

***Anti-Semitism, Inclusivism and The Rejection of Inerrancy***  
***The Confluence of Three Defining Aspects on New Perspective on Paul Theology***

By Dennis M. Swanson  
Library Director and Director of Israel Studies  
*The Master's Seminary*

*Introduction*

The theological system that is *The New Perspective on Paul* (NPP)<sup>1</sup> has become one of the most discussed and written upon subjects in evangelical theology in the last several decades. The literature is extensive and expanding, showing little sign of decreasing in the immediate future.<sup>2</sup>

Although NPP has been more thoroughly formalized and expounded, particularly in evangelical circles, by James D. G. Dunn and N. T. Wright, the movement was really put into motion by E. P. Sanders and his work, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*.<sup>3</sup> In this seminal work, Sanders postulates that the conclusions of traditional Christian scholarship related to the historical and theological constructs of Rabbinic Judaism in the Second

---

<sup>1</sup> The term *New Perspective on Paul* was coined by James D. G. Dunn in his key article "The New Perspective on Paul," *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 65:1 (1983), 95-122, and is now commonly acknowledged title of this theological construct. There remains a great deal of variety within NPP theology. Sanders and Dunn have been likened to the root and Wright to the trunk, but many branches have gone in varying directions.

<sup>2</sup> See our own "Bibliography of The New Perspective on Paul," *The Master's Seminary Journal* 16:2 (Fall 2005), 317-24.

<sup>3</sup> E. P. Sanders. *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion*. Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1977.

Temple Period; particularly as they relate to the doctrine of justification, are wrong.

“Sanders basic claim is not so much that Paul has been misunderstood as that the picture of Judaism drawn from Paul’s writings is historically false, not simply inaccurate in part but fundamentally mistaken.”<sup>4</sup> The importance and influence of this work have been sweeping. Farnell states that “its impact on Pauline studies has led to a collapse of Reformation consensus regarding Paul’s view of the law in the learned centers of theology.”<sup>5</sup> Dunn, while disagreeing with various portions of Sanders’ conclusions, nonetheless affirms that this is the “only work written in the last decade or two” which succeeds in “breaking the mould of Pauline studies.”<sup>6</sup>

While most of the salient aspects of NPP have been examined and, in large part, thoroughly refuted on an exegetical, theological and historical basis<sup>7</sup>, one of the underlying assumptions has received much less attention. When Sanders wrote *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, he stated that

Once the question of polemics in connection with Rabinnic Judaism is raised, the reader may wonder whether or not the topic is anti-Semitism. It is not. . . . The history of the relationship between scholarly representations of Judaism and anti-Semitism is quite complex, but the present work is not a contribution to unraveling it. The charges of misunderstanding [that he makes throughout the book] should be read simply as that and no more.<sup>8</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> Dunn, “New Perspective on Paul,” 97.

<sup>5</sup> F. David Farnell, “New Perspective on Paul: Basic Tenets, History and Presuppositions.” *The Master’s Seminary Journal* 16:2 (Fall 2005), 204.

<sup>6</sup> Dunn, “New Perspective on Paul,” 97.

<sup>7</sup> There is an impressive array of literature answering NPP assertions. Key books are the two volume set *Justification and Variegated Nomism: A Fresh Appraisal of Paul and Second Temple Judaism*. Volume 1: *The Complexities of Second Temple Judaism*; Volume 2: *The Paradoxes of Paul*. D. A. Carson, Peter T. O’Brien and Mark A. Seifrid, eds. (Grand Rapids, MI: Bakers Books, 2001, 2004). Guy Prentiss Waters. *Justification and the New Perspective on Paul: A Review and Response*. (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 2004); Thomas R. Shreiner. *Paul, Apostle of God’s Glory in Christ: A Pauline Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2002). Additionally, *The Master’s Seminary Journal* 16:2 (Fall 2005), contains five articles from the seminary’s Faculty Chapel Lecture Series on NPP.

<sup>8</sup> Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, xiii.

However, NPP authors have often, either directly or indirectly, made the charge of anti-Semitism both in the interpretation of texts and in the text of Scripture itself. One recent title, *Preaching the Gospels without Blaming the Jews*<sup>9</sup> exemplifies this tendency. In an earlier work the same authors acknowledge their debt to Sanders and state that, “many of us need to acknowledge that we operate with a false picture of Judaism in the world of the first century.”<sup>10</sup> They further claim that the text of Scripture itself is anti-Semitic. “But the fact is that many of the passages in the sacred literature from the pen of the early Christian communities distort and degrade Judaism.”<sup>11</sup>

While most of the NPP are not that explicit in their views of Scripture, many evaluations of NPP have concluded that a reaction against a perceived anti-Semitism is a foundational aspect of their position. Commenting on Sanders, Farnell states, “For Sanders, Christian theology from Paul through the Reformation was primarily a result of anti-Semitism.”<sup>12</sup>

This paper will briefly examine the extent to which the perception of anti-Semitism in the New Testament text and interpretation plays in NPP theology, the resulting inclusivism, and the role the rejection of inerrancy plays in their formulations.

### ***Anti-Semeticism vs. Anti-Judaism***

The discussion of anti-Semitism in the New Testament is one that has been ongoing for sometime, particularly since the end of World War II when the horrors of the

---

<sup>9</sup> Ronald J. Allen and Clark M. Williamson. *Preaching the Gospels without Blaming the Jews: A Lectionary Commentary*. Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 2004.

<sup>10</sup> Clark M. Williamson and Ronald J. Allen. *Interpreting Difficult Texts: Anti-Judaism and Christian Preaching*. (Philadelphia, PA: Trinity Press International, 1989), 28.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>12</sup> Farnell, “New Perspective on Paul,” 229.

Nazi Holocaust came to full light.<sup>13</sup> Something of a collective guilt in Christendom existed as it became clear that leaders of the German Lutheran Church and the Catholic Church, particularly Pope Pius XII, were perceived at least to have done little to stop the atrocity.<sup>14</sup> This is a larger discussion to which many volumes have been written, but the focus began to slowly shift from Christianity “doing nothing to stop” the Holocaust to Christianity and Christian theology actually being responsible, in large part, for the Holocaust happening. As the discussion continued the original blame for this “Christian anti-Semitism” shifted from the Reformers (notably Martin Luther) back to the New Testament documents themselves. The noted Jewish scholar, Samuel Sandmel, who is widely quoted by both Sanders and Dunn, declared that,

Here then emerges the paradox that many a Christian derives his inspiration to nobility from the New Testament and yet the New Testament is a repository for hostility to Jews and Judaism. Many, perhaps even most, Christians are completely free of anti-Semitism, yet Christian Scripture is permeated by it.<sup>15</sup>

One Christian theology professor proclaimed that the church needed to make a “categorical rejection of those passages in the church’s Scriptures that convey anti-Judaic or anti-Semitic images, overtones, innuendos and nuances.”<sup>16</sup> In the same article he admitted that removing the offending passages (by which one assumes he meant printing Bibles without those passages) was probably impossible, so he proposed that,

To achieve this aim the church will need to develop a description of the truth of God that is not slavishly dependent on accepting the New Testament *in toto* as the Word of God. What is required is a theological hermeneutic capable of incorporating the insights of New Testament scholarship in such a way that offending passages form

---

<sup>13</sup> See Craig A. Evans and Donald A. Hagner (eds). *Anti-Semitism and Early Christianity: Issues of Polemic and Faith*. (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1993), xix.

<sup>14</sup> Timothy R. Valentino, “The Homiletical Charge in the Book of Acts: Does Luke Reveal and Anti-Semitism?” *Evangelical Journal* 14:2 (Fall 1996), 72.

<sup>15</sup> Samuel Sandmel. *Anti-Semitism in the New Testament?* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1978), 160.

<sup>16</sup> Robert E. Willis, “A Perennial Outrage: Anti-Semitism in the New Testament.” *Christian Century* 87:33 (Aug 19, 1970), 992.

no part of the church's understanding of its role in history, or of the continuing valid role of Judaism and the Jewish people.<sup>17</sup>

Of the NPP adherents, Wright does not see anti-Semitism within the text itself, but does see it in subsequent church history and Biblical interpretation. He states,

Lots of those who joined the Sanders bandwagon, no least in America, did so because they shared his post-Holocaust re-evaluation of Christian-Jewish relations, and the implicit relativism which that engendered. I have spent considerable energy arguing against this possibility, and explaining that Paul's critique of Israel is not based on, or productive of, anti-Judaism as such, still less anti-Semitism, but involves a far more delicately balanced and nuanced theology which cannot be reduced to slogans.<sup>18</sup>

Wright, here as always, is careful with his words and he has generally steered away from anti-Semitic allegations in the New Testament.

Beyond the theological discussions on this subject, the practical application is in the preaching in local churches. The aforementioned work, *Preaching the Gospels Without Offending the Jews*, is a lectionary commentary on how to do just that. Allen and Williamson affirm that the NPP position on Judaism of the New Testament era, particularly the Pharisee's who they claim we have reason "to think the understood forgiveness quite as well as Jesus did."<sup>19</sup> They state,

Sociological studies suggest that the more Christians believe deprecatory things about the Jews in Jesus' time, the more they tend to project those negative images on Jews today. It is the effect of the Gospels on contemporary hearers with which we are primarily concerned with, not the intent of the Gospel writers.<sup>20</sup>

However a few paragraphs later they affirm that they believe that the gospel accounts were a fluid sort of work in progress and "the further removed the Gospels are in time

---

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 991-92.

<sup>18</sup> Wright, "New Perspective," n.p.

<sup>19</sup> Allen and Williamson, *Preaching*, xvi

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., xv-xvi

from Jesus, the more they introduce hostility into the story,”<sup>21</sup> and that “vindictive name calling, typical of many ancient groups, found its way into the Gospels.”<sup>22</sup> While their resulting commentary is well stocked with seemingly important and pertinent historical background information, it is largely an exercise in excising or ignoring passages that offend their sensibilities or explaining the passages in a convoluted manner, their presuppositions about anti-Semitism in the text superseding proper exegesis. But as Bock points out, particularly as it relates to The Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts, the charge of anti-Semitism is untenable,

Luke has been accused of anti-Semitism (J. T. Sanders, 1987). But this is harsh. Luke does argue that the new community is persecuted by those who fail to respond to the message of hope. Jesus and his disciples consistently offer the gospel to the nation and suffer while making the offer. The disciples do not create the division and they do not bring violence to the Jewish community. Those who respond to Jesus are forced out, as the persecution of Acts shows and as Jesus predicted (Luke 12:1-12; 21:12-19). But the new community is not “anti-Jewish”; it is “pro-promise.” Consistently in Acts, the new community continually returns to the synagogue at great risk to offer hope to Israel. These enemies are to be loved and prayed for, as Jesus made clear (Luke 6:27-36; 23:34; Acts 7:60).<sup>23</sup>

To begin with we must come to some understanding as to the terms in question. In the literature anti-Semitism and anti-Judaism are seemingly used inter-changeably. However, the former is racial, while the later is religious, to confuse this distinction is to make the proper discussion of either impossible. As Joel Marcus noted,

...while the books of the New Testament and some other early Christian writings have harsh things to say about certain Jews and Jewish institutions, they do not demonstrate the sort of racial anti-Semitism, the hatred of the Jews simply because

---

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., xxi.

<sup>23</sup> Darrell L. Bock. Luke 1:1-9:50. Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1994), 38-39.

they are Jews, that has so tragically characterized many Christians in subsequent centuries.<sup>24</sup>

Anti-Semitism is to discriminate, show prejudice, or be hostile against Jewish people simply because of who they are racially. Anti-Judaism is to demonstrate opposition to the religious or theological system of Judaism at one level or another. The former is antithetical to true Biblical Christianity, the content of an inerrant Scripture, and the proper interpretation and application of Scripture. The later is the thrust of the New Testament, the part and parcel as to why Christianity exists in the first place. One example of this is the Book of Hebrews, of which Williamson and Allen state, “the structure of Hebrews is itself anti-Jewish,”<sup>25</sup> by which they mean anti-Semitic. However, as F. F. Bruce notes:

The purpose of our author’s exegesis of the Old Testament scripture, as of his general argument, is to establish the finality of the gospel by contrast with all that went before it (more particularly, by contrast with the Levitical cultus), as the way of perfection, the way which alone leads people to God without an barrier or interruption of access. He established the finality of Christianity by establishing the supremacy of Christ in his person and in his work.<sup>26</sup>

Williamson and Allen state, “in a direct and forceful way Hebrews claims that Judaism is a second-rate religion.”<sup>27</sup> But Bruce makes it clear that the main purpose of Hebrews is not to debase Judaism, but to affirm as the rest of the New Testament does, that Christianity provides the only and exclusive means of salvation, other systems, including Judaism do not.

---

<sup>24</sup> Joel Marcus, “Epilogue” in *Anti-Semitism and Early Christaity: Issues of Polemic and Faith*. Craig A. Evans and Donald A. Hagner, eds. (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1993), 291. This is perhaps the most thorough and detailed discussion of the subject and every contributor demonstrates that racial anti-Semitism is foreign to the New Testament writings.

<sup>25</sup> Williamson and Allen, *Interpreting*, 54.

<sup>26</sup> F. F. Bruce. *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (revised). NICNT. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 1990), 29.

<sup>27</sup> Williamson and Allen, *Interpreting*, 54.

This issue is also greatly influenced by the issues related to the debate on the exclusivity or inclusivity of the Gospel. Two things have happened here. The first is that many Christians (including many NPP adherents) have rejected the traditional view that Christianity and the Gospel provide the exclusive means of salvation. John 14:6, perhaps the clearest passage on the exclusivity of the Gospel, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the father but by me,” is reduced by one NPP adherent to an attempt to reassure a doubting disciple. “This statement is a doxology—you should praise God for having been given reliable access to God’s grace. It should not be turned into a hammer with which to beat non-Christians.”<sup>28</sup> Hall, another Christian oriented writer influenced by E. P. Sanders and the general thrust of NPP theology, also rejects exclusivity and promotes the idea of an “inclusive promise” where “Christ is for Gentiles what Torah is for Jews.”<sup>29</sup> Paul is claimed to have taught two ways of salvation, one for Jews and one for Gentiles.<sup>30</sup> Although not a NPP theologian, Anthony Saldarini sums up the inclusivistic search for a Gospel message as he states,

The complexity of God’s world and the profundity of God’s will to save all human, including the four and a half billion who are not members of the Christian Church and will not become so in our lifetimes, require a new Christian theology of how God works through Jesus Christ and his Church in the world today.<sup>31</sup>

---

<sup>28</sup> Allen and Williamson, *Preaching*, 212.

<sup>29</sup> Sidney G. Hall III. *Christian Anti-Semitism and Paul’s Theology*. (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1993), 63.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 129. “My study of Paul reveals one within the New Testament and Christian tradition who embraces Christians as Christians and Jews as Jews. Paul allows Christians to hold to the story of God’s re-presentation of unbounded love in the Christ-event, while also called them to embrace Israel as they hold to their story of God’s re-representation of unbounded love in Torah.” Oddly in this work, while the author has an extended discussion on the Book of Galatians, there is no comment at all on Gal 1:8 and the “another gospel” issue. Also when he runs into issues such as Paul’s discussion of his treatment at the hands of the Jews in 2 Cor 11:24 and Paul’s assertion that the Jews killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets, in 1 Thess 2:14-15, he simply claims (without any evidence or support) that they are a “later textual variant placed into Paul’s argument by a gentile church that interpreted this context as a polemic against the Jewish people” (163, n30).

<sup>31</sup> Anthony J. Saldarini, “Reading Matthew without Anti-Semitism,” in *The Gospel of Matthew in Current Study*, David E. Aune, ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, Publishing, 2001), 184.

NPP is nothing more or less than one of the trails the search for a “New Christian Theology” is taking.

The other thing that has occurred along with the failure to distinguish between anti-Semitism and anti-Judaism is the addition of inflamed rhetoric into the definition. A discussion or presentation of the exclusivity of the Gospel is not only anti-Semitic, it is “hate speech.” Recently the Baseball Chapel leader for the Washington Nationals team was suspended for allegedly affirming that Jews who do not embrace the Gospel would be “doomed.” In the ESPN.com news service report, Rabbi Shmuel Herzfeld, leader of Washington’s oldest Orthodox Synagogue is reported to have said, “The Nationals did a good job about bringing hate into the locker room.”<sup>32</sup> It is patently absurd to conclude that an exclusivistic presentation of the Gospel is some kind of “hate-speech” but such is what the current state of ecumenism has brought things to.<sup>33</sup>

### ***Anti-Semitism in the New Testament: Obviated by Inerrancy***

The “big three” of NPP, Sanders, Dunn, and Wright, despite their differences, do share one thing in common in that they reject the evangelical doctrine of inspiration and inerrancy. For example, speaking of the life of Christ, Sanders states, “The main sources for our knowledge of Jesus himself, the gospel in the New Testament, are, from the point of view of the historian tainted by the fact that there were written by people who

---

<sup>32</sup> ESPN.com “Nationals Suspend Chapel Leader.”

<http://sports.espn.go.com/espn/print?id=2167486&type=story> accessed on 11 Nov 2005. In the article Washington Nationals president, Tony Tavares, was quoted as saying that the chapel leader’s remarks “do not, in any manner, reflect the views or opinions of the Washington Nationals franchise.” Since it is doubtful that the baseball team has an official doctrinal statement, this statement is somewhat meaningless.

<sup>33</sup> While not entirely germane to this discussion it is interesting to note that generally, the Christians who most supportive of the nation of Israel on a political level are also the ones who more generally hold to an exclusive position, while those who are generally much less supportive of Israel at the political level are generally those of the inclusive camp.

intended to glorify their hero.”<sup>34</sup> Sanders further states about the New Testament, particularly the Gospels and Paul’s epistles, “Our sources [the New Testament] leave a lot to be desired.”<sup>35</sup> Dunn is more careful and would be classified as a maximalist in terms of Scripture, however, he also rejects inerrancy<sup>36</sup> and is critical of the conservative position on Scripture that has a “lust for certainty which leads to fundamentalism’s absolutising of its own faith claims and dismissal of all others.”<sup>37</sup> Wright is the most careful in his wording, but he is still a maximalist in his view of Scripture, not an inerrantist.<sup>38</sup> While describing himself both as an “evangelical” and a “good Calvinist,”<sup>39</sup> he does question Pauline authorship of the Pastorals<sup>40</sup> and is ambivalent on the authorship of Ephesians.<sup>41</sup> Wright, in criticizing the radical approaches to New Testament interpretation of John Spong and Barbara Theiring, details his own approach to the text,

We are not committing a gross error in looking to them [the gospel accounts in this case] for serious information about the Jesus who lived within first-century Judaism. Of course we must learn to understand the special language-systems they use. . . We mustn’t imagine that the parables of Jesus describe actual events. We mustn’t imagine that ‘apocalyptic’ language is to be read in a flat literal manner. We mustn’t imagine that the short ‘anecdotes’ which occupy most of Mark’s gospel, and a good bit of Matthew and Like, happened exactly as described. . . If we keep our literary

---

<sup>34</sup> E. P. Sanders. *The Historical Figure of Jesus*. (London: Allen Lane, The Penguin Press, 1993), 3.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>36</sup> James D. G. Dunn, “The Historicity of the Synoptic Gospels” in *Crisis in Christology: Essays in Quest of Resolution*. William D. Farmer, ed. (Livonia, MI: Dove Booksellers, 1995), 216.

<sup>37</sup> James D. G. Dunn. *Jesus Remembered*. Christianity in the Making Volume 1. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 2003), 105.

<sup>38</sup> N. T. Wright. *Who Was Jesus?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 1992), 96-97. Wright’s discussion here related to the Gospel accounts details his position rather clearly.

<sup>39</sup> N. T. Wright, “New Perspective on Paul.” A Paper presented at the 10<sup>th</sup> Edinburgh Dogmatics Conference, Rutherford House, Edinburgh. 25-28 August 2003. n.p. Wright is aware of the issues of inerrancy and also admits that the categories often used by liberals are not helpful. “The word ‘fundamentalism’ has thus become a way of dismissing anyone who places more weight on the Bible than one does oneself. As such, it is fairly useless.” Wright, *Who Was Jesus?* 68.

<sup>40</sup> N. T. Wright. *The Resurrection of the Son of God*. Christian Origins and the Question of God, Volume 3 (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 2003), 267.

<sup>41</sup> N. T. Wright. *What Saint Paul Really Said*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 1997), 8.

wits about us, there is no reason why we should not be able to make a fair start at understanding the Jesus of the gospels as the Jesus of first-century Palestine.<sup>42</sup>

His language here and qualifications are careful, but they amount to a rejection of inerrancy. In NPP inerrancy is replaced with various forms of historical critical theories<sup>43</sup> and Williamson and Allen essentially declare inerrancy to be an anti-Jewish position.<sup>44</sup>

The importance of inspiration and inerrancy in this discussion is important on two fronts. As already noted, a good deal of NPP basic claims about the text are that Paul did not write some of the epistles attributed to him in the New Testament and even in those he did write, there are additions by later “Christian redactors.” They, especially Sanders, follow the assertions George Foot Moore<sup>45</sup> made nearly 80 years ago, that Paul was simply wrong in his understanding and representation of Second Temple Judaism. The Gospel accounts have a theological agenda and the Gospel writers often misrepresent Judaism in the pursuit of that agenda.

Sanders admits that in his research only seven of Paul’s epistles (Romans, I & II Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, I Thessalonians and Philemon) “whose authenticity is unquestioned”<sup>46</sup> are valid sources for studying Paul. He also notes that “since there is little of religious or theological substance in Philemon, we are effectively limited to six

---

<sup>42</sup> Wright, *Who Was Jesus*, 96-97.

<sup>43</sup> Farnell, “New Perspective,” 197ff. It is interesting to also note that Williamson and Allen recognize that their views are incompatible with the doctrine of inerrancy. In *Interpreting Difficult Texts*, they state, “Today scholars who call themselves “evangelical” will often seek inconsistently to shore up their commitments to inerrancy by using such conservative results of historical criticism as fit their views. . . The result incoherently blends inerrancy with the use of the historical critical method, not recognizing that such a method, regardless of its results, cannot get beyond probabilities to absolute truth on historical matters. Using a probabilistic method to support and absolutist position is an odd way of doing one’s theological business” (60).

<sup>44</sup> Williamson and Allen, *Interpreting*, 58-60.

<sup>45</sup> George Foot Moore. *Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era: The Age of Tannaim*, 3 volumes. (Boston: Harvard University Press, 1927; reprint Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997).

<sup>46</sup> Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 431.

letters.”<sup>47</sup> Paul’s recorded words in the Book of Acts are also discounted.<sup>48</sup> There is no attempt to prove this assertion with Sanders simply stating that there is no need to repeat the evidence from other New Testament introductions.<sup>49</sup> This approach to the text is also followed by Dunn and also by Wright (whose emphasis to date has been mainly in the Gospels and the Book of Romans).<sup>50</sup> This view of Scripture is convenient because it allows the interpreter to pick and choose the passages, ignoring or casually dismissing texts that either do no support or are actually contrary to their thesis.<sup>51</sup> It also eliminates the need (or perhaps possibility) for a coherent Biblical theology.

The evangelical doctrine of inspiration and inerrancy that the totality of Scripture, the Old and New Testaments are the product of God. As Warfield stated,

When Paul declares, then, that, “every scripture” or “all scripture” is the product of the Divine breath, “is God-breathed,” he asserts with as much energy as he could employ that Scripture is the product of a specifically Divine operation.<sup>52</sup>

As such the Scripture is infallible and inerrant, the text cannot err in any factual information that it presents. As Feinberg states this must apply to the totality of Scripture,

The doctrine of inspiration applies to *all* and *every* Scripture. That is, the Scriptures in part and in the whole are God’s Word. Note that there is no distinction between those things that are either Christological, salvific, or necessary for faith and practice and those things which are historical, scientific or incidental.<sup>53</sup>

---

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 432.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> For a discussion of the larger issue of hermeneutics and the outworking of the interpretational scheme of NPP, see Robert L. Thomas, “Hermeneutics of the New Perspective on Paul.” *The Master’s Seminary Journal* 16:2 (Fall 2005), 293-316.

<sup>51</sup> E.g. Hall, *Christian Anti-Semitism*, 162. See footnote 22 above for quote.

<sup>52</sup> Benjamin B. Warfield, “Revelation and Inspiration,” in *The Works of Benjamin B. Warfield*, 10 Volumes. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1927; reprint Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1991), 1:79

<sup>53</sup> Paul D. Feinberg, “The Meaning of Inerrancy,” in *Inerrancy*. Norman L. Geisler, ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Books, 1980), 280.

Feinberg then quotes the famous British pastor and expositor, D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones who stated that if such divisions are made, “Who decides what is true? Who Decides what is of value? How can you discriminate between the facts which are true and those that are false?”<sup>54</sup>

The idea that Paul or any of the Biblical writers have misunderstood Judaism or failed to present it accurately is thus rendered invalid, it also invalidates the notion that there were widespread propagandizing additions or deletions from the text in the early Christian period. The consequences of the rejection of inerrancy were detailed by Warfield 100 years ago and serve as an almost prophetic statement today:

Are the New Testament writers trustworthy guides in doctrine? Or are we at liberty to reject their authority, and frame contrary doctrines for ourselves? If the latter pathway is taken, certainly the doctrine of plenary inspiration is not the only doctrine that is “destroyed,” and the labor of revising our current creeds may as well be saved and the shorter process adopted of simply throwing them away. No wonder we are told that the same advance in knowledge which requires a changed view of the Bible necessitates also a whole new theology. If the New Testament writers are not trustworthy as teachers of doctrine and we have to go elsewhere for the source and norm of truth as to God and duty and immortality, it will not be strange if a very different system of doctrine from that delivered by the Scriptures and docilely received from them and by the church results.<sup>55</sup>

The new system of doctrine delivered because of a rejection of inspiration and inerrancy is Covenantal Nomism and NPP.

The second aspect of inerrancy and the question of anti-Semitism in the text is the fact for those who hold to inerrancy and inspiration, the text presents, as Warfield puts it,

---

<sup>54</sup> D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones. *Authority* (Chicago: InterVarsity Press, 1958), 35, as cited by Feinberg.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:180.

“the immediate word of God himself.”<sup>56</sup> That is, the Scripture details God’s nature in its declarations, or as Warfield’s classic essay states what, “Scripture Says, God Says.”<sup>57</sup>

Repeatedly the Biblical writers, particularly the New Testament writers, declare that “there is no partiality with God” (Rom 2:11). In Acts 10, Peter declared that he understood that “God is not one to show partiality” (10:34; also Deut 10:17; 2 Chron 19:7; Gal 2:6; Eph 6:9; Col 3:35; 1 Pet 1:17). Christians are commanded not to hold (or practice) their faith with an attitude of “personal favoritism” (James 2:1, 4, 9). His character is such that he does not “look at the face” of men but judges the hearts.

It is impossible, while holding to inspiration and inerrancy, for one to acknowledge these texts and then propose that other texts are anti-Semitic. It is also incongruous that if some type of textual editing occurred to “introduce hostility into the story”<sup>58</sup> that the texts denouncing prejudice in any form would have stood.

### *Conclusion*

Of course, we are not so naïve to fail to understand that there has been enormous harm done to the Jewish people over the centuries in the name of Christianity and in the name of Christian theology. From the Pogroms to the Holocaust evil men have used Christianity as a pretext to cover the evil of anti-Semitism. Peter warned that even in his day the words of Paul as well as the rest of Scripture had been “distorted” by the “untaught and unstable” leading to their own destruction (2 Pet 3:15-16). True Christians always stand against such evil and the abuse of people at any level.

---

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 1:104.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 1:283-334.

<sup>58</sup> Allen and Williamson, *Preaching*, xvi.

However, *New Perspective on Paul* theology begins by assuming that which is untrue and then tries to solve a problem based on that assumption. The New Testament text, chiefly Paul's epistles and the Gospel accounts are not anti-Semitic, The New Testament writers did not mischaracterize Second Temple Judaism; the Doctrines of Inspiration and Inerrancy make that position impossible.

While Martin Luther did write some repugnant things against the Jews in his later days it is a non-sequitur to then assume that Lutheran, Reformation, or Protestant Theology is then inherently anti-Semitic. As Farnell demonstrates Luther also was warmly received by the Jews in Europe because of his early writings<sup>59</sup> and the reason for this change in attitude is unknown, although widely written on.

The New Perspective is the confluence of several different and foundationally erroneous concepts, founded on the rejection of the inerrancy of the Bible. We it just a theological construct confined to the academy and theological discussions that would be bad enough. But the practical outworking of the movement, re-enforcing erroneous concepts about the Scripture, selective preaching and the inclusivistic message that rejects the Gospel as the only means of salvation are all the worse.

---

<sup>59</sup> Farnell, "New Perspective," 230-32. Using the same logic Arminians often argue against Calvinism based on the singular incident of Calvin's actions or lack thereof in the case of Servetus. One should also be aware of some of the other people and groups Luther wrote against. His use of intemperate and often vicious language was not limited to the Jews.