B. B. WARFIELD'S PATH TO INERRANCY:
AN ATTEMPT TO CORRECT SOME SERIOUS MISUNDERSTANDINGS

Paul Helm

> Upon the whole, I am inclined to think that the far greater part, if not all, of those difficulties which have hitherto amused philosophers, and blocked the way to knowledge, are entirely owing to ourselves. That we have first raised a dust, and then complain, we cannot see. (George Berkeley, 1688–1753, *A Treatise Concerning Human Knowledge*, Introduction *3)

B. B. Warfield's name will forever be linked to the exposition and defense of biblical inspiration, infallibility, and inerrancy. Inspiration, he says,

> *is that extraordinary, supernatural influence* (*or, passively, the result of it,*) *exerted by the Holy Ghost on the writers of our Sacred Books, by which their words were rendered also the words of God, and therefore, perfectly infallible.*[1]

He believed this to be the classic Christian view of Scripture. But around the man, and particularly around his defense of the infallibility and inerrancy of Scripture (he seems to have used these terms interchangeably), there has grown up a number of serious misconceptions. These have to do with what inerrancy is, with the theological method that allegedly spawned it, with the doctrine of God that lies behind it, and with the place of inspired and inerrant Scripture in Warfield's theological system. Unfortunately, despite various valiant efforts to set the record straight, these misconceptions are repeated and embellished until the real Warfield is lost from view and the "Warfield position" becomes a whipping boy.[2] This article is a further attempt to make clear Warfield's position, and particularly his method of arriving at it. In doing this, the immediate objects of attention are certain claims about Warfield made by Professor A. T. B. McGowan in his book *The Divine Spiration of Scripture,*[3] though it is part of the

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Paul Helm is a Teaching Fellow at Regent College, Vancouver. He was Professor of the History and Philosophy of Religion, King's College, London, from 1993 to 2000.

[1] B. B. Warfield, "Inspiration and Criticism," in *Revelation and Inspiration* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1927), 396; italics in the original.

[2] For example, J. D. Woodbridge, *Biblical Authority: A Critique of the Rogers/McKim Proposal* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982).

[3] *The Divine Spiration of Scripture: Challenging Evangelical Perspectives* (Leicester: Apollos, 2007); published in the U.S. as *The Divine Authenticity of Scripture: Retrieving an Evangelical Heritage* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 2007).

burden of this article that Dr. McGowan is one of many such critics of Warfield and of the entire Princeton tradition.[4]

The Divine Spiration of Scripture is a book of considerable scope and ambition. Dr. McGowan proposes changes to the theological locus of Scripture, offers suggestions about the terminology used to characterize Scripture theologically, reconsiders the doctrine of Scripture, and also proposes changes in the use of Scripture in the church's confession, and in preaching. In McGowan's view, a "high" view of Scripture is consistent with an errant autographic text.[5] The book is written in an energetic style that offers little sign of careful argumentation or attention to appropriate evidence. A range of comments is called for. Here, however, I shall confine my attention to McGowan's attitude to B. B. Warfield. I shall focus on two of his misunderstandings about Warfield's theological method, and then attempt to set out what I believe was Warfield's actual procedure. I stress that my concern throughout this article is with establishing the factual accuracy of Warfield's position on biblical inerrancy from his writings, focusing particularly upon his theological method, not with the cogency or truth of his account of biblical inerrancy per se.

The path that we aim to retrace is not that of a historical sequence, but rather the logical path—the nature of biblical inerrancy, the arguments for inerrancy, and the place of biblical inspiration in Warfield's system of thought, and especially within his overall theological outlook. In order to clear a way for the path to be made visible, we shall first consider McGowan's misunderstandings about Warfield's method, the first having to do with the Princetonian way of doing systematic theology, the second with the doctrine of God and its connection with scriptural inerrancy.

I. *Doing Systematic Theology*

According to Dr. McGowan the use of the term "inerrancy" is fairly recent, by comparison with the centuries of usage of the term "infallibility." Its use

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[4] See, e.g., Nancey Murphy, *Beyond Liberalism and Fundamentalism: How Modern and Postmodern Philosophy Set the Theological Agenda* (Rockwell Lecture Series; Valley Forge, Pa.: Trinity, 1996), 42-43; Stanley J. Grenz, *Renewing the Center: Evangelical Theology in a Post-Theological Era* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), 71-73; John R. Franke, *The Character of Theology: A Postconservative Evangelical Approach* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 88-89; George Marsden, "The Collapse of American Evangelical Academia," in *Faith and Rationality* (ed. Alvin Plantinga and Nicholas Wolterstorff; Notre Dame, Ind.: Notre Dame University Press, 1983), 241; David K. Clark, *To Know and Love God: Method for Theology* (Foundation of Evangelical Theology; Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 2003), 48-49; Stephen Wellum, "Postconservatism, Biblical Authority and Recent Proposals for Re-Doing Evangelical Authority," in *Reclaiming the Center* (ed. Millard J. Erickson, Paul Kjoss Helseth, and Justin Taylor; Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 2004), 174; Kevin Vanhoozer, "On the Very Idea of a Theological System: An Essay in Aid of Triangulating Scripture, Church and World," in *Always Reforming: Explorations in Systematic Theology* (ed. A. T. B. McGowan; Leicester: Apollos, 2006); Kevin Vanhoozer, "Lost in Interpretation? Truth, Scripture and Hermeneutics," in *Whatever Happened to Truth?* (ed. Andreas Köstenberger; Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 2005), 100.

[5] *Divine Spiration*, 124-25.

represents a hardening of the age-old doctrine. "Inerrancy" focuses our attention exclusively on questions of truth and falsehood, whereas the older term, "infallibility," when applied to Scripture, lays emphasis upon the fact that the Bible is an unfailing guide to whoever may read it, and especially to the Christian and the church, for the purpose for which it was given. Instead of having to do with informing, guiding, and motivating the will (infallibility), through the influence of Warfield and others the Bible has come to be defended in terms that deal primarily, if not exclusively, with the intellect (inerrancy).[6]

In using the term "inerrancy" and its cognates and so signaling a shift of the relation of Scripture away from the will to the intellect, to truth, it is claimed that Warfield (and other Princetonians, such as A. A. Hodge) were simply being children of their time. The late nineteenth century was an era of unparalleled scientific discovery and technological advance. Warfield and his colleagues were infected by these successes. The focusing on inerrancy was the result of their adoption in their theology of a quasi-scientific theological method which was "rationalist" in character. (They were also, it is implied, panicked by liberal critical methods into an overreaction and so to a hardening of the age-old assertion of the Bible's infallibility.[7] McGowan claims that inerrantism is a doctrine created in the heat of battle.[8])

Dr. McGowan refers to the oft-repeated claim that for Warfield, following Charles Hodge, systematic theology is a matter of gathering facts by a process of scientific induction in the way that (according to the Enlightenment view of science) the natural scientist gains information about the character and behavior of the natural order. For the natural scientist, the data are those ascertainable by the five senses in conjunction with the generalizing powers of the human mind. For the Princeton theologian, the data were the "facts" of Scripture, which the scientific theologian gathers and collates and from which he draws inductive inferences. The results of such inferences, repeatedly checked against the data, are the doctrines of the Bible. Among these doctrines is the doctrine that the Bible itself is inerrant.[9]

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[6] Ibid., 49, 162. But note the earlier use of cognates of inerrancy, e.g., Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology* (1875) (3 vols.; London: Clarke, 1960), 1:169: "If the Scriptures abound in contradictions and errors, then it is vain to contend that they were written under an influence which precludes all error." This language should not surprise us, given the fact that until Hodge's *Systematic Theology* was published in the 1870s Princeton Seminary used Francis Turretin's *Institutio theologiae elencticae* as its theological text. (Mark A. Noll, ed., *The Princeton Theology, 1812–1921* [Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1983], 28-29). In his discussion of Scripture Turretin states, "Rather the question is whether in writing they were so acted upon and inspired by the Holy Spirit (both as to things themselves and as to the words) as to be kept free from all error [*ut ab omni errore immunes fueriint*] and that their writings are truly authentic and divine. Our adversaries deny this; we affirm it" (Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology* [ed. James T. Dennison, Jr.; trans. G. M. Musgrave; 3 vols.; Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1992], 1.4.5 (1:62-63). So the use by the Princetonians of phrases such as "free from error," "without error," and "errorless" does not call for a special explanation, such as one in terms of the influence of modern science.

[7] *Divine Spiration*, 87.

[8] Ibid., 121.

[9] Ibid., 116-17.

> Like most of their contemporaries, the Princetonians had a very high view of the achievements of modern science, to the point where Charles Hodge adopted a highly questionable theological method and Warfield's view of science as 'true truth' led him to become a theistic evolutionist.[10]

It is not my intention here to review what I believe are the gross misunderstandings of Charles Hodge's (and with it, of B. B. Warfield's) theological method, which I have discussed elsewhere.[11] McGowan shares in and explicitly endorses these misunderstandings of Hodge. Nevertheless, we shall need to look at his claim that there is a close connection between that method and what was (in fact if not in intention) a "novel" doctrine of biblical inerrancy.

McGowan tells his readers that he is going to demonstrate that inerrancy is "rationalist."[12] There may be a confusion here between the use of reason and being rationalist, for McGowan does not tell us what he means by rationalism. But he means, presumably, that the doctrine of the inerrancy of Scripture is a conclusion of a rationalist theological procedure. Warfield is certainly an advocate of the use of the reason in drawing out the "good and necessary" consequences of the statements of Scripture. This is hardly a novel procedure. But rationalism? This suggests the adoption of some a priori, normative epistemology which either imposes itself on the data of Scripture, making them fit into its alien mold, or filters out the wheat of Scripture from the chaff in the familiar post-Kantian liberal manner. It becomes clear, however, as McGowan proceeds, that the alleged rationalism refers to two aspects of Warfield's thought: an a priori view of what God can and cannot do (to which we shall come later) and the adoption of what, as we have already noted, McGowan and many others regard as an alien theological method drawn from the Enlightenment, a scientific method which Charles Hodge and Warfield so greatly admired. This is what Dr. McGowan says:

> In the inerrantist argument, truth is largely viewed in propositional terms and theological method is conceived of in scientific terms. Thus the impression is often given that the whole Bible can be reduced to a set of propositions that can then be demonstrated to be 'true'. This then leads to a theological methodology based on a scientific method, such as that of Charles Hodge.[13]

But a glance at A. A. Hodge's and Warfield's "Inspiration" would show how misguided this suggestion is.

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[10] Ibid., 116. Warfield's "theistic evolutionism" is in fact due to a carefully drawn theological distinction between creation and development. See his discussion of Calvin's "pre-scientific" view of the creation, which he clearly endorses ("Calvin's Doctrine of Creation," in *Calvin and Calvinism* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1931], 299-300). The relevant sections of the article are reprinted in B. B. Warfield, *Evolution, Science and Scripture: Selected Writings* (ed. Mark A. Noll and David N. Livingstone; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000).

[11] Paul Helm, "Charles Hodge and the Method of Systematic Theology," in *Reformed Theology in America, 1969–2009* (ed. Ronald N. Gleason and Gary L. W. Johnson; Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, forthcoming).

[12] *Divine Spiration*, 114.

[13] Ibid., 116.

> There is a vast difference between exactness of statement, which includes an exhaustive rendering of details, an absolute literalness, which the Scriptures never profess, and accuracy, on the other hand, which secures a correct statement of facts or principles intended to be affirmed. It is this accuracy, and this alone, as distinct from exactness, which the Church doctrine maintains of every affirmation in the original text of Scripture without exception. Every statement accurately corresponds to truth just as far forth as affirmed.[14]

The two authors are clearly making a distinction between the accurate reporting of an event by an onlooker or from memory, say, and the exhaustiveness and literalness sought by natural science. As they say, in their view the Scriptures "were not designed to teach philosophy, science or human history as such."[15]

Dr. McGowan goes on to assert that such a theological method is "founded on the notion that Scripture can be reduced to a set of 'facts' or 'propositions', which are then collected and arranged into a systematic theology. This rationalist approach, however well intentioned, actually undermines the authority of the Scriptures."[16] McGowan appears to be fond of the idea of *reducing* Scripture to systematic theology, mentioning it five times in two pages. The idea is that in some fashion systematic theology distils the essence of the Bible's teaching by constructing a series of arranged propositions which can be used to supplant the Bible itself. The Bible then becomes second best, a library of disparate and disorderly books to which the clever systematic theologian has brought form and order. Hence, McGowan says, the authority of Scripture is undermined, because it lies in the shadow of "cold and clinical"[17] systematic theology. So there is a paradox at the heart of old Princeton: while striving with might and main to uphold the infallibility and inerrancy of the Scriptures they in fact undermine their authority by supplanting them with their own rationalistic theology.

There are two issues here. One concerns the actual practice of the Princetonians in their handling of the Bible in the Seminary and the church. Was it, for them, a book that was second best to their systematic theology? Was it a book whose only value lies in the true propositions it contains? Dr. McGowan offers not a sliver of evidence for his claims about the procedure of the Princetonians. However, this is strictly speaking a matter for the historian and so we shall put it to one side.

But what about the repeated charge that in the Princetonians' theological method the Bible is "flattened and reduced to a set of propositions that are then deemed to be inerrant"?[18] Here we touch upon a serious confusion in the mind of Dr. McGowan and those who think like him. To illustrate the confusion, let us take these three propositions, drawn from a well-known nursery rhyme. In the nursery rhyme

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[14] A. A. Hodge and B. B. Warfield, "Inspiration," *Presbyterian Review* (1881); reprinted with the same pagination in *Inspiration* (introduction by Roger R. Nicole; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979), 28-29.

[15] Ibid., 28.

[16] *Divine Spiration,* 116.

[17] Ibid., 117.

[18] Ibid.

1. (It is true that) Miss Muffet sat on a tuffet.
2. (It is true that) Miss Muffet ate curds and whey.
3. (It is true that) a Big Spider frightened Miss Muffet away.

Let us suppose that the three statements about Miss Muffet are each true. According to McGowan's suggestion, in being set out as above, as three distinct propositions, the story of Little Miss Muffet is reduced or flattened into something cold and clinical, and the account given in (1)–(3) disregards the "genre" of nursery rhyme. It has to be conceded that the three propositions do not convey the rhyme or lilt of the original. They are not as easily recited or sung to children as is the nursery rhyme itself. But then nothing but the original, said or sung, will convey that rhyme or lilt. Yet McGowan cannot be defending a pure Biblicism, since he has a high view of preaching and of church confessions of faith.

Where does this idea of "flattening" come from? Frankly, it is not easy to say. But here's my suggestion. The charge of flattening may arise from the idea that putting a piece of literature into explicit propositional form (as in (1)–(3) above) emasculates or reduces its content to some lowest common denominator. The idea seems to be that a series of propositions, simply in virtue of being a set of propositions, have a content that is all on the same level, a level so low and flat that all (or much) that is distinctive in the original text is removed or diluted. As a botanist, using the language of his science, may classify flowers and so may "miss" their beauty and fragrance, so a systematic theologian of the Princeton school misses those features of Scripture that are intended to move the emotions and energize the will, and so misses features that are crucial to the proper appreciation of these documents.

To see how confused such a suggestion must be, let us adopt the convention of expressing the content of each of (1)–(3) in a phrase in italics. Then the content of (1) is *Miss Muffet sat on a tuffet,* the content of (2) is *Miss Muffet ate curds and whey,* and that of (3) is *Miss Muffet was frightened by a spider.* The italicized expressions relate three facts about Miss Muffet, three truths. But where's the flattening? Why does asserting that it is true that Miss Muffet sat on a tuffet (as opposed to reciting "Little Miss Muffet sat on a tuffet . . .") interfere in any way with the distinctiveness of this fact, and so make it more or less equivalent, say, to the fact that she was frightened by a spider? (1)–(3) are, after all, nothing other than expressions used to record or report bodily states (like sitting) or actions (like eating) or reactions (like being frightened). How does being frightened become flattened into eating, or eating flattened into sitting, or each of them flattened into some fourth thing? As soon as we ask such questions, we immediately see how utterly preposterous is the idea that propositions "flatten" facts into something else, into other, flatter facts. Of course the report of someone being frightened is not itself a case of being frightened, and it may not even have a frightening effect on those who hear the report. A report of someone being frightened using language that rhymes is different from a report without rhyme.

But then a recipe for haggis is not itself haggis, nor a photograph of Edinburgh Castle itself Edinburgh Castle.

The examples we have used are of course trivial ones. But we can substitute for them assertions of some of the constitutive facts of our faith, such as

(4) (It is true that) the Word became flesh. (John 1:14)
(5) (It is true that) Jesus wept. (John 12:35)
(6) (It is true that) Jesus asserted, "One of you will betray me." (John 13:21)

It is now, I hope, easy to see that prefixing these first-order biblical expressions with "it is true that" does not flatten each of them, nor make them cold and clinical. What does it do? It is simply a linguistic device for enabling us to assert (4)–(6) as facts. (It is not the only such device, of course. Usually, speaking in a certain tone of voice would also do the trick.) However, if they are all facts, if they are true, they most certainly do not each express the same fact, nor are they truths of equal importance. But who seriously can think that an assertion of Jesus to the effect that one of his disciples will betray him comes to be on the same level as the assertion of a particular reactive state of Jesus, his weeping at the tomb of Lazarus, or as the deeply mysterious assertion that the Word became flesh?

Whether or not two or more propositions are the same or different propositions depends entirely on what the propositions in question *mean*. In this connection, while McGowan, in common with many others at present, attributes to natural science, and its "flattening" tendency, an inordinate influence upon the Princeton theology, it is worth reminding ourselves of the almost infinite variety of scientific facts. "It is true that copper expands when heated"; "It is true that water is H_2O." Are these the same fact? Are they two facts on the same level? What could this possibly mean? Although at first glance this charge against Warfield and old Princeton may seem insightful, it is in fact entirely spurious.

But perhaps this is not quite the problem. Perhaps it is that by extracting the kernel from the husk of Scripture, violence is done to Scripture itself, because the form and content of Scripture are inextricably connected so that to express the content of Scripture in other ways than Scripture itself does is necessarily to mis-state that content, to lose some of it or to distort it.

No doubt there is something in this. Scripture is Scripture, and anything that is not Scripture is something distinct from it, even if it is intended to reproduce some of the content of Scripture. But provided that it is clear that certain statements are meant to reproduce the propositional or cognitive content of Scripture, and to do nothing more than that, then would this not be sufficient to meet Dr. McGowan's fears? Otherwise, it may be that in all doctrinal construction and all attempts to teach the Bible and to preach from it, the losses must inevitably outweigh the gains.

There is a further, connected matter. McGowan claims that inerrancy only makes sense in relation to what he refers to as "propositional statements."[19]

[19] Ibid., 213.

Hence, no doubt, his claim that inerrantists reduce the Bible "to a set of propositions," becoming "mere data to be processed by the theologian."[20] But this charge, too, I am afraid, rests upon a simple misunderstanding. To illustrate this, let us take two or three biblical sentences at random: "They took up the broken pieces left over, seven baskets full" (Mark 8:8); "Who do people say that I am?" (Mark 8:27); "Get behind me, Satan!" (Mark 8: 33). Let us add the usual prefix

(7) (It is true that) they took up the broken pieces left over, seven baskets full.

(8) (It is true that) (Jesus asked) "Who do people say that I am?"

(9) (It is true that) (Jesus said) "Get behind me, Satan!"

These three prefixed sentences, (7), (8), and (9), are, we assume, true. But two of the three sentences that are prefixed are not true, nor are they capable of being true. Only one of them, (7), is true, for only one of them, the first, is a statement, a proposition. Questions and commands are not "propositional statements." Nevertheless, questions, commands, exclamations, aspirations, vows, and so forth, as well as statements, are all included in the inerrantist's basket. For questions, commands, and the like can each be inspired, delivered unerringly by their speakers and/or unerringly recorded. They are facts recorded by Scripture. Is it seriously being supposed that Warfield was unaware of such a point? Likewise, distinct scriptural genres hold no fears for an inerrantist. The idea that for an inerrantist such as Warfield the Bible is reduced to a set of statements, and that all questions, commands, vows, and so forth are eliminated, is also preposterous. It is also odd to suppose, as McGowan does, that inerrancy applies exclusively to issues of truth. There are errors in practice—in handwriting and embroidery, chess and soccer, engineering and warfare, surgery and horticulture.

What, in Dr. McGowan's eyes, does all this have to do with inerrancy? I am afraid that that too is not altogether clear. At one point he seems to be attributing inerrancy to the sets of propositions arranged by the systematic theologian—"everything tends to be flattened and reduced to a set of propositions that are then deemed to be inerrant."[21] But where does Warfield (or Hodge) make a claim for the inerrancy of the propositions of systematic theology? Not a scintilla of evidence is provided for such a serious charge. At other times, rather confusingly, the Princeton method is said to result in "a belief in the inerrancy of the *autographa* and a theological method that reduces Scripture to a set of propositions under the theologian's control."[22] Are the propositions of systematic theology inerrant, or are the autographs of the Scripture? Both, apparently. And what, in the meantime, has happened to the text of Scripture as we have it, that text to which Warfield pays such detailed attention?

Besides being confused, the focus upon the theological method of the Princetonians that we have been examining strangely ignores the central Warfieldian

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[20] Ibid., 117.

[21] Ibid.

[22] Ibid.

claim that the Scriptures as we have them are infallible or inerrant only because they are divinely inspired. Later on we shall re-consider McGowan's approach to the *autographa*.

II. *Inerrancy and the Doctrine of God*

Having discussed Dr. McGowan's treatment of the Princetonian theological method in a general way we turn now to another aspect of McGowan's charge of "rationalism" against Warfield and the Princetonians in respect of inerrancy, that they make an unwarranted assumption about God.[23] This will require us to consider Warfield's position in more explicit fashion.

We noted earlier McGowan's preference for the term "infallibility" over "inerrancy" because it is more "dynamic"; that is, it focuses not so much on belief as upon action, and bespeaks an "organic," non-mechanical view of inspiration, stressing that the Holy Spirit uses God's word to achieve all that he intends to achieve.[24] This voluntarist strand in McGowan's thought is also to be seen in the way in which he relates the doctrine of God to the issue of inerrancy. He claims,

> The basic error of the inerrantist is to insist that the inerrancy of the *autographa* is a direct implication of the biblical doctrine of the inspiration (or divine spiration). In order to defend this implication, the inerrantists make an unwarranted assumption about God. The assumption is that, given the nature and character of God, the only kind of Scripture he could 'breathe out' was Scripture that is textually inerrant.[25]

A more explicit claim about inerrancy and the doctrine of God is McGowan's assertion that inerrantists limit God's power.[26] God is all-powerful and can deliver a perfectly inerrant autographic text. Of course others besides God might have this power. The question is, must God do so? McGowan claims that no, he need not, and the assumption that he must do so is unwarranted. "I agree with the inerrantist that God *could* have brought into being inerrant autographic texts, had he chosen to do so, but I reject their argument that he *must* have acted in this way."[27] McGowan also believes that God did not in fact produce such a text. He attributes such an argument to Herman Bavinck, though with no supporting evidence,[28] and cites Bavinck's emphasis on the dual authorship of Scripture as evidence against inerrantism.[29] But there could not

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[23] Ibid.

[24] Ibid., 49. See also 118, 124. Incidentally, this account of Dr. McGowan's "high" view of scriptural infallibility is quite unsatisfactory. It does not distinguish Scripture from God's providence. If God works all things after the counsel of his own will then presumably (in a suitably nuanced way) not just Scripture but simply everything is as he intended it. For an attempt to work this out see Paul Helm, "All Things Considered: Providence and Divine Purpose," in *Comparative Theology: Essays for Keith Ward* (ed. T. W. Bartel; London: S.P.C.K., 2003), 100-109.

[25] *Divine Spiration*, 113.

[26] Ibid., 118.

[27] Ibid., 114.

[28] Ibid., 162.

[29] Ibid., 147-50.

be a stronger and more explicit endorsement of dual authorship than that provided by Warfield the "inerrantist," as we shall see later. If McGowan were correct, then Warfield drew exactly the opposite conclusion than did Bavinck from the same premises.

In characteristic voluntarist fashion McGowan offers an argument in terms wholly of God's power, in terms of what God can and cannot do. But this is to neglect other essential features of God's character, for example, his veracity and faithfulness. Warfield most certainly makes the inference from "God has spoken" to "What God says is infallibly true," but this is not an inference drawn simply from God's power but from God's own infallibility, or more exactly, his necessary infallibility. God not only has not failed in any respect, he could not fail. And being essentially veracious, he could not fail to be veracious. Hence, his word has not and cannot fail. Hence, the Bible is not only true, as some merely human documents are true, but if it is divinely inspired then it is infallibly true. Warfield says that inspiration

> is such an influence as makes the words written under his guidance, the words of God; by which is meant to be affirmed an absolute infallibility (as alone fitted to divine words), admitting no degrees whatever—extending to the very word, and to all the words. So that every part of Holy Writ is thus held alike infallibly true in all its statements, of whatever kind.[30]

However, he does not claim that inspiration is the only possible mode of revelation. Contrary to what McGowan affirms, according to Warfield God could have given us a different kind of revelation. Inspiration is not necessary for revelation, since other modes of revelation are possible.[31]

> We may say that without a Bible we might have had Christ and all that he stands for to our souls. Let us not say that this might not have been possible. But neither let us forget that, in point of fact, it is to the Bible that we owe it that we know Christ and are found in him.[32]

> Were there no such thing as inspiration, Christianity would be true, and all its essential doctrines would be credibly witnessed to us in the generally trustworthy reports of the teaching of our Lord and of His authoritative agents in founding the Church, preserved in the writings of the apostles and their first followers, and in the historical witness of the living Church.[33]

This would be revelation without inspiration, revelation reported by means of ordinary eyewitness testimony and memory.

The issue of whether God had to bring into being inerrant *autographa* is an important one for McGowan, who believes that the answer to that question determines whether or not one is an inerrantist.[34] Yet the question "Must God

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[30] "Inspiration and Criticism," 397. See also 210 and 399.
[31] "The Real Problem of Inspiration," in *Revelation and Inspiration*, 211.
[32] "The Inspiration of the Bible," in *Revelation and Inspiration*, 72.
[33] "The Real Problem of Inspiration," 209-10.
[34] *Divine Spiration*, 211.

have brought into being inerrant autographic texts?'' is somewhat unclear as it stands. Autographic texts of what, exactly? Here are some possible answers to that question.

Could there have been a set of original documents that were partly true and partly false? The answer is, obviously, there could have been. And that is Warfield's answer to the question, or at least, it is strongly suggested by things he says. The quotation just given, with its reference to general trustworthiness, implies that for Warfield there could have been such a document: one that was generally trustworthy, though not absolutely trustworthy, because its medium is not divine inspiration but the reports of those who, as eyewitnesses, say, reliably and yet fallibly testified to what they had seen and heard.

A second question is, could there have been autographic documents that are partly true, partly false, that functioned as the Christian scriptures? Again, Warfield's answer is clear, and is implied by his answer to the first question. There could have been such documents.

A third question is, could there have been autographic texts that were equally the word of God and the words of men and yet were partly true and partly false? Here Warfield's answer, and that of the Princetonians in general, is a resounding no. How could words that are the words of God, who is necessarily omniscient, faithful, and veracious, be partly false? Absolute infallibility, in Warfield's view, is alone fitted to be the character of words that are divinely inspired. And, Warfield crucially adds, absolute infallibility is what we've got, or at least that's what Jesus says.

Throughout his treatment of these issues Dr. McGowan gives considerable prominence to the *autographa*.[35] But he has a very different attitude to them than does Warfield. As already noted, he makes the issue of whether or not God must inspire inerrant *autographa* to be *the* issue between two schools, the ''infallibilists'' and the ''inerrantists.'' The two positions are, he says, in fundamental contradiction, in virtue of their differing attitudes to the *autographa*.[36] But he fails to provide a shred of evidence for this charge. He claims or implies that the Warfieldian tradition lays great emphasis on the *autographa*.[37] He seems to think that on Warfield's view the *autographa* are texts without apparent discrepancies, such as the presently discrepant accounts we have in the Gospels of, say, the Gadarene swine incident, but that they are nevertheless texts that we do not possess and have not seen.[38] But Warfield does not treat the *autographa* in this fashion. Rather, both he and A. A. Hodge, in the latter part of their article already cited, are at pains to offer harmonizations of such discrepancies that occur in the texts as we presently have them. They there take alleged errors as serious difficulties. They do not brush them away by saying in each case, ''If

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[35] Ibid.,109, 114, 124.

[36] Ibid., 212. In other places he makes the issue of ''dual authorship'' the essential difference between the two schools. But this, too, is baseless.

[37] Ibid., 109.

[38] Ibid., 162.

only we possessed the *autographa* then this issue would immediately be solved." Rather, by their response to the difficulties they assume that they are present in the *autographa* themselves.

It is true that the Princetonians have a strong criterion of what could count as an error. It must present not merely a difficulty but be a "proved mistake," an "indubitable error." To the charge that the Scripture exhibits internal dishar- mony they require that such disharmony must be a "necessary conclusion." Whether or not these standards of proof or disproof are reasonable is certainly debatable. But the authors' procedure of attempting to deal with the difficulties openly and honestly, and not simply to appeal to the *autographa* as a one-word answer to any and every such difficulty, is only too clear.[39]

The Princetonians recognized that there are no extant autographic texts, only sets of non-autographic texts containing discrepant accounts of the same event as well as copyists' errors. It may be asked, what is the point of giving prominence to the *autographa* if they are not in our possession? Why do they take such trouble? It is in order to underline their conviction that it is not as if the original autographs are now completely lost and inaccessible, a sort of literary "black hole." Warfield holds that their content is substantially present in the Bible as we have it, translated from copies into which a series of small errors have crept.

> It is *the Bible* that we declare to be "of infallible truth"—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. . . . [W]hat is it that distinguishes 'the Bible as it is' from the original autographs? Just scribes' corruptions and printers' errors; nothing else.[40]

There must be *autographa*, a set of original texts, since every copied text assumes an autograph of which it is a copy. The Princetonians hold that inerrancy applies to that text, and not to textual variants that have crept in due to the errors of copyists. And Warfield's assumption is that the present textual variants provide the limits of such discrepancies. Warfield holds that the recognition of the inerrancy of the original and the existence of the present set of textual vari- ants does not warrant speculation as to whether there is some autograph which is substantially different from that covered by the present set of variants. Why should the *autographa* be inerrant? Because that's what the doctrine of inerrancy is. What is the idea of an unobtainable inerrant autograph for? To reassure us that the text as we have it, insofar as it is not marred by copyists errors, is iner- rant. Note how Warfield distinguishes between copyists' errors and substantive difficulties in harmonizing texts.

> That some of the difficulties and apparent discrepancies in current texts disappear on the restoration of the true text of Scripture is undoubtedly true. That all the difficulties

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[39] Hodge and Warfield, "Inspiration," 45, 46, 61.

[40] "The Inerrancy of the Original Autographs," in *Selected Shorter Writings of B. B. Warfield* (ed. John E. Meeter; 2 vols.; Nutley, N.J.: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1973), 2:582-83.

and apparent discrepancies in current texts of Scripture are matters of textual corruption, and, not, rather, often of historical or other ignorance on our part, no sane man ever asserted. . . . The Church . . . does not assert that the genuine text of Scripture is free from those apparent discrepancies and other difficulties, on the ground of which, imperfectly investigated, the errancy of the Bible is usually affirmed.[41]

So Warfield carefully distinguishes between discrepancies in the text of Scripture due to copyists' errors, and, say, texts which provide discrepant accounts of the same events. So it is possible to identify the copyists' errors. But this success cannot help us with discrepancies between accounts, for example, in the different accounts in the Gospels of the incident of the Gadarene swine. But McGowan confuses these two issues together as *the* problem of inerrant *autographa,* the central dogma of Princetonian inerrancy.

As we have noted, at various places McGowan claims that a commitment to biblical inerrancy involves a "mechanical," "dictation" view of inspiration, even suggesting at one point that Warfield "devised" such a theory. This suggests a less than sure grasp of another aspect of Warfield's thought. Warfield is of course emphatic that the mode of inspiration is not, for the most part, that of divine dictation, and he grounds this fact in the doctrine of God. In the process of inspiration God is not to be thought of as suddenly appropriating a human agent, Luke, say, or John.

> [O]f course, these books were not produced suddenly, by some miraculous act—handed down complete out of heaven, as the phrase goes; but, like all other products of time, are the ultimate effect of many processes cooperating through long periods. There is to be considered, for instance, the preparation of the material which forms the subject-matter of these books . . . there is the preparation of men to write these books to be considered, a preparation physical, intellectual, spiritual, which must have attended them throughout their whole lives, and indeed, must have had its beginning in their remote ancestors, and the effect of which was to bring the right men to the right places at the right times, with the right endowments, impulses, acquirements, to write just the books which were designed for them. . . . If God wished to give His people a series of letters like Paul's, He prepared a Paul to write them, and the Paul He brought to the task was a Paul who spontaneously would write just such letters.[42]

Theologically speaking, the balance Warfield strikes between human agency, and divine preparation and inspiration, is possible only because of his full theism, stressing both divine transcendence and immanence. His doctrine of inspiration is not remotely deistic, nor, viewed overall, mechanistic. Together with this pure theism is a strong doctrine of divine providence such that through it God works all things according to the counsel of his own will. Yet inspiration, though embedded in providence, is not merely a matter of providence, for it is due to the immediate inspiring activity of the Spirit that just these words are the word of God.

[41] Ibid., 584-85.
[42] "Inspiration," in *Revelation and Inspiration*, 100-101.

> Justice is done to neither factor of inspiration and to neither element in the Bible, the human or the divine, by any other conception of the mode of inspiration except that of *concursus,* or by any other conception of the Bible except that which conceives of it as a divine–human book, in which every word is at once divine and human.
>
> The philosophical basis of this conception is the Christian idea of God as immanent as well as transcendent in the modes of his activity. Its idea of the mode of the divine activity is in analogy with the divine modes of activity in other spheres—in providence, and in grace, wherein we work out our own salvation with fear and trembling, knowing that it is God who is working in us both the willing and the doing according to his own good pleasure.[43]

There is little evidence here of the influence of a "closed Newtonian universe" which McGowan invokes as a feature of the Enlightenment to which the Princetonians were allegedly in thrall.[44] Where McGowan spots a tendency to a mechanical view of inspiration among some inerrantists, if he is accurate, may this not be put down to occasions when that doctrine is in the hands of those with a less robust doctrine of divine providence than Warfield's? An Arminian with a doctrine of scriptural inerrancy is likely to veer in the direction of a "mechanical" view, if he veers anywhere, for given the Arminian view of human agency he will find it difficult if not impossible to endorse Warfield's view of divine *concursus,* favoring a limited *concursus* at best.

Why was Warfield so confident about the nature and extent of the inspiration of the Bible, and its consequent inerrancy? Answering this question takes us beyond these serious misunderstandings to the heart of his theological method.

III. *Warfield's Path*

Warfield's approach to establishing the doctrine of biblical inerrancy is more that of a historian than a scientist, as we shall now see. He provides us with a brief résumé of his method in the following passage.

> Inspiration is not the most fundamental of Christian doctrines, nor even the first thing we prove about the Scriptures. It is the last and crowning fact as to the Scriptures. These we first prove authentic, historically credible, generally trustworthy, before we prove them inspired. And the proof of their authenticity, credibility, general trustworthiness would give us a firm basis for Christianity prior to any knowledge on our part of their inspiration, and apart indeed from the existence of inspiration.[45]

Warfield's approach to inspiration and infallibility is resolutely a posteriori and historical. For it begins from the conviction, also established a posteriori, by an inductive procedure, that the Bible is historically reliable. If the Bible is historically reliable then what it tells us about Jesus is historically reliable, and what it tells us about its own inspiration is equally reliable. Warfield states that our procedure for establishing the doctrine rests at first

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[43] "The Divine and Human in the Bible," in *Selected Shorter Writings,* 2:546.
[44] *Divine Spiration,* 61, 71, 129.
[45] "The Real Problem of Inspiration," 210.

on the confidence which we have in the writers of the New Testament as doctrinal guides, and ultimately on whatever evidence of whatever kind and force exists to justify that confidence. In this sense, we repeat, the cause of distinctive Christianity is bound up with the cause of Biblical doctrine of inspiration. We accept Christianity in all its distinctiveness on no other ground than the credibility and trustworthiness of the Bible as a guide to truth; and on this same ground we must equally accept its doctrine of inspiration.[46]

"Bound up with the cause of Biblical doctrine of inspiration": that is, there is parity between the distinctive doctrines of Christianity and the doctrine of biblical inspiration. Because we hold that the Bible is trustworthy in its depiction of the deity of Christ, say, then we can similarly be confident about what it teaches regarding its own inspiration. Warfield is not saying that our confidence in Christ's deity depends upon first accepting the inspiration of Scripture. Nor is he saying that the doctrine of inspiration is as important as the doctrine of the deity of Christ.

> We do not adopt the doctrine of the plenary inspiration of Scripture on sentimental grounds, nor even, as we have already had occasion to remark, on *a priori* or general grounds of whatever kind. We adopt it specifically because it is taught us as truth by Christ and His apostles, in the Scriptural record of their teaching, and the evidence for its truth is, therefore, as we have also already pointed out, precisely that evidence, in weight and amount, which vindicates for us the trustworthiness of Christ and His apostles as teachers of doctrine.[47]

So the path begins as follows. First there is probable evidence, based upon the historical reliability of Scripture, that it teaches certain doctrines about God, Christ, mankind, and so on. Using the same procedure we also recognize that it teaches the doctrine that the Scriptures themselves are divinely inspired. This then enables us to draw the inference that the scriptural account of God, Christ, and man is not only probably true, but inspired, inerrant, because the account of such things is given in a book which is inspired and inerrant. This is "the last and crowning fact" about Scripture, transforming a merely reliable record into an inspired record. Warfield goes on to say that strictly speaking such evidence is, from a logical point of view, probable evidence, incapable of producing demonstrative certainty; nevertheless, it has so great a probability that "the strength of conviction is practically equal to that produced by demonstration itself."[48]

So the first question is, is the Bible reliable, and the second question is, what does this reliable document teach about its own divine inspiration? Warfield

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[46] Ibid., 213-14.

[47] Ibid., 218.

[48] Ibid., 218. ("practically equal"—does Warfield mean "almost equal" or "equal for all practical purposes"? Perhaps it does not matter which.) Incidentally, McGowan switches from the idea of demonstrating inerrancy (*Divine Spiration*, 127) to the view that the Bible is free from demonstrable error (ibid., 155), as if the two were the same. Warfield claims the second, but not the first, except by means of an historical method providing probable conclusions.

offers an answer to the second question in such articles as "God-Inspired Scripture," "'It Says:' 'Scripture Says:' 'God Says,'" and "The Oracles of God."[49]

As we have already noted, there is an additional important feature about what the Bible teaches about its own inspiration. The view of inspiration in question is not "mechanical."[50] Rather, in inspiring the various authors of Scripture God preserved and employed their distinctive personalities, history, and outlook as fallible human beings with limited knowledge, and nevertheless ensured that what they taught is infallible, inerrant.

> The human agency, both in the histories out of which the Scriptures sprang, and in their immediate composition and inscription, is everywhere apparent, and gives substance and form to the entire collection of writings. It is not merely in the matter of verbal expression or literary composition that the personal idiosyncrasies of each author are freely manifested by the untrammeled play of all his faculties, but the very substance of what they write is evidently for the most part the product of their own mental and spiritual activities.

And, quite surprisingly, perhaps,

> It must be remembered that it is not claimed that the Scriptures, any more than their authors, are omniscient. The information they convey is in the forms of human thought, and limited on all sides. They were not designed to teach philosophy, science or human history as such. They were not designed to furnish an infallible system of speculative theology. They are written in human languages, whose words, inflections, constructions and idioms bear everywhere indelible traces of human error. The record itself furnishes evidence that the writers were in large measure dependent for their knowledge upon sources and methods in themselves fallible, and that their personal knowledge and judgments were in many matters hesitating and defective, or even wrong. Nevertheless, 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 physical principle, are without error when the *ipsissima verba* of the original autographs are ascertained and interpreted in their natural and intended sense.[51]

Nothing could be less mechanical than this.

So, in a manner that is distinct from the general *concursus* of divine providence, deeper and more mysterious, while nevertheless being a part of providence, God inspires fallible human authors, limited in knowledge and children of their time. While the words are their words, they are also, through the inspiring agency of God the Holy Spirit, God's words as well. As such, when properly interpreted, the affirmations of Scripture are without error. Questions of genre are relevant to interpretation, and of course the importance of careful exegesis of Scripture is stressed.[52] But this is not at the expense of the distinctive theological principle

[49] Reprinted in *Revelation and Inspiration*.

[50] *Divine Spiration,* 128, 147. See one of Warfield's many clear anti-mechanical affirmations, "The Real Problem of Inspiration," 211.

[51] Hodge and Warfield, "Inspiration," 12-13, 27-28.

[52] For an account that stresses the centrality of careful exegesis, see Moisés Silva, "Old Princeton, Westminster and Inerrancy," in *B. B. Warfield: Essays on His Life and Thought* (ed. Gary L. W. Johnson; Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian & Reformed, 2007).

that a person who is fallible and whose thoughts have been formed by influences that contain elements of human error may nevertheless, in an inscrutable way, be capable of speaking infallible truth as a result of being borne upon by the Holy Spirit, while remaining fully himself. This does not mean that, by the wave of a magic wand, an error becomes a truth when it is inspired. Rather, it simply means that patterns of speech and thought that have an origin that is fallible and partly erroneous in character may be used to make infallibly true assertions.

It is true that according to Warfield and the other Princetonians the doctrine of inerrancy has to be nuanced and finessed in various ways. But then why does this, in I. Howard Marshall's phrase, quoted by McGowan, present the danger of the death of the doctrine "by a thousand qualifications"?[53] If it does, then why may not finely nuanced accounts of, for example, the Incarnation, designed to avoid various heretical alternatives, Nestorianism, Apollinarianism, and so forth, result in the death of the doctrine of the Incarnation? The clarification of a doctrine does not result in its death so long as a substantial doctrinal thesis remains.

But what are we to do when we encounter difficulties in our path? Warfield's answer at this point is: the trustworthiness of the apostles as teachers of doctrine, the doctrine of inspiration, established on the historical grounds that we have previously sketched, must mean that the difficulties take second place. They are nevertheless to be addressed. Once again, he draws a parallel between the apostolic doctrine of biblical inspiration and other apostolic doctrines, say, of the Incarnation. The Incarnation is clearly taught. We accept the apostolic testimony as we would accept, say, that Aristotle wrote the *Nichomachean Ethics*, and believe that the Incarnation is true doctrine. Are there difficulties with understanding the Incarnation? Obviously so. Yet,

> We do not and we cannot wait until all these difficulties are fully explained before we yield to the testimony of the New Testament the fullest confidence of our minds and hearts. How then can it be true that we are to wait until all difficulties are removed before we can accept with confidence the Biblical doctrine of inspiration?[54]

There is a difference, for Warfield, between a difficulty attending a doctrine and facts that are manifestly inconsistent with it. The impeccability of Christ is a difficult doctrine (this is not Warfield's example) but must not for that reason be surrendered. But if there are facts in Scripture manifestly inconsistent with it, if there is incontrovertible evidence that the biblical Christ was a transgressor of the law of God, say, then that is obviously inconsistent with the assertion of his impeccability. Allowing for the anachronism, Warfield pleads for Popperian rigor when it comes to testing the claims of Scripture about itself: "By all means let the doctrine of the Bible be tested by the facts and let the test be made all the more, not the less, stringent and penetrating because of the great issues that

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[53] *Divine Spiration*, 106.
[54] "The Real Problem of Inspiration," 215

hang upon it. If the facts are inconsistent with the doctrine, let us all know it, and know it so clearly that the matter is put beyond all doubt."[55]

But what of such factors as the structure of Scripture, "especially as determined by some special school of modern research by critical methods certainly not infallible and to the best of our own judgment not even reasonable," the identification of certain prima facie discrepancies, and the like?[56] Warfield refers to such things, along with style and genre, as "the phenomena," a term that Charles Hodge had used.[57]

In response Warfield asserts that to modify the teaching of Scripture respecting its own character by reference to such phenomena would be a failure "to commit ourselves without reserve to the *teaching* of the Bible, either because that teaching is distrusted or already disbelieved . . . by correcting the doctrine delivered by the Biblical writers, it discredits these writers as teachers of doctrine."[58]

> If the Biblical facts and teaching are taken as co-factors in the induction, the procedure . . . is liable to the danger of modifying the teaching by the facts without clear recognition of what is being done; the result of which would be the loss from observation of one main fact of errancy, viz., the inaccuracy of the teaching of the Scriptures as to their own inspiration. This would vitiate the whole result: and this vitiation of the result can be avoided only by ascertaining separately the teaching of the Scripture as to its own inspiration, and by accounting the results of this ascertainment one of the facts of the induction.[59]

The "phenomena," such as the presence of apparent contradictions in the text, the hypotheses of a "critical" approach to the text, and the like, may be relevant to the exegesis of the texts of Scripture which teach inspiration. Attention to such facts may help us to interpret the assertions of Scripture.

> Direct exegesis after all has its rights: we may seek aid from every quarter in our efforts to perform its processes with precision and obtain its results with purity; but we cannot allow its results to be 'modified' by extraneous considerations.[60]

At this juncture, the logical order of the procedure, the character of the path, is vital to Warfield's case. If, proceeding inductively, we were to begin with the phenomena of Scripture and the statements about inspiration together, giving to each of these data equal weight, we would be unable to challenge the phenomena by the statements. So the "real problem" of inspiration, as Warfield understood it, is "whether we can still trust the Bible as a guide to doctrine, as a teacher of truth."[61] The presence of such trust means giving that teaching priority over every other fact about Scripture which our inductions may lay bare.

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[55] Ibid., 216.

[56] Ibid., 205.

[57] Hodge, *Systematic Theology,* 1:169.

[58] "The Real Problem of Inspiration," 204-5; italics in the original.

[59] Ibid., 223.

[60] Ibid., 206.

[61] Ibid., 225.

So the declarations of Scripture, and the phenomena, are distinct kinds of fact about it. One is logically subordinate to the other. Once again we can see how grossly inaccurate and unfair it is to describe the Hodge-Warfield theological method as "often giving the impression" that the whole Bible can be reduced to a set of propositions that can then be demonstrated as "true."[62] To whom does it give that impression, one wonders, and how often? The logic is clear. It's not "There are discrepancies and the presence of phenomena that present difficulties, therefore there cannot be an inerrant text," but "There is an inerrant text and therefore the discrepancies and difficult phenomena are no more nor less than that—copyists' errors or unresolved puzzles."

The second thing that Warfield's procedure implies is that, as we noted earlier, there is an epistemic parity between the biblical doctrine of Scripture and the biblical doctrine concerning any other Christian teaching. Warfield himself brings out this point:

> Let it not be said that we thus found the whole Christian system upon the doctrine of plenary inspiration. We found the whole Christian system on the doctrine of plenary inspiration as little as we found it upon the doctrine of angelic existences.[63]

All the doctrines of our faith, including the doctrine of the inspiration of the Scriptures, are established in the same way from the same Scriptures. These doctrines differ in importance, in the extent to which they reach to the heart of the Christian faith, and the doctrine of divine inspiration (and inerrancy) is not the most important of these. It is certainly not a "foundational" doctrine in the way some critics of Warfield believe, who think that his doctrine of biblical infallibility or inerrancy is evidence that he was in thrall to some version of Enlightenment "foundationalism."

So much for Warfield's method, and the pathway he constructs with it.

IV. *McGowan's Claims*

In this article I have been concerned to clear Warfield's views on the inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture from certain serious misunderstandings. McGowan's negative remarks on Warfield's theological method (and that of the Princetonians more generally) are seriously inaccurate. His assertion that Warfield's account of God's relation to the production of inerrant Scripture is "rationalistic" is without foundation. His account of the Princetonian idea of inerrant *autographa* is confused. The idea that Warfield and the Princetonians "devised" an inerrantist account of inspiration that is "mechanical," or provides any pretext for a mechanical view, has no support.[64] Far from the inspiration and authority of Scripture being Warfield's central dogma, the motor for formulating a set of propositions "deemed to be inerrant," the doctrine is for him but one of a set

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[62] *Divine Spiration*, 116.

[63] "The Real Problem of Inspiration," 209.

[64] *Divine Spiration*, 163: "It is no coincidence that the Princeton school of theology, following Hodge's theological method, devised an inerrantist (or mechanical) view of the Scriptures."

of dogmas that the teaching of a reliable Bible delivers to us.

McGowan offers his book as a contribution to debate and calls for ''serious scholarship.''[65] Such scholarship calls for accuracy of statement, the provision of clear evidence, and for cogent argument. Sadly, such features appear to be lacking in his own treatment of Warfield.

There may well be features of Warfield's path, the logic of his argument for the doctrine of biblical infallibility or inerrancy, that are open to criticism. Perhaps there is an inherent logical weakness in his inductivist approach to the data of Scripture. Perhaps Warfield is too naïve in his acceptance of the general reliability of the Bible. Perhaps he does not appreciate as he should that a river cannot rise higher than its source, that a book whose inerrancy is established on inductive grounds is, at best, only very probably inerrant.[66] Perhaps he does not do justice to what Calvin called the self-authenticating character of Scripture. Perhaps he does not sufficiently stress the ineffability of the operation of the divine and human elements in the *concursus* that is inspiration. Perhaps at certain points he is under the influence of the Scottish Common Sense Philosophy. Perhaps he is not *sufficiently* under the influence of that philosophy. All such issues are a matter of legitimate debate. But these legitimate points of debate must arise from a fair and accurate and full exposition of Warfield's views themselves, not from a caricature of them. To follow up these important issues here would take us beyond the scope of this study, which is to consider Warfield's own path to inerrancy, not whether this is the best possible path.

What has in fact happened since Warfield's day is a point not appreciated by McGowan. Since then, it is Fundamentalism and later evangelicalism that have brought the Warfieldian defense of inerrancy to center stage, giving it the foundational place that he denied to it, while at the same time allowing the other features of Warfield's theology, such as his strong doctrine of divine providence, which in his eyes have epistemic parity, to drift into the wings.[67] In all likelihood what McGowan and those who think like him about Warfield and Princeton have done, without realizing it, is to read back into the views of Warfield the conviction of later evangelicals that biblical inerrancy has a central, foundational character, even that it is evangelicalism's necessary and sufficient criterion. But strange as it may seem, this was not Warfield's own view. His path had a different starting point, and led elsewhere.[68]