stanowiska drugiej strony. W tym celu w końcowej konkluzji sformułowano konkretne postulaty, skierowane do obu stron, mające na względzie takie wyjaśnienie i interpretację własnych stanowisk, by nie negowały one lub pozostawały w sprzeczności z odnośnymi stanowiskami drugiej strony.

R. Porada

⁴⁰ According to section 25 of the Second Vatican Council's definitively promulgated Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, *Lumen Gentium* (DH 4149), „religious submission of will and intellect must be offered in a singular way to the authentic magisterium of the Roman Pontiff, even when he does not speak *ex cathedra* [religiosum voluntatis et intellectus obsequium singulari ratione praestandum est Romanis Pontificis authentico magisterio etiam cum non ex cathedra loquitur]”