

THE PIETIST CRITIQUE OF INERRANCY? J. A. BENDEL'S *GNOMON* AS A TEST CASE

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On the first page of his controversial and widely influential 1678 work, *Histoire critique du Vieux Testament*, the French Roman Catholic priest Richard Simon states without apology that the universally held view of Scripture for both Jews and Christians was that Scripture is infallible,¹ has divine authority, comes directly from God, and is the pure word of God. Simon also highlights the fact that the original manuscripts have been lost and that changes have been introduced to copies over time. He then begins his work (which went on to argue for a “public scribes hypothesis” for the authorship of the Pentateuch) by quoting Augustine in support of the need to examine the copies critically.² Critics of inerrancy, however, often argue that the doctrine of the inerrancy of the “original autographs” of Scripture (i.e. the truthfulness of Scripture in all that it affirms) is only a relatively recent development in the history of the church and point to an article by A. A. Hodge and B. B. Warfield on “Inspiration” in 1881 as the classic formulation of the doctrine.³ Although A. A. Hodge claimed that his defense of the inspiration and inerrancy of the original autographs was in line with what had universally been held by the church, many assert that the “original autograph” proposal was a novel development to combat the rise of higher criticism.⁴ The view that Princeton theologians developed the doctrine of inerrant original autographs does not necessarily prove that this doctrine is

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¹ Cf. Jacques Le Brun, “Meaning and Scope of the Return to Origins in Richard Simon’s Work,” *TJ* 3 (1982) 57–70, for a discussion of Simon’s view of the truthfulness of the original autographs. Cf. John D. Woodbridge, *Biblical Authority: A Critique of the Rogers and McKim Proposal* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982), especially 82–83.

² Richard Simon, *Histoire critique du Vieux Testament* (Rotterdam: Reinier Leers, 1685 [1678]) 1.

³ Reprinted in A. A. Hodge and B. B. Warfield, *Inspiration* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979).

⁴ Representative of this position is Ernest Sandeen, *The Roots of Fundamentalism* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1978); Jack Rogers and Donald McKim, *The Authority and Interpretation of the Bible: An Historical Approach* (New York: Harper & Row, 1979), especially 304. The “originality” of Warfield and Hodge continues to be claimed in Theodore P. Letis, “B. B. Warfield, Common-Sense Philosophy and Biblical Criticism,” *American Presbyterians* 69 (1991) 175–90; Donald G. Bloesch, *Holy Scripture* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1994) 35, 307 n. 18; Harriet A. Harris, *Fundamentalism and Evangelicals* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1998) 30; and John Perry, “Dissolving the Inerrancy Debate: How Modern Philosophy Shaped the Evangelical View of Scripture,” *JCTR* 6/3 (2001) par. 20 (Perry suggests that inerrancy came to mean “detailed inerrancy” after Charles Hodge).

wrong. Nevertheless, careful responses have demonstrated the falsity of this claim point by point.⁵

The Pietists are one particular group who continue to be put forward as evidence for the novelty of the doctrine of inerrancy. Although they were not mentioned in the studies of Sandeen and Rogers and McKim, and hence did not need detailed examination in the responses of Woodbridge and others, it is frequently claimed that the Pietists (and their doctrine of Scripture) have been neglected and even suppressed by those who maintain that Scripture is inerrant. The Pietists are said to have held to a more “dynamic” and less “mechanical” view of Scripture—even deliberately rejecting an inerrant view of Scripture. Proponents of this argument (see below) often group Johann Albrecht Bengel together with the Pietists as those who held such a “non-inerrant” view of Scripture. In examining this supposed Pietist tradition, this article will focus specifically on Bengel—in particular, his renowned commentary, the *Gnomon of the New Testament*.⁶ The argument of this article is that Bengel would wholeheartedly agree with formulations such as the doctrinal statement of the Evangelical Theological Society that “[t]he Bible alone, and the Bible in its entirety, is the Word of God written and is therefore inerrant in the autographs.” Before clarifying the arguments for Bengel’s “non-inerrant” view of Scripture and responding to these arguments from his own statements in the *Gnomon*, a brief introduction to Bengel the scholar and his *Gnomon* will be given to help highlight the significance of these claims.

I. UNDERSTANDING BENDEL THE SCHOLAR AS A SETTING FOR THIS DEBATE

To have Bengel on your side as a critic of inerrancy is to have a “heavy hitter” in the history of the Christian church. Although he is now largely confined to a passing comment in discussions of the history of textual criticism, Bengel has been described as a leading figure in the history of Lutheran theology—comparable to Martin Luther, J. C. K. von Hofmann, and Adolf Schlatter.⁷ He has been described as “the exegete of pietism”⁸ and even “the most important exegete since Calvin.”⁹ In fact, although he is readily rec-

⁵ Cf. Woodbridge, *Biblical Authority: A Critique of the Rogers and McKim Proposal*; D. A. Carson and John D. Woodbridge, eds., *Scripture and Truth* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983). However, the claim continues to be made—see previous note.

⁶ Johann Albrecht Bengel, *Gnomon of the New Testament* (ed. A. R. Fausset; trans. A. R. Fausset, J. Bandinel, J. Bryce, and W. Fletcher; 5 vols.; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1866). References to the *Gnomon* will be to the volume and page number of this English edition.

⁷ Jaroslav Pelikan, “In Memoriam: Joh. Albrecht Bengel June 24, 1687 to November 2, 1752,” *CTM* 23 (1952) 785.

⁸ A. H. Franke, *Kirche und Welt* 10 (November 6, 1977) 674, cited in J. Weborg, “Bengel, J(ohann) A(lbrecht) (1687–1752),” in *Historical Handbook of Major Biblical Interpreters*, ed. Donald K. McKim (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1988) 289.

⁹ A. Immer, *Hermeneutics* (trans. Albert H. Newman; Andover: Warren F. Draper, 1877) 47, cited by Andrew Helmbold, “J. A. Bengel—‘Full of Light,’” *BETS* 6 (1963) 73.

ognized as the father of modern textual criticism,¹⁰ Helmbold claims that he is also the father of modern scientific exegesis, modern eschatological study, and even the father of those seeking unity among Evangelicals.¹¹

Whether or not one agrees with these estimations (Helmbold's claims, in particular, seem rather generous), Bengel can hardly be dismissed as an "uncritical" pietist with a simplistic faith and little intellectual ability. In addition to a master's degree in philosophy and an honorary doctorate from the University of Tübingen, he published work on the accents of the Hebrew Bible, Spinoza, new editions of classical and patristic texts, the history and methods of textual criticism, a harmony of the Gospels, a history of interpretation and commentary on the book of Revelation, and a study of biblical chronology and salvation history (*Ordo Temporum*). Bengel also spent twenty-eight years in leadership of the preparatory school at Denkendorf preparing students for the University of Tübingen and ordination for the Lutheran ministry.¹²

As a case study for Bengel's view of Scripture, his *Gnomon* has been chosen as it is his most extensive treatment of Scripture. Indeed, Bengel himself describes it as the culmination of his previous work on the text of the NT, the harmony of the Gospels, the interpretation of Revelation, the *Ordo Temporum*, and more than twenty years of lecture notes and study material.¹³ Originally written in Latin and published in 1742, the *Gnomon* is essentially a verse-by-verse, and sometimes even a phrase-by-phrase, commentary on the Greek text of the entire NT. Intentionally succinct so as not to distract from the text of Scripture, the title *Gnomon* was chosen for the work because he wanted it to be a "pointer" to the biblical text itself. "It is, in short," says Bengel, "my intention briefly to *point out*, or *indicate*, the full force of the words and sentences, in the New Testament . . . so that the reader, being introduced by the straight road, into the text, may find as rich pasture there as possible."¹⁴ The title "pointer" already hints at Bengel's view of even "the words" of Scripture.

Thus, since Bengel is considered the "exegete of Pietism" and his *Gnomon* is the culmination of over twenty years of exegetical labor, the *Gnomon* will be examined as a test case for the charge that the Pietists held to a "non-inerrant" view of Scripture.

¹⁰ Kurt Aland and Barbara Aland, *The Text of the New Testament* (trans. Erroll F. Rhodes; 2d ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995) 11, state that Bengel formulated "the essential principles of textual criticism which have retained their validity to the present." Cf. K. Aland, "Bibel und Bibeltext bei August Hermann Franke und Johann Albrecht Bengel," in *Pietismus und Bibel* (ed. K. Aland; Witten: Luther, 1970) 136.

¹¹ Helmbold, "J. A. Bengel—'Full of Light'" 80.

¹² Further information on the life and work of Bengel can be found most accessibly in the articles by Pelikan, Helmbold, and Weborg.

¹³ Bengel, *Gnomon* 1.8.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* 1.9.

II. ARGUMENTS FOR BENGEL'S "NON-INERRANT" VIEW OF SCRIPTURE

Those who argue that the Pietists held to a "non-inerrant" view of Scripture either discuss Bengel's view of Scripture directly, discuss other Pietists and Bengel by association, or make general claims regarding a Pietist "critique of inerrancy" without explicit reference to Bengel.

Fredrick Holmgren's article on "The Pietistic Tradition and Biblical Criticism" largely discusses the Pietist doctrine of inerrancy with reference to Spener.¹⁵ The context of his discussion of Bengel, however, indicates that he is to be seen in the same light as Holmgren's understanding of Spener. According to Holmgren, Spener "actually counseled preachers *not* to proclaim the inerrancy of the Scripture in such areas as history, geography, and chronology."¹⁶ Holmgren continues by arguing that Zinzendorf and Grotius held "this same understanding of the Bible."¹⁷ Then he asserts that this "new freedom in the handling of the Scriptures . . . prepared the way for a 'scholarly' investigation of the Bible."¹⁸ He asserts that Bengel was clearly "influenced by this approach to the Bible."¹⁹ Bengel is said to have rejected a "mechanical notion of inspiration" and looked on the writers as "real individuals who expressed their individuality in their writings."²⁰ This "new freedom" is then assumed to be what led Bengel into textual criticism and to discredit texts such as the doxology at the end of the Lord's prayer in Matt 6:13.²¹ This tradition of Spener and Bengel is then said to be carried on in the work of Johann S. Semler—in particular, in Semler's rejection of the inspiration of all Scripture and his separation of the Word of God from Scripture.²² Nils W. Lund's advocacy of higher criticism in his positions on multiple sources for the Pentateuch and the Gospels, a Second Isaiah, and a second-century date for Daniel, is said to be clear evidence for the continuing tradition of Spener and Bengel.²³

¹⁵ Fredrick Holmgren, "The Pietistic Tradition and Biblical Criticism," *CQ* 28 (1970) 53–54. On p. 58, n. 1, Holmgren states that the Pietism he refers to is the work of Spener and Francke "and those who stand in that tradition."

¹⁶ *Ibid.* 53 (emphasis original). Although Holmgren does not cite any statement of Spener to support this assertion, he claims that this is the view of a number of scholars and then cites only Erich Beyreuther, *Der geschichtliche Auftrag des Pietismus in der Gegenwart* (Stuttgart: Calwer, 1963) 19. However, Beyreuther does not supply support for this claim either.

¹⁷ Holmgren, "The Pietistic Tradition and Biblical Criticism" 53–54.

¹⁸ *Ibid.* 54.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.* 55–56. To imply that Bengel was somehow the inspiration for Semler's higher criticism neglects the testimony of Semler himself in his *Lebensbeschreibung von ihm selbst abgefasst*, 1.258, concerning Richard Simon's influence. Cited by John D. Woodbridge, "German Responses to the Biblical Critic Richard Simon: from Leibniz to J. S. Semler," in *Historische Kritik und biblischer Kanon in der deutschen Aufklärung* (Wolfenbütteler Forschungen 41; ed. Henning Graf Reventlow, Walter Sparr, and John Woodbridge; Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1988) 80.

²³ Holmgren, "The Pietistic Tradition and Biblical Criticism" 57. It should also be noted that the suggestion that this form of higher criticism is a logical development in the tradition of Pietism

These comments from Holmgren, written more than thirty years ago, reflect a recurring theme in treatments of Pietism and the Bible. Bloesch suggests that the Pietists “were prone to distinguish the divine content from its culturally conditioned form” and that “their emphasis was on the inspiration of the writers, not just the words.”²⁴ Between these comments Bloesch discusses Bengel in the context of Zinzendorf (specifically, the claim that Zinzendorf held that the Bible sometimes erred in chronology), Semler (specifically, Semler’s separation of the word of God from the Bible), and Lund (specifically, Lund’s “higher critical” views of the Pentateuch, Second Isaiah, and Daniel). Bengel is said to have held to “a dynamic view of inspiration.” According to Bloesch, the “concept of the inscription of God’s Word did not appear until much later.”²⁵

Dayton makes similar claims that Pietism reacted to “classical post-Reformation Protestant orthodoxy” and its doctrine of inerrancy (which is said to be picked up by Warfield and fundamentalists).²⁶ Bengel’s comment on 2 Tim 3:16 is put forward as an example of the Pietist emphasis on “the ongoing process of inspiration in the church” as opposed to “the once-for-all givenness and absoluteness of the process of biblical inspiration.”²⁷

Holmgren’s claim that Pietists believed in the inspiration of the authors rather than the text is also a frequent part of general discussions on Pietism and the Bible. Stein cites Holmgren’s claim that this was the view of Spener.²⁸ Both Weborg and Harrisville and Sundberg then cite Stein as support for this claim in their general summaries of Pietism and the Bible.²⁹ Although Weborg refers to a Pietist wariness of the doctrine of inerrancy, he does admit in a footnote that Bengel had an inerrancy doctrine. However, Weborg implies that this was merely to support his eschatological speculations and

neglects the work of the Pietist Johann Jakob Rambach who defended the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch against the views of Simon. Woodbridge, “German Responses to the Biblical Critic Richard Simon: from Leibniz to J. S. Semler” 77, draws attention to Rambach’s *Institutiones Hermeneuticae Sacrae* (2d ed.; Jena: Hartung, 1725) and the important dissertation of Paul Hebers, *Die hermeneutische Lehre Johann Jakob Rambachs* (Doctorate of Theology, Theological Faculty of Ruprecht-Karl-Universität, Heidelberg, 1952).

²⁴ Donald G. Bloesch, *The Evangelical Renaissance* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973) 113, 115.

²⁵ *Ibid.* 114.

²⁶ Donald W. Dayton, “The Use of Scripture in the Wesleyan Tradition,” in *The Use of the Bible in Theology: Evangelical Options* (ed. Robert K. Johnston; Atlanta: John Knox, 1985) 130–31. Dayton’s claim that inerrancy was not held by the Pietists and the Pietist tradition until the rise of fundamentalism is repeated in “The Limits of Evangelicalism: The Pentecostal Tradition,” in *The Variety of American Evangelicalism* (ed. Donald W. Dayton and Robert K. Johnston; Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1991) 50. In a presentation at the Wheaton Theology Conference, April 6, 2001, Dayton claimed that Bengel was part of a Pietist theological critique of biblical inerrancy.

²⁷ Dayton, “The Use of Scripture in the Wesleyan Tradition” 131.

²⁸ K. James Stein, *Philip Jacob Spener: Pietist Patriarch* (Chicago: Covenant, 1986) 152.

²⁹ C. John Weborg, “Pietism: Theology in Service of Living Toward God,” in *The Variety of American Evangelicalism* 170, 176; Roy A. Harrisville and Walter Sundberg, *The Bible in Modern Culture: Baruch Spinoza to Brevard Childs* (2d ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002) 24: “biblical authors rather than biblical words” were inspired.

that he held to varying degrees of inspiration.³⁰ Harrisville and Sundberg go further and suggest that Pietism actually critiqued inerrancy. They cite Stein (who cites Holmgren's claim which is based in turn on Beyreuther!) as affirming that Spener is an example of one who "refused to proclaim the infallibility of Scripture in matters of history, geography, and chronology."³¹ Similarly, Brown, although he rightly notes Spener and Francke's emphasis on studying the original languages of Scripture, states in a chapter on Pietism's view of the Bible that "the Pietist view of inspiration, which held that the writers and not the words were inspired by the Holy Spirit, inclined toward higher criticism. The various biblical writers and passages were to be evaluated differently."³² Spener is then put forward as an example of one who struggled with "the question of contradictions in the biblical record."³³

Thus, Pietism in general, and frequently Bengel in particular, are claimed to have held to: a "person-oriented" view of inspiration that allowed for errors in the text; a "limited" view of inerrancy that allowed for errors in Scripture with regard to history, geography, and chronology; a reluctance to equate the word of God with Scripture; a denial that all of Scripture is inspired in favor of partial inspiration; a freedom from a text-oriented view of inspiration and inerrancy that gave rise to the task of textual criticism; and more generally, an explicit rejection of inerrancy.

III. BENDEL'S DOCTRINE OF SCRIPTURE

The person who hopes to get a taste of Bengel's view of Scripture has the benefit of a lengthy preface to his *Gnomon* in addition to his comments on the NT documents. Thus, Bengel's preface will be treated separately before examining his comments on the text of Scripture itself.

1. *Bengel's preface to the Gnomon.* In the preface, Bengel outlines in twenty-seven sections his methodology and his purpose in publishing the *Gnomon*. The following observations will note Bengel's praise of Scripture, his rationale for commentary writing, his hermeneutical method, his views on the relationship between the writers of Scripture and their writings, his rationale for textual criticism, and his approach to matters of chronology and history.

³⁰ Weborg, "Pietism" 182 n. 55. Weborg draws attention to the works of Gottfried Malzer, *Johann Albrecht Bengel: Leben und Werk* (Stuttgart: Calwer, 1970) 362–68; and Ernst Ludwig, *Schriftverständnis und Schriftauslegung bei Johann Albrecht Bengel* (Stuttgart: Chr. Scheufele, 1952) 28–32. Malzer rightly draws attention to Bengel's view of the original autographs. However, he also suggests Bengel held to varying degrees of inspiration.

³¹ Harrisville and Sundberg, *The Bible in Modern Culture* 24.

³² Dale W. Brown, *Understanding Pietism* (2d ed.; Nappanee, IN: Evangel, 1996) 54. An earlier edition was published by Eerdmans in 1978. Both are revisions of the author's doctoral dissertation, "The Problem of Subjectivism in Pietism" (Ph.D. diss., Northwestern University, 1962).

³³ *Ibid.*

a. *Bengel's praise of Scripture.* Bengel's preface begins and ends with praise for the Bible. Although not precise doctrinal affirmations, these words of praise are instructive for understanding Bengel's view of Scripture. The opening paragraph identifies Scripture as God's word written.

The word of the living God, which formed the rule of faith and practice to the primitive patriarchs, was committed to writing in the age of Moses, to whom the other prophets were successively added. Subsequently, those things which the Son of God preached, and the Paraclete spake through the apostles, were written down by them and the evangelists. These writings, taken together, are termed '*Holy Scripture*;' and, how great soever is their dignity and value, are, in conjunction with this very title of theirs, their own best encomium; for they are called '*Holy Scripture*,' because they contain the utterances of God, and constitute the LORD'S own Book.³⁴

Thus Scripture, according to Bengel, is the word of the living God "committed to writing" and is in fact "the Lord's own Book." Bengel continues by quoting Isa 40:8; Matt 5:18; and 24:35 as support for the enduring nature of "[t]he word of our God." Although some might wrongly charge him with distinguishing between the word of God and Scripture in such a way as to allow for the possibility of error creeping in when the word of God was "committed to writing," at the conclusion of this opening paragraph Bengel declares that "not only are the various writings, when considered separately, worthy of God, but, also, when received as a whole, they exhibit *one entire and perfect body, unencumbered by excess, unimpaired by defect.*"³⁵ Thus, as already indicated here (and as will be demonstrated in the remainder of this article), Bengel equates Scripture with God's written word, and asserts that both in part and in whole, the *writings* of Scripture are perfect and without defect.³⁶

The conclusion to the preface (section XXVII) also contains praise for the nature of Scripture. Bengel complains that those who say, as Jesus did, "it is written" and who "feed upon Scripture *whole and alone*," are thought to be simpletons by those who have contempt for holy Scripture.³⁷ Likewise, he warns that otherwise useful material such as prayers, hymns, and religious stories, when taken as a whole, draw away many from "the BOOK OF GOD, that is the Scripture, which in itself combines, in the utmost plentitude and purity, all that is serviceable to the soul's health. Let those, who prove all things best, preserve the Heavenly Deposit, which God, by writings gradually increasing in clearness and explicitness, has given, not in vain, from the time of Moses down to that of the Apostles."³⁸

³⁴ Bengel, *Gnomon* 1.5.

³⁵ *Ibid.* 1.5–6 (emphasis added).

³⁶ Cf. also M. Brecht, "Johann Albrecht Bengel und der schwäbische Biblizismus," in *Pietismus und Bibel* (ed. K. Aland; Witten: Luther, 1970) 197: "Diese Identifikation von Gotteswort und Bibelwort ist schlechterdings entscheidend."

³⁷ Bengel, *Gnomon* 1.67 (emphasis original).

³⁸ *Ibid.*

Thus, Bengel's concluding paragraph to his preface asserts again that Scripture is to be equated with God's word written. The *writings* of Scripture, according to Bengel, are a "heavenly deposit" given by God. It should also be noted that Bengel's view of progressive revelation is also hinted at here. Later revelation does not contradict earlier revelation, but rather the writings increase in "clearness and explicitness."

b. *Bengel's rationale for commentary writing.* In section IV of the preface Bengel outlines what he sees as the purposes for writing commentaries. His view of Scripture is such that he wanted nothing to distract people from the text of Scripture itself. Thus his rationale for the existence of commentaries is strongly text-oriented. "Writings and commentaries are chiefly available for the following purposes: to preserve, restore, or defend the purity of the *text*; to exhibit the exact *force of the language* employed by any sacred writer; to explain the *circumstances* under which any passage was uttered or written, or to which it refers; to remove *errors* or abuses which have arisen in later times."³⁹

Bengel emphasizes here the purity of the text and the exact language used by the writers of Scripture and states that "errors" have only arisen in later times. The task of the interpreter, then, is to advance to a proficiency in the study and treatment of Scripture which "corresponds with sufficient closeness, to the perfection of Scripture itself."⁴⁰ It is for this reason, says Bengel, that the *Gnomon* will usually employ the following pattern at each annotation: "*The Text runs thus, not otherwise. This, and no other, is the noun; this, the verb; this, the particle; this, the case; this, the tense; this is the arrangement of words; this is the repetition or interchange of words; this, the succession of arguments; this, the emotion of the minds, etc.*"⁴¹

c. *Bengel's hermeneutical method.* In keeping with his concern for a text-oriented commentary, Bengel charges that the role of the interpreter is to determine the authorial intent as expressed in the text of Scripture. "It is the especial office of every interpretation, to exhibit adequately the force and signification of the words which the text contains, so as to express every thing which the author intended, and to introduce nothing which he did not intend to express . . . ; we should take care, therefore, in interpreting . . . [the Divine Scriptures] . . . not to force their meaning to our own standard."⁴²

Interpretation, according to Bengel, is primarily concerned with authorial intent. This intent, however, is found in the text—specifically, the *words* of the text. The interpreter is to take special care not to read into Scripture what is not there. Although aware of the role of the interpreter, he does not advocate a so-called "spiritual" or "subjective" Pietist hermeneutic that primarily concerns itself with the personal experience of the reader rather

³⁹ *Ibid.* 1.7 (emphasis original).

⁴⁰ *Ibid.* 1.8.

⁴¹ *Ibid.* 1.50–51 (emphasis original).

⁴² *Ibid.* 1.43.

than the text.⁴³ In this regard, Bengel praises Chrysostom's careful attention to the use of the particle *καί* in the writings of Paul and quotes with approval Luther's statement that "the science of theology is nothing else, but Grammar, exercised on the words of the Holy Spirit."⁴⁴ He continues the discussion of grammar by highlighting the importance of understanding the use of a Greek emphatic expression, the use of the personal pronoun, the recognition of compound verbs, and the use of the article.

d. *The relationship between the writers of Scripture and their writings.* Although he calls the writers of Scripture God's "inspired interpreters," this does not lead Bengel to a "person-oriented" view of Scripture that emphasizes the creative expression of the writers and leaves open the possibility of error and contradictions in their words. On the contrary, "their language is most exact." Bengel adds, "the expression of their words corresponds exactly with the impression of the things in their minds."⁴⁵ In discussing the arrangement and argumentation of the NT writers (section XIII), Bengel specifically criticizes "the ignorance . . . of those who maintain that the Apostles gave immediate utterance to whatever chanced to occur to them, without any plan or design." In fact, just as in the works of God there is entire symmetry, so "in the Words of God there is the most systematic perfection, *even to a letter.*"⁴⁶

It is true that Bengel draws attention to the "feelings" or "Mores" of the writers of Scripture in section XV of his preface. Nevertheless, he notes this for the purpose of better understanding the style of the NT writings, highlighting his "admiration of the language of the sacred writers." "Those minute particulars," observes Bengel, "which escape the ears and eyes of the ignorant and unrefined, bestow the most exquisite delight on those who are capable of appreciating them."⁴⁷ Thus, the writers of the NT used exact language displaying "letter perfection" as befitting "the Words of God" that even in the minute particulars bring delight.

e. *Bengel's rationale for textual criticism.* As mentioned above, those who argue that Bengel held to a non-inerrant view of Scripture usually draw attention to his text-critical work as evidence for his "freedom" in dealing with the Scriptures. Bengel himself, however, paints a different picture. He highlights the need, especially for those who teach Scripture, to study thoroughly and master "the Sacred Volume . . . both as a whole and in its several parts."⁴⁸ To do this properly requires that "we ought to distinguish the clearly genuine words of the Sacred Text, from those which are open to doubt or question, from the existence and authority of various readings, lest

⁴³ Contra Holmgren, "The Pietistic Tradition and Biblical Criticism" 50.

⁴⁴ Bengel, *Gnomon* 1.44.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.* 1.43.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.* (emphasis added).

⁴⁷ *Ibid.* 1.49.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.* 1.9.

we should either pass by, and thus fail to profit by the words of the apostles, or treat the words of copyists as if they were those of the apostles.”⁴⁹

The above distinction between the genuine words of the text of Scripture and the later additions of copyists is in accord with the above stated reason for commentaries—that is, they are “to preserve, restore, or defend the purity of the *text* . . . to remove *errors* or abuses which have arisen in later times.”⁵⁰ The “errors” are not associated with the genuine text of Scripture.

Sometimes critics of inerrancy speak as though the language of “original autographs” was invented by Hodge and Warfield.⁵¹ However, Bengel clearly speaks in such terms and in fact bases the enterprise of textual criticism on the truthfulness of the “original autographs.” In addition to the above distinctions made between “the genuine words of the sacred text” and the words of later copyists, Bengel draws particular attention to “original autographs” in outlining his principles for weighing manuscript evidence. “*Most important of all,*” declares Bengel, “*ancient* witnesses are to be preferred to modern ones. For since the original autographs (and they were written in Greek), can alone claim to be the well-spring, the amount of authority due to codices, drawn from primitive sources, Latin, Greek, etc., depends upon their nearness to that fountain-head.”⁵² In a difficult case where the manuscript evidence has been weighed by the use of his criteria and the evidence is divided, Bengel says that there may be a difference of opinion, unless “the original autograph Scriptures should ever come to light.”⁵³ Again, in critiquing the forty-three canons of Gerard von Maestricht, Bengel responds to canon number five by noting that “this observation does not enable us to determine, which is that of the original autograph, which is that of the Greek copyist or paraphrast, nor does it distinguish an omission from an addition.”⁵⁴

Thus, Bengel’s practice of textual criticism seems to have no connection to a “new freedom” based on a “person-oriented” view of Scripture. On the contrary, although attacked by advocates of the *Textus Receptus*, he said that his critics have not been able to provide “one single instance, in which I have altered, by innovation, even a syllable of the Sacred Text.”⁵⁵ His primary concern is with the genuine text of Scripture, which itself had no error. The task of textual criticism, according to Bengel, is to separate the later errors of copyists from what is likely to represent “the original autographs” so as to better study and master “the Sacred Volume.”⁵⁶

f. Bengel on harmonizing and chronology. As indicated above, it is sometimes alleged that Pietists, including Bengel, did not advocate the inerrancy of Scripture in areas such as history, geography, and chronology. Before

⁴⁹ Ibid. 1.9–10.

⁵⁰ Ibid. 1.7 (emphasis original).

⁵¹ See above.

⁵² Bengel, *Gnomon* 1.16 (emphasis original; Latin, “nam quum Fontis nomen prima tueatur unice manus”).

⁵³ Ibid. 1.17 (Latin, “nisi forte ipsa olim autographa reperiantur”).

⁵⁴ Ibid. 1.24 (Latin, “quae sit manus primae”).

⁵⁵ Ibid. 1.12.

⁵⁶ Cf. also M. Brecht, “Johann Albrecht Bengel und der schwäbische Biblizismus” 198.

Bengel wrote his *Gnomon*, however, he had already spent a considerable amount of time in just these areas. Matters of history and chronology were especially the focus of his *True Harmony of the Four Evangelists* (Tübingen, 1736), and his *Ordo Temporum* (Stuttgart, 1741), a study of biblical chronology, salvation history, and prophecy. In addition to the comments referred to above concerning the perfection and unimpaired nature of Scripture in part and in whole, Bengel also defends his chronology of the Gospels against various critics in his preface (section XVIII). In particular, Bengel argued for three Passovers between Christ's baptism and ascension. His response to the criticisms of Hauber and Walchius was that "neither of them has brought into play the chronological mainsprings of the Gospels."⁵⁷ Although Bengel's harmony recognized that the Gospels did not present their material in chronological order, nevertheless he argued that those who advocated four or more Passovers could not avoid "doing violence to those chronological data so emphatically laid down by the Evangelists themselves."⁵⁸ He even asserts that his Gospel chronology agrees exactly with the seventy weeks of Daniel, as well as Moses and the Prophets.

Bengel frequently speaks of the perfection, truthfulness, and accuracy of Scripture as a whole—that is, without regard for degrees of inspiration or errors in matters of chronology and history. He speaks of the truth of Scripture when discussing the question of his orthodoxy (section XXI). He claims that he has followed Scripture "not only in doctrines, but even in words, with a religious exactness, which even to good men seems scarcely removed from superstition."⁵⁹ The reason for such exactness, says Bengel, is because "no aberration from the line of Truth laid down in Scripture, however slight" is unimportant. This, in turn, is due to the fact that "Truth is one; (incapable of diminution, or division) and consistent with itself in its greatest, and in its least parts."⁶⁰

Bengel's preface then, draws attention to (a) his praise of Scripture as God's word and unimpaired by defect; (b) his rationale for commentary writing in preserving, restoring or defending the purity of the text; (c) his hermeneutical method as focused on authorial intent expressed in the words of the text; (d) his view that the exact language of the writers of Scripture is such that "the words of God" are perfect even to a letter; (e) his rationale for textual criticism as distinguishing the words of the original autographs from the errors of later copyists, and his determination not to alter even a syllable of the sacred text; and (f) his attitude towards matters of chronology and history as demonstrated in his attention to the chronology of the Gospels, and in his unwavering commitment to all the words of all of Scripture as a defense of his orthodoxy.

2. *Bengel's comments on selected Scripture passages in the Gnomon.*
When Bengel's actual treatment of Scripture and his exegesis of specific

⁵⁷ Bengel, *Gnomon* 1.54.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ *Ibid.* 1.62.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

passages are examined, the same concern for the truthfulness of Scripture as God's written word in the original autographs is found. Although comments of Bengel concerning the truthfulness of Scripture could be drawn from almost anywhere in his commentary, the following study will only highlight his comments on (a) Paul and Scripture (2 Tim 3:16); (b) Peter and Scripture (2 Pet 1:19–21); (c) Jesus and Scripture (Matt 4:1–11; 5:18; John 10:35); (d) Rev 22:18–19 and the text of Scripture; (e) the harmonization of Scripture; and (f) the historical portions of Scripture.

a. *Paul and Scripture (2 Tim 3:16)*. As mentioned above, Bengel's comments on 2 Tim 3:16 have been used to argue for a Pietist combination of inspiration and illumination that emphasizes "the ongoing process of inspiration in the church."⁶¹ However, Bengel's own comments on this verse qualify this claim and add further weight against those who argue for a Pietist belief in partial inerrancy, degrees of inspiration, or an inspiration of persons rather than words.

Regarding the issue of partial inspiration, Bengel remarks that *πᾶσα γραφή* is "the sacred Scripture in all its parts."⁶² Furthermore, Bengel adds that the term *θεόπνευστος* is not a part of the subject but of the predicate. This brief grammatical comment is significant in that if *θεόπνευστος* belonged to the subject, the translation would be "all/every inspired Scripture," which could allow for the possibility of only some Scriptures being inspired. By clarifying that *θεόπνευστος* is to be understood as a predicate, Bengel highlights the fact that he views the entire Bible (he notes that the reference is to writings) as inspired by God.⁶³ It should also be observed that when Bengel comments on the phrase "the other Scriptures" in 2 Pet 3:16 he states, "it follows from this that the epistles of Paul already formed part of the Scriptures."⁶⁴

Bengel states that the Scripture was divinely inspired "while it was written." His additional comment that "also, whilst it is being read, God breathing through the Scripture, and the Scripture breathing Him (He being their very breath)," is probably best understood as providing an active sense to the phrase (as indicated above, the term *θεόπνευστος* is an adjective in a verbless clause). While it may be difficult to explain Bengel's additional comment, his earlier remarks that this phrase refers to the divine inspiration of sacred Scripture in all its parts can hardly be ignored in an attempt to find in Bengel an ally for a merely functional view of Scripture, partial inspiration, or "person-oriented" inspiration that would somehow suggest that Bengel would allow for an errant text. In fact, given the context of his comments, his additional remark may merely be an emphasis on the divine

⁶¹ Dayton, "The Use of Scripture in the Wesleyan Tradition" 131; cf. also Bloesch, *Holy Scripture* 119.

⁶² Bengel, *Gnomon* 4.310.

⁶³ Cf. Pierre Deghaye, "La mystique protestante. Oetinger," in *Le siècle des Lumières et la Bible* (ed. Yvon Belaval et Dominique Bourel; Paris: Beauchesne, 1986) 481: "Pour Bengel, la Bible était un absolu, car elle était entièrement inspirée de Dieu."

⁶⁴ Bengel, *Gnomon* 5.110 (emphasis original).

quality of Scripture—that is, Scripture *is, and continues to be*, God’s speech (as he argues in his comments on 2 Pet 1:19–21, referred to below).⁶⁵

b. *Peter and Scripture (2 Pet 1:19–21)*. Concerning 2 Pet 1:19, Bengel states that “the word of prophecy was always firm of itself; but it became *more firm*” in its fulfillment.⁶⁶ This again is an indication of Bengel’s view of progressive revelation. Later revelation does not contradict earlier revelation, it makes that earlier revelation “more firm.”

Bengel sees this passage as a testimony to the truthfulness of Scripture as a whole. When he comments on the singular τὸν προφητικὸν λόγον (“the word of prophecy”), Bengel states that “the words of Moses, of Isaiah, and of all the prophets, make up one word, in every way consistent with itself. For Peter does not now bring forward individual sayings, but he embraces their whole testimony, as now laid open.”⁶⁷

In his comments on verse 20, Bengel states, “*Prophecy* is not at first of man, *nor* does it ever so far depart from itself as to begin to be the word of *private*, that is, of human interpretation ([ἰδίας] ἐπιλύσεως), but it is altogether of Divine unfolding or revelation.”⁶⁸ It is clear that Bengel sees this verse as affirming both the divine *origin* of OT Scripture (as opposed to the view that this verse may refer to an individual’s *interpretation* of prophecy) and the continuing divine nature of OT Scripture (his rendering of the present οὐ γίνεταί). That this is so, says Bengel, is because “that which has once been truly spoken by the prophets, remains truth even to the present day.”⁶⁹

When commenting on verse 21, Bengel argues that the passive voice of φέρω (“were carried”) highlights the fact that the prophets “were passive, not active instruments. That which is borne, is borne by no force of its own; it does not move and advance anything forward by its own labour.”⁷⁰ Bengel adds that although the verse indicates spoken prophecies, the word “spoke” also has “reference to the *pen* of the written word.”⁷¹

Thus, concerning Bengel’s view of Scripture, his comments on these verses highlight a belief in the divine origin and truthfulness of the entire OT as God’s written word. He may even be understood here as drawing less attention to the role of the human writers than contemporary advocates of inspiration and inerrancy would be comfortable with.⁷²

⁶⁵ Ibid. 4.310. This is saying nothing more than the observations of evangelicals from Scripture that “the Holy Spirit *says*” (cf. Heb 3:7; 8:8; 10:15; 12:5). Cf. David Peterson, “God and Scripture in Hebrews,” in *The Trustworthiness of God: Perspectives on the Nature of Scripture* (ed. Paul Helm and Carl R. Trueman; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002) 121.

⁶⁶ Bengel, *Gnomon* 5.92 (emphasis original).

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid. 5.94 (emphasis original).

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid. (emphasis original).

⁷² In *Gnomon* 5.201 (emphasis original), Bengel comments that “the whole style of John, and especially in the prophetic parts, takes its form, not from accustomed habit, but *from Divine dictation*.” It is unlikely, however, that Bengel had a “dictation theory” of inspiration for all of

c. *Jesus and Scripture (Matt 4:1–11; 5:18; John 10:35)*. In his comments on Jesus' use of Scripture in Matt 4:1–11 Bengel reveals his own view of Scripture. In verse 4, "Jesus," says Bengel, "does not appeal to the Voice from heaven: He does not reply to the arguments of the Tempter: against those arguments He employs the Scripture alone, and simply cites its assertions."⁷³ The fact that Jesus did not enter into debate concerning his status as the Son of God but only answered with, "It is written," is paraphrased by Bengel as essentially saying, "Whoever I am, I assuredly keep to that which is written." He notes that although everything Jesus said was indisputable, nevertheless, he kept to "it is written." Jesus speaks "as if one of many, who were bound to the Written Word."⁷⁴ By doing so, Bengel says that Jesus "declares that He is the Destined One who should fulfill Scripture; and at the same time shows the high authority of Scripture itself, irrefragable even to Satan."⁷⁵ In his comments on verse 7, Bengel notes that Satan's misuse of the phrase "it is written" does not keep Jesus from using the phrase three times because "Scripture is to be interpreted and reconciled by Scripture."⁷⁶

Concerning the reference in Matt 5:18 to ἰῶτα ἐν ἡ μίᾳ κεραία, Bengel notes that this refers to the "Yod, the smallest and most elementary letter in the Hebrew alphabet . . . 66,420 yods are numbered . . . and . . . a mark by which one letter is distinguished from another . . . or one sound from another, as a vowel point or an accent."⁷⁷ He asserts that this emphasizes "anything which in any way belongs to the signification of the Divine will, or assists to declare that signification . . . the entireness of Scripture . . . the smallest portion of the law . . . *all particulars*."⁷⁸

In his comments on John 10:35 Bengel states that "the Scripture cannot be broken, even in its smallest particular. A most firmly-established axiom. The appellation, *gods*, though not strictly used, cannot be broken, once that it has been set down in Scripture."⁷⁹

Thus, in passages where he discusses the teaching of Jesus and the use of Scripture by Jesus, Bengel highlights again a belief in the authority, harmony, accuracy, and truthfulness of the written word of Scripture as a whole and in its every detail.

d. *Revelation 22 and the text of Scripture*. Bengel outlines his view of Scripture in the course of his comments on Rev 22:18–19 with some passion.

Scripture, as this would contradict his discussion in his preface regarding the role of the writers. Contra Helmbold, "J. A. Bengel—'Full of Light'" 77. Cf. also Henning Graf Reventlow, "Wurzeln der modernen Bibelkritik," in *Historische Kritik und biblischer Kanon in der deutschen Aufklärung* (Wolfenbütteler Forschungen 41; ed. Henning Graf Reventlow, Walter Sparr, and John Woodbridge; Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1988) 51.

⁷³ Bengel, *Gnomon* 1.149.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.* 1.151.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.* 1.150.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.* 1.152–53.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.* 1.169–70.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.* 1.170 (emphasis original).

⁷⁹ *Ibid.* 2.387 (emphasis original).

When discussing the warning not to add or take away from the words of the Apocalypse, Bengel states that “to change, is at once both to add and to take away.”⁸⁰ He then outlines a number of ways in which someone may be guilty of this misuse of the Apocalypse. Bengel says a “hearer” may offend in this matter and an “unskilled expounder” may also offend. However, he reserves his most severe warning for those who translate and copy the text itself. “An unfaithful *translator* and *copyist*, who writes out the text incorrectly, exceedingly offends: for while the text is uncorrupted, especially at the foundation, the offence of the expounder and of the hearer may be corrected; but when the text is corrupted, the injury is much greater.”⁸¹

In this warning, Bengel notes that “the foundation” (i.e. the original autographs) of the text is “uncorrupted” and that corruption is due to later copyists and translators. He even argues that this warning applies to “all the books of Holy Scripture” and cites Deut 4:2 and Prov 30:6. However, Bengel notes that it especially applies to the Apocalypse as the crowning point of prophecy and adds that “the minute and admirable connection of which might be disturbed or obscured by the change of even a single word.”⁸² Bengel then goes on to lament the carelessness of the copyists who have been responsible for so many variant readings in the Apocalypse.

In this passage, then, Bengel outlines again his belief in the uncorrupted nature of the original manuscripts and states that his text-oriented view of the truthfulness of Scripture extends to the smallest details.

e. Bengel and the harmonization of Scripture. As mentioned above, it is sometimes asserted that the Pietists had a person-oriented approach to Scripture which treated the writers of Scripture as real persons who expressed their individuality in their writings.⁸³ This view of Scripture is supposed to have kept a Pietist such as Spener from forcing texts and harmonizing passages to make all texts clear—a tradition of freedom that is said to have influenced Bengel.⁸⁴

In addition to the obvious work of Bengel on the harmony of the Gospels, however, there appears to be no evidence in the *Gnomon* to suggest that he thought Scripture contradicted itself and could not be harmonized. In addition to the frequent references already made to the unity, harmony, consistency, and truthfulness of Scripture as a whole and in all its parts, Bengel’s treatment of difficult issues such as the relationship between Jas 2:14–26 and Paul regarding justification by faith, and the relationship between Acts 1:18–19 and Matt 27:3–8 regarding Judas’s death, illustrates his approach to apparent contradictions in Scripture. After discussing the teaching of Paul and James, Bengel urges that “it must not, however, be supposed that they are at variance with each other, as any one might suppose, who should

⁸⁰ Ibid. 5.384.

⁸¹ Ibid. (emphasis original).

⁸² Ibid. 5.385.

⁸³ Fredrick Holmgren, “The Pietistic Tradition and Biblical Criticism” 54.

⁸⁴ Ibid. 53–54.

attach himself either to St Paul or St James, apart from the other. We ought rather to receive, with the greatest reverence and simplicity, without any reserve or wresting of words, the doctrine of each as apostolical, and as proceeding from Christ and His Spirit.”⁸⁵

Bengel adds that they both spoke the truth. His own solution is that Paul speaks of justification in the narrower sense of forgiveness and that James speaks of it in the wider sense that includes the demonstration of the reality of faith in works.⁸⁶

In discussing the relationship of Matt 27:7 (where it is said that the priests bought the potter’s field) to Acts 1:18 (where it is said that Judas bought the field), Bengel suggests that either Judas had determined to purchase it (with a reference to 2 Kgs 5:26) or that Judas began the purchase (expecting the cause of Jesus to come to nothing) and the priests concluded the process.⁸⁷ Furthermore, he sees no contradiction between Judas falling headlong (Acts 1:18) and hanging himself (Matt 27:5). Acts 1:18, according to Bengel, takes for granted that the death is due to hanging and adds the additional detail of “the position of the dead body after it had been cast out with ignominy.”⁸⁸

Whatever is thought of Bengel’s proposals for reconciling Scripture, it seems unlikely that Bengel thought in terms of a contradictory Bible made up of irreconcilable differences owing to the individuality of the writers. Indeed, Bengel shows in the above examples and in his copious cross-references that Scripture interprets Scripture and that the individual parts should be read in light of the whole.

f. Bengel and the historical portions of Scripture. As indicated above, some have claimed that Pietists did not speak of inerrancy in matters relating to history, geography, and chronology.⁸⁹ This section will examine this claim with special reference to Bengel’s discussions regarding matters of history. The following are a collection of his brief comments on historical matters mentioned by Luke, the NT historian.

When commenting on the detailed historical data given in Luke 3:1–2, Bengel speaks of the date as “precisely and definitively marked,” “accurately” defined, and suggests that “even for this reason alone, this book of Luke is a necessary part of the Scriptures of the New Testament.”⁹⁰

Aware that Gamaliel’s reference to Theudas and then “after him” Judas the Galilean in Acts 5:36–37 differs from Josephus’s order which places Theudas after Judas, Bengel simply states that “it must therefore be a different Theudas whom Josephus places after this Judas (not *before* him, as here).”⁹¹

⁸⁵ Bengel, *Gnomon* 5.17.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.* 5.20.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.* 2.519; cf. 1.470.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.* 2.519.

⁸⁹ Fredrick Holmgren, “The Pietistic Tradition and Biblical Criticism” 53; Harrisville and Sundberg, *The Bible in Modern Culture* 24.

⁹⁰ Bengel, *Gnomon* 2.40.

⁹¹ *Ibid.* 2.563 (emphasis original).

When Bengel offers his introductory comments to the speech of Stephen in Acts 7, he observes that “the histories of former events are wont to be commemorated in Scripture, the fact being traced up from its beginnings; but in such a way that, according to the exigency of the purpose in hand, some things are rapidly gone through, others are omitted.”⁹² Apparent discrepancies in Stephen’s account of OT history are due to the fact that Stephen compressed the details that were well known. Bengel quotes approvingly from Flaccius that “Stephen has no time, in going cursorily through so many histories, to narrate each in distinct detail: therefore he compresses into one two different sepulchers, places, and purchases.”⁹³

Finally, regarding the fact that Luke’s account of the death of Herod Agrippa I in Acts 12:21–23 refers to the angel of the Lord striking Herod, and Josephus’s account in *Ant.* 19.343–52 does not mention this, Bengel states that “as to this important circumstance Josephus has nothing, though he enters into many matters of less consequence.” The reason Bengel offers for this difference is that “to such a degree do *Divine and human histories* differ.”⁹⁴

Thus, when Bengel speaks of historical matters in Scripture, he draws attention to their importance, accuracy, and truthfulness. He reconciles apparent differences, assumes that scriptural accounts are true when there is divergence from non-biblical material, and even draws attention to the difference between divine and human historical accounts—assuming the divine origin of the historical material of Scripture.

IV. CONCLUSION

This examination of Bengel’s *Gnomon* as a test case for his view of Scripture finds no evidence that could claim Bengel’s support for a supposed Pietist rejection of inerrancy. On the contrary, Bengel repeatedly draws attention to the truthfulness, perfection, purity, and unimpaired nature of the original manuscripts in part (words, syllables, and even letters) and in whole (including historical narrative), as the written word of God. This article is not advocating every exegetical decision made by Bengel on the doctrine of Scripture or any other doctrine (not least his speculative eschatology). The point is simply that Bengel is one Pietist (and a significant one) who cannot be claimed as an ally in opposition to evangelical formulations of the doctrine of the inerrancy of Scripture.

Thus, the claim that (1) Pietists critiqued the doctrine of inerrancy or emphasized the inspiration of authors rather than words should at least be qualified with the claims of this “exegete of Pietism” for the truthfulness and perfection of the original manuscripts; (2) the doctrine of inerrancy in matters of history and chronology is a novel fundamentalist preoccupation

⁹² Ibid. 2.569.

⁹³ Ibid. 2.573.

⁹⁴ Ibid. 2.617 (emphasis added).

should be rejected; (3) a doctrine of the inerrancy of the “original autographs” is virtually an invention of Hodge and Warfield should be abandoned; and (4) the doctrine of inerrancy belongs solely to a Reformed/scholastic/Warfieldian heritage should be given up as well. As Richard Simon’s comments indicate, and as the work already done by Woodbridge and others demonstrates, Bengel’s belief as a Lutheran Pietist in the inerrancy of the “original autographs” falls within a broad tradition that stretches throughout the history of the church. A. A. Hodge claimed with good reason that his defense of the inspiration and inerrancy of the original autographs was in line with what had universally been held by the church.⁹⁵

⁹⁵ I would like to express my appreciation to John Woodbridge for his suggestion to examine this topic and to both John Woodbridge and D. A. Carson for their helpful comments on an earlier draft of this article.