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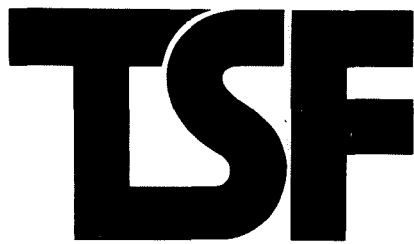
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death. He added, then, in words that must have seemed ominous to Wesley, "I know no sin except the sin against the Holy Ghost of which a child of God may not be guilty, if God should withdraw his grace. . . . What a fond conceit it is to cry up *perfection*, and yet cry down the doctrine of *final perseverance*."¹ At his orphanage in Georgia three months later, Whitefield wrote on Christmas Eve, 1740, the famous letter to John Wesley that signaled their parting of the ways. His professed purpose was to answer Wesley's sermon on "Free Grace." But he seems to have been equally intent upon denying heart purity—so much so as to appear to contradict some of his earlier descriptions of regeneration. Although he had enjoyed the "full assurance of faith" for "five or six years," Whitefield now acknowledged "with grief and humble shame" that he had "fallen into sin often since that." He had not been "able to live one day perfectly free from all defects and sin" and did not expect to be able to do so "in this present world."

Wesley had long since declared that lumping "defects" (such as weakness, poor judgment, emotional strain or subjection to temptation) with "sin" was quite unscriptural. The confusion of the two kept many Christians from believing they could be delivered from either habitual wrongdoing or the inward impulse to evil that St. Paul had called "enmity against God." The first part of Wesley's earliest published sermon on Christian perfection contained in fact a lengthy description of what "entire" sanctification did not accomplish: it did not bring deliverance from temptation, ignorance, infirmity, or mistake.

Once committed in public print, however, Whitefield never yielded the point, even after he had every reason to understand precisely what Wesley was saying. Arriving in Bristol in early spring, 1741, he wrote a friend (possibly Howell Harris) that he believed "we shall never have such a dominion over indwelling sin, as entirely to be delivered from the stirring of it; and the greatest saint cannot be assured, but sometime or another for his humiliation or punishment for unfaithfulness, God may permit him to break out into some actual breach of his law, and in a gross way too." In December 1742 he urged a woman convert to pray God "to show you more and more of your evil heart, that you may ever remain a poor sinner at the feet of the crucified but now exalted lamb of God. There you will be happy." This was a far cry from the exhortations to happiness through holiness that had characterized his earlier advice to new believers.

Shortly afterwards, however, William Cudworth and others led a group of radical Calvinists, including some of Whitefield's converts, in renouncing as prideful self-deception all claims by Christians actually to keep the Ten Commandments.

This made it possible for Whitefield and the Wesleys to renew their fellowship in a common stand against antinomianism. They did not modify their contrary views on either predestination or cleansing from the sinful nature; but Whitefield revived his earlier emphasis upon the victory over sinning that the Holy Spirit brought in the experience of regeneration. In a tract published in 1764 he drew as close to Wesley's doctrine as he could. Whitefield declared that the mighty work of the Holy Spirit in regeneration could extinguish the "innate fiery passions of envy, selfishness, or malice" and "form the soul into any of those divine tempers" that St. Paul describes in I Corinthians 13 as "genuine effects and fruits of the love of God."

Wesley and Whitefield: Similarities and Differences

In the sermon John Wesley preached in Whitefield's London pulpit when the news arrived that the latter had died in America, he declared that the two men had never disagreed in their conviction that the experience of regeneration, or the new birth, brings the presence and power of the Holy Spirit that enables Christians to triumph over temptation and live a holy life. For at least twenty-seven years before Whitefield's death, however, Wesley had proclaimed that being *filled* with the Holy Spirit (as the Apostles were at Pentecost), as distinct from receiving His presence and power in the new birth, brought "full salvation," Christian holiness. And that experience was manifested in loving God and humankind with all one's heart and soul and strength.

In retrospect, what George Whitefield preached in his earliest years about Christian perfection—that the inward and outward holiness begun in regeneration would increase through a daily walk of faith and obedience, sustained by the presence and power of the Holy Spirit—is remarkably close to what, in recent years, some have asked us to believe was Wesley's doctrine.

In fact, however, the issue over which these two friends divided, as Whitefield's statements to and about John Wesley at the time make clear, was the Methodist founder's teaching that the experience of being "filled with the Holy Ghost" and so being "cleansed from all unrighteousness" is available "now and by simple faith" to all true believers, and will be to the end of time. And that teaching, reinforced by the writings of John Fletcher, particularly his *Last Check to Antinomianism*, was precisely what the leaders of the holiness movement of the nineteenth century and the founders of the Wesleyan denominations of the twentieth steadfastly proclaimed.

Reflections on *The Scripture Principle*

by Clark H. Pinnock

In this article I wish to reflect on and to extend the main ideas I attempted to put forward in *The Scripture Principle* (1984).

My chief concern in the book is to think about biblical authority in a way which transcends the present polarization between an unnecessarily low view on the one hand and an inflated view on the other. I see this as part of the broader struggle to avoid what Hendrikus Berkhof calls a "rudderless modernism" on the left and a "rigid traditionalism" on the

right, a situation which came about as a result of the impact of secular modernity upon Christian theology. One group, in response to the cultural crisis, opts for cognitive bargaining and a position of accommodation, while another group digs in its heels and gathers all the wagons in a circle. My goal is to recapture a certain equilibrium, a proper dialectic of fidelity and creativity, which is characteristic of great theologians of the past. As regards the Bible, the question is whether it is possible to affirm the scriptures as God's Word written, as Christians have always done, and to do so in such a way as to be honest and straightforward in the face of severe contemporary challenges.

Clark H. Pinnock is Professor of Theology at McMaster Divinity College in Hamilton, Ontario, Canada.

In a nutshell, I am warning against the loss of biblical authority in liberal theology, seeking to correct rigidities in standard conservative theology, and proposing an improved model of biblical authority which can overcome the present polarization. My sense is that a good number of serious Christians share these instincts with me.

The paradigm I have in mind comprises the three elements Paul refers to in connection with his own ministry in 2 Corinthians 4:7: the treasure of God's message, his own very human reality, and the spiritual power underlying it all. I also detect the three elements in the person and work of Jesus: his divine authority, his human reality, and an empowerment of the Spirit. Such a paradigm has the fullness we need; and if each element is developed soundly it can, I hope, move our thinking about the Bible forward. In order to test this claim, let me take up each point of this triangular model in turn, beginning with the problem posed by the polarization and moving on to its resolution.

My position is that we have a solid basis for believing that God has given us his written Word, and it is not necessary to inflate or exaggerate the point, thus weakening rather than strengthening the case.

Alas, I fear, despite my hope to move beyond polarization, that neither side will welcome what I have said here. James Barr has already denounced it in an unpublished review, and Roger Nicole has revealed his unwillingness to consider any moderating moves in relation to the hardline conservative view. Both feel comfortable with their end of the feuding and the polarization, and do not want to change anything. I suppose I should take comfort in the fact that it would not be the first time a peacemaker got trampled under foot by armies lusty for battle.

Scripture as Human Text

On this issue the tables are turned. Here the liberals are enthusiastic, while the conservatives are distinctly nervous

I did not write the book to refute anybody, even myself. I wrote it to help people honestly struggling with an important and difficult issue. I will be glad if it helps them.

Scripture as God's Word Written

The major challenge here is the "crisis of the scripture principle" (Pannenberg) according to which inspired Scripture is no longer seen to be inherent in Christianity, but rather the Bible is seen as a flawed human witness to revelation. In view of the fact that the entire categorical structure of Christian theology was developed on the basis of a scripture principle, this shift from divine to human testimony in the Bible places the entire Christian message in some jeopardy. In reaction to this move, standard conservative theology has inflated the inspiration category and its implications in order to compensate in pendulum fashion the imposing threat.

Let me give three examples of this: first, the conservatives tend to exaggerate what you can prove the whole Bible to be from the Bible; second, they are selective in the evidence they cite, preferring the so-called "doctrinal verses" to verses which display how New Testament authors actually handled the Old Testament; third, they sound as though they are a little confused vis a vis Christ and Scripture, as to which is a witness to which.

This pendulum reaction which we see here is reminiscent of the way in which liberals focus upon the humanity of Jesus, while conservatives care much more about his deity.

The solution is to be found in defending the inerrancy of Scripture in Christianity against the liberal shift. The conservatives are right to think that the evidence for this is deeply embedded in the thinking of the prophets and the apostles. And it is already clear what the loss of biblical authority will mean: it will spawn a theology which arises from human experience and twists the biblical text to suit the demands of the imperial present. This debate has far-reaching implications for theological method.

But for it to be a viable solution, it will also be necessary for us to be scrupulously honest about the evidence we cite, and stop creating confusion about whether we give Christ or Scripture the priority. Scripture according to Scripture is not an end in itself: it is not a flat book which talks about everything in general. Jesus Christ is the material center of the Bible according to the Bible. Scripture exists to bear witness to him and not for itself in its own right. It is high time we evangelicals read Luther as well as Calvin!

when it comes to admitting the Bible is human. The liberals are so enthusiastic, in fact, that they often allow the humanity to swallow up the divine authority of the text, as though a truly human side would automatically rule out any divine side. In reaction to this, the standard conservatives reveal what Berkouwer called a docetic tendency, trying to make the human dimension as little threatening as possible. One can find them opting for "solutions" to biblical difficulties which fit the theory but cannot be said to be very plausible in themselves. Having the unfortunate cock crow six times in order to remove the offense of the actual texts in the synoptics stands as an entertaining illustration of this.

Again we have an unhappy polarization, and a Christological analogy to it. When liberals stress the real humanity of Jesus, the conservatives come back with a one-sided defense of his divinity.

In this case, the solution is to be found in denying the liberal premise that the humanity necessarily swallows up the divine authority, even though this has been the direction of secular thought for some time. If, in fact, there are good grounds for believing in God and in the Incarnation, there is no implausibility in listening for God to speak in his in-scripturated Word. In the present book I have suggested that we construe the Spirit's work in and through human writers in more dynamic terms than is possible in Reformed theology. In this way I hope to give a little more room to the human authors and not even seem to think of them as pen-men.

But in denying the liberal premise, conservatives must put an end to their apparent unwillingness to accept God's decision to convey his Word to us in genuinely human terms. No doubt it does involve weakness and vulnerability to have the Lord born in a manger, and the Bible clothed in human garments. But it does not give us license to rebel against the God whose decision this was and is. Reason may well balk at the spectre of having to accept that the absolute Word comes to us through a Palestinian Jew and a text written in common Greek. But conservatives believe this is so, and thus must be prepared to accept the concrete humanness of revelation and not yearn after disincarnate revelation. If we do so, not only will we be found to be resisting God, but we will also very likely miss what God has to say to us in this way. Scripture

must be allowed to be what it wants to be even when it is disconcerting to us.

Conservatives have been bears for punishment. So much of our burden is self-imposed. We have to pay the price of having inflated biblical inspiration and having exaggerated the perfection of the Bible. It is not easy to climb down from a high horse. Had we only kept our eyes fixed on the real issue of whether the Bible has mediated life to us in Jesus Christ. Then our difficulties stemming from the humanity of Scripture would have been fewer and less nettlesome. Which brings us to our third subject.

Nor indeed am I wanting to decry the importance of careful exegesis in ascertaining what the biblical writers were trying to say. I am simply wanting to insist that the event of interpretation involves a prayerful listening to God's Spirit speaking by means of the text as well as a purely intellectual effort to analyze it. We are not forced to agree either with the "original meaning" or the "existentialist" hermeneutical theorists, but need to work with an understanding which involves both submission to the text and openness to what the Lord is saying today through it. Surely evangelical hermeneutics is a spiral movement which moves between these two poles. Here again

Jesus Christ is the material center of the Bible according to the Bible. Scripture exists to bear witness to him and not for itself in its own right. It is high time we evangelicals read Luther as well as Calvin!

Scripture as Sacrament

In relation to the Word and the Spirit, I find discomfort on both the liberal and the conservative sides. Liberals, of course, are keen on subjectivity in one sense, namely, in welcoming contemporary ideas in place of biblical ones. This can be symbolized by certain feminists who are bent upon writing up a new canon of appropriate Scriptures. But the subjectivity I have in mind is of a higher sort, a divine Subjectivity which takes what God has said in the scriptures and makes it live for us.

But am I to say that the conservatives too deny this higher Subjectivity? Surely not! Do they not confess the orthodox creed? The point is granted, but the strong impression remains that conservatives are nervous about subjectivity, human and divine. This nervousness does not require a formal denial. I see it in two places.

First, it is seen in the effort to create an airtight case for Scripture which lacks any vulnerability. You see it in a gentle twisting of the scriptural claims, and in a certain desperateness to avoid facing the full humanity of the text. The conservatives desire a case which can stand whether or not the Spirit places his seal to it in our hearts. Second, in the area of interpretation, conservatives want to equate the meaning of the Bible with the scientifically established original intention of the words of the text thus dispensing with the ministry of the Spirit in hermeneutics.

In pendulum reaction to religious humanism, conservatives have sought to establish the doctrine of a perfect Book in a way that does not require the Spirit to be mentioned. It is as if Jesus just before his departure had said: "Be not afraid, it is to your advantage that I go away. For if I do not go away the perfect Book will not come to you" (Pseudo-John 16:7ff). In this manner the legalist conservative answers the libertine liberal.

The solution lies in the New Testament's own balancing of subject and object. The Spirit of God testifies to the Word of the Gospel and helps us to grasp it. The Spirit convicts the world of the things the Bible says. The Spirit enables the human text to deliver its divine message effectively to us.

Although I am not one to deny the place of apologetic reasoning in helping people to see the intelligibility of faith, I reject the notion that it is by intellect alone that faith is born. Ordinary Christians surely understand this. They know instinctively that one can only go so far in proving the Bible true, and after that the Spirit has to seal the truth to the human heart. Would that some conservatives who are admittedly more knowledgeable were also as wise!

it seems to me that ordinary Christians seem to know this better than their scholarly guides.

Were we to correct our theory, I think we might also begin to heal a notable conservative pathology, namely, the tendency to consider infallible not only the text but our interpretations as well. One can recall the late Francis Schaeffer's willingness to draw the line between faithful and unfaithful Christians not just at the point of an infallible Bible but at the point of his sketchy interpretation of Genesis 2 as well. We are disaster-evangelicals if we question his inadequately argued belief that Eve was made from Adam's rib in actual fact. Schaeffer's dogmatism reflects a naively realistic hermeneutic which lacks modesty as to our human judgment in these matters, and it lacks a sense of the ministry of the Spirit bringing new light forth from ancient texts.

In reflection, the doctrine of the Spirit may be the key to reforming the standard conservative theory of the Bible. With a proper sense of the Spirit's ministry in relation to Scripture, the problems in all three dimensions of my paradigm would be eased. First, with the Spirit bearing witness to the Bible, it would not be seen to be necessary to inflate inspiration and exaggerate the evidence for it. Second, on the same basis, the vulnerability associated with the humanity of the text would be easier to accept. Third, confidence in the reality of the Spirit would help us move away from legalistic ways of appealing to the Bible which are often inappropriate to the text and destructive of human beings.

Concluding Observations

I submit that this three-dimensional paradigm sheds a lot of light on our subject and shows up the unfortunately polarized nature of so much talk about the Bible. I am unsure about its reception. Some on the left have no intention of returning to the scripture principle, and some of the conservatives will adamantly refuse to give up their secure scholastic case for the Bible. I just hope my book may overcome some polarization and help some people advance in their understanding. I would not try to pretend that my effort for a *via media* is the only show in town. Many have been trying for the same thing: Barth, Rogers, Childs, maybe even Gadamer and Ricoeur. I just think mine is better.

In closing, let me address three questions. First, is the paradigm coherent in itself? After all, it scales down the argument from the Bible for the Bible, it is wide open to the human realities of the text, and by appealing to the Spirit it creates a flexible hermeneutic. Given these facts, what distinguishes this paradigm from views I myself call liberal? I think the answer is plain and lies in the discussion up to now. I hold

fast to the content of Scripture as infallibly normative. I am simply trying to be honest about how this works.

Second, how can I be taken seriously when I endorse inerrancy in the closing pages of the book, after having savaged the idea in so many places earlier? The answer lies in the ambiguity of the term. You can drive a truck through article XIII of the Chicago Statement on Inerrancy. Thus I conclude that what inerrantists really want to do is to affirm the complete truthfulness of the Bible as I do myself. I would not take second place to any of them in being open to the truth of God's Word written. So why open oneself to criticism for eschewing a term which, like it or not, multitudes of evangelicals prefer? I admit that it comes down to strategy in our context. Like Stuart Hackett of Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, I do not particularly like the term.

Third, what is a person to make of this book in relation to my theological development or, as some might have it, meanings? I think one has to see it as a statement on Scripture which is epistemologically more modest and theologically more trinitarian than my *Biblical Revelation* (1971). In the earlier book, still in print, you have more of a black and white case for the Bible. It has an appeal for those who want to have a strongly rational fix upon the authority of the Bible, and possibly for those with the kind of personality which wants a very clear-cut authority pattern. In the present book, I have moved my theory closer to evangelical practice. In practice, Christians do not demand an airtight case for Scripture; they do not require a definite solution to every biblical difficulty; and they do not consider interpretation to be solely a scientific achievement. What Christians know instinctively is that what

really matters is God revealing our Savior to us and transforming our lives by the Spirit. When our relationship with the Lord is evangelical, there is no need to inflate our evidences or shy away from the vulnerabilities of revelation. Anxiety about the exact age of Methuselah is not likely to throw us into a spin and create a crisis of faith in us.

In the last analysis, though, I did not write the book to refute anybody, even myself. I wrote it to help people honestly struggling with an important and difficult issue. I will be glad if it helps them.

TSF CAMPUS MINISTRY

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Get Rid of the Lust in Your Life

by Paul A. Mickey

There's a word game we used to play with our children on long car trips to help break the monotony, and I wouldn't be surprised if you've played it too. We called it word association, and it goes like this:

I might say, "Italian," and then you say the first word that comes into your mind—such as "pizza."

I say, "winter"—you say, "Palm Beach."

I say, "lust"—and you say, . . . "sex."

Well, maybe you don't; but many people do see a direct and inseparable link between lust and sex. And more than that, they may see lust as something of a positive factor. If you've got good sex in your marriage, the thinking goes, then you just have to have a good dose of old-fashioned lust. In short, many couples accept lust as a natural and inevitable part of their lives. As a result, they fail to recognize it for what it really is—a destructive force that can undermine healthy marital sex and then go on to destroy the very foundations of the matrimonial relationship.

The association between lust and sex is understandable in our society, I suppose. In fact, lust and sex sometimes almost seem synonymous. Lust automatically comes to mind when we talk matter-of-factly about one-night-stand sex, group sex, casual sex, extramarital sex, and drunk-as-a-skunk I'm-sorry-I-did-it sex.

Paul Mickey is Associate Professor of Pastoral Theology at Duke University Divinity School and Interim Director of TSF. This article is taken from Tough Marriage, copyright © 1985 by Paul Mickey and William Proctor. Reprinted by arrangement with William Morrow & Co., Inc.

But lust—especially the kind of lust you need to guard against in your marriage—goes far beyond sex. As a matter of fact, lust is *any* excessive desire, any uncontrollable urge for immediate gratification. Although sex is an obvious target for lust, it's only one among countless others. The main motivation behind lust is to feel better *fast*. And that means capturing the object of your lust. Once you've got your prey in hand, that's supposed to relieve you of the gnawing desire, to satisfy that desperate need that says, If I don't have it, if I can't do it, my life will fall apart!

Lust may involve a craving for food, alcohol, sports, new fashions, job promotions, or many other things. The only common condition to unleash lust is that you must want something and believe you've got to have it right *now*. The pleasure won't be deferred for later fulfillment. And if you find you just can't get what you want, you may become so frustrated that you lose your ability to think and reason clearly.

We're all victims of lust. I know the sweetest little old lady who thinks she can't live without chocolate candy, even though she's diabetic. She's usually either unhappy or under medical treatment.

Then there's a doctor friend who absolutely has to indulge in chess several evenings a week, even though his passion leaves his wife alone and frustrated. I even believe there can be a lust for electronic temptations like television. A career woman I know locks her office door every day, no matter what other pressing matters are on her desk, so that she can see her noontime soap opera on a miniature TV she keeps in a drawer.