

## Observations on a Controversy

The publication in mid-2005 of *Inspiration and Incarnation* by Dr. Enns left me in a difficult position. The second paragraph of its Preface (p. 9), fairly read, leaves the impression that, though not necessarily fully endorsing its content, Westminster Seminary as an institution and his colleagues are supportive of the book's publication. For me, for one, that was not the case. My initial reading soon after it appeared left me with substantial reservations about much of its content as well as its rhetorical strategy, and also with considerable misgivings about its publication. Subsequent re-reading and discussions have not alleviated but reinforced these concerns.

An aspect of my difficulty stemmed from the fact that the book soon became the object of discussion in many quarters as well as of a number of published and online reviews. The most substantial of these make searching and serious criticisms, criticisms that in large part I share. At the same time, however, I have not been in a position to express my problems with the book openly, because of a commitment, as a colleague of Dr. Enns, to confine myself to a process of closed discussion within the faculty and board. This process was one that I not only felt bound by but also wanted to support, with the hope that the outcome might be a satisfactory resolution of the division in our midst concerning his views and their compatibility with Scripture and the Westminster Standards, especially, in the case of the latter, chapter 1 (on Scripture) of the Confession of Faith. Regrettably, these internal discussions did not result in a viable resolution.

At a special meeting on March 26 of this year the seminary's board decided to make public its action at that meeting and also to make certain key documents available to our students in hard copy and to others on the seminary's website (the HTFC précis of its Response to I&I as well as the HFC précis of its Reply, initially omitted inadvertently, are now also available on the website). With that decision the situation is now changed and I am free to express myself publicly.

A couple of things should be kept in mind in reading this document. First, it does not provide a full or self-contained discussion of all my concerns. Rather, along with a couple of new items, it is a composite of various items previously sent to the faculty and/or the board during the course of discussions over the past two years, made available here with some editing. Also, like the "official" documents now made public, they originated in the context of discussions not accessible to the reader. Despite the definite disadvantage this entails, I nonetheless offer them here with the hope that, read along with other materials now available, they will provide a somewhat fuller perception of the issues raised by this controversy, about which, in my view, there is considerable confusion and misconception abroad, within the seminary community as well as beyond.

A particular concern I have in this document is to make clear, especially to students, past and present, whom I can now address openly, major concerns I have with I&I and why I, for one, believe it necessary for me to have voted against the "Edgar-Kelly" motion, adopted by the faculty in support of the views of Dr. Enns.

"I have not shirked the difficult questions." These words under the portrait of original faculty OT professor, Robert Dick Wilson, which hangs in Machen Hall in what was at one time the faculty dining room, have marked the institutional outlook of WTS from its beginning. They ought to be a watchword for everyone and every institution that takes studying the Bible seriously. At the same, however, it should be clear that the right way of addressing such questions is crucial. Solutions wrongly arrived at only compound the problems. No one I'm aware of is faulting I&I for raising problems and seeking their solutions (though it may be asked at a number of points whether matters he raises are really problems). The major difficulty with I&I is its proposed resolutions of problems.

This document is strongly critical of certain views of Dr. Enns, as deviating in important respects from Scripture and the Westminster Standards, Chapter 1 of the Confession in particular. I am keenly aware of the responsibility making such criticisms places on me, above all before the Lord.

Over the years I have received enough of what I consider unfair and misplaced criticism of my own views to be doubly concerned to avoid that in dealing with the views of others. After many hours of reflection and discussion, formal and informal, over the past several years, the analysis and criticisms expressed in this document are, for the most part, fairly firm. But where I may need to be corrected, I hope for grace to be given me to recognize and acknowledge that.

This is a sad time for Westminster. In the confusion that has descended upon us, with many I regret the stresses that have resulted, particularly for Dr. Enns and his family and for others as well. With many I'm deeply burdened about the magnitude of the differences that have emerged among us, faculty and board, and our inability to resolve them. Whatever one's outlook on the issues involved in this controversy, I hope that many will also join me in beseeching our God that he will be pleased to preserve Westminster, consistent with his blessings on it in the past, for a future of usefulness to the church.

I consider this a public document that others are free to circulate at their discretion.

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#1

In January 2008 Dr. Enns sent his "Reflections on *Inspiration and Incarnation*" to the board and voting faculty. Currently he has begun posting portions of this document on his website and in doing so notes also that it "appears to have been fairly widely circulated (which, as I state on page one of that report, is perfectly fine by me)." He also notes that he is aware of "at least one website" where the document appears in full. In view of this sort of circulation, I include the following comments here.

Toward the close of his "Reflections" is a discussion of Academic Freedom and Obligation, including confessional subscription (a discussion with which I have substantial disagreements not addressed here). He concludes that discussion with the following quotation from something I wrote in 1981, by which, he believes, his "thoughts are well summarized" (pp. 36-37):

... whether in our midst Scripture will still have the last word, whether the whole counsel of God will be something more than what we imagine we already have under our control and have already mastered with our theological structures and doctrinal formulations. Will we, too, as the church must in every time and place, continue to return there to be reconfirmed and, when necessary, corrected in our faith, and, above all, to discover there the inexhaustible and "unsearchable riches of Christ" (Ephesians 3:8)?

He then adds the final comment, "I read these words, which pierce my heart, and I wonder 'what has happened to Westminster?'"

Since he has brought me into his "Reflections" in this fashion, some response on my part is appropriate, even mandatory, especially so because my deep concerns about views taken in I&I are well known within the faculty and board, and the fact is now public that within the faculty I am among those who are unable to join in approving I&I. The suggestion left by the quotation and final comment above, then, is that the Gaffin of 1981 and today are not the same and that, lamentably, that change has not been for the better.

I will be as brief and pointed as I can. As Dr. Enns himself notes, the quotation above was made in a particular context ("the Shepherd controversy," p. 36). That contextual factor is all-important.

What I wrote was in defense of contested views in a context where **both sides within the WTS community (board and faculty) shared a largely common understanding of the nature of their commitment to the subordinate authority of the Westminster standards and, more importantly, a commonly understood commitment to the inspiration and authority of Scripture as the written word of God.** Those commitments were never at issue, no matter how strongly held were the conflicting views about the particular teaching of Scripture and the Standards in dispute (primarily the nature of justifying faith). In the present context, however, the differences among us are, I judge, of another and more fundamental order. The foundational commitments held in common in 1981 are precisely what are now at issue and being threatened. In having to say that, I hope that I have made every responsible effort to convince myself otherwise.

As to a perceived change in me, for whatever it's worth, as far as I can know myself, if the context and issues as they were in 1981 were today's, I would write now what I wrote then. And if the issues in 1981 had been what they are today, I would have been of the same mind then as I am now.

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#2

#### WTS and Biblical Theology

A perception present among faculty supporters of I&I and others (for instance, many on the SOS website) is that opposition within the faculty to it and its major emphases is driven by an unduly restrictive and exegetically uninformed and disinterested confessionalism that signals, among other things, an abandonment of interest in biblical theology and the tradition of redemptive-historical interpretation that have been an important and distinctive part of the training provided by WTS over the years.

I disagree with this assessment. In fact, as someone who over the years in my teaching and writing has had no greater interest than biblical theology and its fructifying potential for systematic theology, I dispute it as vigorously as I can. The right of biblical theology as such is not at issue in the controversy over I&I. Not only does no one on the faculty with basic concerns about the book question that right, but we all, in differing degrees no doubt, cherish it and the continuance of biblical theology at WTS.

Rather, at stake are two contending understandings of biblical theology, the one for whom Geerhardus Vos can be said to be the father, the other a more recent and diverging conception reflected, for instance, in troublesome ways in views present in I&I. Why do I say this?

Consider the following quote from Vos, written in 1916 at the height of his career ("Hebrews, the Epistle of the Diatheke" in *Redemptive History and Biblical Interpretation*, pp. 232-33; bolding added):

In the fourth place the Reformed theology has with greater earnestness than any other type of Christian doctrine upheld the principles of the absoluteness and unchanging identity of truth. It is the most anti-pragmatic of all forms of Christian teaching. And this is all the more remarkable since **it has from the beginning shown itself possessed of a true historic sense in the apprehension of the progressive character of the deliverance of truth. Its doctrine of the covenants on its historical side represents the first attempt at constructing a history of revelation and may justly be considered the precursor of what is at present called biblical theology.** But the Reformed have always insisted upon it that at no point shall a recognition of the historical delivery and apprehension of truth be permitted to degenerate into a relativity of truth. The history remains a history of revelation. Its total product agrees absolutely in every

respect with the sum of truth as it lies in the eternal mind and purpose of God. If already the religion of the Old and New Testament church was identical, while the process of supernatural revelation was still going on, how much more must the church, since God has spoken for the last time in His Son, uphold the ideal absoluteness of her faith as guaranteed by its agreement with the Word of God that abideth forever. It is an unchristian and an unbiblical procedure to make development superior to revelation instead of revelation superior to development, to accept belief and tendencies as true because they represent the spirit of the time and in a superficial optimism may be regarded as making for progress. Christian cognition is not an evolution of truth, but a fallible apprehension of truth which must at each point be tested by an accessible absolute norm of truth. To take one's stand upon the infallibility of the Scriptures is an eminently religious act; it honors the supremacy of God in the sphere of truth in the same way as the author of Hebrews does by insisting upon it, notwithstanding all progress, that the Old and the New Testament are the same authoritative speech of God.<sup>1</sup>

In writing and lecturing over the years, I have occasionally cited what is bolded above, in the interests of affirming the continuity there is between confessional Reformed orthodoxy and the biblical theology advocated by Vos and others following him. Here, however, I want instead to direct attention to the nonbolded material, which I encourage you to go back and re-read, along with the footnote.

I am certainly not suggesting an exact correspondence between the outlook Vos was opposing and views present in I&I. But there is, I believe, an affinity, particularly on the fundamental and ever-crucial issue of the relationship between *revelation and history* and how that relationship is viewed. Vos stresses, specifically, that within Scripture the historical character of its truth, while integral, is subordinate to its revealed character. At every point revelation is superior to historical development.

In contrast, in the way I&I conceives of and utilizes the incarnational analogy, in what I&I both says as well as does not say, what Vos is so intent on affirming is at best unclear, especially for the Old Testament. In the approach of I&I, in a constitutive way as far as I can see, revelation is blurred by highlighting the "messiness" of history (e.g., 109, 110, 111, 161). With that blurring, meaningful divine authorship fades to a vanishing point by making the intention of each human author, with all the limitations of his historical situation and circumstances, determinative for the meaning of the text as it originated. With I&I's resulting lack of clarity and uncertainty, Scripture, for Vos the "accessible absolute norm of truth" ("revealing the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth") that we must have in our ever "fallible apprehension of truth," is rendered obscure and uncertain.

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<sup>1</sup> Earlier in his 1894 inaugural address at Princeton Seminary, he wrote in a similar vein ("The Idea of Biblical Theology," *Redemptive History*, p. 19):

The second point to be emphasized in our treatment of Biblical Theology is that the historical character of the truth is not in any way antithetical to, but throughout subordinated to, its revealed character. Scriptural truth is not absolute, notwithstanding its historic setting; but the historic setting has been employed by God for the very purpose of revealing the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. It is not the duty of Biblical Theology to seek first the historic features of the Scriptural ideas, and to think that the absolute character of the truth as revealed of God is something secondary to be added thereunto. The reality of revelation should be the supreme factor by which the historic factor is kept under control. With the greatest variety of historical aspects, there can, nevertheless, be no inconsistencies or contradictions in the Word of God. The student of Biblical Theology is not to hunt for little systems in the Bible that shall be mutually exclusive, or to boast of his skill in detecting such as a mark of high scholarship.

Further, as Vos notes, “the religion of the Old and New Testament church [is] identical”; the way of salvation for both old and new covenants is the same. It is difficult to see how this truth, the unity of biblical religion – a central tenet of the Reformed faith (e.g., WCF, 7:5-6; 8:6; 11:6; WLC, 33-35) – is not being obscured, even compromised, by views in I&I and elsewhere (the article on “Faith” in the *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Historical Books*, commented on below).

On his website, Dr. Enns has posted some comments on biblical theology (“What is Biblical Theology and Why Do I Like It So Much?” December 23, 2007). There (par. 10) he defines biblical theology as “an attempt to offer a coherent picture of Scripture, respecting the historical particularities of any portion while also understanding that portion as a part of a grand story whose conclusion is known to us.” As the “brief definition” he intends, this is helpful. But, then, as he spells out what this definition has in view, problems enter, particularly for how the Old Testament is viewed, problems akin to those already noted by many in I&I. For instance (par. 7 & 8), involved is “holding in tension two dimensions of the Bible’s own theological dynamic: (1) The theological contours of the OT, which is itself fluctuating, diverse, developing, and (2) observing how the NT writers ‘take captive’ the OT and bring it to bear on the reality of the crucified and risen Christ.” Needed as well, we are told, is “an adequate understanding of how the NT seizes the OT ... enriched by understanding the hermeneutical world of the Second Temple period in which the NT writers wrote.”

Briefly, in response, in fact the NT does not “seize” the OT. If anything, if we choose to use such language, it is rather the NT writers who are “seized” by the OT; the OT, in its own all-encompassing and basically clear witness to Christ, “seizes” them. And it is hardly apt to speak of mastering perceived theological fluctuations (contradictions?) within the OT by “taking captive” the OT for Christ.

We are bound to judge otherwise in the light, for example, of what is said to be true about the pervasive Christ-centeredness of the OT *in itself*, in passages like Luke 24:44-45, John 5:39-47 and 1 Peter 1:10-11 – passages, unless I’ve missed something, about which Dr. Enns is silent in discussing the NT use of the OT in I&I and elsewhere, except for a brief treatment of Luke 24 in I&I as providing “a hermeneutical foundation for how the Old Testament is *now* to be understood by Christians” (119, italics added; cf. 129, 134).

In this regard, I accent here a point raised again below (in #5 on the NT use of the OT). In John 5:46-47 Jesus says to Jews who were rejecting him, “If you believed Moses, you would believe me; for he wrote of me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe my words?” It seems reasonably clear that here Jesus affirms a relative overall clarity and independence of Moses (the OT), as a witness to himself, distinct from his own teaching (and so from the NT as well). So much is that the case (v. 45) that, in the just condemnation of those rejecting him, this OT witness to Christ serves as an adequate basis *in itself and apart from his own self-witness*. One does not get that impression of the OT from reading I&I.

I know that Dr. Enns sincerely believes that his work in biblical theology is on a trajectory that I, for one, as a former teacher, have helped to set. But, although I hope I have made responsible and peace-seeking efforts to be persuaded that I’m wrong, I’m left with the conclusion that we are not on the same trajectory in important ways. As I have tried to indicate here briefly, the biblical theology he advocates and that is reflected in I&I and elsewhere diverges from the Reformed and confessionally compatible biblical theology inaugurated by Vos. It does so in a way that blurs the fundamental difference there is between that biblical theology, founded, as it is, on a clear and biblically sound understanding of the Bible’s inspiration and final authority, on the one hand, and the historical-critical understanding of biblical theology, with its contrary presuppositions involving rational autonomy, on the other (one evidence of this methodological blurring is the perception, expressed repeatedly, that on the issues it raises I&I “move[s] beyond” (15) and “transcends” (171) the divide (“impasse,” 48) between liberal-modernist and evangelical-conservative-fundamentalist approaches, e.g., 14-15, 21, 41, 47, 49; see further the comments that follow in #3).

Dr. Enns captions his website, “a time to tear down | A Time to Build Up.” That is how he sees himself in his work. In the matter of biblical theology, for one, I fear that the effect (though not the intention) of that work is to tear down what WTS has stood for and to build up something that is proving to be alien.

So, as I contemplate all that has transpired and been brought to light by I&I and in the aftermath of its publication, including numerous colleagues who, with virtually no substantial reservations, have affirmed it, then, as he has asked toward the close of his “Reflections” (see above), I, for my part, am left wondering, with distress, “what has happened to Westminster?”

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### #3

Some of the blog commenting subsequent to the WTS board’s release of documents is quite confident that the HFC Reply thoroughly refutes the HTFC Response to I&I and shows that there are no credible objections to the orthodoxy of Dr. Enns and I&I. Especially those animated with such confidence may want to consider the following – beyond the telling substantive critiques of I&I by those outside the seminary and in addition to the fact that the HTFC Response was never intended as a full critique to I&I; it was an initial statement of some basic concerns produced and submitted under the deadline pressure of about a month (in contrast to the HFC Reply which eventually appeared about a year later).

First, the HFC Reply (approximately triple the length of the HTFC Response) spends considerable space arguing matters that are not at issue with the HTFC as if they were (for instance, I surely do not disagree where the Reply cites me with approval). More importantly, the précis of the HTFC Response (also included among the documents available on the seminary’s website) should not be overlooked, in expressing as it does the heart of the Response’s concerns.

Concerning the intended audience of I&I, the précis states (p. 5):

It should be apparent that it is just such troubled readers, in keeping with Proverbs 3:5-6, who are most in need of the clear affirmation indicated above [of the divine authorship and consequent divine authority of Scripture]. Such an affirmation assures us of at least three things *in advance* of whatever problems we encounter in the Bible. Because “God (who is truth itself) [is] the author thereof” (WCF, 1:4): 1) the Bible is reliable and, appropriate to the genre involved, will not mislead us in what it reports as having transpired; 2) the Bible does not contradict itself, and what it teaches as a whole, in all its parts, is unified and harmonious in a doctrinal or didactic sense; 3) problems that may remain insoluble for us are not ultimately unsolvable; they have their resolution with God.

This three-fold assurance is essential for dealing constructively with the problems there undoubtedly are for us in Scripture. It is especially essential to provide that assurance for those whose faith in Scripture is being shaken by these problems.

The HFC response to this passage, expressed to the board and faculty, was, in substance, that while the three points of assurance, which the HTFC précis considers requisite but finds lacking in I&I, may be suitable for demonstrating one’s own orthodoxy, they are not helpful for reassuring the many Christians who are wrestling with difficulties in the Bible.

That sort of reaction prompts the questions like the following:

- 1) What role, if any, beyond serving as a badge of theological orthodoxy, ought these

three points to have in one's study and interpretation of the Bible?

- 2) What role, if any, ought these points to have in teaching and writing, especially on matters of hermeneutics and biblical interpretation?
- 3) Why is it that even a minimal affirmation and explanation of these points with their implications for understanding the Bible and addressing the problems we find there are deemed out of place or even unhelpful for the intended audience of I&I?

A biblical-theological approach claiming to be developing in the tradition of Vos will have ready and clear affirmative answers to these questions. The HFC Reply, despite its considerable length, does not provide such answers.

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A frequent claim of its supporters is I&I's continuity with Westminster's past. The following two items test that claim by comparison with the work of John Murray, as much as anyone a benchmark of that past.

#### #4

#### Murray and I&I on Myth

The following passage is toward the close of the Preface in John Murray's *Principles of Conduct* (p. 9):

It may be objected that the standpoint reflected in this book fails to take account of the mythological character of certain parts of Scripture on which a good deal of the material in these studies is based, particularly Genesis 1-3. It is true that the argument is not conducted in terms of the mythological interpretation of Scripture. By implication such an interpretation is rejected. That Genesis 2 and 3, for example, is story, but does not represent history, the present writer does not believe. An express attempt to refute such an interpretation had not been undertaken. But if I have been successful in demonstrating the organic unity and continuity of the ethic presented in the Bible, this fact should itself constitute one of the most potent arguments against the mythological interpretation of Genesis 2 and 3, as also of other passages. This is just saying that the historical character of the revelation deposited in the Bible does not comport with a nonhistorical view of that which supplies the foundation and starting point of that history. It is surely apparent how far-reaching must be the reconstruction of the Bible's representation respecting the history of revelation if we are to reject the historicity of the fall of Adam as the first man. It is the conviction of the present writer that a mythological interpretation is not compatible with the total perspective which the biblical witness furnishes. To state the case positively, the concreteness of Genesis 2 and 3, as historically interpreted, is thoroughly consonant with the concreteness which characterizes the subsequent history of Old Testament revelation.

I&I takes up the issue of myth, primarily on pages 39-41, 49-56. In comparing these two assessments of myth in the Bible, I offer the following observations.

First, I do recognize that I&I is concerned for a "more generous" understanding of myth (40), one that is not synonymous, as has been its usual understanding in biblical studies, with "untrue," "made-up," "storybook" (40). No doubt Murray has this latter understanding in view in rejecting "the mythological interpretation."

Murray's speaking, simply and without differentiating, in the singular, of "the mythological interpretation" was responsible and defensible around 1960, when he wrote, as I believe it still is today. For the view of myth he rejects has been and continues to be common and widespread to the present within the historical-critical tradition of biblical interpretation. Emerging in late-Enlightenment scholarly study of the Bible, as a categorical rejection of its God-breathed and infallible truthfulness and historical reliability, this view also has its precursors, going back at least as far as the view flatly rejected in Scripture itself (e.g., 2 Pet 1:16).

Second, for these historical reasons, and for the sake of avoiding confusion and misunderstanding, it is incumbent on anyone wishing to maintain myth in the Bible in a more benign ("more generous") sense to delineate that sense carefully from the conventional and widely accepted sense. As far as I can see, I&I fails to do that. Twice (40, 50), myth is defined as "an ancient, premodern, prescientific, way of addressing questions of ultimate origins and meaning in the form of stories: Who are we? Where do we come from?" But this definition simply begs important, even crucial questions. How does it differ from the understanding of the dominant historical-critical conception of myth in biblical studies? How is it any less applicable to the myths elsewhere in the ancient Mesopotamian world, whose similarities with the biblical materials I&I is so concerned to stress?

Specifically, what is factual, what is the historical reference in the storied myths of Genesis that differentiates them from myths of the nations surrounding Israel? The most I can find by way of an answer in I&I is that, in distinction from the gods of other contemporary myths, Israel's God is Yahweh and that "Yahweh, the God of Israel, is worthy of worship" (55). But what is there *in fact* about who Yahweh is and what he has done that makes him worthy of worship? As far as I can see, according to I&I, the Genesis myths provide little, if any, help in answering that question.

Third, and this further compounds my difficulties, the major part of I&I's discussion of myth unfolds under the heading, "Is Genesis Myth or History?" (49; cf. 39). Recognizing, as already noted, that I&I wants to maintain myth in Genesis other than in the sense of "untrue" or "made-up," nonetheless a couple of things have to be said here. First, in terms of the question posed in this either/or heading, I&I comes down on the side of myth. That means, in some sense, it is not history and so makes it all the more incumbent – my concern expressed in the previous paragraph – that I&I do what it has not done: clearly distinguish its understanding of myth from the common, historical-critical one and also clarify in what sense Genesis, now to be taken mythically, is still historically reliable, that is, in what sense it is, in Dr. Enns' terms, still "true" and "not made up." Second, the heading question, "Is Genesis Myth or History?" has history in view in a modern, scientific sense. It apparently does not consider any other notion of trustworthy history.

Unless I'm missing something, it would have been far better, perhaps mandatory, and certainly wiser, to come down categorically, instead, on the side of history and then clarify how Genesis, in the face of its similarities with ANE creation myths, is nonetheless historical in a nonmodern, nonscientific sense. That at least is the approach that has been taken by the best in the Reformed tradition – e.g., Bavinck and Warfield, Murray and Stonehouse. Their view, all told, to cite just one, is that "the historiography of Holy Scripture has a character of its own," which, among other considerations, means, "It does not speak the exact language of science and the academy but the language of observation and daily life." It "uses the language of everyday experience, which is and remains always true.... the language of observation, which will always continue to exist alongside that of science and the academy" (Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 1: 447, 445, 446; worth reading in this regard in their entirety are pp. 445, from the paragraph beginning at the bottom of the page, through 447, the last full paragraph).

Fourth, concerning its intended audience and purpose, I cannot see how I&I is helpful. Those struggling with faith issues about the Bible who may initially think they are helped by I&I will eventually be confronted by the question of historical reference in the Genesis material. Unless they close their eyes to the issues involved, they will be bound to ask in what sense, if any, it is

reliable as narrative. Where that happens the treatment of I&I will prove to be confusing at best. I wish I did not have to draw such a conclusion, but I can't see how it can be otherwise.

Finally, Murray's observation may not be missed or evaded. "It is surely apparent how far-reaching must be the reconstruction of the Bible's representation respecting the history of revelation if we are to reject the historicity of the fall of Adam as the first man." Dr. Enns may very well wish to affirm the historicity of both Adam as the first man and his fall. But it is not clear on what grounds he does so. Clear affirmations of the historicity of Adam and his fall elsewhere in Scripture (e.g., Rom 5:12-19; 1 Cor 15:21-22, 45, 47) rest on Genesis 1-3. The integrity of the entire history of redemption, including its culmination in the death and resurrection of Christ, stands or falls with the historicity of its beginning, *as presented in Genesis 2-3*. I cannot see how the mythical approach to Genesis argued in I&I contributes to maintaining that integrity. If anything, it tends toward undermining it.

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#### #5

#### Murray and I&I on Hosea 11:1 and Matthew 2:15

A complaint, frequently voiced within the faculty and elsewhere, is that those with fundamental objections to I&I deal solely in doctrinal generalities and fail to engage the specific problem texts that I&I addresses. The following observations concern one such perceived problem.

In John Murray's *Collected Writings*, 1 is an address (pp. 23 –26), "The Unity of the Old and New Testaments." I commend reading it in its entirety. It concludes with the following two paragraphs:

The events of New Testament realization, as noted, afford validity and meaning to the Old Testament. They not only validate and explain; they are the ground and warrant for the revelatory and redemptive events of the Old Testament period. This can be seen in the first redemptive promise (Gen. 3: 15). We have a particularly striking illustration in Matt. 2: 15: 'Out of Egypt have I called my son'. In Hosea 11: 1 (cf. Numb. 24:8) this refers to the emancipation of Israel from Egypt. But in Matthew 2:15 it is applied to Christ and it is easy to allege that this is an example of unwarranted application of Old Testament passages to New Testament events particularly characteristic of Matthew. But it is Matthew, as other New Testament writers, who has the perspective of organic relationship and dependence. The deliverance of Israel from Egypt found its validation, basis, and reason in what was fulfilled in Christ. So the calling of Christ out of Egypt has the primacy as archetype, though not historical priority. In other words, the type is derived from the archetype or antitype. Hence not only the propriety but necessity of finding in Hosea 11:1 the archetype that gave warrant to the redemption of Israel from Egypt.

In this perspective, therefore, we must view both Testaments. The unity is one of organic interdependence and derivation. The Old Testament has no meaning except as it is related to the realities that give character to and create the New Testament era as the fulness of time, the consummation of the ages.

I&I discusses the Hosea passage and its use in Matthew 2 on pages 132-34 and 153, which should be studied for the comments that follow.

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These two approaches have a similar interest, namely how the OT relates to the NT and what has taken place in Christ. But one does not need to ignore or minimize that similarity, in order

also to recognize that it is undercut by a deep difference. In terms of the basic hermeneutical stance and commitments each reveals, it is difficult for me to see how these two approaches are compatible. It does not seem overstating to say that they are mutually exclusive.

The fundamental difference is apparent from the note on which each ends:

**Murray:** In this perspective, therefore, we must view both Testaments. The unity is one of organic interdependence and derivation. The Old Testament has no meaning except as it is related to the realities that give character to and create the New Testament era as the fulness of time, the consummation of the ages.

**I&I:** I should make one final observation. Matthew does not say that the events in Jesus' boyhood life fulfill *Hosea's* words. He says that they fulfill what 'the *Lord* has said through the prophet.' It is what God says that is important, and what God said is not captured by the surface meaning of the words on the page, but by looking at the grander scope of God's overall redemptive plan (134; emphasis original).

And so *Hosea's* words, which in their original historical context (the intention of the human author, *Hosea*) did not speak of Jesus of Nazareth, now do (153).

Murray is emphatic about the unequivocal "no meaning except" of the OT text and, true to the revelation-historical insight of Vos, emphatic also about the unambiguous unity, the "organic interdependence" and harmony, textual and didactic, there is between the OT and NT. For I&I, in contrast, any thought of unity, *organic* and *interdependent*, between the text of *Hosea* (what *he*, the human author, wrote, his intention) and the text of Matthew (his intention) is not only not present but denied, and with some emphasis. Contrary to Murray, given with the text of *Hosea* is ambiguity and disjunction, even contradiction it seems, between the meaning of the divine author and the human author ("what 'the *Lord* has said through the prophet,'" on the one hand – "*Hosea's* words," on the other; again, "what God says" – "the surface meaning of the words on the page"). Further, there is a corresponding disjunction, again amounting to contradiction, between *Hosea* and Matthew, that is, contradiction between what the text of *Hosea* says and what Matthew says is said through the text of *Hosea*. This hardly squares, for instance, with the equation, as it has been expressed by Warfield: "It says: 'Scripture says: 'God says'" (a chapter title in his *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible*, 299-348).

A different sort of equation is present in I&I, as foreign to Murray's approach as it is unwarranted, an equation between what *Hosea* wrote and what he, as a human author with his personal, cultural and historical limitations, intended (=, apparently, what he happened to understand of what he wrote). As a result of this confusion, as already noted in the previous paragraph, what the text of *Hosea* says does not agree with what God says later, in Matthew, through the text of *Hosea*. And what *God*, the primary author, said and intended, as distinct from *Hosea*, *when* *Hosea* wrote, is anything but clear.

The view of I&I revolves around Matthew's use of *Hosea*. But how do we know that Matthew has gotten it right or deserves preference? The answer, presumably, is from our assessment of "the grander scope of God's overall redemptive plan." But it is difficult for me to see how the "christotelic" criterion that determines this assessment of the overall redemptive scope of Scripture is not based exclusively on NT texts, to the exclusion of the OT, so that Christ is present only by being read into it from the vantage point of the NT (this is one of Bruce Waltke's criticisms of I&I; see below). This criterion functions in a way that affirms and includes certain texts (in this instance, Matthew) while excluding or negating others (in this instance, *Hosea*). The OT text ("the surface meaning of the words on the page") is played off against "the grander scope of God's overall redemptive plan"; the one is at odds with the other. Luther's reductive canon criterion, *Was Christum treibet* ("what urges/inculcates Christ"), seems present here in even less benign garb.

How are we to square this approach of I&I with that, for example, of Jesus? In John 5:46 he says, "If you believed Moses, you would believe me; for he wrote of me." From the instance of Hosea above, it would seem, according to I&I, that what Jesus really meant to say was that Moses' "words, which in their original historical context ... did not speak of Jesus of Nazareth, now do"; or that what God both said and now says through what Moses wrote "is not captured by the surface meaning of the words on the page."

But is that really what Jesus says or means to say? Further, when in the same context he says of the OT Scriptures generally, "these are they which testify about me" (v. 39), does he really mean that previously they, as a whole or at least in some parts, did not testify about him but now, in the light of his coming, they do? Again, is that what he means when he indicts those who "do not believe what he [Moses] wrote" and does so just as he specifically distinguishes that unbelief from the issue of belief in his own words (v. 47)? I very much doubt that it is. When in his final, post-resurrection teaching he affirms the necessary fulfillment of "everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms" (Luke 24:44), he hardly has in view what the OT, in part or as a whole, now means but did not previously.

The view of I&I, I can't see otherwise, is not tolerable for a proper understanding of Scripture as the written word of God, interpreted in the light of its self-witness and the good and necessary consequences of that self-witness. More importantly, it is not tolerable given who God is according to Scripture. No amount of appeal to the incarnational analogy or the humanness of the Bible, properly understood, can change that.

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Note: The footnote on the first page of Murray's address (23) indicates that its original audience, in 1970, was the Christian Union of the University of Dundee, thus presumably a gathering of students. This further invites comparison with I&I, given that it has a similar intended audience, as its author and supporters are concerned to stress.

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## #6

Dr. Enns has written the entry, "Faith," in the *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Historical Books* (IVP, 2005), 296-300. This article as a whole is extremely troublesome to me, with its baseline assertion that "there is little if anything in the Historical Books that one could turn to as examples of 'saving faith'" (296, col. 1). Rather, its overall nomistic conclusion, it seems clear enough (297-300), is that faith is the faithfulness or covenantal fidelity that marks both God and his people in their mutual relationship, so that for the latter, faith is equivalent to obedience in word and deed.

According to the article, if we view Rahab in Joshua 2, for instance, as an example of faith, "certainly this would be reading too much into a complex narrative" (296, col. 1). Aware of the two NT passages (Heb 11:31; Jam 2:25) that do just that, that is, "cite Rahab's act as an example of faith," that fact nonetheless "does not settle the issue of how the story functions in its original and historical context" (296, col. 2). Further, in general, "Appeal cannot be made to these NT texts to settle the issue of faith in the Historical Books" (296-97). Presumably, then, this generalization applies as well to the numerous other NT examples of OT faith, notably in Hebrews 11 as well as the example of Abraham in James 2 and Paul's use of Abraham (Rom 4, Gal 3) and David (Rom 4) as prime examples of justifying faith. At least it is not clear how this generalization would not apply in these other instances.

This is the case, all told, apparently, because "[t]he use of this story in these NT books clearly is a function of their specific rhetorical-theological contexts, which raises complex questions of its own, as does the whole matter of the NT's use of the OT" (296, col. 2). I'm not clear about everything this sentence intends; whatever the implications of "rhetorical-theological," they are not

spelled out. But what does seem clear is that the use the NT makes of OT narrative material is foreign to, even in conflict with, how this material “functions in its original and historical context.” Until I can be shown I’m missing something I shouldn’t and despite Dr. Enns’ affirmation elsewhere of “the majestic coherence of the Old and New Testaments” (<http://peterennsonline.com/ii/inerrancy/>, last line), I can’t see how this view is compatible either with the Bible’s doctrinal unity, its didactic coherence, or with the unity of the covenantal religion of the Bible, the essential continuity of normative OT and NT religion. There are no doubt relative (new covenant – old covenant) distinctions between us and Abraham, David and Rahab in believing; our NT faith is undoubtedly fuller and clearer. But, more basically, their OT faith is the same as our NT faith, our justifying, saving faith. The NT tells us that plainly and nothing the OT historical books teach is incompatible or at odds with that.

Further, the view that there are apparently no examples of saving faith in the Historical Books of the OT contradicts fundamental elements of the system of doctrine taught in Scripture as contained the Westminster Standards, specifically in their affirmation of the basic Christ-centered identity of OT and NT religion and faith: *Confession of Faith*, 7:5, *Larger Catechism*, 34 (“... faith in the promised Messiah, ...”); *Confession of Faith*, 7:6 (“... one and the same, under various dispensations”); 8:6; 11:6 (OT and NT justifying faith are “... in all these respects, one and the same ...”). In conflict with the Standards as well is the related view that in the Historical Books of the OT faith is covenantal obedience or faithfulness: in addition to the places cited in the preceding sentence, *Confession of Faith* 14:1-2; *Larger Catechism*, 72, *Shorter Catechism*, 86.

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#### #7

A special interest of Dr. Enns over the years has been the NT use of the OT. Some of the problems attendant on his approach have just been noted in #5 and #6. Here I offer some further reflections on this approach as a prime instance of how he thinks the incarnational analogy forces evangelicals to make a doctrinal “reassessment” (I&I, 14) of what the Bible is.

I&I treats the NT use of the OT in chapter 4. The controlling approach he takes, not immediately apparent there, has already been articulated more explicitly earlier in his article, “Apostolic Hermeneutics and an Evangelical Doctrine of Scripture: Moving Beyond a Modernist Impasse,” in *WTJ* 65 (2003): 263-87.

This approach turns on the distinction between *method* and *goal* in the NT handling of the OT. This distinction itself is hardly problematic (no more than there is a problem with the incarnational analogy per se, for recognizing the presence of both divine and human factors in the origin of Scripture and reflecting on how they relate). Where problems enter is in the way Dr. Enns understands how method and goal relate and the resulting conclusions he draws. Those problems emerge in both the article and the book.

To state the nub of his view, apostolic method, the various interpretive procedures with which the NT utilizes the OT, as *method*, though strange to us, is quite unexceptional in that it is strikingly similar and entirely consistent with interpretive approaches already existing elsewhere, outside the NT, within contemporary Judaism. In this respect apostolic hermeneutics are purely a function of Second Temple Jewish hermeneutics and so for us are burdened with the same problems as the latter, of which they are but one manifestation.

In decided contrast, however, the apostolic goal is thoroughly at odds with the surrounding Judaism in its various factions. In light of Christ, his death and resurrection, methods in common with that Judaism are utilized for unprecedented “Christotelic” readings of the OT and for finding Christ as its pervasive meaning.

This construal of goal and method and their relationship has results that do not square with what the Bible itself, especially its self-witness, requires us to affirm about its divine authorship and consequent authority and doctrinal unity. Among these are the following results expressed as four points. These points both overlap and also repeat some of what has already been said in #5 but are distinguished as they are here for the sake of clarity. For documentation pertinent to points 1 through 3, almost all the examples offered in I&I, chapter 4 (and in the WTJ article cited above) could be cited, but see, in particular, the treatment of the NT use of Hosea 11:1 in I&I, 132-34, 153 (already discussed in #5) and of Exodus 3:6 on 114-15, 132.

1. The NT frequently attributes to OT passages a meaning each did not have when it was written.

The *Westminster Confession*, 1:9 speaks of “the true and full sense of any Scripture (which is not manifold but one).” In the view of Dr. Enns, the NT does not provide “the true and full [= “deeper”] sense of the OT passage, in the *requisite* sense, biblical and confessional, that there is always harmony and organic unity (“not manifold but one”) between what the OT passage says and what the NT says it says.

Rather, in his view, what the OT passage says and what the NT says it says (or what the NT says God says through it) are so different as to be discontinuous to the point of being mutually incoherent and effectively contradictory.

Dr. Enns introduces the analogy of reading a novel to explain his view (153). But that analogy actually serves to reveal how his view is *not* like reading a novel, at least a good one. A reader, having read a novel in its entirety, is able, on a subsequent re-reading, to see how details in the plot leading up to its conclusion, which on an initial reading didn’t seem to fit, in fact did fit all along. In the view of I&I, however, not only on a “first” read but even when we re-read from the vantage point of the conclusion the NT provides, we are still unable to see how OT plot “details,” *in their original contexts and when they were written by their human authors*, are in harmony with that NT conclusion or how the NT finds that harmony, other than by reading into the OT what is not there.

Bruce Waltke has aptly described this view: not only does I&I maintain that “some diversity in the Bible implies contradictions” but also “that the New Testament writers used stories invented during the Second Temple period as a basis for theology; and that they employed the highly arbitrary *peshar* method of interpretation, which was used in IQpHab. According to this method of interpretation, the people who believe they are living in the eschaton impose their convictions on reluctant Old Testament texts” (*Old Testament Theology* [Zondervan, 2007], p. 34, n. 18).

2. What the OT writers intended to say is often not what the NT writers say they said. Specifically, the OT writers do not speak of Christ when the NT writers say they do.

Dr. Enns affirms that for the NT authors “Christ gives the Old Testament final coherence.” But that happened only as they look at the OT “in a *whole new light*” (italics added) that bypasses “what the Old Testament author intended” (I&I, 160). The “coherence” of the OT that Christ provides is one that accommodates dissonance with what the OT writers intended.

This construal conflicts with many NT passages like Matthew 13:17: “Truly, I say to you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it”; John 12:41: “Isaiah said these things because he saw his glory and spoke of him”; and, most especially, 1 Peter 1:10-12: in what they were about, “the prophets,” likely to be taken as a synecdoche for the OT writers as a whole (cf. 2 Pet 1:20-21), were intent on the new covenant revelation of messianic sufferings and consequent glory.

Both I&I and the 2003 WTJ article are completely silent about 1 Peter 1:10-12. This silence is strange because these verses are the most explicit in the NT in affirming, and in fairly sweeping

terms, that the OT writers, in their multiplicity, have an explicitly Christ-centered intention. Assuming that Dr. Enns, given his interests, can hardly be unaware of this passage, how should we interpret this silence? If we take the passage at face value, as affirming what is in fact true about the intention of the OT writers, then we have important evidence in the NT itself against his views on the NT use of the OT.

It is hard to imagine that Dr. Enns would agree with that reading of the passage. So that leaves us to surmise that for him, the common redemptive-historical epoch (between Christ's resurrection and return) that 1 Peter shares with the church today notwithstanding, it, along with other NT passages like those noted above, is to be read in terms of its cultural strangeness and historical distance from us. As a programmatic statement of *peshet* method, singular within the NT, it shows just how thoroughly Peter and the other NT writers were committed, true to their Second Temple Jewish roots, to attributing to the OT writers an intention they did not in fact have. But on that view Dr. Enns unavoidably maintains that the NT writers creatively contradict and correct their OT counterparts. If there is another, more plausible way of reading his silence, then I have missed it.

Also, there is this to be noted briefly here. Take, for instance, the third Gospel (and Acts). On Dr. Enns' view Luke's use of the OT would have to be exempt somehow from the standard for careful narration and historical reliability he sets for himself in his prologue (1:1-4). It would have to be maintained, as an exception to the overall approach indicated in the prologue, that Luke exercises a hermeneutical freedom and latitude in handling inscripturated OT tradition that he did not allow himself in utilizing tradition and sources from the recent past. But such an exception, given a proper understanding of the methodological interests expressed in the prologue, is difficult to establish in a convincing or even plausible fashion.

Dr. Enns finds the notion of "ancient historiography," marked by relative indifference to original authorial intent and factual truthfulness, in Second Temple Judaism (*WTJ*, 65 [2000], 304-05). But that notion is no more applicable to Luke-Acts than it was in the effort of Martin Dibelius and others a generation ago in deriving it from pagan Hellenistic sources. As others have shown (e.g., F. F. Bruce, I. H. Marshall), "ancient" and "modern" historiography, broadly considered, are basically continuous in their concern for historical reliability. Undeniable theological shaping and reliable narration are both present in Luke-Acts without tension (and in the other Gospels as well).

### 3. What God, as the primary author, says is not what the human author says.

Dr. Enns holds that in numerous OT instances the intention of God and the intention of the human writer differ. They differ not in the requisite sense that God's intention is the same as the human writer's, only at a deeper, more comprehensive and clearer level. Rather, they are seen to differ as the NT use of the OT writer shows that God's intention and the writer's intention are dissimilar and even at odds.

The effect of this view, whether or not intended, is, once again, to undermine the doctrinal coherence and the didactic unity-in-diversity of the Bible as a whole. It also renders unclear, at best, what *God's* word (the divine intention) was in the original setting of the human writer and of all subsequent readings prior to the NT and the coming of Christ.

### 4. The NT use of the OT involves erroneous methods.

*WTJ* 65 (2003), 279 raises the question, "How does apostolic hermeneutics affect inerrancy?" The first sentence in answer reads, "There is no question that 'inerrancy,' at least in its earlier formulations, is not a term that is designed to encompass apostolic hermeneutics understood in its Second Temple context." Since these "earlier formulations" are not specified, it is unclear what Prof Enns intends to exclude. From what he goes on to say, he apparently has in view notions of inerrancy he labels "abstract," in that they are inappropriate to what Scripture is and how it functions. But what specifically constitutes the abstractionism of the past he wishes to

exclude is not spelled out.

As one reads on here (and elsewhere), it is difficult to conclude other than that Dr. Enns affirms the inerrancy of apostolic hermeneutics, in the NT use of the OT, in its goal but not in its methods. Their lofty “Christotelic” goal entitles the NT writers, even demands of them, to make OT texts say what ignores or even contradicts both what their human authors wrote (“the surface meaning of the words on the page,” 134) and intended in what they wrote. Sustained by the conviction “that the only agenda Scripture is called to support is Christ” (p. 282, n. 40), the NT writers employ methods that, whether or not knowingly, violate the integrity of their OT counterparts. This last clause does not seem to be too strong or an unfair way of characterizing this view.

This view, with the way in which it relates apostolic goal and apostolic method, is a variant, at least in its tendency, on a view of inspiration that has plagued the church especially in the modern period since the time of the Enlightenment. This is the view that distinguishes in Scripture between its divine and therefore in some sense trustworthy and authoritative subject matter (or content), with its attendant goal (or purpose), on the one hand, and, on the other, the fallible human form, including methods used, for presenting that subject matter and realizing the goal.

This view is fundamentally at odds with chapter 1 of the *Westminster Confession*. When 1:4 speaks of “God (who is truth itself) the author thereof,” it leaves no room for a tension between an infallible divine goal and fallible human methods for reaching that goal. Most assuredly, it can not be read properly as having in view a divine authorial truthfulness limited to subject matter or purpose, in distinction from errant human forms used to convey that content or flawed methods for achieving that purpose. Nor can its view of God as *author* be credibly extended to cover the notion that in his all-controlling providence God has condescended “incarnationally” to a written self-revelation whose form includes questionable human methods. Such a notion of condescension or accommodation, no matter how sovereign, does not rise to the level of affirming God as the primary *author* of the *text* of Scripture.

To say flatly, within the context of chapter 1 as a whole, as the Confession does, “God (who is truth itself) the author thereof,” excludes any such disjunction between divine goal and human method in Scripture. Rather, consistent, for instance, with the “God-breathed” of 2 Timothy 3:16 and the “from God” of 2 Peter 1:21, such language affirms that God’s truthfulness, as primary author, includes the form as well as the content of the biblical documents. Specifically, nothing less than God’s own authorial integrity and veracity are ultimately at stake in the intentions of the human authors or final redactors of the OT documents, no matter how limited their own grasp of the full depth of those intentions. So, too, divine authorial integrity and veracity are at stake as well in the methods the NT writers use, in the light of Christ’s coming, in interpreting those OT intentions.

Much is made by Dr. Enns of the similarities between the hermeneutics of the Second Temple period generally and the NT. But, whatever similarities there are and even whether or not we knew a thing about Second Temple hermeneutics, we know from the NT itself, because it is *God’s* written word, that the methods the NT writers use in interpreting the OT, as distinct (not divorced) from their purpose, are appropriate for disclosing the meaning of a given OT text. These are methods appropriate to the OT text at the point of its origin, human as well as divine, and in both its divine and human intention, a divine-human sense that is unified (“not manifold but one,” *Westminster Confession*, 1:9). What I find Dr. Enns not only lacking an awareness of but also calling into question is the organic unity, that is, the unified coherence and didactic harmony, there is between the OT and NT documents, with God as the primary author of each and considered in terms of the human as well as divine intention of each.

In continuing to wrestle with the sometimes nettlesome questions that do arise in considering the NT use of the OT, sound resolutions will not be arrived at by viewing the NT writers as using methods, recently discovered to be historically and culturally relative and also judged to be defective for disclosing the original meaning of an OT text and the intention of its author, yet are

nonetheless to be exonerated by the sublime “Christotelic” goal to which they are dedicated.

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#8

In keeping with I&I’s overall concern for evangelical “reassessment of doctrine” (14), Dr. Enns’ ultimate interest in the NT use of the OT is how the church today should use the OT in its teaching and preaching. That contemporary use is addressed primarily in I&I, 160-63 and chapter 5 and in the WTJ article referenced above (in the second paragraph of #7), 281-86. The general idea expressed is that OT interpretation is “a subtle interpenetration of a myriad of factors, known and unknown, that can rightly be described not as a product of science but a work of art.” Focused on Christ, it is “a product of much more than an exegetical exercise” that “includes such things as creativity, intuition, risk, and a profound sense of the meaningfulness of the endeavor” (I&I, 162).

As I ponder this gist and his related comments in these pages, I cannot avoid the conclusion that matters of method are left in such a state of flux that the end result over the question of how the church today should use the OT is a large cloud of uncertainty, a cloud of such density that only a hoped-for activity of the Holy Spirit, understood as remedial or compensatory, can dispel it. The outcome of his own use of grammatical-historical methods in interpreting the OT and the NT use of the OT functions to undermine the church’s use of such methods, or at least marginalizes them, for understanding the meaning of the OT for today. That understanding, as already noted, is ultimately “not ... a product of science but a work of art.” Sound interpretive methods and scholarly exegetical procedures are seen to be in tension with factors like Spirit-worked “creativity,” “intuition” and “risk,” with the latter as decisive. This outcome for arriving at the contemporary relevance of the OT may be fairly traced, step-wise, as follows.

- 1) Grammatical-historical method shows us that the OT (the original intent of the human authors) is not about Christ.
- 2) Grammatical-historical method shows us that Christ and the NT writers did not use grammatical-historical method to find Christ in the OT.
- 3) Grammatical-historical method shows us that the NT teaches the church that, following Christ and the NT writers, it is to find Christ in the OT.
- 4) The church today cannot validly use the historically distant and culturally relative (Second Temple) methods of the NT writers to find Christ in the OT.
- 5) The church today shares the goal of the NT writers, but not their methods, for finding Christ in the OT.
- 6) The church today is without a method (in basic methodological uncertainty) for its goal of finding Christ in the OT. In its own way, ultimately uncontrollable methodologically (“not ... a product of science but a work of art”), the church today is to read Christ into the OT, dependent on the contemporary work of the Holy Spirit.
- 7) The work of the Holy Spirit in the church today, akin to his work in the NT writers (“an intuitive, Spirit-led engagement of Scripture,” I&I, 160), protects against arbitrary and subjective individual readings of the OT and, despite our confusion and uncertainty about method, produces a communal finding of Christ in the OT for today. This consensus is no more than provisional, because, though communal, it is also a culturally relative finding of Christ in the OT.

1) through 5) are fairly straightforward in what Dr. Enns has written. 6) and 7), as far as I can see

from the pages noted in the first paragraph above, express where his work will almost certainly take him, if it is not where he already is presently.

This view, whether or not intentionally, effectively replaces the Reformation principle of the Spirit working with the word (Scripture), in its unity and pervasive clarity, with a quite different principle, the principle of the Spirit presumably working with the word, in the face of and despite disunity between the NT and the OT (and also within the OT) and the pervasive obscurity of the OT, especially in its discordant relationship to the NT. Here, I cannot see otherwise, the unambiguous Christ of the Scriptures as a whole (not just the NT), however imperfectly grasped by faith, is displaced by the imaginative and supposedly Spirit-intuited Christ of fluctuating faith.

It is surely true that the OT can't stand without the NT in the sense that, as revelation, the former apart from the latter records a revelatory history short of its consummation, in terms currently in vogue, a "story" lacking its ending. The OT is one large promise looking for its fulfillment or, using a grammatical analogy, one long protasis without an apodosis. Christ in his exalted glory is that consummation, that ending, that fulfillment, that apodosis.

But, by the same token, NT revelation can't stand on its own, without the OT (already in the second century the conflicts with Marcion and various strands of Gnosticism made that clear to the church). Which is to say, Christ and the gospel can't stand without the OT. To recall just one key passage here, the gospel, centered in his death and resurrection, is "according to the Scriptures" (1 Cor 15:3-4). If the gospel is not that, "according to the Scriptures," in the sense of *the pervasive, though shadowy, clarity* of the OT, its *unidirectional, univalent movement* toward Christ, and the *organic unity* of the OT, including *the intentions of its human authors*, with the NT, then Christ is a consummation rendered obscure because isolated from a coherent history leading up to it, an ending without a story, a fulfillment detached from its promise, an apodosis lacking the protasis essential to its meaning.

Christ is the fulfillment of the OT and, as such, shines an elucidating light of nothing less than eschatological brilliance on the OT. But he does not give meaning and coherence to an OT marked by "messiness," an OT that, because and in terms of its human authorship, is in itself discordant and marked by dissonance. Interpreting the OT in the light of the NT for the edification of the church today is a challenging task that does pose some difficult questions (although we should avoid a tendency to exaggerate these difficulties). It would be a great loss, should the controversy that has erupted over I&I cause us to become inhibited in continuing to confront this task for the good of the church. But, we should be clear, finding Christ in the OT is not ultimately a matter of creative and intuitive "risk"-taking.

[Pertinent to the issues addressed in #7 and #8, see my "'For Our Sakes Also': Christ in the Old Testament in the New Testament," in R. Penny, ed., *The Hope Fulfilled: Essays in Honor of Dr. O. Palmer Robertson*, (Phillipsburg: P&R, 2008), 79-99.]

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## #9

On his web site Dr. Enns has posted a medium-length review of *A High View of Scripture?* by Craig Allert (Baker, 2007), a book primarily about the formation of the New Testament canon and its authority.

To put it bluntly, this book is deeply flawed. Certainly one can learn from the author's considerable knowledge of historical details about the New Testament in the early church. But as he draws out the theological significance of this history, including conclusions for the authority of the Bible today for evangelicals – the primary reason he has written the book and why Dr. Enns has reviewed it – he is confusing at best.

Dr. Enns states, "Allert explicitly affirms inspiration, ..." True, but the inspiration he affirms explicitly rejects plenary verbal inspiration, as held, e.g., by Warfield. Further, he blurs the categorical difference there is between inspiration and illumination, that is, between the Spirit's activity in the past in producing Scripture, on the one hand, and, on the other, his ongoing contemporary activity in our recognizing that Scripture is God's word and understanding it.

Allert also holds, for instance, that we really can have no clear idea what the Greek word ( $\alpha\epsilon\omicron, \rho\acute{\nu}\epsilon\upsilon\sigma\tau\omicron\jmath$ ) translated "God-breathed" means in 2 Timothy 3:16 and argues that plenary verbal inspiration is an untenable view because rooted in a fallacious use of etymology: Paul's use of the word, he goes so far to say, no more means what Reformed and evangelical theology has heretofore understood it to mean than "nice" means "ignorant" because the latter is the meaning of the Latin root (*nescius*) for "nice" (pp. 153-54). He also questions inerrancy and throughout undertakes lines of argumentation that destabilize our understanding of what Scripture is, as well as of canonicity and apostolicity.

In all, the book leaves no place for another categorical distinction essential to any sound doctrine of Scripture: the distinction between God's giving of the canon – in fact, the NT canon is closed with the completion of its last book – and the subsequent ongoing and sometimes ragged process of recognizing and accepting that closed canon in the ancient church. At the very least it blurs that crucial distinction beyond recognition. The overall impression left is that the theological significance of the canon history that unfolded within the ancient church is not in the Holy Spirit's working throughout it, in a purely receptive way, to bring about in the church the eventual consensus recognition of the existing 27 book canon it had already been given by God. Instead, that history is viewed as a *constitutive* factor the Spirit uses, by involving the church not merely in recognizing but in establishing what is Scripture and in determining the eventual contents of the New Testament canon.

Yet Dr. Enns, in singling out this book for review, commends reading it, with only minor criticisms, for its affinity with some of the concerns of I&I, as a book whose "aim is a noble one," and for the contribution it makes "as Evangelicalism continues to explore new frontiers in self-definition." He is completely silent on the problems noted above.

It is difficult to square either this commendation or this silence with a cordial and knowledgeable commitment to Chapter 1 of the *Westminster Confession*. For Allert's book surely subverts what that chapter affirms about inspiration and canonicity. It is also thoroughly at odds with the line of theological reflection on the issue of canon, faithful to Scripture and the Confession, that has marked Westminster from its beginning and has been expressed more recently, for instance, in the chapter, "The New Testament as Canon," in the *Inerrancy and Hermeneutic* (1988).

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The criticisms of Dr. Enns' views in this document are substantial and serious. I regret, as I'm convinced, their necessity. In making them I hope not to have misrepresented or overstated, or to have come short of the judgment of charity he is due. As I stated at the outset, where it may prove that I'm remiss in these respects, I hope I will come to see that.