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The Place of the New Testament in the Neo-Conservative Movement

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I. Introduction

The neo-conservative movement is most of all an expression of concern for an appropriate handling of the Bible. If proponents of this movement are mistrustful of the mainline churches, they give as their reason that (to quote Jimmy Swaggart) "they don't believe the Bible any more".¹ This new conservative movement insists that one must read the Bible "as it stands",² rather than alter it to suit one's own capricious inclination. One must not let human reason usurp the place of the clear and unambiguous word of God. Rather than follow the dictates of human traditions and entrenched worldly custom, one must let oneself be propelled by the powerful activity of the Holy Spirit.

If one wishes to understand this movement, one needs to examine the role which the Bible plays in it. This article sets itself a rather limited objective by focusing on a selected number of gospel pericopes to explore how in these circles the New Testament is read, interpreted and applied.

II. The Problem of Definition

It should come as no surprise to discover that "neo-conservatism" is not a uniform movement. No movement ever is. There is an obvious and wide difference between the individual contemporary TV evangelists and neo-conservative authors. To make that fact abundantly clear, one need only name such well known personalities as Billy Graham, Robert Schuller, Martin and Richard DeHaan, Oral Roberts, Pat Robertson, Jimmy Swaggart, Rex Humbard, Terry Winter, Jerry Falwell,

Millard Erickson, Josh McDowell and George Eldon Ladd. And this list is by no means exhaustive. Many names could be added both to the right and the left of those mentioned here.

The diversity among the various representatives of this movement is such that disagreements among them sometimes become the object of lengthy disputes. On the one hand, *Christianity Today*, which can hardly be labelled liberal, voices serious objections about the ministry of John Wimber.³ Clark Pinnock, himself an avowed proponent of the new conservative theology, speaks of "dangers lurking... in Pentecostal movements".⁴ Fuller Seminary, which has made a point of welcoming charismatics and Pentecostals, has nevertheless found it necessary to discontinue the course MC510 "Signs and Wonders", which had been taught by John Wimber and Peter Wagner;⁵ and Ben Patterson, a contributing editor to *Christianity Today*, lists five major concerns about some representatives of this new breed of evangelists.⁶ On the other hand, attacks from the far right have not spared even an evangelical of the stature of Billy Graham⁷

This great diversity makes definition of the movement very difficult. if indeed it is legitimate to speak of a "movement" at all. It might be more appropriate to borrow the language of music and to think of the phenomenon as a tone cluster of beautiful and sour notes all sounding together, thus creating the impression of an incredible amorphous diversity, a cacophony of theological noise.

Nevertheless, it is the contention of this writer that a definite "tone" pervades a significant range of the scale of these new conservative Christian preachers and teachers, which allows us to speak of an "ism". Although the inclusion of this or that preacher or author will significantly alter the profile of the movement as a whole, one can detect among these various representatives a common orientation of faith and a similar method of approaching the scriptures.

Since the movement is so variegated, it is problematical to try to identify the way in which neo-conservatism handles the New Testament. Blanket statements, either approving or disapproving of the movement as a whole, are therefore inappropriate. Still, one may identify features which are prominent in some key personalities, and traits which several of them share

in common, without however suggesting that these trends necessarily characterize the movement as a whole.

III. Interpretation of the Biblical Text

1. *Introduction*

The most prominent television preachers exude genuine warmth and concern. One cannot help but be impressed by the deep emotional appeal of Jimmy Swaggart who leaves his congregation in tears. His audience has witnessed an agonized outpouring of deep caring, an aching longing for peace and for everything that is good. There is no doubt that his listeners have experienced an immense release of pent up emotion as they have responded both to the anger and to the soft and gentle appeal of the preacher. Rex Humbard similarly elicits genuine tears with his assurance, "You are loved!" It is obvious that people deeply long for what they hear and see. And who would not wish to be cuddled by John Wimber, that "lovable teddy bear"? There are good reasons for people to keep tuning in and sending money. But we are particularly interested in the role which the New Testament plays in these circles.

Given the nature and orientation of the neo-conservative "movement", it is most surprising to discover how little the Bible is actually quoted and interpreted. Representatives of this movement thrive on a small number of recurring themes. Unlike the liturgical churches, which take pains to cover the entire spectrum of Old and New Testament texts over a given period of time, the representatives of this segment of Christianity concentrate on a handful of issues which appear to them to be of primary importance. Their treatment tends to be issue-oriented, rather than text-oriented.

Not all of these evangelists have chosen the same themes, of course, but each of them tends to capitalize on a very limited range of lessons. H.W. Armstrong's World-wide Church of God endlessly discusses the end of the world, the proper day for the celebration of the Sabbath and the defensibility of celebrating Christmas. Oral Roberts deals with one theme and one theme only: healing. Others dwell on topics dealing with morality, family crisis and personal stress.

Accordingly, the choice of biblical texts is rather predictable. Those who are most concerned with healing keep

returning to James 5:16b (“pray for one another, that you may be healed”) and Mark 11:24 (“whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours”). Those who, like Rex Humbard, are concerned with finances, love to elaborate on Malachi 3:10 (“bring the full tithes... put me to the test... if I will not... pour down for you an overflowing blessing”). Separatists like to fasten on 2 Corinthians 6:17 (“come out from them, and be separate from them”), and practically everyone sooner or later comes to focus the audience’s attention on 2 Timothy 3:16 (“All scripture is inspired by God and is profitable...”).

Rather than expound extended New Testament pericopes, the television preachers tend to use isolated verses as proof-texts to support their various positions. Preaching more often than not is topical, thematic or doctrinal rather than expository. Hardly ever does a sermon begin with the reading of a biblical pericope. All this implies that the Bible is regarded as a collection of isolated instructions and commands rather than as a continuous story or drama. Passages are usually quoted without reference to their context, thus giving them an aura of timeless authority.

The result is rather startling. While the general tenor of the message of these preachers suggests that their proclamation is solidly based on the Bible, the actual biblical basis tends to be very narrow and selective.

2. The Harmonization of Parallel Texts

a) Introduction

It is especially important for neo-conservatives to point out that the Bible is uniform and monolithic, without spot or blemish. The Bible-waving gestures of preachers like Billy Graham and Jimmy Swaggart are a visual sermon. The favourite refrain of Billy Graham well exemplifies the underlying attitude: “The Bible says!” According to J.I. Packer⁸ it is necessary to see an “absolute identification” of scripture with the speaking God. To suggest, therefore, that the Bible does not everywhere speak with one voice would be to imply that God is unreliable.

Critical scholarship, on the other hand, claims that to read the Bible “as it stands” is to face up to a great deal of historical and even theological tension within the pages of the

New Testament. We will examine a selection of pertinent pericopes in order to observe how the neo-conservative branch of Christianity copes with the alleged problem.

b) The Death of Judas

It is a well known fact that the New Testament relates the death of Judas twice, and that the two accounts differ quite markedly one from the other. According to Matthew (27:3-10) Judas hanged himself, but according to Luke (Acts 1:18-19), his body burst open and his bowels gushed out.⁹ Millard Erickson, who describes himself as a representative of "classical orthodoxy",¹⁰ and whose *Christian Theology* the publishers enthusiastically welcome as a "current, comprehensive, cohesive introduction to systematic theology" for which evangelicalism in the late-twentieth century has been waiting all too long,¹¹ reconstructs the event in the following way:

Having hanged himself, Judas was not discovered for some time. In such a situation the visceral organs begin to degenerate first, causing a swelling of the abdomen characteristic of cadavers that have not been properly embalmed....And so, "swelling up" [Judas] burst open in the middle and his bowels gushed out."¹²

This is pure hypothesis, of course, and Erickson knows it: "While there is no way of knowing whether this is what actually took place, it seems to be a workable and adequate resolution of the difficulty."¹³ The explicit agenda is to show that inconsistencies in the biblical text are apparent only.

We must, then, continue to work at the task of resolving whatever tensions there are in our understanding of the Bible....Therefore we must not attempt to give fanciful explanations which are not warranted by the data. It is better to leave such difficulties unresolved in the confidence, based upon the doctrine of Scripture, that they will be removed to the extent that additional data become available.¹⁴

The neo-conservative scholars presuppose that the tensions are not in the text, but in our understanding of it. They are confident that if and when more data become available, it will be clear that there never was any tension to worry about, in the first place. Hypotheses, even "fanciful" hypotheses, are "warranted by the data", if they serve to point out that the tensions are apparent only, and that they exist not in the biblical text, but in our understanding of it. Evidently Erickson sees no circularity in this argumentation.

c) The Genealogy of Jesus

The New Testament presents the genealogy of Jesus in two places, with major differences between the two accounts. According to Matthew (1:1–16), Joseph is the son of Jacob, a descendant of David's son Solomon, whereas according to Luke (3:23–38) Joseph is the son of Eli, a descendant of David's other son, Nathan. Josh McDowell of Campus Crusade for Christ International is fully aware of the conflicting data, but is sure that there is no discrepancy in actual fact. Here is his explanation:

In all probability Joseph was the son-in-law of Eli. This is believed because Luke 1 and 2 seem to be centered around Mary, and Luke would probably continue her dominant role in Luke 3 by giving her genealogy.¹⁵

Luke gives no indication whatsoever that in the last link of the genealogy the genitive case means anything other than what it means in the entire rest of the genealogy, namely "(the father) of". Why, then, does McDowell import a totally alien meaning into the text at this one particular place, so as to make it read "(the father-*in-law*) of"? The answer is simple: only by doing so can the text in Luke be made to agree with the genealogy as it appears in Matthew. McDowell prefers to read the genealogy in Luke's gospel as the genealogy of Mary rather than that of Joseph, as the text has it.

McDowell, who can boast of having spoken to over five million faculty and students in fifty-eight countries, works on the presupposition that there cannot be any factual inconsistencies in the biblical text. The hidden agenda is barely disguised. To read the text "as it stands" is to interpret it in whatever way is necessary so as to make it fit the procrustean bed of biblical inerrancy.

d) The Entry into Jerusalem

Much ink has been spilled over the differences in the various accounts of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem at the beginning of the passion story. *Bibliotheca Sacra*, the journal of Dallas Theological Seminary, periodically discusses this and related subjects in an endeavour to demonstrate the uniformity and trustworthiness of the biblical accounts.

There is, first and foremost, the problem of the *two* animals in Matthew's version of the story, and the question how

Jesus could ride on two animals at once. The obvious solution, suggests S.L. Johnson,¹⁶ is that Jesus rode the colt only. The mother animal was brought along only to calm the colt, and this fact makes clear that the colt really was unbroken, as Mark explicitly states. Johnson is sure that in this way the accounts of Mark and Matthew can be brought into perfect harmony.

This explanation is not new. It can be found in R.C.H. Lenski's commentary series, an old stand-by for Lutheran preachers in Canada. Lenski was very concerned to point out how the parallel accounts in the New Testament support each other's historical accuracy. One suspects that Lenski was intent on combining the neo-conservative dictum of biblical inerrancy with the Lutheran admonition to let "scripture interpret scripture". Be that as it may, Lenski has left a deep imprint on Lutheran preaching in this country. Regarding the two donkeys in Matthew's account he comments:

Matthew alone tells us about the two asses, the dam and her colt...

Both animals are brought together, for neither would be content if they had been separated. Jesus rode the colt, the dam trotting by its side.¹⁷

An ingenious explanation, admittedly, but does it take proper account of the text? The NIV translates: "They brought the donkey and the colt, placed their cloaks on them, and Jesus sat on them." Lenski has a ready explanation to hand: the second "them" refers to the garments, not the animals:

Several of these thin, long robes were thrown over the back of the colt, and on these Jesus sat. Robes were thrown also over the dam, for the disciples did not at once know which of the two animals Jesus would use. They did not ask. We may imagine that because of the crowd that came from Bethany with Jesus (John 12:9, 17) it was not convenient to ask.¹⁸

Lenski is convinced that if there are differences between parallel accounts of one and the same incident, the two accounts must be seen to supplement each other. It is simply inadmissible to consider that the differences might be irreconcilable. If John mentions the use of palm branches while Matthew, Mark and Luke do not, one must assume that there were palm branches used, but that only John bothers to mention that fact.¹⁹ If only John mentions a welcoming crowd coming from

Jerusalem, one must conclude that the Synoptic accounts simply did not consider this minor historical detail of sufficient importance to warrant its inclusion.²⁰ To obtain the full picture concerning any one chronicled incident, one must interpolate into one account those missing details which are suggested by the other gospels.

e) General Disregard of Inconsistencies

Lenski could be included in the neo-conservative movement only if the definition of the term were considerably distended. One can say, then, that the harmonizing approach to the interpretation of New Testament parallels is not an invention of neo-conservatism. On the contrary, in most instances neo-conservatives do not even bother any longer to discuss "supposed" disagreements between parallel New Testament accounts. They simply assume that whatever "discrepancies" one may identify are "apparent" only.

Josh McDowell has written two books in defense of the historical accuracy of the Bible. Entering seminary students often come armed with one or both of his volumes. McDowell intends to present a huge variety of "evidence that demands a verdict", but as far as this writer can determine, he has only in one place addressed a "supposed" disagreement between a set of parallel New Testament passages, and that one case he has relegated to a one-page appendix.²¹

Don Bashan, in his *Handbook on Holy Spirit Baptism*, lists as one of the advantages of speaking in tongues the alleged fact that such speaking allows one to communicate with people of foreign linguistic background.²² He bases his claim on Acts 2:6-11, evidently simply assuming that the phenomenon described there is identical with the related phenomenon known to Paul. He overlooks the fact that according to Acts 2 the hearers, representing various ethnic and linguistic communities, all understand the message in their own language, whereas according to 1 Corinthians 14 speaking in tongues is inarticulate and demands the services of an interpreter.

When neo-conservatives do acknowledge the presence of disagreements in parallel New Testament passages, practically all of them are quick to insist that such deviations are of a superficial nature only. In the words of Robert Preus, "inerrancy

does not imply verbal or intentional agreement in parallel accounts of the same event....We have no right or good reason to assume that the holy writer tampers with or distorts the facts."²³ Hardly ever do such writers discuss specific instances of such disagreements. They are rather content to assert in a general way that "the Bible is trustworthy and historically reliable".²⁴

f) The Uniqueness of the Gospel of John

There are, however, among neo-conservative scholars some notable exceptions who do acknowledge very candidly the real problem of harmonization. One of these is George Eldon Ladd, who carefully notes the extent of the differences between the Synoptic Gospels, on the one hand, and the Gospel of John, on the other. He observes that the Gospel of John is unique in terms of thought-world, style, content²⁵ and theology.²⁶ Ladd has no illusions regarding the severity of the problem: "The Fourth Gospel is so different from the Synoptics that the question must be honestly faced whether it reports accurately the teachings of Jesus or whether Christian faith has so modified the tradition that history is swallowed up in theological interpretation."²⁷ To put it another way: "To what extent has the teaching of Jesus been so assimilated in John's mind that what we have is a Johannine interpretation rather than an accurate representation of Jesus' own teaching?"²⁸

Evidently the suggestion is too threatening for Ladd to pursue any further. He resorts to a pure hypothesis which can safeguard an authentic historical link between the Gospel of John and the historical Jesus: "It is possible that in the last days Jesus in fact used a different style that opened up the deeper truths of his person and mission to his disciples, and John deliberately cast the entire Gospel in this idiom."²⁹

There is absolutely no evidence which would support this theory of a sudden personality shift in Jesus during the last days of his earthly life, and Ladd does not venture to offer any such evidence. Nevertheless, the hypothesis is needed in order to undergird the two neo-conservative constructs of scriptural inerrancy and historical infallibility. The neo-conservative could not respect and revere a Bible that does not conform to these criteria.

g) Conclusion

This brief examination has shown, among other things, that neo-conservatives have their own set of hypotheses which they bring to the study of the New Testament. If there is a difference between neo-conservatives and critical scholarship with regard to the use of hypotheses, it must be this: in conservative circles a hypothesis is admissible only if it supports the doctrine of biblical inerrancy.

Predominant among conservatives is the conviction that the Bible is a uniform book. When Jimmy Swaggart waves his Bible throughout his sermon and when Billy Graham uncompromisingly exclaims "the *Bible* says", it is clear that both of them are convinced that this book speaks with a single and unambiguous voice which tolerates no fluctuations or stuttering.

Our ancestors in the faith, however, vividly demonstrate that it is possible to be devoted to the Bible without making exaggerated claims on its behalf. Origen and Eusebius in the third and fourth centuries regarded it as appropriate to designate some New Testament writings as "disputed" or "doubtful", and Luther did not hesitate to assign preferential status to some books in the New Testament, while seriously questioning the merit of others. One need only allude to Luther's value judgments about such books as James and Revelation³⁰ to make that point abundantly clear. Maybe it is the glory of the Bible that God can use this book in spite of its imperfections. God does not need an immaculately conceived Mary to bear the Son of God.

Many of the right-wing conservatives do not see it that way. " 'Infallible' denotes the quality of never deceiving or misleading, and so means 'wholly trustworthy and reliable'; 'inerrant' means 'wholly true'."³¹

Conservatives by and large do not consider it edifying to speak of imperfections in holy things. They tend to follow the principle that every dissonance in the biblical text must be harmonized, every tension smoothed out, every discrepancy of whatever sort denied or explained away. Lack of uniformity is to them a sign of inferiority. A Bible that is not uniform is not reliable, and cannot be authoritative.

3. A Historical-Literal Reading of the Bible

a) Preliminary Observations

"The Bible is easy!" So says Peter Youngren, an evangelist who has preached and healed in over thirty countries. "Christianity is simple." God did not make things difficult.³²

According to C. Pinnock, the error of much of what he calls "liberal Christians" is that they prefer not to "believe the New Testament as it stands".³³ The liberals follow an "unbiblical philosophy".³⁴ To such people, according to Jimmy Swaggart, applies the biblical word, "professing themselves to be wise, they became fools". Swaggart, on the contrary, presents the "uncompromising, unadulterated Gospel, ... pulling no punches and playing no favorites".³⁵ What is needed, according to these people, is the straightforward word of the Lord which is not subject to the vagaries of ivory tower biblical specialists. In the words of Billy Graham, the best known contemporary evangelist:

The world longs for authority, finality and conclusiveness. It is weary of theological floundering and uncertainty. Belief exhilarates the human spirit; doubt depresses.³⁶

The new conservatism is convinced that the Bible was intended for simple folk. Any suggestion that biblical exegesis requires a high degree of expertise meets with disdain: "You are taking the Bible away from the people!" If the Bible speaks the language of the people, so the reasoning goes, it follows that one must understand everything that it says in the ordinary, obvious sense. The neo-conservative interpretation of 2 Timothy 3:16 ("All scripture is inspired by God") assumes that the meaning of the word "inspired" is practically self-evident: God-breathed, and therefore inerrant.³⁷ "Scripture" is taken to mean the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testament. The fact that at the time of the writing of 2 Timothy there was not yet a New Testament canon in existence does not appear to present a problem.

b) The Role of Eyewitnesses

Neo-conservative Christianity sees itself as a staunch defender of the historical accuracy of the Bible. This is why it

questions much of "liberal" theologizing. Again, in the words of Erickson:

There seems to be an implicit assumption that the early Christians, or those who preserved the traditions and reduced them to writing, were really not too interested in history. It should be noted however, that, on the contrary, these were people to whom historical events were very important. The kerygma itself indicates the importance of various events. The crucifixion and resurrection, for example, were very significant in the preaching of Peter (Acts 2:22-36) and the writing of Paul (1 Cor. 15).³⁸

That the crucifixion and resurrection were indeed regarded as of primary historical importance, no one should question. However, Erickson fails to distinguish clearly between a) regarding an event as historically very significant and b) relating that event with absolute historical accuracy. It is rather to be observed that in human history precisely those events which have come to be regarded as cornerstones of a people's existence are described in poetic, symbolic, allegorical and even mythical categories. The New Testament evidence indeed indicates something very similar to that.

To check that evidence one needs only to compare the date of the crucifixion as it is related in the Synoptic Gospels, on the one hand, and in John, on the other. In the Synoptic Gospels Jesus institutes the Eucharist in the context of the Passover meal. The arrest, trial and crucifixion follow on the next day. The Lord's Supper thus represents the Christian counterpart to the Passover celebration of the deliverance of Israel from Egyptian bondage. According to the Gospel of John, on the other hand, the trial before Pilate takes place on the day *before* the eating of the Passover meal (see John 18:28, 31), so that Jesus, our Passover Lamb, dies on the cross at the same time as the Passover lambs are slaughtered in preparation for the Passover meal. Since hardly anyone will have the courage to suggest that Jesus must have died twice, on successive days, it should be clear that other than historical interests are operative here.

Persons of neo-conservative persuasion tend to place a great deal of confidence in the Gospel writers' reliance upon eyewitness reports. In their estimation, the assumption that first hand data were difficult to obtain when the Gospel writers composed their accounts "fails to take account of the eyewitnesses who helped form and preserve the tradition".³⁹ Lenski,

too, has no doubt that the parallel accounts of the institution of the Eucharist are "four historical testimonies".⁴⁰ He feels similarly confident about the story of the stilling of the storm.⁴¹

The availability of eyewitnesses at the time of the writing of the Gospels should, of course, not be ruled out. However, it is not at all obvious that the evangelists would have assigned primary value to such eyewitness information about what happened in Galilee and Jerusalem during the ministry of Jesus. Paul, we know, did not. Paul tells us a great deal about the theological significance of the death and resurrection of Jesus, but he tells us next to nothing about the historical event itself. Only in one place does he call upon the testimony of eyewitnesses (1 Corinthians 15), and then to attest their vision of the *risen* Christ. Paul, writing considerably before the composition of the Synoptic Gospels, no doubt had excellent access to eyewitness reports. Yet, what Paul has to tell us about Jesus of Nazareth could comfortably be compiled on one page.

To what extent, furthermore, the eyewitnesses were concerned about precise historical details is a matter of dispute. It is possible to consult concrete data to address this question: even when information was available, the writers of the Gospels sometimes decided to "alter" it, for whatever reason. A case in point: Matthew consistently abbreviates and condenses the miracles by removing most of the vivid details for which Mark is so famous. The stilling of the storm, for example, is related so differently by Mark and Matthew that even conservatives⁴² see a problem in harmonizing the two versions of the account. The question, then, is not whether the stilling of the storm was important to the evangelists, but to what extent the historical details were.

c) The Definition of Prophecy

The fascination with historicity also affects the definition and identification of what is termed "prophecy". Prophecy in the neo-conservative lexicon means prediction of history. As B.R. Lakin put it: "prophecy is the writing of history before it happens."⁴³ Josh McDowell evidently operates with this same definition.

The Old Testament written over a 1,500 year period contains several hundred references to the coming Messiah. All of these were fulfilled in Christ and they establish a solid confirmation of His credentials as the Messiah.⁴⁴

McDowell proceeds to produce an impressive list of parallels between statements in the Old Testament and events in the life of Jesus. A small sample of this fascinating collection must suffice here. The words of the psalmist (Psalm 78:2), "I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings of old", according to McDowell, are fulfilled in Matthew 13:34, "all these things Jesus spoke to the multitudes in parables, and He was not talking to them without a parable".⁴⁵ The confident assertion of the psalmist (Psalm 16:10), "For Thou wilt not abandon my soul to Sheol; Neither wilt Thou allow Thy Holy One to see the pit", is fulfilled in Jesus, who, according to Acts 2:31, "was neither abandoned to Hades, nor did His flesh suffer decay".⁴⁵ The lament of the psalmist (Psalm 35:11), "Malicious witnesses rise up; They ask me of things that I do not know", is regarded as a prediction of what is related in Matthew 26:59ff., "Now the chief priests and the whole Council kept trying to obtain false testimony against Jesus".⁴⁷ The lament of the psalmist (Psalm 22:14), "My heart is like wax; It is melted within me", is a prediction of John 19:34, "but one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately there came out blood and water".⁴⁸

Also the apocalyptic references to the end of the old world and the breaking in of the new are interpreted in strictly historical terms. This is the central theme of the broadcasts of the World-wide Church of God. It is simply assumed that the function of apocalyptic literature is to predict the future. "Scripture teaches also that the conflict between satanic and divine forces will intensify as the end draws near...wickedness and apostasy will increase (see Matthew 24:12; 2 Thessalonians 2:7); wars and disasters will intensify (Matthew 24:22)".⁴⁹

d) Pseudepigraphy

Since neo-conservatives insist on the absolute historical accuracy of the biblical record, it follows that they cannot allow for the presence of certain literary devices and forms in the Bible, forms which they regard as somehow "untruthful". In the words of Robert Preus, "any literary genre that would in itself be immoral or involve deceit or error is not compatible with Biblical inerrancy and is not to be found in Scripture, for example, myth, etiological tale, midrash, legend or saga according to the usual definition of these forms".⁵⁰

Pseudepigraphy is therefore intolerable.

Pseudonymity in the sense of one writer pretending to be another in order to secure acceptance of his own work is illicit and not compatible with inerrancy. That the motives for such action may be construed as good does not alter the fact that fraud and forgery has [*sic*] been perpetrated. The fact that such a practice was carried on in ancient times does not justify it nor indicate that the practice was considered moral....Pseudonymity is deliberate fraud (for any reason whatsoever).⁵¹

Illicit in whose eyes, one would like to ask? Forgery by whose standards? Neo-conservatives, it seems, cannot themselves break out of the straightjacket of twentieth-century rationalism, even while they keep accusing critical scholarship of being captive to a philosophical framework which is alien to the Bible. Few, if any, neo-conservatives can entertain the notion that pseudepigraphy may have been and may continue to be a perfectly legitimate vehicle of communication.

e) Historicity and Inspiration

In neo-conservative theology inspiration has been defined in such a way as to tie it indissolubly to the notion of historical accuracy and inerrancy. This is how Robert Preus views the matter. "The inerrancy and authority of Scripture are inseparably related....Without inerrancy the *sola scriptura* principle cannot be maintained or practiced."⁵²

If, therefore, one should perchance discover some historical inaccuracy in a given verse of the Bible, the inspiration of that verse would be in jeopardy. Such a possibility has indeed been entertained by none other than Millard Erickson, whose systematic theology is so highly acclaimed in neo-conservative circles.

Stephen, in his speech in Acts 7, may not have been inspired, although he was filled with the Holy Spirit. Thus, his chronological statement in verse 6 is not necessarily free from error. It appears that even Paul and Peter may on occasion have made incorrect statements.⁵³

The repercussions of such a statement are mind boggling. The neo-conservative doctrine of inerrancy and inspiration suddenly totters on the brink of the abyss. According to this line of reasoning, even statements of Paul may have to be judged to be not scripture. If it is true that "all scripture is inspired"

(2 Timothy 3:16) and some of the things Paul says may not be inspired, then some things presently in the New Testament are not scripture. Where does this leave the pious people in the pew, one wonders?

f) Signs of Change in Neo-Conservatism

Yet, at least some neo-conservatives are beginning to strike out in promising new directions. One may hope that others will follow their lead, and possibly even overtake them. Erickson writes:

We must judge the truthfulness of Scripture in terms of what the statements meant in the cultural setting in which they were expressed. We should judge the Bible in terms of the forms and standards of its own culture. We should not employ anachronistic standards in seeking to understand what was said. For example, we should not expect that the standards of exactness in quotation to which our age of the printing press and mass distribution is accustomed would have been present in the first century.⁵⁴

Whether Erickson realizes it or not, he is proposing the adoption of form-critical criteria for the reading of the New Testament text. Were he actually to apply these criteria consistently, however, he would no longer automatically assume, as he still does, that simply because 2 Peter claims to have been written by the Apostle Peter, Peter was its actual author, or that 2 Timothy must be ascribed to Paul. Rather he would ask: what was the meaning and purpose of pseudepigraphy in Christian antiquity?

It is gratifying to note that within the ranks of the neo-conservative movement itself, some voices are beginning to be raised in favour of a more critical reading of the New Testament. Surprisingly, one of these voices is McDowell's.

One problem I constantly face is the desire on the part of many to apply one standard or test to secular literature and another to the Bible. One needs to apply the same test, whether the literature under investigation is secular or religious.⁵⁵

Evidently, McDowell, too, has begun to see some good in the form-critical approach, which practices precisely the *modus operandi* which he approaches. Were McDowell to pursue the matter further, he would stop trying to harmonize the two genealogies of Jesus, and he would begin to ask what is the function of a genealogy in secular literature. Ladd has already proceeded a long way in this direction.

The day is long past when we may think of the Synoptics as “bare” history...It is obviously not the intent of the Synoptic Gospels to give a report of the *ipsissima verba* of Jesus nor a biography of the events of his life. They are portraits of Jesus and summaries of his teaching. Matthew and Luke feel themselves free to rearrange the material in Mark and to report Jesus’ teaching with considerable freedom. If John used more freedom than Matthew and Luke, it is because he wished to give a more profound and ultimately more real portrait of Jesus. The historical, “objective” tradition is so interwoven with Johannine interpretation that it is impossible to separate them.⁵⁶

If Ladd represents a new trend in neo-conservative circles, we may yet hope to see a meeting of ways between neo-conservatives and critical scholars on this important question of the historicity of the New Testament.

4. *Ethics, Morality and Decision*

As has already been observed, the feeling is widespread, not only in neo-conservative circles, that the Bible is a book containing a vast collection of individual commands and instructions. This is God’s blueprint for life. Even narrative material, reported in the New Testament in the indicative mood, is sometimes read as though it were imperative in nature. We are familiar with this phenomenon in the Lutheran church, too. Lenski was not the first to press the details of narrative so as to derive from them instructions for living.

The point is that Jesus instituted the sacrament with the use of one cup and that he bade all the disciples to drink out of this one cup. Any change in what Jesus here did, which has back of it the idea that he would not for sanitary or similar reasons do the same today, casts a rather serious reflection upon Jesus.⁵⁷

Lenski here polemicizes against the celebration of the sacrament which involves the use of individual cups. He does this by making the action of Jesus prescriptive in every detail. Things must be done today precisely as they were done by Jesus.

To alter a testament is to invalidate that document. Hence the use of any other liquid than actual wine that is made from grapes—this alone was “wine” in Christ’s day, this alone was used in the Passover—renders the sacrament invalid so that it ceases to be the sacrament. Christ’s testament is valid only in the form in which he made it and not as men today may alter it.⁵⁸

Similarly, Pinnock⁵⁹ reads how Jesus sent out the disciples on their famous mission and concludes: Jesus sent us [!] to heal.

Fortunately, Pinnock is inconsistent enough to know that the "command" to us does not include the words of Jesus to his disciples, "Go nowhere among the gentiles" (Matthew 10:5).

In neo-conservatism the imperative often takes on a heavy moralistic overtone. Jimmy Swaggart best exemplifies the mood. In his address, "The Death of a Nation", he spells it out specifically: the situation is black and white. There are *no* good films, *all* drinking of alcoholic beverages is wrong because it makes children into alcoholics. But his most scathing condemnation is reserved for the National Education Association. According to Swaggart, it is an atheistic organization which wants to eradicate God from American education and is responsible for teenage suicide. It is not anti-communist, and *it advocates gun control!*⁶⁰

One certainly cannot accuse neo-conservative Christianity of a one-sided concern for the soul only. This religion cares about societal values as much as it does about one's personal relationship with Jesus. But from where does neo-conservatism get the norms by which a Christian society must live? Is it the Bible that has provided them? Where does the Bible command an anti-communist stance? Does the Bible mandate the avoidance of all alcoholic beverages? Does the Bible guarantee the right to bear arms? It would be interesting to trace this ethic to its sources.

The punishment of offenders that is recommended can sometimes be shocking. Drug pushers who solicit children should receive one warning, and one warning only, advises Swaggart. After that, he advocates the use of a .30-.30.⁶¹ His impassioned plea for the on-the-spot execution of drug pushers is greeted with extended applause. Tender concern and righteous violence sometimes dwell very close together in neo-conservative piety.

In spite of their denunciation of a corrupt society, the message of these preachers is very hopeful, however. They are convinced that the evil situation in the world and in personal lives can be rectified if only there is the will to do it. This theology makes much of the freedom of the will and the value of human commitment. "The thing that impresses God, is commitment," confides Jerry Falwell. "Determine never to quit, rather die trying!" "Salvation is not just something you feel... it is *your commitment to your Lord... to your spouse and family... to the*

ministry." It is "as a result of our commitment to each other" that "God has blessed us," and "the level of my commitment to the ministry will determine the success of that ministry."⁶²

This decision theology can border on magic: by doing the right things, saying the right things, believing the right things, one can practically manipulate God. Rex Humbard expresses this most blatantly: "Faith and prayer can put God to work for you!"⁶³ Even Martin DeHaan, who carefully distinguishes between baptism in the Holy Spirit and being filled with the Holy Spirit, writes a book with the title which says it all: *How Can I Be Filled with the Holy Spirit?*⁶⁴ The message is clear: the ball is in your court!

The key to a new life is to be found in a "personal decision for Christ". Decision theology hardly ever mentions the word baptism, except in the phrase "baptism *in the Holy Spirit*". What matters is your personal decision. In anabaptist theology the sacraments are rituals only, until they are accompanied by your own personal decision. Baptism, if it is practised at all, is for adults only. The closest equivalent to a sacrament in neo-conservative Christianity is the altar call combined with the sinner's prayer:

Come into my heart, Lord Jesus. I will serve you the rest of my life, as you give me grace to do it.⁶⁵

But, explains Jimmy Swaggart, "simply saying the Sinner's Prayer won't do anything: but if you believe it and believe God, it will bring you to Jesus."⁶⁶ The believing prayer at the altar is the focus and highlight of the Billy Graham evangelistic crusade. Even Terry Winter ends his presentations with a prayer of commitment. "I accept the Lord Jesus Christ, I admit my sin, and my need for forgiveness. Come into my life,... change me. I want to become a true believer."⁶⁷

Make no mistake about it: God is gracious, but unless you grab hold of that, and add to it your own personal commitment, it does not mean anything. Neo-conservative theology can be highly activist. People who want to change the world often find in this piety the encouragement to exert their most strenuous efforts. "You can do it," this theology seems to say, "just try hard enough and believe hard enough."

5. *A Theology of Glory*

The operative word in much of this new evangelicalism is "power". Healings are a major demonstration of such power. Pinnock⁶⁸ reminds the church that "Jesus sent us to heal". In fact, he reads it as a command: "We *must* do what Jesus did."⁶⁹ From among the many things that Jesus did, these evangelists have singled out healing miracles. "Expect a miracle!" So Oral Roberts exhorts his audience. "God wants you healed, and so do I!"⁷⁰ The impression is created that God and Oral Roberts are partners, and when the two agree to do something, it is as good as done.

Similar promises are made by Rex Humbard. "I'll be fasting and praying for your need." In fact, twelve of his people will unite in prayer and believe God for the miracle you need. What are the miracles you need? "Write them out, send them to me,... we'll pray and believe God for the miracle you need." "Faith and prayer can put God to work for you." "You have in your hand the power to have your sins forgiven."⁷¹ Has this theology finally turned the tables on God, so that God is now the servant? The titles of Humbard's books send a clear message: *Twelve Steps to Physical, Spiritual, and Financial Blessings*, and *Personal Promises from God's Word*.⁷²

Rex Humbard unabashedly preaches on the subject: "How to turn your greatest needs into miracles". He encourages the audience to ask for anything they want. "What kind of miracles do you need today?" He presents his credentials: "We have found jobs, raises,... marriages are healed;... miracles still happen!" If you join Rex Humbard's prayer key family and believe God for miracles, "God will provide all your needs: physical, spiritual, financial" (there is that phrase again!). A tantalizing promise, an offer too good to miss. "One person needed a house..."⁷³

To create still deeper confidence, Oral Roberts relates the experiences of his earlier life. "In 1947 I began with my Bible and my hands." He shows his hands, as Christ must have shown his hands to Thomas. "I will touch you with the same hands." Is there some magic in those hands? With those same miracle-working hands he will take "that same old Bible".⁷⁴ Is there magic in that Bible, too? What, exactly, is the role of the Bible in the preaching of this evangelist?

Many of these evangelists emphasize miracles as evidence of God's powerful activity through their ministry. John Wimber initiated a course at Fuller Seminary, MC510 "Signs and Wonders", designed to enhance the role of the miraculous in the ministry of the church. "He [Wimber] believes we should all be operating in the realm of the supernatural."⁷⁵ Pinnock thinks that John Wimber has much to say to the church.

Jesus sent us out to preach and heal, and we have refused to do more than just preach. No wonder we are relatively ineffective. We refuse to believe God in a whole area where he is pledged to answer the prayer of faith...Should not Christians who claim to be following the New Testament be operating more in the power of God than we are now? Do we not serve a God who performs miracles, and displays power among the nations?⁷⁶

It would be unfair to suggest that all neo-conservatives are miracle-hungry. Some, among them Pinnock himself, express serious misgivings about the inordinate highlighting of miracles.

Fakery and manipulation are easy when one is operating in the realm of the supernatural. False claims are difficult to test, and evildoers can mask their actions by an appeal to the Spirit of God...Furthermore, the masses are easily excited by charismania, by an overemphasis on the spectacular, to the detriment of the ongoing works of charity. A generation whipped up to a frenzy by high-tech show biz may well demand charismatic Christianity and be bored with anything else.⁷⁷

The preoccupation with miracles (few seem to be concerned about an appropriate definition of so slippery a term) sometimes borders on the magical. Attention is focused on doing the right things and saying the right words for a miracle to occur. Certain formulas assume almost the status of magic incantations. One has to have heard the miracle worker at the Saskatoon Christian Centre exclaim repeatedly, "Be healed!" to appreciate the power of the utterance. Oral Roberts places his hands on the letters he has received, and asks his television audience to touch the television set. The power of his healing center is real, he assures his viewers. The waves of healing will reach them wherever they are.

Of course, faith healers also have had to learn to cope with disappointments in their ministry. Miracle workers encounter a lot of setbacks.

The majority of people who are prayed for do not, in fact, get well physically....A subtle, but powerful, pressure therefore builds in the Signs and Wonders mentality to see miracles where there are none.⁷⁸

Peter Youngren, who performed faith healing at the Saskatoon Christian Centre recently,⁷⁹ could offer a perfect explanation when many of the people felt that they had not been healed: healing is a process. Some miracles take time. Even if you do not feel presently that anything has changed for you, you must believe that the healing process has begun and will soon be complete. This kind of consolation does have the salutary effect of helping people to live in hope, but it might have been better to encourage them to take to heart the words of the Apostle Paul, "I have learned, in whatever state I am, to be content" (Philippians 4:11).

John Wimber, for one, "focuses not on accepting God's will, but on seeing God's power".⁸⁰ Maybe the Bible verses which are *not* quoted are more significant than the ones that are. The Gethsemane pericope in which Jesus in deep agony accepts the will of the Father, does not appear to be part of the neo-conservative New Testament. In vain does one look in neo-conservative literature for some reference to 1 Corinthians 14:19, "I would rather speak five words with my mind... than ten thousand words in a tongue." By contrast, 1 Corinthians 14:18 is quoted with regularity and with relish: "I thank God that I speak in tongues more than you all."

But in this regard, too, neo-conservatism is not uniform. Terry Winter, for example, makes conscious efforts to keep from being identified with the general run of television evangelists. He clearly spells out a more balanced theology when he speaks about the troubles in family relationships: success is possible, and even achievable, *but there are going to be struggles*.⁸¹

Not everyone in the neo-conservative camp has sold out to the theology of glory.

IV. Attitudes Toward Critical Scholarship

Critical scholarship does not enjoy an untarnished reputation in neo-conservative circles. It would be more correct to say that evangelicals tend to regard critical scholarship with a good

deal of distrust and suspicion. Some of this antipathy no doubt can be explained as a reaction against the severe criticism this movement has received from critical scholars. The conflict has escalated. Sooner or later a beleaguered camp decides that the best defense is attack.

They accuse us of not facing all the facts. We reply that they think this is so only because they themselves do not face all the facts. The boot is on the other foot. They say we fail to meet the claims of reason. We say that they fail to meet the claims of *Christian* reason; and that it is they, rather than we, who weaken the Church's intellectual life, in that they discourage Christians from using their minds in a manner consistent with their faith.⁸²

This is not to say that various evangelical writers have not attempted to employ the tools and methods as well as the results of critical scholarship. One such person is Millard Erickson.

Erickson has much good to say about form criticism and redaction criticism. In this, he claims, he is not alone; "a number of evangelical biblical scholars have argued for a restricted use of redaction criticism."⁸³ Of course, one cannot expect him to embrace critical scholarship without reservation. He observes: "Form criticism, when its presuppositions are not contrary to the perspectives and positions of the biblical authors, is able to help confirm some of the basic assertions of Scripture."⁸⁴

Similarly, he feels, redaction criticism can be useful, under certain circumstances. "Sound redaction criticism can help rebut the destructive use of critical tools and substantiate the veracity of the text."⁸⁵ Erickson is willing to accept the results of the methodology when those results confirm the evangelical position but he rejects them when they do not. He warns that critical scholarship is prone to circular argumentation.⁸⁶ One wonders whether he would be ready to concede the same of evangelical scholarship.

Still, here is a neo-conservative scholar who counsels evangelical theology to "strive to achieve a balance between an uncritical use of critical methodology and simply discarding the method because of its excesses".⁸⁷ It is indeed amazing to see how far Erickson is willing to go in the direction of accepting some of the results of critical scholarship. He is ready to concede that the words of Jesus were not passed on precisely

as uttered. He will grant that the Christian message was adjusted and interpreted for a new generation. He even considers it possible that a particular saying of Jesus recorded in the New Testament was not actually uttered by Jesus during his earthly ministry. Far from being threatened by such a possibility, he is edified by it, since from this "we can gain insight into how the message of Christ can be adapted to new situations".⁸⁸ The possibility that a particular saying of Jesus recorded in the New Testament was not actually uttered by Jesus, does not bother Erickson. The truthfulness of scripture, Erickson contends, is threatened only if the saying in question represents a creation of the evangelist, "an imposition, as it were, of his own view upon Jesus".⁸⁹

What is the difference, then, between what critical scholarship generally holds and what Erickson maintains? Evangelical piety is deathly afraid of the possibility that in the process of the transmission of the Christian message some "human" elements may have intruded themselves. This piety has a deep distrust of everything that might be labelled "human". One wonders whether, were it consistent, evangelical piety would not need to consider the doctrine of the incarnation as a manifestation of "secular humanism". How does evangelical piety visualize the process of communication taking place between God and God's people? Where does the human and the divine intersect? This, in the view of this writer, is where the real problem lies. The new evangelicalism needs a pure and unalloyed message from God.

Neo-conservatism cannot live without a doctrine of inerrancy. "If the sense of the words attributed to Jesus by the writer was not uttered by Jesus, or if the exact words of Jesus are so construed that they have a sense never intended by Jesus, then inerrancy would be threatened."⁹⁰

There is a hidden agenda, then: under no circumstances can inerrancy be relinquished. Redaction criticism is rejected if and when it threatens the concept of inerrancy. It is because inerrancy is accepted a priori, that Erickson must draw the line where he does.

Regarding critical methodology and its results, Erickson cautions: "We need to note that in all these matters we are dealing with probability rather than certainty."⁹¹ Critical scholarship would assert that very same thing. It would be

commendable, could the neo-conservatives speak with equal uncertainty about their own theological conclusions. That, however, they cannot do. Neo-conservative theology must above all else offer certainty.

In a world in which there are so many erroneous conceptions and so many opinions, the Bible is a sure source of guidance. For when correctly interpreted, it can be fully relied upon in all that it teaches. It is a sure, dependable, and trustworthy authority.⁹²

There is a fly in the ointment: "*when correctly interpreted*". The neo-conservative, it appears, *knows* what constitutes a *correct* interpretation. Theological arrogance is evidently not restricted to liberal scholarship.

Erickson's "Guidelines for Evaluating Critical Methods"⁹³ include the following: "We need to be watchful for the presence of circular reasoning."⁹⁴ "We should be watchful for unwarranted inferences."⁹⁵ "We need to be aware of arbitrariness and subjectivity."⁹⁶ "We should be alert to the presence of assumptions regarding an antithetical relationship between faith and reason."⁹⁷ "We need to note that in all these matters we are dealing with probability rather than certainty."⁹⁸

No one will contest that these are excellent criteria; in fact, they are precisely the criteria of *critical* scholarship, and they are precisely what critical scholarship feels is *absent* in much of what neo-conservatism does. If both neo-conservatism and critical scholarship practice what they preach, we should be off to an excellent and fruitful journey of discovery and maturation in the faith. Unfortunately, both sides, liberal and conservative alike, are prone to assert that the beam is in the other person's eye.

V. Conclusion

The new evangelicalism can no longer be ignored. For some, this is a cause for joy, for others a cause for concern, for some of us it is a bit of both. One thing is sure: things will never be the same again. "Signs and Wonders is part of a bigger Pentecostal movement that is changing the church worldwide."⁹⁹

So, when we talk about "neo-conservatism", we cannot speak of "us" versus "them". As we have seen, the movement is not neatly identifiable, it rather represents a trend which has made inroads on practically all the Christian denominations.

Obviously, one should commend a conservative “keep your feet on the ground” stance. Certainly, the writer of this article would want to be labelled “conservative”. Nevertheless, it is necessary to point out for the benefit of us all, that some of the new conservative trends which have become very powerful in the church are not necessarily as fully in harmony with the gospel of Jesus Christ as they are claimed to be.

By all means, let the scriptures function as a corrective to our preconceived notions! All Christians seem to advocate precisely that. Yet, strangely, preconceived notions of what constitutes truth seem to stand as almost insurmountable obstacles in the way of achieving that universally desired objective. *Everyone*, it appears, reads the Bible from the perspective of presuppositions that are not clearly understood.

The tragedy is that, if one may speak of “sides”, each side accuses the *other* of having read into the Bible what in fact is not there. This kind of reciprocal critique has its positive aspect, of course. We need to challenge one another so that we may continue to rethink dearly held positions and to search out “whether these things are really so” (Acts 17:11). As long as this mutual conversation can be continued in a spirit of a questing for knowledge and understanding, one can only affirm and support the ongoing struggle. Unfortunately, however, we tire all too soon, and prefer to separate and splinter off into ever smaller groups of like-minded individuals where it is possible to attack those with whom one disagrees from a position of unchallenged superiority.

There is no doubt that neo-conservatism can make a positive contribution. It can exert a steadying influence in a “windy” theological climate. But neo-conservatism is subject to excesses of its own. It would no doubt be advantageous for the church if within it there could coexist various groupings and orientations which call each other to account. In this way, the excesses of either “side” could continue to be checked. Unfortunately, at least in the perception of this writer, the neo-conservative stance more often than not prefers to withdraw from dialogue, priding itself on a correct understanding of scripture.

Can we avoid a hardening of positions and a parting of the ways?

Notes

- 1 Jimmy Swaggart, "The Death of a Nation", a sermon broadcast from Cobo Hall, Detroit, Michigan, January, 1985.
- 2 Clark H. Pinnock, "The Incredible Resurrection: A Mandate for Faith", *Christianity Today*, 23/13, 6 April 1979, 13.
- 3 Tim Stafford, "Testing the Wine from John Wimber's Vineyard", *Christianity Today*, 30/11, 8 August 1986, 17-22.
- 4 Clark H. Pinnock, "A Revolutionary Promise", *Christianity Today*, 30/11, 8 August 1986, 19.
- 5 *Christianity Today*, 30/3, 21 February 1986, 48.
- 6 Ben Patterson, "Cause for Concern", *Christianity Today*, 30/11, 8 August 1986, 20.
- 7 Lowell D. Streiker, *The Gospel Time Bomb: Ultrafundamentalism and the Future of America* (Buffalo: Prometheus Books, 1984) 96.
- 8 J.I. Packer, "Fundamentalism" and the Word of God (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1958) 87.
- 9 Luke's phrase *prenes genomenos* is variously translated "falling headlong", "fell forward on the ground", "fell to his death"; see RSV, KJV, TEV, Jerusalem Bible, NEB, NIV; Phillips leaves the phrase untranslated.
- 10 Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1983) 13.
- 11 *Ibid.* book flap.
- 12 *Ibid.* 238.
- 13 *Ibid.* 238.
- 14 *Ibid.* 238.
- 15 Josh McDowell, *Evidence That Demands a Verdict* (Campus Crusade for Christ, 1972) 377.
- 16 S.L. Johnson, "The Triumphal Entry of Christ", *Bibliotheca Sacra*, 495, 1967, 218-229.
- 17 R.C.H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Matthew's Gospel* (Columbus: Wartburg Press, 1943) 801.
- 18 Lenski, *Matthew*, 806f.
- 19 *Ibid.* 807.
- 20 *Ibid.* 808.
- 21 McDowell, *Evidence*, 377, "Genealogy of Jesus".
- 22 Don Bashan, "The Value of Speaking in Tongues", *A Handbook on Holy Spirit Baptism* (Monroeville, Pa.: Whitaker Books [n.d.]), reprinted in Erling Jorstad, *The Holy Spirit in Today's Church, A Handbook of the New Pentecostalism* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1973) 85.
- 23 Robert D. Preus, "Notes on the Inerrancy of Scripture", in John Warwick Montgomery, *Crisis in Lutheran Theology*, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1967) 40.
- 24 McDowell, *Evidence*, 76.

- 25 There are no parables in John.
- 26 Erickson notes the peculiarly Johannine eschatology and the absence of such themes as the kingdom of God and repentance.
- 27 George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974) 215.
- 28 Ibid. 215.
- 29 Ibid. 220f.
- 30 See *Luther's Works*, American Ed., vol. 35.
- 31 Packer, "Fundamentalism", 95.
- 32 Peter Youngren in his address at the Christian Centre Ministries in Saskatoon, 5 October 1986.
- 33 Pinnock, "Resurrection", 13.
- 34 Ibid. 15.
- 35 Jimmy Swaggart, in his sermon "Death of a Nation", broadcast in January 1985.
- 36 Billy Graham, "Biblical Authority in Evangelism", *Christianity Today*, 1/1, 15 October 1956, 6.
- 37 Packer, 94f.
- 38 Erickson, *Theology*, 91. Almost identical feelings are expressed by Clark Pinnock, "The Case Against Form Criticism", *Christianity Today*, 9/21, 16 July 1965, 12.
- 39 Erickson, *Theology*, 92.
- 40 Lenski, *Matthew*, 1027.
- 41 R.C.H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Mark's Gospel* (Columbus: Wartburg Press, 1946) 196ff.
- 42 Even Lenski acknowledges this problem in his commentary on Matthew.
- 43 B.R. Lakin in his sermon "How I Know That There Is a God", originally broadcast 30 September 1979, and rebroadcast on the Jerry Falwell television program in January 1985. Oral Roberts in his "Expect a Miracle!" broadcast in January 1985, goes even further and asserts that he has been given specific prophecies about things which will happen in the near future.
- 44 McDowell, *Evidence*, 147.
- 45 Ibid. 163.
- 46 Ibid. 165.
- 47 Ibid. 167.
- 48 Ibid. 173. McDowell adds his own comment: "The blood and water which came forth from His pierced side are evidences that the heart had literally burst."
- 49 Samuele Bacchiocchi, "The Imminence of Christ's Return", *Signs of the Times*, February 1987, 10.
- 50 Preus, "Inerrancy", 42.
- 51 Ibid. 45.
- 52 Ibid. 46.
- 53 Erickson, *Theology*, 234.

- 54 Ibid. 235.
- 55 McDowell, *Evidence*, 76.
- 56 Ladd, *Theology*, 221f.
- 57 Lenski, *Matthew*, 1027.
- 58 Ibid. 1028.
- 59 Pinnock, "Promise", 19.
- 60 Jimmy Swaggart in his television program "A Study in the Word", dealing with the topic "NEA, Trojan Horse of American Education", broadcast in January 1985.
- 61 Jimmy Swaggart in his address "The Real Child Abusers", broadcast from Anchorage, Alaska, in January 1985.
- 62 Jerry Falwell in his sermon "What Is the Level of Your Commitment?", broadcast in "The Old Time Gospel Hour" program, January 1985.
- 63 Rex Humbard in his sermon "What Is in Your Hand?", broadcast in January 1985.
- 64 The book is advertised on the Martin and Richard DeHaan television show "Day of Discovery", broadcast from Grand Rapids, Michigan. No publication data are given.
- 65 Jimmy Swaggart in his address "The Real Child Abusers", broadcast from Anchorage, Alaska, in January 1985.
- 66 Ibid.
- 67 Terry Winter on "The Terry Winter Show", January 1985.
- 68 Stafford, 18.
- 69 Ibid. 19.
- 70 With these words Oral Roberts regularly begins his "Expect a Miracle!" program.
- 71 Rex Humbard in his sermon "What Is in Your Hand?", broadcast in January 1985.
- 72 The books are advertised on the Rex Humbard television show. No publication data are given.
- 73 Rex Humbard in his sermon "What Is in Your Hand?", broadcast in January 1985.
- 74 Oral Roberts in his "Expect a Miracle!" broadcast, January 1985.
- 75 Pinnock, "Promise", 19.
- 76 Ibid. 19.
- 77 Ibid. 19.
- 78 Patterson. 20.
- 79 On 5 October 1986.
- 80 Stafford, 20.
- 81 Terry Winter on "The Terry Winter Show", January 1985.
- 82 Packer, *Fundamentalism*, 127.
- 83 Erickson, *Theology*, 100.
- 84 Ibid. 90.
- 85 Ibid. 100.
- 86 Ibid. 102, and see below.
- 87 Ibid. 91.

- 88 Ibid. 100.
- 89 Ibid. 102.
- 90 Ibid. 101, quoting Paul. D. Feinberg, "The Meaning of Inerrancy", in *Inerrancy*, ed. Norman Geisler (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979) 301.
- 91 Erickson, *Theology*, 104.
- 92 Ibid. 240.
- 93 Ibid. 102f.
- 94 Ibid. 102.
- 95 Ibid. 103.
- 96 Ibid. 103.
- 97 Ibid. 103.
- 98 Ibid. 104.
- 99 Stafford, 22.