Christian notion of the limiting concept has been developed on the basis of the non-Christian conception of mystery. By contrast we may think of the Christian notion of the limiting concept as based upon the Christian conception of mystery. The non-Christian notion of the limiting concept is the product of would-be autonomous man who seeks to legislate for all reality, but bows before the irrational as that which he had not yet rationalized. The Christian notion of the limiting concept is the product of the creature who seeks to set forth in systematic form something of the revelation of the Creator. . . The creeds must therefore be regarded as “approximations” to the fulness of the truth as it is in God. (Common Grace, p. 11)

Is it perhaps idolatrous to elevate a limiting concept or a confessional document to the level of or higher than the Scriptures? One can readily justify requiring belief in God the Father, Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and the Holy Spirit; but can one, for example, require with the same sense of importance a belief in the term “Trinity” if someone else objects to the word because it is a non-Biblical term? Certainly, an individual should be free to embrace purely Scriptural terms and free to reject non-Biblical terms, even though the non-Biblical may very well reflect the Biblical position.

There are many current examples of Inferential Theology. Let us examine a few of the more obvious ones.

There are some groups, for instance, who declare it to be unscriptural to sing anything other than the 150 Psalms or to use any musical instrument in stated services of worship. Now everyone will agree that nowhere does Scripture assert in the following or similar words: “You shall not sing in a worship service songs other than the 150 Psalms.” Thus, this is an area of Inferential Theology and, therefore, certain caution must be exercised by its proponents lest the inference be elevated to the level of primary revelation. Those who hold this position claim to follow what is called “the Regulative Principle” and insist upon its normative value for the New Testament Church. This principle asserts that nothing should be permitted in a worship service unless it is specifically required by the New Testament. Since nowhere does the New Testament speak of using musical instruments in worship, they conclude that we shouldn’t use them either. Similarly, since the Psalms alone are alleged to have been sung in the Old Testament Church, we ought to sing them and them alone (the Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16 passages are interpreted as referring only to these same Psalms).

By way of a critical observation, this approach has been accused of manifesting a kind of Dispensationalist discontinuity between the Old and New Testaments. That is, although there is a divine/historical precedence—musical instruments boldly used in Temple worship for nearly a thousand years—we must not do so today. It is this radical disjunction between Old Testament and New Testament which Dispensationalism affirms and which the basic theologies of these groups are supposed to deny.