

Why do some conservative New Testament scholars and theologians maintain that "to question it [*sc.* the traditional identification of the authors of the biblical writings] is to question the authority and inspiration of the Bible itself"?

Is the only, or the most important, reason that to question *anything* is to undermine the literal inerrancy of the Bible? This doesn't seem likely to me. More important, surely, is that, on the view in question, inerrancy depends on inspiration, while inspiration, in turn, depends on apostolic authorship. It was the apostles (as well as, in a somewhat different way, the prophets) who were uniquely authorized immediately by Jesus himself. Thus they wrote as those who were uniquely inspired to do so, and this, in turn, explains why their writings were and are inerrant. Consequently, if a New Testament writing had an author other than an apostle, it cannot have the unique authority that belongs solely to the writings of the apostles. Therefore, "the credibility of the Bible [*is*] inexorably linked to the authenticity of its attested authors."

The logic of this view is both clear and understandable. And the only way out of it is to break the connection it assumes between authority and the personal condition of the author by maintaining instead that the claim that the Bible is God's word is entirely compatible with the conclusion "that the Bible is the product of a purely human endeavor, that the identity of the authors is forever lost and that their work has been largely obliterated by centuries of translating and editing."

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