

FOUNDATIONS OF
EVANGELICAL THEOLOGY

LIGHT IN A DARK PLACE

THE DOCTRINE OF SCRIPTURE



JOHN S.
FEINBERG

JOHN S. FEINBERG, GENERAL EDITOR

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LIGHT IN A DARK PLACE

THE DOCTRINE OF SCRIPTURE



JOHN S. FEINBERG

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To
Colleagues, Past and Present,
in the
Department of Biblical and Systematic Theology
At Trinity Evangelical Divinity School,
This Volume Is Dedicated
with Undying Love, Respect,
and Appreciation

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Why another series of works on evangelical systematic theology? This is an especially appropriate question in light of the fact that evangelicals are fully committed to an inspired and inerrant Bible as their final authority for faith and practice. But since neither God nor the Bible change, why is there a need to redo evangelical systematic theology?

Systematic theology is not divine revelation. Theologizing of any sort is a human conceptual enterprise. Thinking that it is equal to biblical revelation misunderstands the nature of both Scripture and theology! Insofar as our theology contains propositions that accurately reflect Scripture or match the world and are consistent with the Bible (in cases where the propositions do not come *per se* from Scripture), our theology is biblically based and correct. But even if all the propositions of a systematic theology are true, that theology would still not be equivalent to biblical revelation! It is still a human conceptualization of God and his relation to the world.

Although this may disturb some who see theology as nothing more than doing careful exegesis over a series of passages, and others who see it as nothing more than biblical theology, those methods of doing theology do not somehow produce a theology that is equivalent to biblical revelation either. Exegesis is a human conceptual enterprise, and so is biblical theology. All the theological disciplines involve human intellectual participation. But human intellect is finite, and hence there is always room for revision of systematic theology as knowledge increases. Though God and his word do not change, human understanding of his revelation can grow, and our theologies should be reworked to reflect those advances in understanding.

Another reason for evangelicals to rework their theology is the nature of systematic theology as opposed to other theological disciplines. For example, whereas the task of biblical theology is more to describe biblical teaching on whatever topics Scripture addresses, systematics should make a special point to relate its conclusions to the issues of one's day. This does not mean that the systematician ignores the topics biblical writers address. Nor does it mean that theologians should warp Scripture to address issues it never intended to address. Rather it suggests that in addition to expounding what biblical writers teach, the theologian should attempt to take those biblical teachings (along with the biblical mind-set) and apply them to issues that are especially confronting the church in the theologian's own day. For example, 150 years ago, an evangelical

theologian doing work on the doctrine of man would likely have discussed issues such as the creation of man and the constituent parts of man's being. Such a theology might even have included a discussion about human institutions such as marriage, noting in general the respective roles of husbands and wives in marriage. However, it is dubious that there would have been any lengthy discussion with various viewpoints about the respective roles of men and women in marriage, in society, and in the church. But at our point in history and in light of the feminist movement and the issues it has raised even among many conservative Christians, it would be foolish to write a theology of man (or, should we say, a "theology of humanity") without a thorough discussion of the issue of the roles of men and women in society, the home, and the church.

Because systematic theology attempts to address itself not only to the timeless issues presented in Scripture but also to the current issues of one's day and culture, each theology will to some extent need to be redone in each generation. Biblical truth does not change from generation to generation, but the issues that confront the church do. A theology that was adequate for a different era and different culture may simply not speak to key issues in a given culture at a given time. Hence, in this series we are reworking evangelical systematic theology, though we do so with the understanding that in future generations there will be room for a revision of theology again.

How, then, do the contributors to this series understand the nature of systematic theology? Systematic theology as done from an evangelical Christian perspective involves study of the person, works, and relationships of God. As evangelicals committed to the full inspiration, inerrancy, and final authority of Scripture, we demand that whatever appears in a systematic theology correspond to the way things are and must not contradict any claim taught in Scripture. Holy Writ is the touchstone of our theology, but we do not limit the source material for systematics to Scripture alone. Hence, whatever information from history, science, philosophy, and the like is relevant to our understanding of God and his relation to our world is fair game for systematics. Depending on the specific interests and expertise of the contributors to this series, their respective volumes will reflect interaction with one or more of these disciplines.

What is the rationale for appealing to other sources than Scripture and other disciplines than the biblical ones? Since God created the universe, there is revelation of God not only in Scripture but in the created order as well. There are many disciplines that study our world, just as does theology. But since the world studied by the nontheological disciplines is the world created by God, any data and conclusions in the so-called secular disciplines that accurately reflect the real world are also relevant to our understanding of the God who made that world. Hence, in a general sense, since all of creation is God's work, noth-

ing is outside the realm of theology. The so-called secular disciplines need to be thought of in a theological context, because they are reflecting on the universe God created, just as is the theologian. And, of course, there are many claims in the nontheological disciplines that are generally accepted as true (although this does not mean that every claim in nontheological disciplines is true, or that we are in a position with respect to every proposition to know whether it is true or false). Since this is so, and since all disciplines are in one way or another reflecting on our universe, a universe made by God, any true statement in any discipline should in some way be informative for our understanding of God and his relation to our world. Hence, we have felt it appropriate to incorporate data from outside the Bible in our theological formulations.

As to the specific design of this series, our intention is to address all areas of evangelical theology with a special emphasis on key issues in each area. While other series may be more like a history of doctrine, this series purposes to incorporate insights from Scripture, historical theology, philosophy, etc., in order to produce an up-to-date work in systematic theology. Though all contributors to the series are thoroughly evangelical in their theology, embracing the historical orthodox doctrines of the church, the series as a whole is not meant to be slanted in the direction of one form of evangelical theology. Nonetheless, most of the writers come from a Reformed perspective. Alternate evangelical and nonevangelical options, however, are discussed.

As to style and intended audience, this series is meant to rest on the very best of scholarship while at the same time being understandable to the beginner in theology as well as to the academic theologian. With that in mind, contributors are writing in a clear style, taking care to define whatever technical terms they use.

Finally, we believe that systematic theology is not just for the understanding. It must apply to life, and it must be lived. As Paul wrote to Timothy, God has given divine revelation for many purposes, including ones that necessitate doing theology, but the ultimate reason for giving revelation and for theologians doing theology is that the people of God may be fitted for every good work (2 Tim. 3:16–17). In light of the need for theology to connect to life, each of the contributors not only formulates doctrines but also explains how those doctrines practically apply to everyday living.

It is our sincerest hope that the work we have done in this series will first glorify and please God, and, secondly, instruct and edify the people of God. May God be pleased to use this series to those ends, and may he richly bless you as you read the fruits of our labors.

John S. Feinberg
General Editor

Scripture is both the hallmark and foundation of evangelical theology. This is so because evangelicals believe that it is the word of God. Since the subject matter of theology is God's person, works, and relationships, any theologian needs to consult sources as he or she prepares to write a theology. For evangelical theologians, the primary and governing source is Scripture. This is so because it presents God's views on the subject matter of theology. As omniscient, God knows more about any and every subject than does anyone else, and since the subject matter of theology is God himself, of course he knows more about that topic than anyone.

It would be, therefore, wise for any theologian to take Scripture seriously, if he or she wants to know what to say about the various doctrines of systematic theology. Such is at least part of the rationale for Scripture being so foundational to evangelical theology. Of course, this mind-set also means that evangelical theologians turn to Scripture as their governing source, because they actually believe that it is what God himself has said about the topics it covers. And if it is, then it must tell us the truth about whatever it addresses. Of course, as the word of the supreme ruler in the universe and as true, it also possesses supreme authority over all of life.

What, then, does Scripture tell us about its own nature? Suppose, for example, Scripture says that it offers some general religious ideas, words expressing how much various writers have loved and appreciated God, a few *suggestions* about human behavior, and some history about God's interaction with various people (because such stories are interesting, even if they teach us nothing about what God expects of us). That kind of Bible might offer stimulating reading, but it wouldn't help us in addressing life's most pressing and significant issues.

On the other hand, suppose Scripture tells us that it is God's inerrant word and that it has supreme and binding authority on all people. Yes, it offers descriptions of God's character and actions, and explains how humans can establish a saving relationship with God, and tells us what sort of behavior is acceptable in God's eyes, but none of this is simply information that we can merely be aware of intellectually and then push aside as we go on with our lives on our own terms. It has binding authority on every human. We can reject it, ignore it, or obey only the parts of it that we like, but nonetheless, we are accountable to what it teaches, and will be judged by what we have done with what it commands.

In the previous two paragraphs I have described two very different views of what Scripture is and of how we should relate to it. Which description fits what Scripture actually says about itself? That is the subject of the doctrine of Scripture and therefore of this book. As we shall see, the second vision of Scripture's nature is the one it affirms. But, then, it should be clear as to why evangelicals take Scripture so seriously, and why it must be the basis of evangelical systematic theology. If evangelicals are right in their assessment of Scripture's nature, then of course it must be the primary source material and final authority on what anyone should believe about any and every area of systematic theology. Hence, the volumes in this theology series are unapologetically grounded in Scripture and take as their main task the articulation of what Scripture teaches about the particular doctrinal locus under consideration.

Clearly, the doctrine of Scripture is a most important subject. A book on this doctrine certainly needs to "get it right" about what we should believe about this book. Given the importance of the task at hand and the need to reflect accurately what Scripture teaches about itself, lest we misrepresent God and what he has said about this book, it would be easy to pass on the chance to write a volume on Scripture. But I welcome the challenge, in part because it is such an important topic, and so basic to anything else one might do in systematic theology. And, I embrace this task, because I love Scripture, and I know from firsthand experience how powerful and transforming this book can be in individual lives. I am hoping that as you read the chapters of this book and come to see better what a treasure Scripture is and also understand everything God has done to give it to us, your love and appreciation to God will also grow, and that you will commit, or recommit, yourself to reading and obeying what Scripture teaches and requires!

A book of this nature and length does not, of course, get written with little thought and effort. And it certainly cannot be done without the help of many people. Some people have been especially significant in helping me to produce this volume. First, I must thank Crossway for its support of the whole Foundations of Evangelical Theology Series and of my doing this volume on Scripture. We began this series many years ago. A lesser publisher would have "pulled the plug" on the series long ago, assuming that they would have ever agreed to contract it in the first place—I have doubts about whether any other publisher would have done so. As to this volume on Scripture, Crossway has been enthusiastic, patient, and encouraging to me all along the way as I have worked on it! And a special word of thanks is due to Bill Deckard, the very best academic editor I've ever known and worked with! His knowledge of grammar, proper style, and everything else that goes along with academic books is unmatched. And his care in attending to everything—big issues or small—gives

authors like me the assurance that what we want to say will be presented as accurately and clearly as possible.

Next, I want to thank the administration and board of Trinity Evangelical Divinity School for granting me sabbaticals and leaves of absence to work on this volume. In fact, the whole book was produced during a series of sabbaticals approved by Trinity, so this volume is indeed a result of Trinity's generous sabbatical policy, and I am extremely grateful for Trinity's generous support and encouragement.

Then, a very special word of appreciation goes to my friend and colleague Graham A. Cole. He read and commented on an earlier version of the whole book, and those comments have been extremely helpful in bringing the book into its present form. This volume is definitely better because of his interaction and advice! Errors that still remain are, of course, mine and not his.

I am also extremely grateful to many graduate student assistants who helped me tremendously in gathering articles and books that I needed to read. Without their efforts, it would have taken much longer to complete this work. Most of them were doctoral students in systematic theology at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, and they are already doing significant work in the discipline of systematic theology. They have great potential as teachers and scholars, and I find that very encouraging!

Then, I have a special appreciation and thanks for colleagues, past and present, in the Department of Biblical and Systematic Theology at Trinity. All of them are fully devoted to Scripture as God's inspired and inerrant word, and they are most able defenders of an evangelical understanding of Scripture. Having them as friends, colleagues, and dialogue partners has always been extremely helpful to me and my work. And, their interest and many first-rate publications on the doctrine of Scripture are not only instructive about the doctrine, but have also inspired me as I have worked on this volume. As every academic knows, whom you have to talk with about what you are thinking and writing makes a huge difference in what you can produce. Being in this environment for more than three decades has made a huge contribution to me in every way. So it is only fitting and proper that I dedicate this volume to all of my department colleagues, past and present, at Trinity!

As you read this volume, may your appreciation of God grow, and may you be strongly encouraged not only to study Scripture more earnestly and consistently, but also to obey what it teaches! And may your heart be warmed and your life guided by Scripture so that you become the prosperous/happy/blessed person described in Psalm 1! That is possible if your life is firmly rooted and grounded in Scripture, a light in a dark place!

John S. Feinberg
August 2017

A B B R E V I A T I O N S

ANF	<i>Ante-Nicene Fathers</i>
BSac	<i>Bibliotheca Sacra</i>
BBR	<i>Bulletin for Biblical Research</i>
CSR	<i>Christian Scholar's Review</i>
CTJ	<i>Calvin Theological Journal</i>
CTQ	<i>Concordia Theological Quarterly</i>
EvQ	<i>Evangelical Quarterly</i>
EBC	<i>The Expositor's Bible Commentary</i>
GTJ	<i>Grace Theological Journal</i>
ICC	<i>International Critical Commentary</i>
JSNTSup	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series</i>
JSOTSup	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series</i>
JETS	<i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
JTI	<i>Journal of Theological Interpretation</i>
LCC	<i>Library of Christian Classics</i>
MAJT	<i>Mid-America Journal of Theology</i>
MSJ	<i>Master's Seminary Journal</i>
NPNF ²	<i>Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Series 2</i>
RelS	<i>Religious Studies</i>
RevExp	<i>Review and Expositor</i>
ThTo	<i>Theology Today</i>
TJ	<i>Trinity Journal</i>
WTJ	<i>Westminster Theological Journal</i>

INTRODUCTION

Life without light is unthinkable, impossible! “God is light, and in Him there is no darkness at all” (1 John 1:5). And God “lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see” (1 Tim. 6:16 NIV 1984). So to try to live without God and to embrace moral and spiritual blindness instead would be as foolish as if someone with perfect natural vision deliberately blinded himself, choosing instead to live the rest of his natural life in absolute darkness.

Of course, some people through no fault of their own are physically blind. We admire their courage and tenacity as they struggle each day to handle this infirmity and try to live anything like a normal life. It is hard to believe, however, that anyone who can see would choose a life of blindness, or that any blind person wouldn’t gladly choose to see, if merely willing it could make it so.

As debilitating as natural blindness is, spiritual blindness is even worse. For it seeks to defeat us during our natural life on earth, and ruin our eternity. Darkness challenges every aspect of our existence.

God, of course, fully knows this; we would expect nothing else. Moreover, our beneficent creator knows exactly what we need in each area of life, and he has provided it. In particular, God gave three special expressions of light to meet life’s most pressing needs.

The first is *creation light*. In Genesis 1, we read that “in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (v. 1). But the earth as initially created was formless and void, and darkness was everywhere (v. 2). So what did God do next? Divide the land from the water? Create any of the creatures that would inhabit this new world? No, God first spoke physical light into existence (v. 3). On the fourth day of creation, he created the sun, moon and stars, and “placed them in the expanse of the heavens to give light on the earth” (v. 17). God knew that no natural life could exist without these lights, and so he created them.

God later created the first man and woman to live in the paradise he had made. As created, they were morally and spiritually right with God, for they

had never sinned. But sadly, they bowed to temptation and chose to disobey the one rule God gave them, plunging themselves and the whole human race into moral and spiritual darkness (Gen. 3:6; Rom. 5:12ff.).

This was and is a problem no mere human can possibly solve. But without a solution the race would be condemned to live forever apart from fellowship with its creator. That would lead only to endless suffering and separation from the blessing and presence of the God who desperately wants a loving relation with us.

Again, God had the solution. The human race needed another infusion of divine light! This time it was *redemption light*. God sent his Son Jesus to pay the penalty that sin had incurred, so that fellowship between God and humans could be reestablished. Jesus said, “I am the light of the world; he who follows Me shall not walk in the darkness, but shall have the light of life” (John 8:12). The darkness of which Jesus spoke is moral and spiritual darkness. Those who have followed Christ by faith can well attest that he is the light of their lives, both now and for eternity.

There is a third form of divine light, *revelation light*, given again to meet humans’ needs. In his second epistle, the apostle Peter wrote about it. Peter wrote this letter toward the end of his life, and he wanted to remind his readers of things he had told them many times before. He began chapter 1 with a reminder that God has given believers everything they need for life and godliness, and he has promised great blessing to those who follow him (2 Pet. 1:3–4). In light of that, they should reject the moral corruption of this world and make every effort to develop Christian virtues. If they do, they will make their “calling and election sure,” and they will be warmly welcomed into Jesus Christ’s “everlasting kingdom” (vv. 5–11 KJV).

Undoubtedly, Peter had encouraged his readers to godly living on many other occasions, but it was right for him to refresh their memories, especially because he knew that before long his mortal life on earth would end and he would go to be with the Lord (vv. 12–14). In verses 16–21 Peter rehearsed for his readers one more time the basis of the hope that he and they had for eternal life and blessing. He knew that salvation with all of its blessings is a marvelously wonderful hope for followers of Christ. But Peter also knew that some things sound much better than they actually are. So, how did Peter know that the gospel and its blessings were true? Perhaps all of that is just a “cleverly devised” story to make people feel secure (v. 16), but has no basis in fact. In the rest of chapter 1, Peter explained why the blessings of which he wrote are not just wishful thinking. They aren’t because there are two guarantees that the gospel is absolutely true.

Peter and the other apostles proclaimed many amazing things about Jesus. How could they be sure that what they said about him was true? Peter says that

he knew that Jesus is all he claimed to be, first, because of the experience that he, James, and John had at the Mount of Transfiguration (vv. 16–18). During most of Jesus’s earthly life, there was little outward, physical evidence that he was the glorious and all-powerful Lord of glory. But Peter, James, and John caught a glimpse of his true majesty when they saw him transfigured, and heard the voice from heaven saying, “This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased” (Matt. 17:5).

We often say that seeing is believing. Peter says, in effect, “I was there, and I saw and heard, and I believed.” Clearly, this event was irrefutable proof for Peter that Jesus was everything he ever claimed to be (2 Pet. 1:17). But Peter knew that only three mere humans witnessed the Mount of Transfiguration event. Peter, James, and John were convinced, and many of their followers believed because they knew these men to be honest and reliable witnesses. But how could others be sure, especially those living at other times and places than in first-century-AD Israel?

In verses 19–21 Peter adds a second reason that anyone can be sure that Jesus is everything he claimed to be. In fact, Peter says that this second evidence is even more certain than his eyewitness testimony (v. 19). That is truly remarkable, for we usually think that there is no better proof of a claim than tangible, empirical evidence, especially eyewitness testimony. What could be stronger proof than that?

Peter’s answer? Scripture! Why? Because Scripture, though penned by mere humans, was inspired by God, who supervised the writers and their writing at every step along the way (vv. 20–21). Peter had no doubts about what he saw and heard as he followed Jesus, but he knew that even eyewitness testimony can sometimes be mistaken. Peter and the other apostles weren’t wrong about what they saw and heard Jesus do and say. But even so, Peter says that Scripture is even more certainly true than their eyewitness testimony! Whatever Scripture says is unassailably true, and hence, totally reliable—something all can stake their very life on!

Because Scripture is even more certainly true than the most reliable eyewitness testimony, Peter advised his readers (v. 19), “you will do well to pay attention” to it, “as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts.” There you have it—the third form of light God gave to guide and protect humans as we live in this world of moral and spiritual darkness: Scripture is a light in a dark place.

From the earliest days of my life, through my childhood and adolescence, and throughout my adult life, Scripture has been the foundation of my life. My parents taught my siblings and me that no one is more important than God, and so if God says anything, we must give it our undivided attention, and obey

it. Like others, my life has been blessed with many “light places,” but there have been “dark places” as well. What has always remained the same, regardless of circumstance, is the light that Scripture casts upon my way.

And so, I have always loved Scripture, especially as I grew and studied it more. In my preaching and teaching ministries, Scripture has always been and continues to be the foundation and content of whatever I say. In addition, as a teacher of theology, I have the extremely great privilege of teaching others about Scripture.

Scripture is a ray of divine light in a dark place, but we can and should say much more about it. How did Scripture ever come into existence? Why is it so important that we learn and live its content? Can Scripture be trusted in what it says, regardless of the topic?

All of these questions and more demarcate the issues that must be addressed in a book on the doctrine of Scripture. I write unapologetically from a firmly embraced evangelical stance. That means, in part, that as a theologian, I assume that apologists and philosophers of religion have made the case that Scripture is trustworthy in whatever it says about any topic. Given that belief, what does Scripture teach about itself? That is the subject of this volume. I contend that Scripture claims to be the inspired, inerrant, and powerful revealed word of God. Moreover, Scripture also affirms that its basic message of how to establish and grow a positive relationship with God is understandable, and that the Holy Spirit stands ever ready to move and enable each person to apply Scripture’s teachings to his or her life so as to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. I believe all of these things about Scripture, and more, because, as I shall show in this book, they are what Scripture teaches about itself. I also know it to be true from personal experience, and from seeing Scripture’s transforming power in the lives of people who obey it.

Evangelicals are people of the book—the Bible. The hallmark of evangelical theology is its contention that Scripture is God’s inspired and inerrant word. Given that belief, evangelical theology strives to be consistent with whatever Scripture claims. And there is very good reason for this understanding of and approach to theology. Systematic theology covers the person, works, and relationships of God. Of course, a crucial question then becomes, what is theology’s source material? Nonevangelical theology typically is based on tradition, human reason, and/or some current worldview or philosophy. Scripture may also be a source, but it isn’t the touchstone of nonevangelical thinking. If Scripture disagrees with the prevailing philosophy and mind-set of the nonevangelical thinker, Scripture is adjusted to match the theologian’s vision of reality and God’s place in it.

Evangelical theology is different. While it may use as source material data from various disciplines of study, its primary and governing source is Scripture. Moreover, scriptural teaching, properly interpreted, is the touchstone for anything that goes into an evangelical theology. If the data one proposes to include in theology disagree with Scripture, the data must be either rejected or revised to fit the vision of reality that Scripture presents.

Why does evangelical theology take this approach? The answer is rather simple. The subject matter of theology is God and his relationships with all creation. Who would know the most about what should go into a conceptual scheme that aims to articulate an accurate picture of God? No one knows as much as God does! So, then, if God tells us something about himself, his deeds, his relationships, and anything else he cares to communicate, that information should be the most complete and accurate information available, and hence, it should be the foundation of our theology.

Where can one find such information? That's where Scripture enters the picture. Though Scripture is not the only place God has revealed himself, it is a marvelously thorough, accurate, and clear deposit of the things God most wants us to know about himself, ourselves, and our relation to him. Evangelicals believe that Scripture is God's word, and since no one knows more than God, we would do well to base our thinking on God's word, the Bible. This is why Scripture must be the foundation of evangelical theology, provide its main contents, and be the touchstone against which any and every theological claim is judged.

And so, in this volume I intend to present the various concepts involved in the doctrine of Scripture. I have divided my presentation into four parts. The first deals with how Scripture first came into existence. That is, it covers the creation of Scripture. The concepts of revelation and inspiration explain how Scripture came into existence. The second section treats various attributes or characteristics that are true of Scripture. The discussion will focus on the inerrancy and authority of God's word.

Of course, a discussion of Scripture invariably addresses how it was decided which books would be part of Scripture. Thus, the third portion of our study investigates the boundaries of Scripture. The issue in view is, of course, canonicity. The key question is, what criteria were used to decide which books should be part of the Bible and which should not be?

The final section of this book covers the usefulness of Scripture. In this section I shall discuss various reasons why Scripture can accomplish so many things in people's lives. Some chapters in this section will focus on qualities of Scripture, so they could easily be placed in the second section of the book. But I have placed chapters such as the ones on Scripture's clarity, power, and

sufficiency in this fourth section because all of these attributes of Scripture are so crucial to understanding and applying Scripture in individual lives. Of course, without the ministry of the Holy Spirit, Scripture is a “dead letter” to its recipients. Thus, this portion of the book also includes a chapter on the Holy Spirit’s illumination of the minds and hearts of Scripture’s readers to Scripture’s message.

Clearly, in the doctrine of Scripture much more is at stake than merely “filling in” the details of this doctrinal locus in an overall system of theology. What is at stake is what one thinks Scripture to be, how one understands the person of God, and whether one is required to live as Scripture prescribes. If Scripture is merely a compendium of religiously pious thoughts of religiously sensitive people and nothing more, then we may find it inspirational and instructive, but we shouldn’t feel any urgency to live in accord with its teachings. But if Scripture is, as evangelicals and their theology have affirmed throughout history, the very word of our almighty, omniscient, and all-loving God, then the only sane choice is to let it enlighten our thinking and our actions each and every day.

As you read this book, I hope you will be thrilled and overwhelmed with appreciation to God for everything he has done to give us Scripture! Just as the giving of his word over so many years to so many writers in a variety of circumstances is truly remarkable, so is God’s preservation of his word, despite attempts to silence and even eradicate it altogether! Because God has done that, Scripture can be light in the various dark (and light) places of our lives. May God grant that as you read, you will be thankful that God has not left us to wander and stumble through life without knowing the way to him, and may you be even more determined than before to follow the precepts for the God-pleasing life that Peter exhorted his readers to pursue. Christianity and the Christian way of life are not some cleverly constructed myths and legends. They are truth and they give abundant life and eternal life, because they follow God’s light, Scripture!

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