

EVANGELICAL REVIEW OF THEOLOGY

VOLUME 5

Volume 5 • Number 2 • October 1981

Evangelical Review of Theology

*Articles and book reviews selected from publications
worldwide for an international readership,
interpreting the Christian faith for contemporary
living.*

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(4) Justification and sanctification are conjoined as coincident aspects of redemption in Christ (I) and as the fundamental blessings of the new order (III). Justification is an essential aspect of that true wisdom which Christ has become for believers (I); it is also an essential aspect of that δικαιοσύνη which characterizes the entire new dispensation (III).

(5) The fact that Paul freely employs the concept of justification even in contexts where the legalistic point of view is not discussed at all (I, II, IV; the first passage is particularly important in this regard) strongly argues that it cannot fairly be regarded as a purely polemical doctrine born of, and intended for use in, debate with Jews and Jewish Christian legalists only. In the light of the previous two observations ((3), (4)), it is much rather to be considered as of central significance to Paul.

(6) Justification by faith does not exhaust the content of Paul's gospel: like reconciliation and sanctification, and coincident with these, justification is one aspect of redemption in Christ. At the same time, it is not just one aspect like any other, but rather stands out as the most fundamental aspect of that redemption and of the believer's incorporation in Christ; it is the first step in Paul's analysis of the meaning of union with Christ, which in fact is the central motif and probably the best summarizing concept of Pauline soteriology.⁵⁴

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The Concept of Truth in the Inerrancy Debate

Norman L. Geisler

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How is it that evangelicals on both sides of the inerrancy debate can claim the Bible is wholly true and yet one side believes that there can be minor mistakes of history or science affirmed by the biblical authors,¹ while the other side denies that there are any mistakes

⁵⁴ The teaching of justification by faith as expressed in the Corinthian letters will be found to be endorsed and more fully and systematically developed in Galatians and (especially) Romans.

¹ LaSor admits that "those portions where one passage is clearly in disagreement with another (such as the thousands in Kings compared to the ten thousands in Chronicles) cannot be explained as 'textual corruptions' " because otherwise "we could never again use the canons of criticism to support any text against the conjectural reading of liberal critics" (William S. LaSor, "Life under Tension," *Theological News and Notes* (Pasadena, CA: Fuller Theological Seminary, 1976), p.7) This means, according to LaSor, that clear contradictions (such as four thousand stalls in [2 Chron. 9:25](#) and forty thousand stalls in [1 Kings 4:26](#)) should be accepted as part of the autographs.

whatsoever? Some even claim to believe in inerrancy to the point that every word of the Bible is true,² and yet they hold that Jesus' statement that the mustard seed is the "smallest of all seeds" is scientifically incorrect.³ Some claim that the Bible is "the only infallible rule of faith and practice"⁴ but hold that Paul was wrong when he affirmed that the husband is the "head" of the wife.⁵ One errantist put it bluntly when he wrote, "We can speak of the Bible as being inspired from cover to cover, human mistakes and all."⁶

Is this duplicity? Are those who believe the Bible contains errors intentionally deceiving their constituency? Do they hold a double standard of truth? As a matter of fact, it is not necessary to come to any of these conclusions. Errantists do not hold a double *standard* but rather a different *theory* of truth.

Could it be, then, that the real problem is that a fundamental issue that occasions the difference between the two major camps of evangelicals on biblical inerrancy is that they are presupposing different theories of truth? This writer proposes that this is indeed the case. One thing is certain: Different theories of truth will make a significant difference in what one considers to be an "error," or deviation from the truth. In fact, what counts as an error on one definition of truth is not an error on another definition of truth.⁷

TWO THEORIES OF TRUTH

A Noncorrespondence Theory of Truth

² In a letter to a radio listener Daniel E. Fuller wrote, "*I believe that every statement in the Bible is totally without error and every word is equally inspired*" (April 28, 1978, italics added).

³ Fuller claims that "although the mustard seed (see [Matt. 13:32](#)) is not the smallest of all seeds, yet Jesus referred to it as such" because "to have gone contrary to their mind on what was the smallest seed would have so diverted their attention from the knowledge that would bring salvation to their souls that they might well have failed to hear these all-important revelational truths" (Daniel E. Fuller, "Benjamin B. Warfield's View of Faith and History," *Bulletin of the Evangelical Theological Society* 11 (Spring 1968): 8–82).

⁴ From Fuller Theological Seminary's "Statement of Faith," Article III.

⁵ See Paul K. Jewett, *Man as Male and Female* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1975), p.139.

⁶ Dewey Beegle, *The Inspiration of Scripture* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1963), p.138.

⁷ It is clear from the writings of the errantists that this is their belief. Hubbard wrote, "The nub of Lindsell's quarrel with many of us who have been his colleagues is the interpretation of the word 'error' ... Many of us signed, and still could sign, Fuller's earlier Statement without buying Lindsell's definition of error" (David A. Hubbard, "A Conflict in Interpretation," *Theological News and Notes*, p.8). Rogers approvingly quotes Bavinck that "the purpose, goal, or 'designation' of Scripture was 'none other than that it should make us wise to salvation.' According to Bavinck, Scripture was not meant to give us technically correct scientific information" (Jack Rogers, "The Church Doctrine of Biblical Authority", in *Biblical Authority*, ed. Jack Rogers (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1977), p.43). In other words, since the Bible accomplishes this soteriological intention, then it is true.

For the sake of simplicity of discussion, only one of several noncorrespondence views of truth will be discussed. One that is used by errantists may be called an intentionality view of truth.⁸ According to this view a statement is true if “it accomplishes what the author intended it to accomplish,”⁹ and conversely, a statement is false if it does not. Several corollaries of this view of truth may be stated.

1. The first corollary is that a statement is true, even if some of its factual assertions do not correspond with reality, so long as the statement accomplishes its intended purpose.¹⁰ This means that factually incorrect statements can be true, provided they accomplish their intended results. For instance, the parental exhortation to a young child, “If you are good, Santa Claus will bring you presents,” is factually incorrect but, according to this view of truth, it could actually be true if it helps produce the intended good behaviour in children before Christmas.

2. A second implication of this point is that factually correct statements can be false if they do not accomplish their intended goals. Some parents are driven to negative psychology in saying, “That is bad; do not do that,” because their factual correct statement “That is good” was not accomplishing its intended result.¹¹

3. A third corollary of the noncorrespondence view of truth is that persons, not merely propositions, can be properly characterized as true.¹² A person is true if he accomplishes or

⁸ This view could also be called a “functional” view of truth since it centres in the saving function of the Bible. Rogers and McKim write, “The authority of Scripture in these (Reformed) confessions resided in its saving function, not in the form of words used” (*The Authority and Interpretation of the Bible* (New York: Harper & Row, 1979), p.125). Again they state, “It is significant to note ... that for the Reformation concept of the ‘reliability’ of Scripture in achieving its function of salvation, Terretin substituted a discussion of the formal ‘necessity’ of Scripture” (ibid., p.175).

⁹ Fuller (Fuller to Geisler, March 29, 1978) and Hubbard hold this same functional view of truth, namely, that the Bible is true in that it is “able to make us wise unto salvation.” Hubbard contends that “error” in the Bible means “that which *leads astray* from the truth God is teaching” (“A Conflict in Interpretation,” p.8).

¹⁰ Berkouwer makes it clear he holds this same intentionalist or functional view of truth. He wrote approvingly of Kuyper that “he was not at all troubled by the absence of accuracy and exactness precisely because of the God-breathed character of Scripture: the reliability of the Gospels was guaranteed by this *purpose* of the Spirit” (G. C. Berkouwer, *Holy Spirit*, Studies in Dogmatics, comp. and ed. Jack B. Rogers (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1975) p.250, italics added). Berkouwer also stated “The authority of Scripture is in no way diminished because an ancient world view occurs in it; for it was not the *purpose* of Scripture to offer revealing information on that level” (ibid., p.181, italics added).

¹¹ Rogers claims that the redemptive function of the Bible is the locus of truth rather than the verbal form (*The Authority and Interpretation of the Bible*, p.125). Broadly speaking, the intentional (functional) view is a species of the “pragmatic” theory of truth, along with its sister “personalistic” and “existential” theories of truth.

¹² Of course neo-orthodox theologians such as Emil Brunner contend that revelation is personal, not propositional (see, e.g., Brunner’s *Revelation and Reason* (Philadelphia:

lives up to someone's intentions for him, and persons are not true if they fail to measure up to someone's expectations (whether the intentions are their own or another's).

A Correspondence View of Truth

According to this view, truth is "that which corresponds to the actual state of affairs," to the way things really are. If this theory of truth is correct, then an "error" is that which does not correspond with the facts, with what is really the case.¹³ Several corollaries of this view may be observed.

1. The first corollary of a correspondence view of truth is that a statement is true even if the speaker (or writer) intended not to say it, provided that the statement itself correctly describes a state of affairs.

2. The second corollary is that one can make a true statement that is actually *more* than he intends to say. Everyone has had the experience of accidentally revealing more by his words, to his own embarrassment, than he intended to say. This writer once heard an unfair umpire say, "I umpired *against* that team once." He obviously *meant*, "I umpired a game *for* that team." Judging by his highly questionable calls, what he actually *said* was true, even though he did not mean to reveal as much.

3. The third corollary of a correspondence view of truth is that, properly speaking, truth is a characteristic of propositions (or other expressions) about reality, but truth is not a characteristic of the reality itself.

4. The fourth corollary is that reality, or that which is, is neither true nor false as such; it simply *is*. For instance; a lie can be real but the lie is not true. That is, someone's lying can be the actual state of affairs. One would not say that the lie is therefore *true*. It is simply true that he is *actually* lying.

Therefore, strictly speaking, it is propositions about states of affairs which are true or false. Truth is found in the affirmation (or denial) about reality, not in the reality itself.

Of course "reality" or states of affairs referred to by propositions can be mental states of affairs (thoughts, ideas, etc.) or even other propositions. But strictly speaking, on a correspondence theory of truth, only affirmations (or denials) are true or false, not the reality about which the affirmations are made. Persons can be called true in the secondary sense that what they say can be trusted to come to pass or to correspond to reality. So they can be called true or trustworthy persons because their statements can be trusted to come to pass, or to correspond with reality.¹⁴

SOME IMPLICATIONS FOR INERRANCY

It seems apparent that if one adopts the noncorrespondence (intentionality) view of truth he could easily (and consistently) hold that the Bible is wholly true (as God intends it) and yet the Bible could have many errors in it. For if truth means only that the Bible will always

Westminster Press, 1946), pp.369–70). This neo-orthodox view bears a strong kinship with the neo-evangelical views of Berkouwer, Rogers, and others.

¹³ On a correspondence view of truth see Aristotle *Categories* 1.a. 10-4.b. 19 and *On Interpretation* 19.a. 10–19.

¹⁴ Thiselton gives an excellent discussion of the various theories of truth and of the biblical usage of truth (*The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, s.v. "Truth," by A. C. Thiselton, 3:874–902).

accomplish its intended purpose (regardless of factual incorrectness), say, “to make men wise unto salvation,”¹⁵ then it can do that with or without minor errors. Even incorrect maps can get one to the intended destination. In this view, there can be unintentional biblical errors in minor matters, without affecting the author’s main intention to save sinners. These minor errors do not reflect badly on the author’s (God’s) character, since they are not pernicious. In an intentionality view of truth one does not need an inerrant Bible; all one needs is a “reliable” and “trustworthy” Bible.

It becomes obvious that serious implications for the doctrine of inerrancy follow from each of these theories of truth.

Implications for Inerrancy in the Noncorrespondence (Intentionality) View

With this view several implications follow for inerrancy, two of which will be discussed.

First, factual incorrectness in affirmations is not necessarily an error unless the author *intended* to affirm it.¹⁶ Accordingly neither the so-called “three-storied universe,” the “mustard seed,” nor affirmation about creation (versus evolution) are really errors, even if they are factually incorrect statements. For example, as long as [Genesis 1–2](#) fulfils its intention, say, to evoke worship of God, then—any incorrect scientific affirmations notwithstanding—it could still be wholly true and without error. The same could be true of the Flood, of Jonah and the great fish, of Paul’s view of male “headship,” and of other biblical affirmations of this kind. On an intentionality view of truth these could all be factually wrong and yet the Bible would still be trustworthy.¹⁷ As long as the intention of God is being fulfilled through these passages, that is, His redemptive function, then it does not matter whether some aspects affirmed in them correspond with reality.

Second, on an intentionalist’s view, truth, properly speaking, can be personal and not merely propositional. Persons who fulfil someone’s intentions are true or genuine. In this sense Jesus’ claim, “I am the ... truth” ([John 14:6](#)), could mean that He is the one who perfectly fulfils the Father’s intentions for Him.

It should be noted in passing that proponents of this view cannot claim that something is not true *simply* because it was intended by someone. If this were so, then almost everything ever written would be true, since surely almost every author *intended* to tell the truth, even though most of them make many mistakes. In any event, the intentionalist view of truth discussed here holds that true statements are those which faithfully *fulfil* their author’s

¹⁵ Fuller has stated this point very clearly. “I believe it is a necessary implication of [II Tim. 3:15](#) that the Bible’s truth depends on how well it lives up to this intention, stated explicitly here. I know of no other verse which states the Bible’s purpose so succinctly as [II Tim. 3:15](#)” (Fuller to Geisler, March 29, 1978).

¹⁶ A thoroughly consistent intentionalist’s view of truth, in contrast to a correspondence view, is factually unfalsifiable. For no matter what facts are presented contrary to the affirmation, it is always possible that the author’s intentions were true.

¹⁷ Davis is more forthright than most errantists in admitting errors in the Bible (see Stephen T. Davis, *The Debate about the Bible* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1977)). He tries to preserve the “infallibility” of the Bible in moral matters while denying its inerrancy in historical and scientific matters. But even here he runs into difficulty since some of his illustrations are “errors” and have decidedly moral aspects, for instance, the slaughter of the Canaanites (*ibid.*, p.97).

intentions. That is, it is not simply a matter of intention but of *accomplished* intention which makes something true.¹⁸ In the case of God's truth one could say it *always* accomplishes what God intends ([Isa. 55:11](#)). The Bible, then, would be inerrant so long as it always accomplishes its purpose to "make us wise unto salvation" ([2 Tim. 3:15](#)).

Implications for Inerrancy in the Correspondence View

Inerrancy means "without error" or "wholly true". On the correspondence view of truth, several implications are involved. First, it would mean that whatever the writer of a scriptural book actually *affirmed* is to be taken as true, even if he personally did not intend to affirm it. That is to say, the Bible could say *more* than its human authors intended it to, since God could have intended more by it than the authors did.¹⁹ [Psalm 22](#) may be an example of this. David may have intended merely to describe his own persecution, whereas God intended to affirm the Cross in this passage. This is what many think happened to the prophets ([1 Pet. 1:10–11](#)) when they wrote of things that seemed to go beyond them (cf. [Dan. 12:4](#)).

Of course the fact that the authors *could* say more than they intended does not mean they *did*. One might hold that God supernaturally restrained the biblical writers from doing so in order that there would always be an identity between God's intentions and the author's intentions.²⁰ In any case, an implication of the correspondence theory of truth is that one knows an author's intentions by his affirmations and not his affirmations by his intentions. This is so because there is no way for one to get at the biblical author's intentions apart from his expressions of them. A person cannot read a biblical author's mind apart from reading that author's writings.²¹

Second, on the correspondence view of truth an error can occur even when an author *intended* otherwise, because error has to do with his *affirmations* and not simply with his intentions apart from his affirmations. In short, mistakes are possible even if they are unintentional. Therefore to prove the Bible in error, one need not prove wrong intentions of

¹⁸ In this sense the intentional or functional view of truth is akin to or a kind of subspecies of a pragmatic view of truth. As James remarked, "Truth *happens* to an idea. It *becomes* true, is *made* true by events ... 'The true,' to put it very briefly, is only the expedient in the way of our thinking, just as 'the right' is only the expedient in the way of our believing" (William James, *Pragmatism: A New Name for Some Old Ways of Thinking* (New York: Longmans, Green, & Co., 1913), pp.201, 222, italics his).

¹⁹ Even Hirsch, who places strong emphasis on the intention of the author in interpretation, admitted that "the human author's willed meaning can always go beyond what he consciously intended so long as it remains within the willed type, and if the meaning is conceived of as going beyond even that, then we must have recourse to a divine author speaking through the human one. In that case it is His willed type we are trying to interpret, and the human author is irrelevant" (E. D. Hirsch, Jr., *Validity in Interpretation* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1967), p.126, n.37).

²⁰ Kaiser places great weight on this point. See his recent essay, "Legitimate Hermeneutics," in *Inerrancy*, ed. Norman L. Geisler (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1980), pp.117–47.

²¹ Phillip H. Payne makes an interesting point of this in "The Fallacy of Equating Meaning with the Author's Intention," *Trinity Journal* 6 (Spring 1977):23–33.

the author (which is virtually impossible to do) but simply show that he made an incorrect affirmation.²² Hence any proposition affirmed as true by any writer of Scripture which does not (or did not) correspond with the reality to which it referred would be false and in error even if the author did not intend to so affirm.

For instance, *if* the Bible actually affirms that hell is geographically down and heaven is up, and *if* this is contrary to fact, then the Bible would be wrong regardless of what the author may have intended by the passage. Further, *if* the Bible affirms that God directly created all basic forms of life and *if* this is contrary to scientific fact,²³ then the Bible would be in error. Likewise, *if* Paul affirmed that a husband is the “head” of his wife and *if* in fact God does not intend this to be so, then the Bible would be in error here.²⁴

It should be noted in passing that the correspondence view of truth does not have any direct implications as to the *beliefs* of the biblical authors. They may have believed many false things just so long as they did not *affirm* any of these false beliefs in Scripture.²⁵ For on this view of truth “whatever the Bible affirms, God affirms,” and God cannot affirm as true what is false.

WHAT IS TRUTH?

At first one might think that the resolution of the problem as to which view of truth is correct could be achieved by a simple appeal to biblical usage of the terms for “truth”, namely, ἀλήθεια and *emeth*.²⁶ However, these and kindred terms are used both ways in

²² Hirsch contends that there is no meaning apart from the author’s intention of that meaning (*Validity in Interpretation*, p.58). But if this claim is not false it is at least in need of serious qualifications. First, it would seem to make all unintentional falsehoods meaningless statements, whereas it seems evident that unintentionally false directions can be clearly understood, even though they are wrong. Second, why cannot a statement be meaningful even if no human has affirmed it? As long as someone could affirm it, even as he reads it, it would seem to be a meaningful statement. In other words, is not its *affirmability* (not whether it has been affirmed) a sufficient condition for its meaning?

²³ This writer believes the Bible does affirm creation and opposes evolution. See the excellent book by A. E. Wilder Smith, *Man’s Origin, Man’s Destiny* (Wheaton, IL: Harold Shaw Publications, 1968).

²⁴ In this sense inerrancy as held by a proponent of the correspondence view of truth is a truly falsifiable position. All one needs to do to falsify the biblical affirmation “Christ rose from the dead” is to produce the body of Christ or good evidence of witnesses who saw it in decay sometime after the first Easter morning (see [1 Cor. 15:12–13](#)).

²⁵ It may even be possible for an author to *reveal* some of his beliefs through his affirmations without necessarily affirming those beliefs. [First Thessalonians 4:15](#) may be an example (“we who are still alive ...”). Paul did not *affirm* that he would be alive when Christ returned, but he seemed to *believe* (or hope?) that he would be alive at the Lord’s return.

²⁶ The Hebrew word for truth (*emeth*) is used in roughly the same way as the New Testament word. It occurs some 127 times. Often it is used of propositional truth. The Old Testament speaks of true *laws* ([Neh. 9:13](#)), *words* of men ([1 Kings 17:24](#)), *words* of God ([2 Sam. 7:28](#); [Ps. 119:160](#)), *commandments* ([Ps. 119:151](#)) *Scripture* ([Dan. 10:21](#)), and of the

Scripture. “Truth” is used of correspondence to reality in [Proverbs 14:25](#); [John 8:44–45](#); [Acts 24:8, 11](#); [Ephesians 4:25](#); and in many other places. On the other hand, God is said to be truth(ful) ([Rom. 3:4](#)) and Jesus said, “I am ... the truth” ([John 14:6](#)), thus showing that “truth” is used of persons.

How, then, can the problem of the two views of truth be resolved? Is this an irresolvable impasse? This writer thinks not. For one view of truth is broad enough to include the other, but not the reverse. For example, a true statement will always accomplish its intention, but what accomplishes its intention is not always true. Lies and falsehood sometimes accomplish their intentions too. Hence only the correspondence view is adequate as a *comprehensive* view of truth. Further, if truth is only personal but not propositional, there is no adequate way of explaining the numerous biblical passages where truth means propositional correspondence.²⁷ In fact, of the some one hundred New Testament occurrences of the word “truth” (ἀλήθεια) only one passage indisputably uses truth of a person as opposed to propositions or expressions about reality (viz., [John 14:6](#)). Some other passages speak of truth as being (or not being) *in* a person (e.g., [John 1:14, 17](#); [8:44](#); [1 John 2:4](#)), but the latter passage makes it clear that a person is not considered true because he “is a liar,” which involves false propositions (or expressions). In his second epistle John speaks of “walking in the truth” (v. [4](#)) or of continuing “in the teaching” (v. [9](#)) as though truth were personal, but then he explains that this means to “walk in obedience to his commands” (v. [6](#)), which are propositional. Most of the other passages using truth in a personal sense employ words for truth in the adverbial sense of “truly,” not in the substantival sense of “truth”. At least one can safely say that the normal and consistent New Testament usage of “truth” is of truth in the cognitive, propositional sense. Truth is what can be *known* ([Rom. 2:20](#)), what can be *thought* ([1 Tim. 6:5](#)), what can be *heard* ([Eph. 1:13](#); [2 Tim. 4:4](#)), what can be *believed* ([2 Thess. 2:12](#))—in short, it is used of propositions. And any passage where truth is used in reference to a person can be understood as meaning a person who *speaks* the truth or one whose *word* can be trusted (cf. [Rev. 3:14](#); [21:5](#)).

Even if some passages are best understood as meaning truth in a personal or practical sense, they still entail a correspondence view of truth. For the person or action must *correspond* to God’s expectations in order to be true. Furthermore the passages where truth is used propositionally cannot all be explained as truth in a strictly intentional or personal sense, that is, a sense that is not necessarily factually correct. Hence truth—biblical truth—understood as primarily (or exclusively) personal or intentional does not accurately represent the teaching of Scripture about the nature of truth.

factually correct ([Deut. 17:4](#); [22:20](#); [1 Kings 22:16](#); [2 Chron. 18:15](#)). Also “truth” is used of God ([2 Chron. 15:3](#); [Jer. 10:10](#)), of value judgments ([Ezek. 18:8](#)), and of actions ([Gen. 47:29](#); [Judg. 9:16](#)). But even these can be understood in the sense of correspondence to what is or what ought to be. In short, truth is what can be *spoken* ([Jer. 9:5](#)), *known* ([Isa. 10:19](#)), *declared* ([Ps. 30:9](#)), *factually investigated* ([Deut. 13:14](#)), *written* ([Neh. 9:13](#)), or *expressed* in some way ([2 Sam. 2:6](#)), and is what would correctly represent that to which it refers.

In view of this it is strange to read that “truth is not measured in the Old Testament by correspondence to a theoretical norm but by its ability to achieve its goal” (Brevard Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), p.535).

²⁷ See note 26 for Old Testament examples and the following discussion for New Testament examples.

IN DEFENSE OF A CORRESPONDENCE THEORY OF TRUTH

There are two lines of argument for a correspondence view of truth—the biblical²⁸ and the philosophical.

Biblical Arguments

The ninth commandment is predicated on a correspondence view of truth. “You shall not give false testimony against your neighbour” ([Exod. 20:16](#)) depends for its very meaning and effectiveness on the correspondence view of truth. This command implies that a statement is false if it does not correspond to reality. Indeed this is precisely how the term *lie* is used in Scripture. Satan is called a liar ([John 8:44](#)) because his statement to Eve, “You will not surely die” ([Gen. 3:4](#)), did not correspond to what God *really* said, namely, “You will surely die” ([Gen. 2:17](#)). Ananias and Sapphira “lied” to the Apostles by misrepresenting the factual state of affairs about their finances ([Acts 5:1–4](#)).

The Bible gives numerous examples of the correspondence view of truth. Joseph said to his brothers, “Send one of your number to get your brother; the rest of you will be kept in prison, so that your words may be tested to see if you are telling the truth” ([Gen. 42:16](#)).

Moses commanded that false prophets be tested on the grounds that “if what a prophet proclaims ... does not take place or come true, that is a message the Lord has not spoken” ([Deut. 18:22](#)).

Solomon prayed at the dedication of the Temple, “And now, O God of Israel, let your word that you promised your servant David my father (that there would be a Temple) come true” ([1 Kings 8:26](#)).

The prophecies of Micaiah were considered “true” and the false prophets’ words “lies” because the former corresponded with the facts of reality ([1 Kings 22:16–22](#)).

Something was considered a “falsehood” if it did not correspond to God’s law (truth) ([Ps. 119:163](#)).

Proverbs states, “A truthful witness saves lives, but a false witness is deceitful” ([14:25](#)), which implies that truth is factually correct. In court, intentions alone will not save innocent but accused lives. Only “the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth” will do it.

Nebuchadnezzar demanded of his wise men to know the *facts* and he considered anything else “misleading” ([Dan. 2:9](#)).

Jesus’ statement in [John 5:33](#) entails a correspondence view of truth: “You have sent to John and he has testified to the truth.”

In [Acts 24](#) there is an unmistakable usage of the correspondence view. The Jews said to the governor about Paul, “By examining him yourself you will be able to learn the truth about all these charges we are bringing against him” (v. [8](#)). They continued, “You can easily verify (the facts)” (v. [11](#)).

Paul clearly implied a correspondence view of truth when he wrote, “Each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbour” ([Eph. 4:25](#)).

The biblical use of the word err does not support the intentional theory of truth, since it is used of unintentional “errors” (cf. [Lev. 4:2, 27](#); etc.). Certain acts were wrong, whether the

²⁸ These arguments are basically an elaboration and expansion on some of the same points made by Robert Preus (*The Inspiration of Scripture* (London: Oliver & Boyd, 1955), p.24).

trespassers intended to commit them or not, and hence a guilt offering was called for to atone for their “error”.²⁹

To summarize, the Bible consistently employs a correspondence view of truth. A statement is true if it corresponds to the facts and false if it does not. Rarely are there even apparent exceptions to this usage.³⁰

If the biblical arguments are this strong for a correspondence view of truth, why is it that many Christians—even some who believe in inerrancy—claim to hold a noncorrespondence (intentionality) view of truth? Actually the reason is often quite simple: There is a confusion between *theory* of truth and *test* of truth. That is, often both parties hold the correspondence theory of truth but differ in their claims that truth is tested by correspondence, by results, or by some other method. In short, truth should be *defined* as correspondence but *defended* in some other way.

In summation, there are good reasons for insisting that a correspondence *theory* (definition) of truth should be accepted, regardless of the apologetic debate about how Christian truth is to be *tested*.

Philosophical Arguments

Several arguments outside biblical usage can be given in support of a correspondence view of truth.

Lies are impossible without a correspondence view of truth. If one’s statements need not correspond to the facts in order to be true, then any factually incorrect statement could be true. And if this is the case, then lies become impossible because any statement is compatible with any given state of affairs.³¹

²⁹ Of the five times *shegag* (“to err”) is used in the Old Testament ([Gen. 6:3](#); [Lev. 5:18](#); [Num. 15:28](#); [Job. 12:16](#); [Ps. 119:67](#)), the Leviticus and Numbers references clearly refer to erring unintentionally. Further, the noun *shegagah* is used nineteen times and all but two are of unintentional errors ([Lev. 4:2](#), [22](#), [27](#); [5:15](#), [18](#); [22:14](#); [Num. 15:29](#), [25](#) (twice), [26](#), [27](#), [28](#), [29](#); [35:11](#) (twice); [Josh. 20:3](#), [9](#)). Only [Ecclesiastes 5:6](#) and [10:5](#) could be understood as using *shegagah* to refer to intentional errors.

³⁰ [John 5:31](#) (RSV) appears to be an exception. Jesus said, “If I testify about myself, my testimony is not valid” (ἀληθής). This would seem to imply that Jesus’ factually correct statements about Himself were not “true”. This, however, would be nonsense on even an intentionalist’s definitions of truth, for surely Jesus *intended* truth about Himself. What is meant here is that a self-testimony was not *established* as true. Or, as the NIV puts it, such “testimony is not valid,” despite the fact that it is true, since it is only “by the testimony of two or three (other) witnesses” that every word is *established* ([Matt. 18:16](#); cf. [John 8:17](#)) and not by one’s own word. Elsewhere Jesus clearly said, “Even if I testify on my own behalf, my testimony is valid” ([John 8:14](#)), meaning that it is factually correct, even if they did not accept it.

³¹ Part of the confusion rests in the fact that errantists sometimes confuse “lying” which is always an *intentional* falsehood and “error” which is just a plain falsehood. Rogers and McKim seem to make this mistake when they said that “error, for Augustine, had to do with *deliberate and deceitful* telling of that which the author knew to be untrue” (*The Authority and Interpretation of the Bible*, p.30, italics added). Besides the fact that Augustine is not speaking of a mere error but a *lie* in this context—a crucial fact which Rogers and McKim

Without correspondence there could be no such thing as truth or falsity. In order to know something is true as opposed to something that is false, there must be a real difference between things and the statements about the things. But this real difference between thought and things is precisely what is entailed in a correspondence view of truth.

Factual communication would break down without a correspondence view of truth. Factual communication depends on informative statements. But informative statements must be factually true (that is, they must *correspond* to the facts) in order to inform one correctly. Further, since all communication seems to depend ultimately on something being literally or factually true, then it would follow that *all* communication depends in the final analysis on a correspondence view of truth.

Even the intentionalist theory depends on the correspondence theory of truth. The intentionalist theory claims something is true if it is accomplishing what it intends. But this means that it is true only if the accomplishments *correspond* to the intentions. So without *correspondence* of intentions and accomplished facts there is no truth.

CONCLUSION

A certain irony is involved in the present debate about inerrancy which illustrates this point. Hubbard, who is apparently an intentionalist and errantist, recently criticized Lindsell, who is an inerrantist and correspondentist, for *misrepresenting the facts* about the situation at Fuller Theological Seminary. He provided Lindsell with “a handful of errors”³² in Lindsell’s treatment of the Fuller situation. But why should these be called “errors” on an intentionalist’s view of truth? Surely Lindsell *intended* well and even *accomplished* his intentions in arousing awareness of the drift from inerrancy at Fuller. But this is all that one can expect on an intentionalist’s view of truth. In short, why should Hubbard complain about factual misrepresentation unless he really holds a correspondence view of truth? And if he holds a correspondence view of truth, then why should he reject the factual inerrancy of the Bible? The least to be expected is that he be consistent with his *own* view of truth.

There is more, however, that biblical Christians must expect and even demand. It is this: Every Christian should get his view of truth about the Bible from the Bible. And if this is the correspondence view of truth, as the foregoing discussion indicates, then it follows that the factual inerrantists are right. That is to say, the Bible is inerrant in whatever it affirms.

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mistakenly overlook—their use of the word *untrue* in the last part of the sentence belies a correspondence view of truth which is at odds with the intentional view they are proposing in the first part of the quotation.

³² See David A. Hubbard, *Theology, News and Notes* (Pasadena, CA: Fuller Theological Seminary, 1976), p.26. Hubbard’s comment is especially strange in view of the fact that he explicitly rejected Lindsell’s view of an “error” or untruth (*ibid.*, p.8).