BIBLE & THEOLOGY

# Your Interpretation May Not Be Inerrant, but Your Bible Is

JUNE 22, 2018 — **DEREK J. BROWN**

If a man spends over 40 years faithfully teaching and writing on the doctrine of Scripture, you pay attention when he releases a book containing decades of refined reflection. With his latest work, *Light in a Dark Place: The Doctrine of Scripture*, John Feinberg—professor of biblical and systematic theology at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School—offers Christians a comprehensive guide for understanding the theological foundations of an evangelical doctrine of Scripture, as well as effective tools for engaging the contemporary discussion.

While I marked many useful sentences in this nearly 800-page book, I found Feinberg's treatments of illumination and perspicuity, along with his moving testimony of Scripture's power in his own life, especially enlightening. I'm also grateful for the footnotes at the outset of each major section that include books and articles Feinberg found helpful in his research. With these recommended-resource lists and the book's massive Scripture and topic indices, *Light in a Dark Place* is an exceptionally valuable source for research, teaching, spiritual growth, and theological development.

In a book this size, there are many topics to which I could attend. Given the present evangelical discussion over the doctrine of Scripture, however, I will narrow my focus to one issue: the doctrine of inerrancy.

## Vital Emphasis

While giving significant attention to all the major categories that compose a full doctrine of Scripture (revelation, inspiration, authority, illumination, canonization, perspicuity, sufficiency, effectiveness, and preservation), Feinberg devotes three chapters (155 of 770 pages) to the doctrine of inerrancy. This emphasis is due, of course, to its importance in the whole of Christian theology *and* the fact that inerrancy has been a point of much disagreement and discussion among professing evangelicals since the early 1970s (percolating as early as the 1950s).

When Feinberg started formally teaching the doctrine of Scripture in 1976, he labored from the settled assumption that the inspiration of Scripture required the inerrancy of Scripture. Soon he realized some fellow evangelicals were questioning the validity of this presupposition.

While 40 years of debate has done much to solidify evangelical views concerning inerrancy (consider, for example, the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy and the many books and institutions that use the CSBI as the primary reference point for their position on Scripture), there's also a steady effort by evangelical errantists to revive old arguments and offer fresh critiques of the doctrine. Current developments require extended reflection on this topic.

> **"Inerrancy belongs to the text as it was originally penned and as it is rightly interpreted."**