



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Systematic Theology

TRANSCRIPT “Contemporary Evangelicalism and Biblical Inspiration”

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful to Thee for the privilege of the study of the Scriptures and for the privilege of considering the great doctrines of the Christian faith. And, again, we ask that as we turn to problems that face us as readers and students of the Bible that we may have Thy enlightenment as we study. May the Holy Spirit, who has authored the word through men to teach us the things that he has written. We commit the hour to Thee. We commit each one present to the Thee.

We pray in Jesus’ Name, Amen.

[Message] Our subject for tonight is “Contemporary Evangelicalism and Biblical Inspiration.” And I would like for you to turn with me to 2 Peter, chapter 1. And let’s read a few verses beginning with verse 19. 2 Peter, chapter 1, verse 19 through verse 21. And, again, I’m reading from the New American Standard Bible. I’m getting near the end of it. I hope you’re reading your Bible. I’m in Galatians. Actually, I’m a day behind schedule, so I have to stop on time tonight and get home and read twenty pages instead of ten. Have you found it? 2 Peter, chapter 1, verse 19 through verse 21. Peter writes:

“And so we have the prophetic word made more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts. But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one’s own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.”

About ten years ago, perhaps now ten or twelve years ago, in one of our national evangelical magazines, an article was written in which it was stated that some evangelicals were beginning to speak of re-examining the inspiration of Scripture. Now, other evangelicals were very much upset by that article because it was an indication to them of the fact that many in evangelicalism were unhappy with the doctrine of the Scriptures that had been believed and had been taught for many years.

There is nothing wrong, in itself, in re-examining one’s position on the Scriptures. In fact, it seems to me, that that is something that evangelicals should constantly do. They should realize that the things that they find in Holy Scripture are the things that the Holy Spirit teaches them as they seek to interpret it under his guidance. And, it is always possible for us to come to a deeper knowledge of the truth of the word of God. So, it seems to me that there should be nothing essentially wrong in re-examining any of our doctrines providing we approach them on the basis of learning something deeper or something more that the Holy Spirit has taught us in Scripture.

Many were upset, however, because it did seem to indicate that some wanted to change their view, and so, under the guise of “re-examination,” it was thought by many that this was really a departure, an abandoning, of biblical inspiration.

Now, history has indicated that that is somewhat true because some of those who were speaking of re-examination have now departed. But at the present time there is going on still a re-examining of the doctrine of inspiration. It is disturbing in some ways because many whom we have considered to be Evangelical -- that is, sound in the

doctrines of the word of God -- are turning from the things that they believed for a long time. It is encouraging, in another sense, in that it does indicate that some are concerned to learn more about the word of God.

I, myself, participated in one of these conferences back in 1966 when about fifty men, really, from all over the world, gathered together in Wenham, Massachusetts. And for ten days we debated, discussed, and debated. Many papers were presented; many discussions were held afterwards, on the topic of biblical authority. And I think, out of that conference, it became evident, to me at least, that some were thinking of abandoning the doctrine of inspiration that they had taught.

One might ask, why does this mood exist in evangelicalism? Well, probably, there are several reasons for it.

Now, one reason, I think, as any college student might be able to answer surely, the claims of science as over against the claims of the word of God do seem to be in conflict. This is particularly evident in connection with the Bible doctrine of creation and the scientific theory of evolution. And, in the light of the fact that they do seem to be so diametrically opposed to one another, it’s not surprising that this mood of re-examination of what the Bible teaches should exist among evangelicals. Many of them are disturbed by this conflict, which they are unable to handle.

Then, secondly, the Bible teaches us that there is to be an apostasy from the truth in the latter days. And, while I do not want to suggest to you that I think we are in the latter days, I think that is something that we really cannot tell, in spite of the fact that we may have certain opinions. Nevertheless, we should not be surprised at the fact that apostasy takes place. I think that if you will study the history of the Christian church, this matter of apostasy is not something that is reserved for the last days. It is really a cycle that seems to go on within Christianity constantly.

In John’s day, as you have been listening -- as you’ve been hearing on Sunday, in John’s day, the apostle was speaking about anti-Christ’s. He was speaking about people

who were denying the Christian faith concerning the incarnation. And, of course, we all know of the great upheaval of the 16th century in the Protestant Reformation. And we have known of other cases in which there has been departure from the truth, apostasy in our places of Christian profession, which has been followed again by revival or return to the fundamentals. This was true in the case of Wesleyan revivals of the 18th century.

So, we should not be surprised if there is apostasy. And, I think also, this mood exists because of the shrewd attacks on the doctrine of inspiration, which have been leveled by proponents of what we have called “Neo-orthodoxy,” for lack of a better word.

Neo-orthodoxy is a party within the professing Christian church, which outwardly has claimed to be a return to the principals of the Reformation. It is identified with such men as Professor Karl Barth, who died just a couple years ago, of the University of Basel, in Switzerland. Professor Reinhold Niebuhr, in this country, not nearly so conservative as Barth, professor at Union Theological Seminary in New York City, and many others.

Neo-orthodoxy claimed to be a re-interpretation of, in the case of Barth, of Calvinism and a return to the teaching of holy Scripture. Barth had been an ordinary liberal, humanistic in his philosophy, until the time of the First World War. But when the First World War came, then Barth realized that his doctrine of the inherent goodness of man did not tally with human experience. And so he had a rethinking of his own theology. He reexamined it and came to the startling conclusion that men were really sinners after all, and that they were under a God who was totally God, and they were totally his creatures and totally sinful. And, consequently, that movement came to be known as Neo-orthodoxy; that is, a new return to orthodoxy.

Now, Neo-orthodoxy mounted some shrewd attacks on fundamentalism or evangelicalism because when Neo-orthodoxy came into existence, the Neo-orthodox theologians did not really return to evangelical teachings. What they did was to return to certain of the evangelical doctrines such as the doctrine of sin. Some of them even

returned to the doctrine of salvation. They returned to certain other doctrines that were scriptural. But they did not return to the doctrine of inspiration.

And, furthermore, in connection with their doctrines, they accepted all of the higher critical methodology and results, which they had been taught as liberals. And so Neo-orthodoxy became a mixture of what was true to the Bible plus a mixture of methodology that was, generally speaking, anti-evangelical, at least, not to settle the case, anti-evangelical, at least. And the result was that, since they did not accept the doctrine of the inspiration of the Scriptures, they attacked it. And they attacked it very shrewdly because they said things like this --

Now, if you, in my audience, are an individual who accepts the inspiration of the Scriptures you really believe that the Bible is made up of the words which God gave and men inspired by the Holy Spirit, and that what we have in the Scriptures in the original manuscripts or in the original -- in the autographer would be better -- in the original writings themselves -- If you believe that those words that Paul and John and Isaiah and the other biblical writers were truly the words of God, how would you answer a question like this?

Well, do you believe in the sinfulness of man? And you would reply, oh, yes, I believe in the sinfulness of man. Well, then if you really believed in the sinfulness of man, how can you possibly believe that the Scriptures, which have come from the pen of men, could be totally holy? Is it not reasonable to expect that since the Scriptures have come from sinful men, that we should find some evidences of their sinfulness in the Scriptures?

Now, you see, they really do not believe in the sinfulness of man. You have only a modified view of the sinfulness of man. You think that it is possible for a sinful man to produce something that is totally holy and pure.

Now, how would you answer that? Now, you see, your own doctrine of the nature of man would seem to require that you believe that the Bible itself contains an evidence of it.

Furthermore, the Neo-orthodox men have claimed that God does not speak to us in words; he speaks to us in events. As a matter of fact, he has spoken to us primarily and ultimately in Jesus Christ and what he has done. God does not speak to men as a professor who gives us lectures on theology. He has inculcated all of his teaching into the life and ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. And so he speaks to us in the “acts” for which he is responsible.

He spoke in the Old Testament in the acts of redemption by which he brought Israel out of Egypt. And he has spoken to us in the acts of Jesus Christ. His life, his death, his burial, his resurrection, these are the great revelatory events of God, and in them he speaks to us.

Let me put it in this way: Jesus did not come to talk to men about God and say to them what his apostles afterward said, “God is love.” But he lived and he died and that was his teaching about the love of God. He did not come to men to lay down a theory of the atonement so that we should go into our classrooms and discuss the classic theory of the atonement or the Anselmic view of the atonement or the Abelardian view of the atonement.

No, Jesus did not give us a doctrine of propitiation. But he went to the cross, and he gave himself for us. And, in what he did on the cross, well, that’s God teaching about atonement. He did not come to us and say, there is a future life, and that future life is of such and such a character. But he came out of the grave and he said, “Touch me and handle me, the spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see me have.”

So he taught men by what he did, rather than by what he said. He did not lecture upon ethics, but he lived the perfect human life out of which all moral principles that will guide human conduct may be gathered. And so when we talk about ethics, we should

not speak of principles and practices, but we should speak about the life and ministry of the person of our Lord Jesus Christ.

And as one old commentator, who made reference to this approach, before Neo-orthodoxy came out into the open, he said, “And so, instead of presenting us with the *hortus siccus* -- (You who are Latin students will remember that that means something like a dry garden) -- a botanic collection of scientifically arranged and dead propositions, he led us into the meadow where the flowers grow, living and fair. His life and death, with all that they imply, are the teaching.”

Well, I think you can see from this that evangelicals do have some problems with their viewpoints. And they do have to answer the critics who have leveled these shrewd attacks against their doctrine of inspiration. So inerrancy, that the Bible does not contain any errors. The doctrine of inerrancy was opposed to the doctrine of depravity. How can you have depravity and inerrancy at the same time? And God does not speak in propositions. He speaks in the events that have redemptive significance. You may also, if you are a philosopher, recognize that there are certain aspects of existentialism in the second attack.

Well, now, let’s consider, against that background, some of the problem of contemporary evangelicalism and biblical inspiration. And Roman I in the outline, Contemporary views of Biblical inspiration, and capital A, the liberal view.

Now, when I say liberal view, I mean the long-standing view of those who have not made any claims whatsoever of accepting the truths of the word of God. Generally speaking, the liberals have denied flatly that the Bible is an inerrant book. They do not believe that the Bible is a book that does not contain error. To the liberals, the Bible has always contained errors. It is not an infallible book. It is not a book that we can completely trust. It is a book that is the product of sinful men. It is, in a sense, a kind of history of the religious thinking of men from the time of -- the earliest times to the present to the times of the apostles and shortly thereafter, perhaps.

George Arthur Buttrick, who is a famous Christian preacher, professing Christian preacher, has said, “Literal infallibility of Scripture is a fortress impossible to defend. There is treason in the camp. Probably, few people who claim to believe every word of the Bible really mean it. That avowal, held to its last logic, would risk a trip to the insane asylum.”

Millar Burrows, who I believe is now dead, said, “What is ultimately authoritative for us -- he was an outstanding liberal -- is that which commands the assent of our best judgment accepted as the witness of the spirit within us.” In other words, the authority of the word of God rests finally in human judgment.

That is the liberal view of inspiration. If you are a young person who has been to university, you, no doubt, have had men criticize the doctrine of the inspiration of the Scriptures. And one famous critic of the Bible used to, when his students came into his room -- he was a former professor of philosophy of religion at the University of Chicago. He used to pose the following dilemma to his class when they first came in his class. “Is there anyone in the class so foolish as to believe the literal truth of the whole Bible?” And if a timid soul would raise his or her hand, he would then say, “When our Lord told his followers go and tell that fox, Herod, do you believe that Herod was a four-footed furry animal? Obviously not.” And then he would say, “And therefore, you do not believe the literal truth of the New Testament.

Now let me ask you a question from the Old Testament. The Psalmist declares that “the hills clapped their hands for joy.” Do you believe that the Judean hills banged themselves together out of sheer joy? Of course not. And so, I see you do not believe in the literal truth of the Old Testament, either.” And thus, Dr. Weinman polished off faith in the truth of the Bible.

Now, one of the first things that you learn as a student of Scripture is that there are figures of speech in the Bible. And, consequently, the question is not, “Does the Bible contain figures of speech? Does the Bible contain figurative language? Does the Bible

contain poetic sections? Does the Bible contain apocalyptic?” The question really is, “What is to be our rule of interpretation?” Shall we accept the normal interpretation of words. And if this interpretation does not make sense, look for figures of speech, look for allegory, look for apocalyptic, look for poetry? Or shall we reverse that and make the other our rule and, occasionally, see something literally? That, really is, it seems to me, ultimately the question. And most of you know the answer to it. Well, this was the view of the liberal.

Second, now this I say because it was identified with a view of man that was ultimately shattered by World War I and World War II -- now, this approach of simply ridiculing the statements of Scripture has largely passed out of existence, except in some rare university or college where someone really has not been studying much what has happened. In its place is a Neo-orthodox view of Scripture. Now, the Neo-orthodox view of Scripture is something that you as Christians should be aware of, because in general, it is the view of thinking people within our professing Christian churches who are not strongly evangelical. Almost all ministers who have been trained in theological seminaries at the present time that are moderately conservative have a Neo-orthodox view of inspiration. And, consequently, you should be acquainted with it.

Neo-orthodox men -- they vary among themselves of course, but, generally speaking -- they believe that the Bible is the witness of fallible erring men like you and me. The authors can be at fault in any word that they write. Yet God, in spite of their fallibility, in spite of their errors, speaks through the resulting word of God. And that is why they think the Bible is an important book. At the same time that is why they do not accept its teaching verbally.

Let me read you something that Professor Barth said. He said, “The Bible is the witness of ‘fallible erring men like ourselves.’ We can establish *lacunae*, inconsistencies and overemphasis. We may be alienated by a figure like that of Moses. We may quarrel

with James or Paul.” (end that quote) Then again, he has said, “At every point it is the vulnerable word of man.” (close quote)

He says, “To the bold postulate, that if their word is to be the word of God they must be inerrant in every word. We oppose the even bolder assertion that, according to the scriptural witness about man which applies to them, too, they can be at fault in any word and have been at fault in every word and, yet, according to the same Scripture -- scriptural witness being justified and sanctified by grace alone they have still spoken the word of God in their fallible and erring human word.”

Now, you see what they’re saying? They’re saying men are sinners. Their word, therefore, must reflect that fact. Consequently, their word is an erring sinful word.

But God has deigned in spite of their erring fallibility to speak through the Bible. And, Professor Barth used to say, “He speaks only through the Bible.” And so he speaks through this erring book. That is why, for him, the Bible is final authority. But at the same time, it’s not final authority because it is the only word through which God speaks, but it is fallible, erring word.

Now, I know what you want to ask. It’s a natural question. How can you tell what is infallible and what is fallible? That is a question Professor Barth was never able to answer. He knows the answer now. But he was not able to answer it then. [Laughter] And when he visited this country a few years ago, four or five years ago, in Chicago -- I sat in on his lectures in Basel, and I must confess, I think he was a genuine Christian. In fact, he was one of the better lecturers that I heard while in Europe. I heard quite a few of them. But at the same time, his view of Scripture was not Scriptural. But when he came to this country, four or five years ago, in Chicago, he in a group of -- a company of theological men was asked this precise question which I just posed for you, which is the question that you would ask, I’m sure. And he was unable to answer that except to say something very much like Millar Burrows did, that which commends itself to our best judgment, we accept as the word of God and that which does not, we cannot accept.

Now, capital C, evangelical views. By evangelical, I mean those who profess to believe in Jesus Christ as their Savior and are, according to our definition of what a Christian is, are Christians without question. Evangelicalism is divided into two camps.

There are those who believe that the Bible is fully inspired and inerrant, in the autographer. Now, when I say autographer -- Let me put this [pause as Johnson writes on overhead] -- that is a technical word. It is made up of two Greek roots: one, *grapho*, which means to write; *autos*, which is an intensive pronoun which means essentially the very thing or -- if I were to put it with a noun -- pronoun like he, it would be he himself, *aut, autos*. So when we say Autographer, we mean the very writings or the writings themselves; that is, the manuscript that the writers of Scripture penned, not a copy, but the writings themselves. In other words, the very piece of papyrus upon which John wrote the Gospel of John.

So when we talk about inspiration, we are talking about the inspiration of the autographer, the very things they wrote, not copies. The minute scribes began to copy the manuscripts of the New Testament and the Old Testament, errors began to appear. Because the doctrine of inspiration does not have to do with the copying of Scripture, it has to do with the writing of the original documents themselves.

Now, evangelicals are divided into two camps: one group, those who believe that the Bible is fully inspired and inerrant in the autographer. They do not believe that the Authorized Version is inerrant. There are errors in the King James Version. There are errors that are caused by mistranslation. Occasionally there are errors that are produced because they did not translate what we now know to be the best manuscripts of the New Testament, largely because they were unavailable to them. So that, we do not believe in the inspiration -- these evangelicals do not believe in the inspiration of the King James Version. They may have varying opinions about its reliability. But they do believe that the autographer were inspired, the original writings, and in them there was no error.

To use one definition of inspiration which has been given by a well-known scholar, the Bible, in its entirety, is God’s written word to man, free of error in its original autographs, wholly reliable in history and doctrine. Its divine inspiration has rendered the book infallible; that is, incapable of teaching deception. Infallible. Inerrant, not liable to prove false or mistaken. Its inspiration is *plenary*, P-L-E-N-A-R-Y. You all remember your Latin, don’t you? *Plenary*, full, full inspiration. It is *plenary*, it extends to all parts of life. In other words, Revelation is just as inspired as Genesis. Job is just as inspired as Romans.

Plenary, verbal. Now that does not mean that it extends to the verbs. But again, you remember your Latin. *Verbum* means word, so it extends to the words. It is full, all parts alike. Verbal, it extends to the words themselves. And it is confluent. You know, if you were a good Latin student, you wouldn’t have any trouble with theology, would you?

Confluent means to flow together. And so, consequently, it is -- the inspired word is the product of two free agents, human and divine. Who, out of their common activity, produce the word of God, which flows out of these two sources as one. So the biblical inspiration produces an infallible book, an inerrant book. Its inspiration is *plenary*. It is verbal. It is confluent. That author continues, “Inspiration involves infallibility as an essential property and infallibility, in turn, implies inerrancy.”

Now, that is the doctrine of inspiration which most of you have been exposed to in Believers Chapel. Now, this is the kind of teaching that is common in evangelical circles. It is the kind of inspiration of the word of God that Billy Graham, for example, accepts. It is the kind of teaching that Dallas Theological Seminary accepts. It is this kind of teaching that, not only do many of the seminaries like Dallas, but some of particularly the smaller denominational seminaries accept also, like Grace Theological Seminary in Winona Lake, and so on. Now, that is one group within Evangelicalism.

Now, the second group is a group that believes that the Bible is fully inspired and authoritative, but they have grave questions about its inerrancy. Now, this is the question that is at issue among evangelicals today: Is the Bible inerrant?

We can accept its infallibility. But we cannot accept or we have difficulty with its inerrancy. Well, how can that be? Now, you might think that if the Bible is infallible, well surely that means that there are no errors in it. Well, you see, that’s why you are so often duped by religious men. [Laughter] Because, you have not studied your theology and so you don’t know what they mean. And so they can tell you in words what seems to be something that you can accept, but they mean something a little different from what you may ordinarily think it to mean.

The average man -- I think if I were to ask him “Do you believe in the infallibility of the Scriptures?” He would say, “Yes.” And I would say, “What do you think that means? Do you believe then that the Bible has an error?” “No, it’s infallible.”

But, unfortunately, infallible has become a kind of technical word; a kind of a code word among men like this. And what it means is that the Bible is inerrant in matters of faith and morals; not necessarily in facts of history. And so, consequently, what the Bible teaches about faith, what the Bible teaches about morals, well, in those matters, the Bible is infallible, inerrant, but in other matters, it may be in error.

For example, it they say that Jesus did such and such a thing at such and such a time, but actually Jesus may have done it at some other time, but the Bible can still be infallible though not inerrant.

For example, specifically, in the temptation account there are, as you remember, three temptations. Now, if you’ve read your Bible carefully, you will notice that in Matthew the account is temptation number one, temptation number two, temptation number three. But in Luke, when he records them: temptation number one, same as Matthew; temptation number two, well, it’s really Matthew’s third; temptation number three is Matthew’s second.

Now, who was wrong? How would you answer that? Does not that prove that the Bible is not inerrant? Somebody has to be wrong. How would you handle that? You believe in the inspiration of the Scriptures, don’t you? And you believe the Bible doesn’t contain an error? See me afterwards.

That’d be a good exercise for you if we were really having a series on inspiration. That would be one of the things I would like to ask you to do, answer that question, and tell me how you can still believe in the inerrancy of the Bible and at the same time acknowledge that accounts of events in the New Testament are given in different orders.

Occasionally you will find men who are Christian men who will say, “The reason I don’t believe in inerrancy is because the Bible never teaches inerrancy. It never says anywhere the Bible is inerrant.” How would you answer that?

Now, perhaps some of you may think, Well, it doesn’t seem to make a whole lot of difference. Because, after all, if the Bible is infallible in what it teaches with reference to faith and morals, then what it may say about other things is really somewhat inconsequential. But remember our question that we asked Barth? How can you tell when something that is apparently inconsequential only an historical fact may not also be the cornerstone of some tremendous spiritual doctrine? For example, was the tomb really empty or not? Was the stone really rolled away or not?

Well, now you can see if the stone was not rolled away, that has great moral and spiritual implications. At least, it would have to me. So you see, a little matter of a historical fact can be the foundation for an important truth.

Further, the biblical principle which you find everywhere is that once you begin to allow a little bit of error in among and in the midst of the truth, it’s not long before the truth or those who hold the truth are corrupted by the error. And the truth is no longer truth.

There is an old Latin proverb: *Corruptio optimi pessima*, the corruption of the best is the worst form of corruption. Now, the Texas explanation of that is this: there is

nothing as good as a ripe strawberry; there is nothing as bad as a rotten one. So the corruption of the best is the worst form of corruption. Now, let’s go back to our outline here. And I want to analyze this latter view, because this latter view is a modification of evangelical views.

Now, let me give you a little bit of history for a minute. The theologian who most effectively set forth the doctrine of inspiration which Dallas Theological Seminary, that branch of evangelicalism has held, was Professor B. B. Warfield of Princeton Theological Seminary. In the 20th Century, Professor Warfield was recognized as probably the greatest defender of the inspiration of the Scriptures. Every Christian ought to read some of Professor Warfield’s articles because they were magnificent expressions of evangelical views concerning revelation and inspiration. And let me assure you, if you do not know anything about him, your Christian life is deficient in some measure.

Now, this view was Warfield’s view. It was his exposition of what was the view of Calvin, of that which was the view, in my opinion, of Luther, which was the view of the great evangelicals of the past. Now, this view that the Bible is infallible in faith and morals but not inerrant, I’m calling Neo-Warfieldian because there are certain things about it that are true to Warfield but other things that are not.

Why must we consider the rejection of the term “inerrancy”? What arguments might you adduce to show that we should not accept the doctrine of inerrancy?

Well, here are some that have been adduced. It has been said that we have a problem in the phenomena of Scripture. Have I got that far? Yes. By phenomena, we mean the facts of history, the facts of science, the facts of morals that are found in the Bible. The phenomena of Scripture are those little details. And it is said, by those who hold this particular view, that when you look at the facts as they are in Scripture without deciding ahead of time that the Bible is perfect, you will come to the view that the Bible is not inerrant.

In other words, if you approach the Bible inductively, taking a look at what you actually find in it rather than someone reasoning from a text or Scripture saying, all Scripture is given by inspiration of God and saying therefore it is inerrant. If you will come to the facts as you see them, you will believe that there must be some errors in the Scripture. In other words, an inductive approach to the word of God demands it.

Now, do you remember what induction is? Induction is a method by which we approach data. We observe the data, we correlate our observation, and we express our observation in the form of a principle. So we let the facts speak to us, and then we formulate what we see as a result of the facts speaking to us.

Do you remember the principle of deduction? You begin with a known principle. And out of that known principle, you reason that certain implications flow from it. And, on the basis of this, you come to certain conclusions. In other words, you reason from the general to the specific; from this known truth to some new truth; from a certain premises to a certain conclusion.

Well, it should be obvious, so we are told, that induction is much the better method. Now, we should let the facts speak to us rather than beginning with some principle and reasoning from that, so they say. The phenomena of Scripture will cause us to hold that the Bible is errant, not inerrant.

Second, the problem of science and Scripture. How can we explain the facts of science? The Bible has an antiquated worldview. Just to give one illustration, the Bible teaches that the universe is a three-storied universe. There is heaven above. That’s the third story. There is this story in which we are living. And then there is the story that is below us. Now, it should be obvious to us if we know anything about science that such a thing does not exist. Science has taught us that the universe is not constructed as a three-story universe. But the Bible teaches that. Consequently, what shall we say about the Bible teachings?

And third, the problem of scriptural teaching and scriptural mention -- or as I put it up here, teaching and touching? In other words, we can believe the Bible when it teaches specifically certain truths. But so far as the details are concerned, so far as the incidentals are concerned, so far as the things that upon which the Bible only touches in passing, we do not have to believe that. So we believe what the Bible teaches, but what it may touch, we do not necessarily believe.

Now, third, let me criticize this Neo-Warfieldian doubt. We really ought to have two, three times on this, but if I had two, three times on it, I’m sure my audience would shrink. [Laughter] So I want you to become a thinker in this area as a result of what we have talked about tonight, if nothing else. So if I’ve given you a few problems to wrestle with, then when you meet someone who believes these things and has been taught only them, you won’t be so surprised.

Capital A -- I didn’t have time to put it on this machine here -- the true relation of induction and deduction. Well, let’s ask ourselves the question: Can we really understand truth on the basis of induction? Well, let’s just suppose for a moment as we look at data, that we have incomplete data. Suppose when we make our induction we do not consider every aspect of truth? Induction has its possibilities of error, too. Suppose we make a wrong selection of the data -- which is certainly possible. As a matter of fact, it is often probable. And suppose that we reasoned improperly from the data that we have seen and properly selected. Well, induction is no more certain to cause us to arrive at truth than deduction. So induction has its limitations as well as deduction. We may start with a wrong premise in induction, that’s true, and, consequently, our conclusions may not be true.

But at the same time, induction is no guarantee that we shall reach the truth either. As a matter of fact, if we were to properly induct, I guess, philosophically we’d have to know everything in the world.

Let’s take an illustration of the facts about God. Suppose we oppose what we know about God from what he has done with what we know about God from the statements of Scripture itself. And suppose we were to say, we should not accept the statements about God so much as we should pay attention to what he has done. Both of these, of course, are contained in Scripture.

Now, let me ask you a few questions now. Was the cross an expression of love? Wait a minute. Wait a minute. Was the cross an expression of love? You don’t have any biblical word. Now, you just have that fact. Was the cross an expression of love? Or was it an expression in judgment?

Well, now, if you are a good Bible student, you know it was both. You know it was an expression of love, for Christ died for sinners. You know it was an expression of judgment because their sin was judged. Or was the Cross a miscarriage of judgment? Now, you see, we cannot really know the meaning of facts and events if we have simply an account of the facts or of the event.

What do we need in addition to the event itself? What do we need? What do we need? Huh? Well, we have the fact of the cross. To understand it, what else do we need? Interpretation. Interpretation. We must have interpretation. So it’s not enough to have events. It’s not enough to have facts. It’s not enough to have data. We must have interpretation of those facts.

Let me give you another illustration, along the same lines. Let’s just suppose that there are four people standing around the cross. Some of you have heard me before -- remember, I’ve used this illustration before. Let’s suppose there are four people standing around the cross when Jesus Christ died: three of them are unbelievers and one is a Christian. And one of them is a Jew; one is a Roman; and one is a poor, weeping woman. And as they stand around the cross, you and I go up. We have the cross, the fact. There they are, all looking at the fact. And so I approach the Roman Centurion and

say -- not the one who ultimately came to faith in our Lord, but just say he’s an unbeliever.

And I say, What happened here today? What’s happened? He’d say, well, a Jewish insurrectionist is being put to death.

So I turn to the Pharisee, the Jewish man who is standing by and I say, what is happening here? A blasphemer is being put to death.

And so I turn to the woman, and she is an unbeliever, too. And I say, what in the world is happening here today? And she says, a poor, gentle, simple, good soul is being crucified by the Romans and the Jews.

And I turn to the Christian, enlightened by the Spirit, and I say, what is happening here? And he says, the Son of God is dying for my sins.

You see, you need more than the fact. You need the interpretation of the fact.

That is why the biblical doctrine is propositional. It does come to us in propositions. It comes to us in truth. Events are not enough. We need the explanation of the events.

So if the Egyptians are in Egypt and the Children of Israel are coming out, and I ask, what is happening? I need interpretation to understand. To the Jews, God is working his mighty work in their behalf. But what is he doing to the Egyptians?

So when we come to induction and deduction, it is not enough to simply look at data. We must have interpretation. We must have statements.

Now, what I’m getting at is this: When it comes to the inspiration of the Scripture, it is not enough for us to look at how the New Testament writers viewed Scripture. Or what may be said in Scripture only. But, if the Bible says, all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, it is necessary for us to interpret that statement. To use that statement to interpret those data and to guard it and to guide us as we reflect upon what we see in the word of God.

The correct approach to the inspiration of the Scripture is to combine the two. We say, what does the Bible say about inspiration? Well, the Bible says a lot of things. It says, all Scripture is inspired of God. It says, Holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, by God himself. Jesus said, the Scripture cannot be broken.

Now, we would be wrong if we were to base our doctrine of Scripture only on those statements. If there were facts about how the apostles used the Old Testament that might modify that, but we must use those statements and then we must look at the facts. And if there are contradictions in the word of God, if there are things that cannot be reconciled, if there are obvious historical errors which can be proven, then we would have to modify our meaning of those statements which say that the Scripture cannot be broken. We would have to say that must mean something different from what I have said.

Professor Warfield said there was an immense presumption against alleged facts contradictory of the Bible doctrine. He put it this way: he said, “In that case, any objections brought against the doctrine from other spheres of inquiry are inoperative. It being a simple, logical principle that so long as the proper evidence, by which a proposition is established, remains un-refuted, all so-called objections brought against it pass out of the category of objections to it’s truth in that the category of difficulties can be adjusted to it.”

Now, what’s the true relation of science and Scripture? Well, here, evangelicals have to be humble. Does the Bible agree with science? Well, my first question I would ask is: What science? Science of 1890? Science of 1900? Science of 1925? Science of 1950? Science of 1972?

Well, I have a good, scientific friend who said he wouldn’t -- he’d be very questionable -- he wouldn’t have a great deal of trust in the Bible if it did agree with science today because, he, having been a scientist for thirty years, knows that science today is not what it’s going to be five years from now.

So evangelicals must be humble in the light of scientific data, which seems established. We must look at the Bible and say, well; perhaps I have interpreted the Bible wrong. You know, that’s possible.

On the other hand, scientists must be humble, too. It seems to me that in the light of the mutation of science and in the light of fallibility of human interpretation of the Bible, we look with a great deal of interest at what science says. And we listen to it. Pay careful attention to it. And at the same time, we also look at our own interpretations and we say, well, maybe I was wrong in that interpretation. As far as I can tell, there is no real struggle between science and Scripture that prevents a Christian from believing the word of God.

And, finally, we must remember the true relations between what the Bible teaches and what it touches. Not everything in the Bible is truth, you know. You don’t believe that, do you?

Well, it has been said that Satan has spoken 99 times, and every time it was a lie. I never have counted his statements in Scripture, but we must learn to distinguish in the Bible certain things. For example, we must learn to distinguish the things that are directly taught by the word of God. They are true, infallible, inerrant. We must learn to distinguish the things that are directly taught as a minor intention. We must learn to distinguish the things that are intended as true yet the assertion is independent of the primary ideas and insignificant thing. We must learn to distinguish the things that are alluded to without intention of true or false teaching regarding them. There are things in the Bible that are simply alluded to. The Bible does not guarantee the truthfulness or the error of some incidental things. We must learn to distinguish the things believed by the author and referred to but not necessarily as his own teaching. In other words, we must be careful to read the Bible in its context.

I have a little diagram. One of my new Orthodox friends, Professor Brunner of the University of Zurich, who also now knows the truth a great deal better in connection

with inspiration [laughter], did say once, that we must construct our doctrine of inspiration by the incarnation of Jesus Christ. I agree. We must.

Now, let’s take a look at what I put on the board. Here we have a biological mystery on the left. The process, divine. The Holy Spirit coming upon the Virgin Mary, (sinful Mary,) close parenthesis after Mary. The working -- the product of the working of the Holy Spirit upon this sinful woman was the theantropic person, the God man, theantropic, the theantropic person, Jesus Christ, who is impeccable. What does impeccable mean? Huh? What? Spotless? More than that. Cannot -- not cannot be tempted, not unttemptable. Cannot what? Cannot sin. Right. Not without sin, only cannot sin. That’s more. Impeccable.

Now, we have a divine person who works upon a sinful woman and the product of this work of the Holy Spirit is the theantropic person, Jesus Christ, who cannot sin, the impeccable Son of God.

Now, notice the parallel with Scripture. We have the divine Holy Spirit who works upon sinful authors of Scripture, Isaiah, “Woe is me, for I am undone.” Paul, “All have sinned and come short of the glory of God.” Peter, “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.” Sinful writers, the product being a theantropic book, the product of God and man, the Bible, which is as Christ is impeccable, it is inerrant, without error.

Is that possible? Well, Professor Barth said, “If men are sinful, the Bible must contain evidence of it.” If Jesus Christ, is the son of sinful Mary, by the same reasoning, what must we say about Jesus Christ? He must have sin? But we know the Bible says he was “sinless.” So it is possible for the Holy Spirit to so work upon a sinful, human being that the product is a divine, impeccable person. And the same thing is true of the word of God.

By the way, what is Jesus Christ called? What is he called? The word of God... The living word of God. What is the Bible called? What is the written word of God called? The word of God.

It seems to me the parallel is quite obvious. So I accept myself an inerrant Bible. I do not dodge the difficulties -- at least, I hope I do not. I still wrestle a little with what science has said, every now and then.

I’m not expecting that there is going to be anyone found on Mars alive. But I would not say that the Bible does not teach that that is possible. It doesn’t, as far as I can tell, say anything about something like that.

So in matters like this we must not speak when the Bible has not spoken. We must not speak -- yes. That’s right -- when the Bible has not spoken. We must test our utterances about what the Bible teaches. Listen to what others say, but at the same time listen to what the word of God says.

Well, our time is up. I wanted to close with a quotation. This is the testimony of the Old Testament. “The sum of Thy word is truth.” Psalm 119, verse 160. The New Testament, John 10:35, “The Scripture cannot be broken;”

The doctrine of inerrancy is an implicate of the divine origin of Scripture. If Scripture is really the product of God working through men, we should expect it to be perfect, complete, inerrant.

Let’s bow in prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful to Thee for the teaching of Holy Scripture. Enable us, Lord, to be subject to the word and enable us to develop in the truth so that we can defend the truth to the glory of God.

For Jesus’ sake. Amen.