

affirmation practically all evangelicals can agree. Third, Dr DeKoster asserts that the way in which God gets his Word from the writers of Scripture to us today is "mysterious," an "inexplicable mystery," something which we "dare to say," something which "we are naive enough to believe," and something which we "gladly affirm" but which "cannot be explained." To this assertion we are obliged to respond in a twofold manner. On the one hand, it is good and proper to acknowledge that sinful human beings cannot exhaustively understand the nature or the working of God. Truly, as the Lord says, "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." (Isa 55:9). On the other hand, the overwhelming majority of evangelical writers (including Lindsell and Palmer) have attempted to come to grips with the necessity of clearly distinguishing between the original manuscripts of Scripture, which were products of the Holy Spirit's special and unique act of inspiration, were inerrant, and were infallible (in the dictionary sense of that term), and present-day copies of Scripture, which were not copied by inspiration, and which are products of a long process of transmission which involved a number of copyist's errors; and they have attempted responsibly to deal with the problems raised by this necessary distinction, especially by demonstrating how closely present-day copies of Scripture approximate the text of the original manuscripts. By so doing these evangelicals have attempted to preserve the integrity of the assertion that we have the Word of God today, as well as the teaching of Scripture concerning its unique inspiration. Dr DeKoster sees no need of making such a distinction or of coming to grips with the problems raised by it. He chooses simply to believe that we have God's "inspired, infallible, inerrant Scriptures" on our pulpits today. Such fideism is fascinating; like a magic wand it waves into nonexistence both the problem of errors in transmission and the need for textual criticism! Fourth, Dr DeKoster affirms that the Bibles which lie on our pulpits are inspired, infallible, and inerrant; then he denies inspiration, infallibility, and inerrancy for the pulpit ministry; and then he affirms that God gets his inspired, infallible, inerrant Scriptures to the faithful in the pew. If this combination of statements seems mind-boggling, it should be remembered that to Dr DeKoster it is an "inexplicable mystery" which he is "naive enough to believe." Frankly, such a confession of belief seems more than faintly reminiscent of Tertullian's "I believe it because it is incredible," or Kierkegaard's "I believe it because it is absurd!"

Although this exchange between Dr Lester DeKoster and Dr Edwin H Palmer does not serve particularly to illuminate the discussion concerning the value of the doctrine of inerrancy (since we do not possess the originals) and concerning our ability to say that we are proclaiming God's Word, sound doctrine, and truth today (since we possess only errant copies), yet it serves to illustrate the kinds of tensions occasioned by the distinction between inerrant originals and errant copies. To these tensions we must now address ourselves.

In a paper first presented during the 1977 Theological Institute of Biblical Theological Seminary. I proposed a concept for which I coined the term "inspiredness." Under the general term "inspired," I included two