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A table of contents for *The Evangelical Quarterly* can be found here:

# William Lane Craig

# Inspiration and the Freewill Defense Revisited

*Dr Craig is well-known for his use of the concept of middle knowledge in solving problems of philosophical theology. He directs his attention here to the problem of God's plenary inspiration of the Scriptures.*

From the time of the Apostolic Fathers until the sixteenth century it was the conviction of the doctors of the Church that Holy Scripture is plenarily and verbally inspired. The human writers were merely the instruments through whom God spoke. With the controversy sparked by Baruch Spinoza's denial of biblical inspiration in his *Tractatus theologico-politicus* (1670) there came a deeper appreciation of the humanity of Scripture. The human writers were seen to be not mere secretaries, but genuine authors, whose humanity and distinctive peculiarities are reflected in their compositions. Together with the Church's historic commitment to the full breadth and depth of biblical inspiration, the element of human agency implies, in Pinnock's words, that 'Divine inspiration is plenary, verbal, and confluent.'[1]

But Randall and David Basinger have argued that no one holding to the classic doctrine of inspiration can also consistently hold to the Free Will Defense in the realm of theodicy.[2] They begin their argument by analyzing the connection between biblical inerrancy and dictation. If God alone were the author of Scripture, they say, its inerrancy would be unproblematic; but given that the human authors write freely, how can God guarantee that they write what he desires? The defender of the classical doctrine of inspiration must argue along the following lines:

1. The words of the Bible are the product of free human activity.
2. Human activities (such as penning a book) can be totally controlled by God without violating human freedom.
3. God totally controlled what human authors did in fact write.
4. Therefore, the words of the Bible are God's utterances.

1. Clark H. Pinnock, *Biblical Revelation* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1971), 66; see 86-95 for exposition.
2. Randall Basinger and David Basinger, 'Inerrancy, Dictation and The Free Will Defence,' *Evangelical Quarterly* 55 (1983), 177-180.

5.  Whatever God utters is errorless.
6.  Therefore, the words of the Bible are errorless.

The key premiss is (2). Detractors of the classical doctrine of inspiration will regard (2) as self-contradictory: The only way God could have totally controlled (an expression Basinger and Basinger take to be synonymous with 'infallibly guaranteed') what the human authors wrote would have been to take away their freedom. The defender of the classical doctrine of inspiration, on the other hand, must affirm (2) if he is not to fall into a dictation theory of inspiration. Basinger and Basinger go on to argue that the defender of the classical doctrine of inspiration cannot, in view of his endorsement of (2), utilize the Free Will Defense with respect to the problem of evil. Given the reality of human evil and the fact that God cannot be the author of evil, the Free Will Defender must regard as (2) false.

What Basinger and Basinger's argument, if successful, goes to show is that the Free Will Defense is incompatible, not simply with biblical inerrancy, but with the classic doctrine of inspiration. For given that God cannot totally control the free decisions of creatures, one may argue as follows:

1.  The words of the Bible are the product of free human activity.
    2'. Human activities (and their products) cannot be totally controlled by God without violating human freedom.
7.  The doctrine of the verbal, plenary inspiration of the Bible entails God's total control of the words of the Bible.
8.  Therefore, the doctrine of the verbal, plenary inspiration of the Bible is false.

If one persists in affirming the doctrine of verbal, plenary inspiration, then, since (7) is true virtually by definition, one must deny (1); that is to say, verbal, plenary inspiration implies dictation. The bottom line is that the doctrine of the plenary, verbal, confluent inspiration of Scripture is incoherent.[3]

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3.  It is intriguing that this is the conclusion to which Pinnock, quoted above, was eventually driven. He says, 'A text that is word for word what God wanted in the first place might as well have been dictated, for all the room it leaves for human agency' (Clark H. Pinnock, *The Scripture Principle* [San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1984], 101). The problem is that God is said to have 'controlled the writers and every detail of what they wrote' (Ibid.). 'To hold that God predestined and controlled every detail of the text makes nonsense of human authorship and is tantamount to saying God dictated the text. It is quibbling over words to deny it so vigorously' (Ibid.). 'If God is really in total control of all things, then he must have willed all the tragedies and atrocities that have happened . . . . God is the one responsible for everything that happens if he willed it so completely, and he must take the blame' (Ibid.,102). I hope to show that none of these inferences is correct.

The response to Basinger and Basinger on the part of defenders of classical inspiration has not been encouraging. New Testament scholar D. A. Carson agrees that their argument 'is valid,'[4] by which he evidently means 'sound,' since he does not dispute the truth of their premises. Carson agrees that the classical doctrine of inspiration is incompatible with the Free Will Defense. But he does not see this as in any way problematic. On the one hand, the notion of divine/human confluent activity lies at the very heart of the Christian faith, since the major redemptive acts of history were wrought by both God and man:

> . . . the conspirators did what God Himself decided beforehand should happen. Yet the conspirators are not thereby excused: they are still regarded as guilty. Any other view will either depreciate the heinousness of the sin or render the Cross a last minute arrangement by which God cleverly snatched victory out of the jaws of defeat, rather than the heart of His redemptive purposes.[5]

If we permit divine human *concursus* in redemptive history, Carson asks, why not also in biblical inspiration?

This line of response seems to indicate that Carson would accept (2) and reject the Free Will Defense. In fact, he does go on to dismiss that defense; but he does so in such a way as to call into question his commitment to (2). For he says, 'human responsibility can be grounded in something other than "free will," where free will is understood to entail absolute power to the contrary' and footnotes Jonathan Edwards and other defenders of a compatibilist view of freedom.[6] But if one is a compatibilist about human freedom, then (wholly apart from the difficulties this occasions for theodicy) the sort of freedom then envisioned in (1) seems inadequate to secure confluence. One has advanced no further than a deterministic doctrine of providence which turns the authors of Scripture into robots. One has not lived up to the charge of Carson's co-editor John Woodbridge that 'We must spell out unequivocally our full commitment to the human authorship and full freedom of the biblical writers as human authors,'[7] nor have we stayed true to what Carson himself calls 'the central line of evangelical thought . . . : God in His sovereignty . . . superintended the freely composed human writings we call

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4.  D. A. Carson, 'Recent Developments in the Doctrine of Scripture,' in *Hermeneutics, Authority, and Canon*, ed. D. A. Carson and John D. Woodbridge (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1986), 45.

5.  Ibid.

6.  Ibid.

7.  John D. Woodbridge, *Biblical Authority*, with a Foreword by Kenneth S. Kantzer (Grand Rapids, Mich: Zondervan, 1982), 9.

the Scriptures.'[8] Rather we have simply watered down the concept of freedom so as to be able to affirm determinism and, hence, God's total control.

Norman Geisler, on the other hand, argues that the Basingers' argument is not sound.[9] Unfortunately, his critique is not as clear as it could be, and the Basingers are able to point out a number of misunderstandings in their reply to Geisler.[10] These misunderstandings not withstanding, there are, I think, a couple of points in Geisler's critique to which Basinger and Basinger have not given due attention. First, Geisler, in effect, challenges (3). He observes that a purely human utterance may be inerrant; if, then, a true statement is made by both God and man, God need not totally control the human author in order for the statement to be without error. By extension all the statements of Scripture could be errorless and have both God and human beings as their authors, yet without God's exercising total control over what the human authors wrote. If (3) is false, then the defender of biblical inerrancy does not assume (2) in defense of his doctrine; rather he defends his position on the basis of (4-6) alone. Now Geisler is obviously correct that total divine control of human authors is not a necessary condition of the inerrancy of their writings. But if I am correct that what is at stake here is not so much inerrancy as plenary, verbal inspiration, then (7) tells us that the truth of that doctrine entails (3). For God and man did not merely *concur* in tokening separately the same Scriptural sentence-types; rather the doctrine of inspiration holds that the human author's sentence-tokens are identical with God's sentence-tokens; God tokens the sentences *through* the human author; his words are God's words. Thus, God must in some way so control the author as to speak through him. The control is 'total' in that it extends to the very words of Scripture. Hence, Geisler's first objection fails to show why the defender of inspiration is not committed to (3) and, if he wishes to avoid dictation, therefore (2).

But Geisler has a second line of attack.[11] He exposes a hidden assumption in Basinger and Basinger's reasoning, to wit,

9.   If God can infallibly guarantee what some men will do, then He can do the same for all,

an assumption which Geisler rejects as false. Geisler is quite correct

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8.   Carson, 'Recent Developments,' 45.
9.   Norman L. Geisler, 'Inerrancy and Free Will: A Reply to the Brothers Basinger,' *Evangelical Quarterly* 57 (1985), 347-353.
10.  David Basinger and Randall Basinger, 'Inerrancy and Free Will: Some Further Thoughts,' *Evangelical Quarterly* 58 (1986), 351-354.
11.  Geisler, 'Inerrancy and Free Will,' 351.

that the Basingers make this assumption, for (2) may be taken in the sense of

2*. Some human activities (such as penning a book) can be totally controlled by God without violating human freedom, i.e., $(\exists x)$ $(Hx \cdot Cx \cdot {\sim}Vx)$

or

2**. All human activities (such as penning a book) can be totally controlled by God without violating human freedom, i.e., $(\forall x)$ $(Hx \supset [Cx \cdot {\sim}Vx])$.

The Basingers require (2**) for their argument to be sound. But one could maintain that while it is within God's power to control the writing of Scripture without violating human freedom, that does not imply that God can so control human activity in general that no one ever freely does evil. In order for the classical doctrine of inspiration to be incompatible with the Free Will Defense, (2) must be taken as universally quantified rather than as existentially quantified. But now a familiar move in the Free Will defense may be turned against Basinger and Basinger: (2), so understood, is neither necessary nor essential to Christian theism nor a logical consequence of propositions that are; nor is the person who fails to see that (2) has these qualities intellectually deficient in some way.[12] Therefore, no incompatibility has been demonstrated between the classical doctrine of inspiration and the Free Will defense. Basinger and Basinger's reply at this point is faltering:

> Geisler . . . denies that people who believe that God infallibly guaranteed that the writers of Scripture freely produced an inerrant work must also believe that God can infallibly guarantee that all individuals will always freely do what he wants . . .
>
> But is this true? Can God infallibly guarantee that any single human action will *freely* occur if he cannot totally control all *free* human action . . .? We believe not . . .. if ([2]) is false, then God can never *guarantee* that any human will freely do what he wants.[13]

But this amounts to nothing but a personal confession of belief on the Basingers' part. It needs to be remembered that Basinger and Basinger are making the very strong claim that 'Any person wanting to both use the free will defense in his theodicy and, at the same time, defend inerrancy against dictation is attempting the impossible . . . .

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12. On these conditions, see Alvin Plantinga, 'Self-Profile,' in *Alvin Plantinga*, ed. James Tomberlin and Peter Van Inwagen, Profiles 5 (Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1985), 39-40.

13. Basinger and Basinger: 'Inerrancy and Free Will,' 353-354.

One cannot have it both ways'[14] But in order to show these doctrines to be broadly logically incompatible, they must come up with a proposition whose conjunction with the propositions formulating each doctrine is logically inconsistent and which meets the above stipulated conditions, and (2) is definitely not it.

But where does this leave us? Perhaps Basinger and Basinger might retrench at this point and argue that given (2*), (2**) is highly probable. For if God can control human activities in such exquisite detail as to produce through free agents a Scripture which is verbally and plenarily inspired, then there seems no reason why he could not control human activities such that people always freely refrain from sin. Given, then, the evil in the world, (2*) is probably true. But if (2*) is probably true, then, as argued, the doctrine of verbal, plenary inspiration is probably false.

To defeat this argument what is needed is some plausible, positive account of how God can control free human activities in such a way as to yield inspired Scripture without being able simultaneously to control free human activities in such a way as to prevent evil. Here Geisler is less helpful. He suggests,

> The way God 'can' guarantee that some do not perform evil (or err) is by knowing infallibly that they will freely do good. It does not follow that God can do this for those who freely choose to do evil. For in this case God would have to force them to do contrary to their free choice.[15]

On Geisler's view, 'since God knows (and so determines) which men will utter truth and when, then God can also affirm these truths as his infallibly true Word.'[16] There are two problems with this suggestion: (1) It appears to endorse an untenable theological fatalism springing from the fact of divine foreknowledge. The suggestion seems to be that future acts, whether good or bad, are somehow fixed in virtue of God's infallible foreknowledge of them. But as numerous thinkers have shown, such an inference is simply logically fallacious.[17] Since God's foreknowledge is counterfactually dependent upon future contingents, they can fail to happen until they do happen; were they to fail to happen, then God would have foreknown differently than he does. (2) Divine foreknowledge is insufficient for providential control of the authors of Scripture. Foreknowledge only informs God of what the authors of Scripture will freely write; but such knowledge comes too late in the order of explanation for God

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14. Basinger and Basinger, 'Inerrancy, Dictation, and the Free Will Defense,' 179; cf. 180.
15. Geisler, 'Inerrancy and Free Will,' 351.
16. Ibid., 352.
17. See references in note 25.

to do anything about it. The problem is not that God would have to 'force them to do contrary to their free choice.' Rather it is logically impossible to *change* the future. Geisler in effect misplaces the divine creative decree *later* in the order of explanation than divine fore-knowledge, rather than *before*. Thus on his view God must consider himself extraordinarily lucky that he finds himself in a world in which the writers of Scripture just happen to freely respond to their cir-cumstances (including the promptings of His Spirit) in just the right ways as to produce the Bible. This is incompatible with a robust view of divine providence.

Geisler does, however, hint at the account we are looking for. In asking why some men were providentially preserved from error while others were not kept from error (or evil) at every time, he suggests,

> It may have been because only some men freely chose to co-operate with the Spirit so that he could guide them in an errorless way. Or it may have been that the Holy Spirit simply chose to use those men and occasions which he infallibly knew would not produce error.[18]

Here we are speaking not of simple foreknowledge, but of God's counterfactual knowledge. It involves his knowledge of what some creature would freely do, were he to be placed in a specific set of cir-cumstances. If God has such knowledge explanatorily prior to his cre-ative decree then such knowledge is what theologians have called middle knowledge (*media scientia*).

Largely the product of the creative genius of the Spanish Jesuit of the Counter-Reformation Luis Molina (1535-1600), the doctrine of middle knowledge proposes to furnish an analysis of divine knowl-edge in terms of three logical moments.[19] Although whatever God knows, he has known from eternity, so that there is no temporal suc-cession in God's knowledge, nonetheless there does exist a sort of logical succession in God's knowledge in that his knowledge of cer-tain propositions is conditionally or explanatorily prior to his knowl-edge of certain other propositions. That is to say, God's knowledge of a particular set of propositions depends asymmetrically on his knowl-edge of a certain other set of propositions and is in this sense poste-rior to it. In the first, unconditioned moment God knows all *possibilia*, not only all individual essences, but also all possible worlds. Molina calls such knowledge 'natural knowledge' because the content of such knowledge is essential to God and in no way depends on the

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18. Geisler, 'Inerrancy and Free Will,' 352.
19. For Molina's doctrine see Ludovici Molina *De liberi arbitrii cum gratia donis, divina praescientia, providentia, praedestinatione et reprobatione concordia.* 4. This section has been translated as Luis Molina, *On Divine Foreknowledge,* trans. with an Introduction and Notes by Alfred J. Freddoso (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1988).

free decisions of his will. By means of his natural knowledge, then, God has knowledge of every contingent state of affairs which could possibly obtain and of what the exemplification of the individual essence of any free creature could freely choose to do in any such state of affairs that should be actual.

In the second moment, God possesses knowledge of all true counterfactual propositions, including counterfactuals of creaturely freedom. That is to say, he knows what contingent states of affairs would obtain if certain antecedent states of affairs were to obtain; whereas by his natural knowledge God knew what any free creature *could* do in any set of circumstances, now in this second moment God knows what any free creature *would* do in any set of circumstances. This is not because the circumstances causally determine the creature's choice, but simply because this is how the creature would freely choose. God thus knows that were he to actualize certain states of affairs, then certain other contingent states of affairs would obtain. Molina calls this counterfactual knowledge 'middle knowledge' because it stands in between the first and third moment in divine knowledge. Middle knowledge is like natural knowledge in that such knowledge does not depend on any decision of the divine will; God does not determine which counterfactuals of creaturely freedom are true or false. Thus, if it is true that

> If some agent S were placed in circumstances C, then he would freely perform action *a*,

then even God in his omnipotence cannot bring it about that *S* would freely refrain from *a* if he were placed in *C*. On the other hand, middle knowledge is unlike natural knowledge in that the content of his middle knowledge is not essential to God. True counterfactuals of freedom are contingently true; *S* could freely decide to refrain from *a* in *C*, so that different counterfactuals could be true and be known by God than those that are. Hence, although it is essential to God that he have middle knowledge, it is not essential to him to have middle knowledge of those particular propositions which he does in fact know.

Intervening between the second and third moments of divine knowledge stands God's free decree to actualize a world known by him to be realizable on the basis of his middle knowledge. By his natural knowledge, God knows what is the entire range of logically possible worlds; by his middle knowledge he knows, in effect, what is the proper subset of those worlds which it is feasible for him to actualize. By a free decision, God decrees to actualize one of those worlds known to him through his middle knowledge. According to Molina, this decision is the result of a complete and unlimited deliberation by

means of which God considers and weighs every possible circumstance and its ramifications and decides to settle on the particular world he desires. Hence, logically prior, if not chronologically prior, to God's creation of the world is the divine deliberation concerning which world to actualize.

Given God's free decision to actualize a world, in the third and final moment God possesses knowledge of all remaining propositions that are in fact true in the actual world. Such knowledge is denominated 'free knowledge' by Molina because it is logically posterior to the decision of the divine will to actualize a world. The content of such knowledge is clearly not essential to God, since he could have decreed to actualize a different world. Had he done so, the content of his free knowledge would be different.

Molina's doctrine has profound implications for divine providence. For it enables God to exercise providential control of free creatures without abridging the free exercise of their wills. In virtue of his knowledge of counterfactuals of creaturely freedom and his freedom to decree that certain circumstances exist and certain free creatures be placed in those circumstances, God is able to bring about indirectly that events occur which he knew would happen as a direct result of the particular decisions which those creatures would freely make in those circumstances. Plantinga has provided an analysis of such providential control in terms of what he calls *strong* and *weak actualization*.[20] God is said to strongly actualize a state of affairs $S$ if and only if he causes $S$ to be actual and also causes to be actual every contingent state of affairs $S^*$ included in $S$ (where $S$ includes $S^*$ if and only if it is impossible that $S$ be actual and $S^*$ not be actual). God is said to weakly actualize a state of affairs $S$ if and only if he strongly actualizes a state of affairs $S^*$ that counterfactually implies $S$ (that is, were $S^*$ to obtain, then $S$ would obtain). Then God can weakly actualize any state of affairs $S$ if and only if there is a state of affairs $S^*$ such that (i) it is within God's power to strongly actualize $S^*$, and (ii) if God were to strongly actualize $S^*$, then $S$ would be actual. Weak actualization is clearly compatible with human freedom, since the actualized state of affairs S obtains in virtue of the counterfactual of creaturely freedom which connects $S$ to $S^*$. Thus, God knew, for example, that were he to create the Apostle Paul in just the circumstances he was in around AD 55, he would freely write to the Corinthian church, saying just what he did in fact say. It needs to be emphasized that those circumstances included not only Paul's background, personality, environment, and so forth, but also any prompt-

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20. Plantinga, 'Self-Profile,' 48-49.

ings or gifts of the Holy Spirit to which God knew Paul would freely respond.

The theological application to the doctrine of inspiration is obvious. By weakly actualizing the composition of the books of the Bible, God can bring it about that biblical inspiration is in the fullest sense confluent. The Epistle to the Romans, for example, is truly the work of Paul, who freely wrote it and whose personality and idiosyncrasies are reflected therein. The style is his because he is the author. The words are his, for he freely chose them. The argument and reasoning are the reflection of his own mind, for no one dictated the premises to him. Neither did God dictate *levicula* like the greetings ('Greet Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes,' *etc.*); these are spontaneous salutations which God knew Paul would deliver under such circumstances; so also the interjection of his amanuensis Tertius (Rom. 16:22). Paul's full range of emotions, his memory lapses (1 Cor. 1:14-16), his personal asides (Gal. 6:11) are all authentic products of human consciousness. God knew what Paul would freely write in the various circumstances in which he found himself and weakly actualized the writing of the Pauline corpus. Perhaps some features of Paul's letters are a matter of indifference to God: maybe it would not have mattered to God whether Paul greeted Phlegon or not; perhaps God would have been just as pleased had Paul worded some things differently; perhaps the Scripture need not have been just as it is to accomplish God's purposes. We cannot know. But we can confess that Scripture as it does stand is God-breathed and therefore authoritative. The Bible says what God wanted to say and communicates his message of salvation to mankind.

Some of the statements of the defenders of the classic doctrine of verbal, plenary, confluent inspiration fairly cry out for such a middle knowledge perspective. Here is what Warfield, for example, has to say about the inspiration of Paul's letters:

> So soon, however, as we seriously endeavor to form for ourselves a clear conception of the precise nature of the Divine action in this 'breathing out' of the Scriptures—this 'bearing' of the writers of the Scriptures to their appointed goal of the production of a book of Divine trustworthiness and indefectible authority—we become acutely aware of a more deeply lying and much wider problem, apart from which this one of inspiration, technically so called, cannot be profitably considered. This is the general problem of the origin of the Scriptures and the part of God in all that complex of processes by the interaction of which these books, which we call the sacred Scriptures, with all their peculiarities, and all their qualities of whatever sort, have been brought into being. For, of course, these books were not produced suddenly, by some miraculous act—handed down complete out of heaven, as the phrase goes; but, like all other products of time, are the ultimate effect of many processes cooperating through long

periods. There is to be considered, for instance, the preparation of the material which forms the subject-matter of these books: in a sacred history, say, for example, to be narrated; or in a religious experience which may serve as a norm for record; or in a logical elaboration of the contents of revelation which may be placed at the service of God's people; or in the progressive revelation of Divine truth itself, supplying their culminating contents. And there is the preparation of the men to write these books to be considered, a preparation physical, intellectual, spiritual, which must have attended them throughout their whole lives, and, indeed, must have had its beginning in their remote ancestors, and the effect of which was to bring the right men to the right places at the right times, with the right endowments, impulses, acquirements, to write just the books which were designed for them. When 'inspiration,' technically so called, is superinduced on lines of preparation like these, it takes on quite a different aspect from that which it bears when it is thought of as an isolated action of the Divine Spirit operating out of all relation to historical processes. Representations are sometimes made as if, when God wished to produce sacred books which would incorporate His will—a series of letters like those of Paul, for example—He was reduced to the necessity of going down to earth and painfully scrutinizing the men He found there, seeking anxiously for the one who, on the whole, promised best for His purpose; and then violently forcing the material He wished expressed through him, against his natural bent, and with as little loss from his recalcitrant characteristics as possible. Of course, nothing of the sort took place. If God wished to give His people a series of letters like Paul's He prepared a Paul to write them, and the Paul He brought to the task was a Paul who spontaneously would write just such letters.[21]

Divine middle knowledge illumines such an interpretation, since God knew what Paul would write if placed in such circumstances and knew how to bring about such circumstances without extinguishing human freedom along the way. Warfield comments that when we give due weight in our thinking to the universality of providence, to the minuteness and completeness of its sway, to its invariable efficacy, then we may wonder that anything 'is needed beyond this mere providential government to secure the production of sacred books, which should be in every detail absolutely accordant with the Divine will.'[22] Revelation will be needed in some cases for truths not accessible through natural reason. Moreover, we must never forget that the circumstances known to God include, not exclude, all those movements of the Holy Spirit in an author's heart to which God knew the writer would respond in appropriate ways.

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21. Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield, 'The Biblical Idea of Inspiration,' in *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible*, ed. Samuel G. Craig with an Intro. by Cornelius Van Til (Philadelphia: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1970), 154-155.

22. Ibid., 157.

Given the doctrine of middle knowledge, then, we see how plenary, verbal, confluent inspiration can be coherently affirmed. The distinction between strong and weak actualization reveals how the control described in (2) by Basinger and Basinger is possible.[23] We can understand how the divine/human confluence in the events of redemptive history as insisted on by Carson is possible without falling into determinism. Finally, we can see why Geisler was right to maintain that God's ability to control the free composition of Scripture does not imply his ability to so control the free actions of all persons that a world containing as much good as the actual world but with less evil would be actualized. God might well have requisite control of the authors of Scripture to ensure that Scripture would be freely written without having requisite control of all human beings to ensure that less evil, but the same amount of good, would be freely wrought. In fact, God's placing a premium on actualizing a world in which the requisite counterfactuals of creaturely freedom are true for the free composition of Scripture are true might require him to forego worlds in which counterfactuals requisite for an otherwise better balance of good and evil are true. Indeed, the existence of Scripture in the world might actually serve to increase the amount of evil in the world by exacerbating sinful desires (Rom. 7:7-8)! It all depends on which counterfactuals of creaturely freedom are true, a contingency over which God has no control. A world in which Scripture is freely composed and in which the balance between good and evil is more optimal than it is in the actual world may not be feasible for God. Basinger and Basinger are in effect claiming that

10. A world in which an inspired, inerrant Scripture is freely written is feasible for God (Classic Doctrine of Inspiration)

and

11. A world containing as much good as the actual world without as much evil is not feasible for God (Free Will Defense)

are broadly logically incompatible or, at least, improbable each with

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23. This also helps us to see that the notion of 'infallibly guaranteeing' is really a red herring. Weak actualization does not infallibly guarantee the result in the sense that there are possible worlds in which the strongly actualized state of affairs does not counterfactually imply the weakly actualized state of affairs, since counterfactuals of freedom are true/false relative to a possible world. Thus, there may be a possible world relative to which a world with a freely composed Bible and a more optimal balance of good and evil is feasible for God. The verbal, plenary, confluent inspiration of Scripture thus does not require that God's guarantee be infallible, but merely that he in fact has the requisite control of free creatures to weakly actualize Scripture's composition. He can guarantee inerrancy without infallibly guaranteeing it.

respect to the other. But such claims are pure speculation; we are simply not in an epistemic position to make responsibly such pronouncements. Thus, in the area of biblical inspiration, as in so many other areas of theology,[24] the doctrine of divine middle knowledge proves to be a fruitful resource in shedding light on seemingly irresolvable old conundrums. The doctrine is, of course, controversial and has many detractors, but the objections lodged against that doctrine are far from compelling.[25]

## Abstract

The Christian Church has traditionally held that the inspiration of Holy Scripture is verbal, plenary, and confluent. But such an affirmation may seem to be incoherent. For if Scripture is the product of both divine and human free agency, then it seems impossible that God should have sufficient control of the various authors of Scripture so as to produce a Word that is verbally and plenarily his. A Molinist theory of divine middle knowledge can help us to break this deadlock and craft a doctrine of inspiration that is both orthodox and coherent.

24. For applications of middle knowledge to such issues as Christian exclusivism, divine sovereignty and human freedom, perseverance of the saints, infallibility, and creation/evolution see William Lane Craig, '"No Other Name": A Middle Knowledge Perspective on the Exclusivity of Salvation through Christ,' *Faith and Philosophy* 6 (1989), 172-188; idem, 'Middle Knowledge: a Calvinist-Arminian Rapprochement ?' in *The Grace of God, the Will of Man*, ed. C. Pinnock (Grand Rapids, Mich: Zondervan, 1989), 141-164; idem, '"Lest Anyone Should Fall": a Middle Knowledge Perspective on Perseverance and Apostolic Warnings,' *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 29 (1991): 65-74; Thomas P. Flint, 'Middle Knowledge and the Doctrine of Infallibility,' Philosophical Perspectives, vol. 5: *Philosophy of Religion*, ed. J. E. Tomberlin (Atascadero, Calif.: Ridgeway Publishing, 1991), 373-393; Del Ratzch, 'Design, Chance, and Theistic Evolution,' in *Mere Creation* (Downer's Grove, Ill.: Inter-Varsity, 1998), 289-312.
25. See Alvin Plantinga, 'Reply to Robert Adams,' in *Alvin Plantinga*, 372-382; Jonathan L. Kvanvig, *The Possibility of an All-Knowing God* (New York: St. Martin's, 1986), 121-148; Alfred J. Freddoso, 'Introduction,' in *On Divine Foreknowledge*, 62-81; Edward R. Wierenga, *The Nature of God: an Inquiry into Divine Attributes*, Cornell Studies in the Philosophy of Religion (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1989), 116-165; William Lane Craig, *Divine Foreknowledge and Human Freedom: The Coherence of Theism I: Omniscience*, Studies in Intellectual History 19 (Leiden, The Netherlands: E. J. Brill, 1990), 237-278; Thomas Flint, *Providence*, Cornell Studies in the Philosophy of Religion (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1998); William Lane Craig, 'Middle Knowledge, Truth-Makers, and the Grounding Objection,' *Faith and Philosophy* (forthcoming). A useful anthology of articles on middle knowledge is William Hasker, David Basinger, and Eef Dekker, eds., *Middle Knowledge: Theory and Applications*, Contributions to Philosophical Theology 4 (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2000).