

Journal of International Society of Christian Apologetics

Vol. 7 No. 1 April 2014

The Creation and Historicity of Adam and Eve	5
<i>Walter C. Kaiser, Jr.</i>	
A Review of <i>Five Views on Biblical Inerrancy</i>	33
<i>Norman L. Geisler</i>	
Intelligent Design and Some Thomist Philosophers	144
<i>J. Thomas Bridges</i>	
How to Convince Biblical Skeptics of Jesus' Divine Self-Understanding	209
<i>Kirk R. MacGregor</i>	
Contextualization, Biblical Inerrancy, and the Orality Movement	244
<i>Cameron D. Armstrong</i>	
An Exploration of Eleonore Stump's Theodicy	305
<i>J. Brian Huffling</i>	
Book Reviews:	
A Review of <i>The End of Apologetics</i>	331
<i>Louis Markos</i>	
A Review of <i>The Lost World of Scripture</i>	341
<i>F. David Farnell</i>	

Journal of the International Society of Christian Apologetics

EDITOR

William C. Roach., Ph.D.

The Journal of the International Society of Christian Apologetics is a peer-reviewed journal published annually on behalf of the International Society of Christian Apologetics to foster scholarly discussion of ideas among evangelical scholars relevant to the defense of the Christian faith. It includes articles from a wide variety fields, including philosophy, ethics, theology, biblical studies, law, literature, history, and comparative religions.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

There are two levels of membership in the Society:

Full Member: \$25.00

Student Member: \$15.00

A subscription to the journal is included in these memberships.

Libraries and non-members may purchase copies at \$15.00 per issue.

CORRESPONDENCE

Prospective manuscripts or inquiries concerning content or policies of the journal:

William C. Roach., Ph.D.

roawil@gmail.com

Please conform manuscripts to the Chicago Manual of Style. See www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html

Concerning subscriptions, memberships or dues: Dr. Khaldoun A Sweis (ksweis@ccc.edu)

Concerning the www.isca-apologetics.org website: Tim Adkisson (adkisson02@gmail.com)

THE INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY OF CHRISTIAN
APOLOGETICS
(Founded 2006)

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

President, Kerby Anderson; Vice President, Donald Williams; Editor of Journal, William C. Roach; Webmaster, Tim Adkisson; Past Presidents: Norman L. Geisler, Past President; Winfried Corduan, Past President; Phil Robert, Past President.

PURPOSE STATEMENT

To foster scholarly discussion of ideas among evangelical scholars relevant to the defense of the historic Christian Faith in accordance with the Doctrinal Statement of the Society.

Contents

The Creation and Historicity of Adam and Eve	Walter C. Kaiser, Jr.	5
A Review of Five Views of Biblical Inerrancy	Norman L. Geisler	33
Intelligent Design and Some Thomist Philosophers	J. Thomas Bridges	144
How to Convince Biblical Skeptics of Jesus' Divine Self-Understanding	Kirk R. MacGregor	209
Contextualization, Biblical Inerrancy, and the Orality Movement	Cameron D. Armstrong	244
An Exploration of Eleonore Stump's Theodicy	J. Brian Huffling	305
<u>Book Reviews</u>		
A Review of The End of Apologetics: Christian Witness in a Postmodern Context	Louis Markos	331
A Review of The Lost World of Scripture: Ancient Literary Culture and Biblical Authority	F. David Farnell	341

The Creation and Historicity of Adam and Eve

Walter C. Kaiser, Jr.

Introduction

Christians and Jews, through much of the past twenty centuries, have pretty much believed that the Biblical Adam and Eve of Genesis 1-3 were actual persons who were directly created by God, and from whom all other human beings have descended.¹ In addition to this, Christians believe that because of the disobedience of this original couple, sin entered into the human experience, and so all were judged to be sinners as a result of their “fall” into sin. Furthermore, Christians continue to confess by means of creeds such as the Apostles Creed that, “[We] believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth.”

¹ Dr. Walter C. Kaiser Jr. is president emeritus at Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary and signer of the historic Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy. This paper was read on April 5-6,

So if this has been the traditional belief, especially of Christians for so many in the past twenty centuries, what has happened recently that has led some to abandon, or seriously modify, their belief in the fact that God in particular created a real Adam and Eve as the first human couple? When this question is seriously put to many Christians who have so suddenly changed their minds and their positions about an actual historical Adam and Eve being directly created by God as their Maker, they generally point to two recent advances in studies outside of the Bible that have impacted their thinking: (1) the myths on the origins of the world from the ancient Near Eastern cultures that purport to have been partially borrowed and used by the writer of Genesis and (2) the discoveries about the human DNA from the genome project that require, as it is claimed, that the human population arose from as many

as several thousand members, not just an original pair of two persons. These two topics have tended to dominate the current agenda for investigating this issue of an historic Adam and Eve. But first, let us summarize some of the teaching of Genesis 1-2 that form the background for our investigation.

I. AN ABSOLUTE BEGINNING – GENESIS 1:1

The first verse of the Bible begins with a distinct and unique sentence that asserts an absolute beginning for the whole universe: “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.” No further details are given on this beginning, but it did claim to involve the whole universe, for while Hebrew has no distinct word for “universe,” or “cosmos,” it does have the use of the expression “heavens and the earth,” which is a figure of speech called a hendiadys, where two words are used to speak of a single reality, the universe.

This concept of an absolute beginning of the world was shared by a good number in the Jewish community as well, for the Hebrew Masoretes (Jewish scholars who copied the text of Scripture from the fifth to sixth centuries A.D.) punctuated the Hebrew word bereshith, “in the beginning” with a disjunctive accent marker called a tiphchah, thereby indicating a break, or a separation of this word, from what follows in the text (somewhat like we would use a comma for punctuation). By doing so, the early Hebrew scribes highlighted “In the beginning” as an absolute beginning and its legitimacy by rendering it: “In the beginning” (with the article). Likewise, the early Church Father, Origen, in his Hexapla, also indicated that some scholars read the first word in the Bible as “In the beginning.” Generally Hebrew adverbial expressions routinely deleted the Hebrew article in these types of constructions, but in one of Origen’s eight columns of his Hexapla, where he transliterated the Hebrew letters into

Greek letters, he wrote this first Hebrew word in the Bible with a long “a” vowel, indicating once again that it was read and understood as meaning “In the beginning.” There was no clearer way of making this very point.

However, this first great principle of an absolute beginning in the Bible is contrary to some of the ancient schools of philosophy, which classically have held that matter was “eternal.” Thus, Epicurus taught, “know first of all that nothing can spring from a non-entity.” Likewise, Plato taught that matter was “co-existent with God.” But Christianity affirmed that the universe (and therefore matter) had a beginning and that all varieties of spontaneous combustion or the eternity of matter were decisively excluded and opposed to Biblical theism. Only God was eternal; all matter was of recent vintage and came from the hand of God.

II. CREATION BY THE WORD OF GOD

The second great evangelical principle is that the creation narrative also recorded the method God used in creating the universe, which was by the powerful word of God. This is affirmed by its repetition in the Genesis record nine times over; “And God said.” But this same affirmation is underscored in numerous places elsewhere later on throughout the Biblical text, such as in Psalms 33:6, 9, which says: “By the word of the Lord were the heavens made For he spoke, and [they, i.e., the heavens and the earth] came to be; he commanded, and [they] stood firm.”

This creative and authoritative word of bringing into being something by supernatural means of the spoken word of God can be understood as similar to another event in the New Testament narrative, where Jesus’ word to the Centurion, who came to Jesus in Matthew 8:5-13 with a request that Jesus would heal him simply by his speaking the divine word. He did not want to trouble the Lord to

come to take time to come all the way to his house, for if Jesus merely spoke the word, he believed his servant would be healed – which he was!

Moreover, John's Gospel takes a similar stance when it affirms:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made (Jn. 1:1-2a).

Surely this points to the direct hand of our Lord Jesus in particular with all that now currently appears on earth and in heaven. The point is clear: evangelicals must cease declaring that Genesis merely teaches “that God created the heavens and the earth,” but it does not tell us how he created it. In fact, it does tell us how: it was by his powerful word that he spoke the heavens and the earth into existence!

III. A NARRATIVE PROSE LITERARY GENRE
FOR GENESIS 1-11

In a paper prepared and read for the twentieth anniversary of the Evangelical Theological Society in 1967,² I argued there as I do now, that the author of Genesis intended the events of Genesis 1-11 to be treated as being just as real and historical as he intended the events of Genesis 12-50. The author of Genesis indicated this by using the same rubric or heading ten times over to headline the materials in both parts of Genesis, viz., “The generations/accounts of ...” He used this rubric six times in Genesis 1-11 (2:4; 5:1; 6:9; 10:1; 11:10, 27), while he used the same rubric in Genesis 12-50 four [or five] times in a section of the book of Genesis that has been illuminated by many archaeological finds, viz., Genesis 12-50 (25:12, 19; 36:1 [9]; 37:2).

² It was subsequently published: Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., “The Literary Form of Genesis 1-11,” in *New Perspectives on the Old Testament*. Ed. by J. Barton Payne, Waco, TX. 1970, 48-65.

As a matter of fact, this same type of header continues the larger story of the whole Bible in Numbers 3:1; Ruth 4:18 and Matthew 1:1. Abraham Malamat³ even compared the Hebrew toledoth, “generations/histories” of Perez (Ruth 4:18) (or we might even add the genealogies of Genesis 4, 5, 11), to the number of palus, “eras” or “dynasties” found in the genealogy of Hammurabi. Based on this comparison, Malamat surmised that these terms might well have indicated earlier genealogical documents which were used as sources for the present compositions. Therefore, Genesis 1-11 matches instances of corresponding materials from the ancient Near East and the concept that Moses did indeed utilize sources under the inspiration of God, just as Luke argued that is what he did for the life of Jesus (Luke 1:1-4).

³ Abraham Malamat, “King Lists of the Old Babylonian Period and Biblical Genealogies,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 88 (1968), 164-5, 170-1.

The best case for the literary genre of Genesis 1-11, and especially Genesis 1-3 can be made for calling these texts “narrative prose;” not poetry, allegory, myth, fable, or parable, or any other similar genre. What pushes us to this conclusion of “narrative prose” is the presence of the Hebrew waw consecutive verbal construction, the frequent use of the Hebrew direct object sign eth, and the presence of the so-called relative pronoun asher, all of which are almost never used in the poetical sections of the Bible. Moreover, there is the emphasis on defining the things spoken of, which again would be unique to prose, but not usually included in poetical writing.

This does not mean that there are no figures of speech involved, for as E. W. Bullinger properly called to our attention, there are some 150 different illustrations of tropological materials in Genesis 1-11.⁴ However, it must

⁴ E. W. Bullinger. *Figures of Speech*, 1898, r.p. Grand Rapids: Baker, 1968, pp 1032-33.

be strongly asserted that all such examples of figurative language are controlled by an exact literary science, which first names the figure of speech, then defines that figure, followed by giving examples from classical Greek and Roman sources, and then finally cites examples from the Bible for comparison and accessing the meaning of the figure.

In addition to this, Genesis 1-11 has given to us numerous occasions to inspect the authenticity of the text by adding some 64 geographical terms, 88 personal names, 48 generic names and 21 cultural items such as gold, bdellium, onyx, brass, iron, gopher wood, bitumen, mortar, brick, stone, harp, pipe, along with such features such as towers and cities themselves. By way of contrast, the single tenth chapter of Genesis alone has five times more geographical data than is found in the entire Koran. Every one of the items listed in Genesis 1-11 exposed the Biblical writer to a challenge to his reliability, if one of more of this

plethora of data could be found to be misplaced in time or location. But no one has ever demonstrated such anachronistic material in the text.

IV. GOD CREATES A GARDEN AND A MAN – GENESIS 2:4-25

For some, it would appear that Genesis 2:4 - 3:24 is a second account of creation, for if chapter one appears to have just described the creation of the world, then it looks as if all of a sudden we are beginning all over again with a time when plants, animals and humans have not yet been created. Is this then an alternate account of creation? Does it contradict what had been described already in chapter one? What is the solution to this problem? This brings us to the fourth great evangelical principle of creation, which is that Genesis 2-3 continues the same creation story, but with an emphasis on a special garden that was made for the first couple, Adam and Eve.

Of course, critical scholars have been in the habit of claiming that there are two stories of beginnings in Genesis,

based on documentary evidence of “J” and “P.” But “P” and “J” are not real sources which have been epigraphically identified, or archaeologically discovered in our digging, but “P” and “J” are only hypothetical sources created by scholars’ ingenuity. Moreover, the tactic of the Genesis writer, seen throughout the book of Genesis, is to cover the wider area of what he wants to say, such as the broader aspects of the subject first (here: such as the universe and the earth in its broadest sense), and then to focus in more narrowly on the specific detail that he is after: in this case it was the Garden of Eden in Genesis 2-3. In the rest of the book of Genesis, the author of this book will exhibit this same stylistic device. For example, he will briefly cover Esau’s descendants briefly in in Genesis 36, but then he will focus extensively in on Jacob’s child Joseph in Genesis 37 – 50, for that was his purpose in raising the issue.

We would contend that the materials in Genesis 2-3 deal exclusively with the Garden of Eden where God

introduced grain seeds and thorns and thistles for the first time, because up to that point no man had been there to till the ground in order to perpetuate the nurture of grains, and no rain had fallen on the ground, which would allow the thorns and thistles to grow. Thus these plants were now introduced in Eden, but had not been mentioned in Genesis chapter 1.

V. AN HISTORICAL ADAM AND EVE MADE IN THE IMAGE OF GOD

Some affirm that Genesis 2-3 would seem to favor the fact that God used the evolutionary biological process (hereafter EBP) to bring humans into being, so that they are viewed as the products of natural selection and the evolutionary biological process (EBP) as some scientists have taught. On this view, “Adam and Eve” would only function as “types,” or as an “allegory” or a “symbol” of the human race. But other scholars who have also recently adopted an evolutionary view of the active mechanism for the origin of all the cosmos, plants, fish and animals, to be the real

explanation for what took place in Genesis 1. However, some of these same theological scholars have nevertheless rejected such a biological process for the sudden appearance of Adam and Eve in the Biblical record, because of the serious theological consequences this would raise for our understanding of someone no less than the Apostle Paul. This group of scholars regard this couple as a real historical set of individuals, who appeared in real space and time. But how can they stop the EBP at the end of chapter 1, and simply say that Genesis 2-3 do not show any of the signs of the literary style exhibited in Genesis 1? That is even more difficult to explain. There is a tacit recognition that we are indeed dealing with “narrative prose” genre in all three chapters of Genesis 1-3, but there is a tendency to adopt a new literary genre which is known as one of “exalted prose,” terms that were first used by E. J. Young in a somewhat different sense, but now it has have been adopted and reinterpreted by some to imply another

type of possible poetic-like prose writing, whatever that means. Others have gone in a different route and have tried to show a tendency to adopt a new purpose for Genesis 1-2, by saying these chapters are meant to describe a “functional” view of the story of beginnings, and not the method of creation!

To argue, however, that Adam and Eve were merely symbols, or mythic representations, of the whole human race (or even merely a description of the functions of creation), rather than a record of the divine introduction of a set of historic individuals, would put us at odds with Jesus who in Mark 10:6 declared: “But at the beginning of creation God ‘made them male and female’ ... and the two will become one flesh.” That is a serious consideration for a believer in Christ. It involved a theology of the unity of the race, as well as a theology of marriage and a theology of creation.

Such a symbolic designation would also mean that we would be at odds with the apostle Paul, who certainly held in Romans 5:12 ff. that Adam was just as real a man as Jesus was (1 Cor 15:21-22), for the two are linked in these statements.

Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all have sinned. Romans 5:12

For if the many died by the trespass of one man, how much more did God's grace and the gift that came by the grace of one man, Jesus Christ, overflow to the many! Romans 5:15

For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. I Corinthians 15:21-22.

The rejoinder that assumes these Biblical authors were by these means exhibiting that they were merely persons of their times, who used ancient methods common to that day to teach their readers, is a difficult position to take, for it raises a new set of criteria (usually unstated) for deciding

which parts of the Bible can be trusted and which parts are merely the outward husks that embody or contain the essential inside contents of correct doctrine! But this again assumes that the writers were not divinely aided as they received their messages, but merely reflected their own culture and thinking. Furthermore, unless there is this unity of humanity in the one man Adam, we could have some mortals who might be less sinful than Adam, or some who were derived from another line of humans, that may have been exempt from original sin into which Adam and Eve fell, but Scripture insists on an equal sinfulness of all who belong to the human race. Such a claim is foundational to the Biblical disclosure, both federally and paternally! This will be our fifth evangelical principle in the doctrine of creation.

The key to determining meaning of any portion of Scripture is to return to the author's original sense or meaning as the determinate basis for deciding what is

authoritatively taught in any Biblical text. Therefore, when we refuse to take or understand the author, as he himself intended his truth assertions to be taken in the first place, is to substitute another, or an alternative authority, in place of the individual writer of Scripture, who first stood in the council of God to receive this revelation from God.

Nevertheless, a few evangelicals still wish to treat Adam and Eve as real hominids, or as the products of evolutionary biological developments from the existing primates. But this raises the problem of those other descendants who arose by the same EBP, as we have already noted, but who may not have been represented, either federally or paternally, by Adam. How will they fit the declarations of the Apostle Paul or Jesus to the contrary -- that all came from one man and are sinners in need of a Savior?

In the intellectual capital of the world of that day, e.g., in the city of Athens, the apostle Paul preached this message on Mars Hill,

The God who made the world, and everything that is in it, is Lord of heaven and earth... From one man he [God] made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth (Acts 17:24, 26).

Thus, while the Church over the centuries has held that the manner in which “Eve” is spoken of in Scripture, as being “formed” by God from a portion taken from Adam’s “side,” must be understood as a direct creation by God, a looser view is more recently often held by others for the derivation of “Adam.” His origins are said to be more symbolical and thus he was the result of an EBP. But Paul’s argument about the unity of humankind as coming from this one man is more than a federal headship argument; it is a paternal argument and Biblically such an argument does not seem to allow for multiple individuals to arrive on the scene at the same time that Adam arrived.

This whole discussion brings up a sixth evangelical principle of Biblical creation. With the assumed view of a large number of biologically emerging primates all available to play the part of Adam and Eve, how did God decide to affix his own image to one, or even two of these primates, and not to any of the others? Genesis 1: 27 decisively announced: “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.” While this “image of God” is difficult to define in detail, most identify it with the following: (1) the gift of immediate speech (Adam and Eve are not taught in the Biblical narrative how to talk to each other or to God, but they are able to communicate immediately!), (2) the gift of love (Adam is wild about Eve, when he is first introduced to her!), (3) the gift of “having dominion” or of being a steward of all that God has made, ruling over the natural order on behalf of God, (4) along

with a gift of knowledge (Col 3:10): “renewed [in the new birth] in knowledge in the image of [one’s] creator.”

The fact that Adam and Eve were invested with “having dominion,” and given a charge to “subdue” the earth, did not necessarily imply that the garden was not yet in the shape God wanted it to be. The doctrine of work implied here in this setting had none of the negative concepts that we now attach to work, but it was a joy to continue to see creation in God’s order sustained to its full potential under the supervision of this couple who answered to God for its effectiveness and beauty.

**VI. ALL THINGS WERE CREATED BY CHRIST
JESUS – COLOSSIANS 1:15-17**

Paul taught in Colossians 1:15-17 that Jesus held the honor of being first in rank and preeminence (“firstborn”) over all creation, (not number one in chronological order of creation, as if God created his Son first, which is a heresy of the Arians and Jehovah Witnesses). “For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible

and invisible.... All things were created by him and for him.” Even if one takes this statement as exhibiting only permission, and secondary causation, but not direct agency, one must name what the figure of speech it is that was allegedly used here, define it in terms of its wider usage, and then show how it is specially functioning here. A mere wave of the hand, with a summary conclusion that this is but a “figurative expression,” will not pay the proper respect such as text deserves or that the writer is worthy of enjoying.

In conclusion there is one other matter and that is the designation “theistic evolution.” In order to remove the explanation of this title from what could more aptly be called “Deistic Evolution,” where the watch-maker wound the clock up and then let the EBP take it to its natural conclusion, early twentieth century advocates of this view, such as James Orr, Augustus Hopkins Strong, or Benjamin Breckenridge Warfield, tried to locate three definite spots

where God directly intervened into the evolutionary process: viz., (1) with the creation of matter in the beginning (Gen 1:1); (2) the creation of life (Gen 1:20-21), and (3) the insertion of the image of God into man and woman (Gen 1:27). These men linked these interpretive moves with thesis that this should be named “Theistic Evolutionary;” a view of the text of Scripture (for they were exegetes and theologians) that the Bible itself taught. They emphasized the fact that the Hebrew verb bara’, “create,” was only used in these three spots in the Genesis text – Genesis 1:1, 21, 27. It was only at these three moments where God interrupted the evolutionary process and directly intervened in the creative process according to their views.

It is true that this verb, bara’, which occurs some 45 times in the Old Testament, is never used with any agency of material and exclusively has God as its subject in all of its occurrences; so, therefore, it is the closest verb mortals

could have (which mortals would otherwise not need such a word in their vocabulary, since we mortals are unable to create anything out of nothing) to mean “creation out of nothing,” ex nihilo. But of course it does not mean that, since, as we have said, mortals have no need for such a verb of their own works, God cannot create things out of nothing! However, two other Hebrew words for “create” are alternately used along with this verb bara`, viz, `asah, “to make,” and yatsar, “to form.” It is doubtful, then, that it was the intention of the writer of Genesis to reduce all of these Hebrew words to mean the identical concepts for all three Hebrew verbs – there were nuances of meaning to each! What helps us, however, are the circumlocutions found in other texts that show that what now appears was indeed made out of what was not visible or part of our mortal existence prior to God’s making it in creation. See, e.g., Hebrew 11:3 –

By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what was seen was not made out of what was visible.

So if we are understandably fainthearted about translating bara` as "creating out of nothing," do not despair, for Hebrews 11:3 will send what a single word could not denote or mean by giving the same concept to us in a fully expression!

Therefore, God did create out of nothing, for he had to initially call each thing into existence. But the attempt to focus on the three uses of bara` as the door that allowed "Theistic Evolution" into our exegesis is unwarranted.

CONCLUSIONS

1. There was nothing in the absolute beginning of the universe except God. Matter is not eternal, but is derived from God.

2. The method God used to create the universe was by stating his word as the grounds for all that appeared (Ps 33:6, 9).
3. The unity of all humanity meant that all mortals were by nature and by practice sinners who needed the redemption of Jesus Christ.
4. At the heart of the Biblical narrative is the story of the harm that came to all persons because of the sin of one man, but by the work of another one incarnate man, Christ Jesus, salvation was provided to the saving of the souls of all who will believe.
5. Mortals are not junk, but have dignity, value and worth because they have been gifted with the image of God.
6. Attempts to introduce “Theistic Evolution” be means of noting the three places where Genesis 1 used the term “created” (bara`) is flawed, because it argues for a use and meaning of a verb (i.e., “to create out of nothing”) that cannot be sustained in the parallel verbs used

elsewhere in that same text and in the rest of the Old Testament.

7. Many who of those who currently espouse a view of “theistic evolution” almost always forget to tell us where God entered the picture, in distinction from those theistic evolutionists of the early twentieth century, who attempted to attach God’s entry into the picture at the point of the three appearances of bara` in Genesis 1. So what makes “theistic evolution” “theistic,” as determined by the text of Scripture? This needs to be shown from Scripture.

A Review of *Five Views on Biblical Inerrancy*,

Eds. J. Merrick and Stephen Garrett

Norman L. Geisler

Introduction

The Zondervan general editor of the Counterpoint series, Stanley Gundry, together with his chosen editors, J. Merrick and Stephen Garrett, have produced a provocative book on *Five Views on Biblical Inerrancy* (2013).¹ The five scholar participants are Albert Mohler, Peter Enns, Kevin Vanhoozer, Michael Bird, and John Franke. This Counterpoints series has produced many stimulating dialogues on various topics, and they no doubt intended to do the same on this controversial topic of inerrancy. However, there is a basic problem in the dialogue format as applied to biblical inerrancy.

¹ This article is written by Dr. Norman L. Geisler. He is the former president of the ETS, framer of the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy, and professor at Veritas Evangelical Seminary.

There is Madness in the Method

The “dialogue” method works well for many intramural evangelical discussions like eternal security, the role of women in the ministry, and the like. However, when it is applied to basic issues which help define the nature of evangelicalism, like the nature of Scripture, the method has some serious drawbacks. For if inerrancy is a doctrine that is essential to consistent evangelicalism, as most evangelicals believe that it is, then it seems unfitting to make it subject to the dialogue method for two reasons. First, for many evangelicals the issue of inerrancy is too important to be “up for grabs” on the evangelical dialogue table. Second, just by providing non-inerrantists and anti-inerrantists a “seat at the table” gives a certain undeserved legitimacy to their view. If, as will be shown below, the non-inerrancy view is not biblical, essential, or in accord with the long history of the Christian Church, then the dialogue method fails to do justice to the topic because it

offers an undeserved platform to those who do not really believe the doctrine. To illustrate, I doubt if one were setting up a conference on the future of Israel that he would invite countries who don't believe in the existence of Israel (like Iran) to the table.

Stacking the Deck

Not only can the staging of the inerrancy discussion in the *Five Views* book be challenged, but so can the choice of actors on the stage. For the choice of participants in this *Five Views* “dialogue” did not fit the topic in a balanced way. Since the topic was inerrancy and since each participant was explicitly asked to address the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy (CSBI), the choice of participants was not appropriate. For only one participant (Al Mohler) states his unequivocal belief in the CSBI view of inerrancy produced by the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy (ICBI). Some participants explicitly

deny inerrancy (Enns, 83f.).² Others prefer to redefine the CSBI statement before agreeing with it. Still others claim to agree with it, but they do so based on a misunderstanding of what the framers meant by inerrancy, as will be shown below.

What is more, an even greater problem is that none of the framers of the CSBI, whose statement was being attacked, were represented on the panel. Since three of them (J. I. Packer, R. C. Sproul, and N. L. Geisler) are still alive and active, the makeup of the panel was questionable. It is like convening a panel on the First Amendment to the US Constitution while Washington, Adams, and Madison were still alive but not inviting any of them to participate! Further, only one scholar (Al Mohler) was unequivocally in favor of the CSBI view, and some were known to be unequivocally against it (like Peter Enns). This is loading

² Unless otherwise noted, all page numbers in parentheses refer to J. Merrick and S. Garrett, eds., *Five Views on Biblical Inerrancy*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013).

the dice against positive results. So, with a stacked deck in the format and the dice loaded in the choice of participants, the probabilities of a positive result were not high, and understandably the result confirms this anticipation.

Understanding Inerrancy

To be sure, whether inerrancy is an essential doctrine is crucial to the point at hand. In order to answer this question more fully, we must first define inerrancy and then evaluate its importance.

Definition of Inerrancy

Unless otherwise noted, when we use the word “inerrancy” in this article, we mean inerrancy as understood by the ETS framers and defined by the founders of the CSBI, namely, what is called total or unlimited inerrancy. The CSBI defines inerrancy as *unlimited* inerrancy, whereas many of

ETS participants believe in *limited* inerrancy. Unlimited inerrancy affirms that Bible is true on whatever subject it speaks—whether it is redemption, ethics, history, science, or anything else. Limited inerrancy affirms that the Bible’s inerrancy is limited to redemptive matters.

The Evangelical Theological Society (ETS), the largest of any society of its kind in the world, with some 3000 members, began in 1948 with only one doctrinal statement: “The Bible alone and the Bible in its entirety is the Word of God written, and therefore inerrant in the autographs.” After a controversy in 2003 (concerning Clark Pinnock’s view) which involved the meaning of inerrancy, the ETS voted in 2004 to accept “the CSBI as its point of reference for defining inerrancy” (Merrick, 311). It states: “For the purpose of advising members regarding the intent and meaning of the reference to biblical inerrancy in the ETS Doctrinal Basis, the Society refers members to the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy (1978)” (see J.

Merrick, 311). So, for the largest group of scholars believing in inerrancy the officially accepted definition of the term “inerrancy” is that of the CSBI.

The CSBI supports unlimited or total inerrancy, declaring: “The holy Scripture...is of divine authority in all matters upon which it touches” (*A Short Statement*, 2). Also, “We deny that Biblical infallibility and inerrancy are limited to spiritual, religious, or redemptive themes, exclusive of assertions in the fields of history and science” (Art. 12). It further declares that: “**The authority of Scripture is inescapably impaired if this total divine inerrancy is in any way limited or disregarded, or made relative to a view of truth contrary to the Bible’s own**” (*A Short Statement*, 5, emphasis added). As we shall see below, unlimited inerrancy has been the historic position of the Christian Church down through the centuries. Thus, the history supporting the doctrine of inerrancy is supporting unlimited inerrancy.

The Importance of Inerrancy

The question of the importance of inerrancy can be approached both doctrinally and historically. Doctrinally, inerrancy is an important doctrine because: (1) it is attached to the character of God; (2) It is foundational to other essential doctrines; (3) it is taught in the Scriptures, and (4) it is the historic position of the Christian Church.

The Doctrinal Importance of Inerrancy

First of all, as the ETS statement declares, inerrancy is based on the character of God who cannot lie (Heb. 6:18; Titus 1:2). For it affirms that the Bible is “inerrant” because (note the word “therefore”) it is the Word of God. This makes a direct logical connection between inerrancy and the truthfulness of God.

Second, inerrancy is fundamental to all other essential Christian doctrines. It is granted that some other doctrines (like the atoning death and bodily resurrection of Christ) are more essential to salvation. However, all

soteriological (salvation-related) doctrines derive their divine authority from the divinely authoritative Word of God. So, in an epistemological (knowledge-related) sense, the doctrine of the divine authority and inerrancy of Scripture is the fundamental of all the fundamentals. And if the fundamental of fundamentals is not fundamental, then what is fundamental? Fundamentally nothing! Thus, while one can be saved without believing in inerrancy, the doctrine of salvation has no divine authority apart from the infallibility and inerrancy of Scripture. This is why Carl Henry (and Al Mohler following him) affirmed correctly that while inerrancy is not necessary to evangelical *authenticity*, it is nonetheless, essential to evangelical *consistency* (Mohler, 29).

Third, B. B. Warfield correctly noted that the primary basis for believing in the inerrancy of Scripture is that it was taught by Christ and the apostles in the New Testament. And he specified it as unlimited inerrancy (in

his book *Limited Inspiration*, Presbyterian & Reformed reprint, 1962). Warfield declared: “We believe in the doctrine of plenary inspiration of the Scriptures primarily because it is the doctrine of Christ and his apostles believed, and which they have taught us (cited by Mohler, 42). John Wenham in *Christ and the Bible* (IVP, 1972) amply articulated what Christ taught about the Bible, including its inerrancy, for Wenham was one of the international signers of the 1978 *Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy* (see Geisler, *Defending Inerrancy*, 348). Indeed, to quote Jesus himself, “the Scripture cannot be broken” (John 10:35) and “until heaven and earth pass away not an iota, not a dot, will pass away from the Law until all is accomplished” (Matt 5:18). A more complete discussion of what Jesus taught about the Bible is found in chapter 16 of our *Systematic*.

Fourth, inerrancy is the historic position of the Christian Church. As Al Mohler pointed out (Mohler, 48-

49), even some inerrantists have agreed that inerrancy has been the standard view of the Christian Church down through the centuries. He cites the Hanson brothers, Anthony and Richard, Anglican scholars, who said, “The Christian Fathers and the medieval tradition continued this belief [in inerrancy], and the Reformation did nothing to weaken it. On the contrary, since for many reformed theologians the authority of the Bible took the place which the Pope had held in the medieval scheme of things, the inerrancy of the Bible became more firmly maintained and explicitly defined among some reformed theologians than it had even been before.” They added, “The beliefs here denied [viz., inerrancy] have been held by all Christians from the very beginning until about a hundred and fifty years ago” (cited by Mohler, 41).

Inerrancy is a fundamental doctrine since it is fundamental to all other Christian doctrines which derive their authority from the belief that the Bible is the infallible

and inerrant Word of God. Indeed, like many other fundamental doctrines (e.g., the Trinity), it is based on a necessary conclusion from biblical truths. The doctrine of inerrancy as defined by CSBI is substantially the same as the doctrine held through the centuries by the Christian Church (see discussion below). So, even though it was never put in explicit confessional form in the early Church, nevertheless, by its nature as derived from the very nature of God and by its universal acceptance in the Christian Church down through the centuries, it has earned a status of tacit catholicity (universality). It thus deserves high regard among evangelicals and has rightly earned the status of being essential (in an epistemological sense) to the Christian Faith. Thus, to reduce inerrancy to the level of non-essential or even “incidental” to the Christian Faith, reveals ignorance of its theological and historical roots and is an offense to its “watershed” importance to a consistent and healthy Christianity. As the CSBI statement declares:

“However, we further deny that inerrancy can be rejected without grave consequences, both to the individual and to the Church” (Art. 19).

Unjustified Assumptions about Inerrancy

A careful reading of the *Five Views* dialogue reveals that not only were the dice loaded against the CSBI inerrancy view by format and by the choice of participants, but there were several anti-inerrancy presuppositions employed by one or more of the participants. One of the most important is the nature of truth.

The Nature of Truth. The framers of the CSBI strongly affirmed a correspondence view of truth. This is not so of all of the participants in the *Five Views* dialogue. In fact there was a major misreading by many non-inerrantists of Article 13 which reads in part: “We deny that it is proper to evaluate Scripture according to standards of truth and error that are alien to its usage or purpose.” Some

non-inerrantists were willing to subscribe to the CSBI based on their misinterpretation of this statement. Franke claims that “This opens up a vast arena of interpretive possibilities with respect to the ‘usage or purpose’ of Scripture in relation to standards of ‘truth or error’” (Franke, 264). Another non-inerrantist (in the CSBI sense), Clark Pinnock, put it this way: “I supported the 1978 “Chicago Statement on the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy,” noting that it “made room for nearly every well-intentioned Baptist” (Pinnock, *Scripture Principle*, rev., 266).

However, the framers of the CSBI anticipated this objection, and R.C. Sproul was commissioned to write an official ICBI commentary on the Chicago Statement which, straight to the point in Article 13, reads: “**By biblical standards of truth and error’ is meant the view used both in the Bible and in everyday life, viz., a correspondence view of truth.** This part of the article is

directed at those who would redefine truth to relate merely to redemptive intent, the purely personal, or the like, rather than to mean that which corresponds to reality.” Thus, “all the claims of the Bible must correspond with reality, whether that reality is historical, factual, or spiritual” (see Geisler and Roach, *Defending Inerrancy*, 31, emphasis added). So, non-inerrantists, like Pinnock and Enns, misunderstand the Chicago Statement which demands that truth be defined as correspondence with reality. This is important since to define it another way, for example, in terms of redemptive purpose is to open the door wide to a denial of the factual inerrancy of the Bible as espoused by CSBI.

Purpose and Meaning. Another serious mistake of some of the non-inerrantists in the *Five Views* dialogue is to believe that purpose determines meaning. This emerges in several statements in the book and elsewhere. Vanhoozer claims “I propose that we identify the literal sense with the

illocutionary act the author is performing” (Enns, 220). The locutionary act is *what* the author is saying, and the illocutionary act is *why* (purpose) he said it. The *what* may be in error; only the *why* (purpose) is without error. This is why Vanhoozer comes up with such unusual explanations of Biblical texts. For example, when Joshua commanded the sun to stand still (Josh 10), according to Vanhoozer, this does not correspond to any actual and unusual phenomena involving an extra day of daylight. Rather, it simply means, as he believes that the purpose (illocutionary act) indicates, that Joshua wants “to affirm God’s covenant relation with his people” (Vanhoozer, *Linguistic Approach to Christian Theology*, 106). Likewise, according to Vanhoozer, Joshua is not affirming the literal truth of the destruction of a large walled city (Joshua 6). He contends that “simply to discover ‘what actually happened’” is to miss the main point of the discourse, which is to communicate a theological interpretation of what happened

(that is, God gave Israel the land) and to call for right participation in the covenant” (Vanhoozer, *Five Views*, 228). That is why Joshua wrote it, and that alone is the inerrant purpose of the text.

However, as we have explained in detail elsewhere (Geisler, *Systematic*, chap. 10), purpose does not determine meaning. This becomes clear when we examine crucial texts. For example, the Bible declares “Do not cook a young goat in its mother’s milk” (Ex. 23:19). The meaning of this text is very clear, but the purpose is not, at least not to most interpreters. Just scanning a couple commentaries from off the shelf reveals a half dozen different guesses as to the author’s purpose. Despite this lack of unanimity on what the purpose is, nonetheless, virtually everyone understands what the meaning of the text is. An Israelite could obey this command, even if he did not know the purpose for doing so (other than that God had commanded him to do so). So, knowing meaning stands apart from

knowing the purpose of a text. For example, a boss could tell his employees, “Come over to my house tonight at 8 p.m.” The meaning (what) is clear, but the purpose (why) is not. Again, understanding the meaning is clear apart from knowing the purpose.

This does not mean that knowing the purpose of a statement cannot be interesting and even enlightening. If you knew your boss was asking you to come to his house because he wanted to give you a million dollars, that would be very enlightening, but it would not change the meaning of the statement to come over to his house that night. So, contrary to many non-inerrantists, purpose does not determine meaning. Further, with regard to biblical texts, the meaning rests in *what* is affirmed, not in *why* it is affirmed. This is why inerrantists speak of propositional revelation and many non-inerrantists tend to downplay or deny it (Vanhoozer, 214). The meaning and truth of a proposition (affirmation or denial about something) is what

is inspired, not in the purpose. Inerrancy deals with truth, and truth resides in propositions, not in purposes.

At the CSBI conference on the meaning of inerrancy (1982), Carl Henry observed the danger of reducing inerrancy to the purpose of the author, as opposed to the affirmations of the author as they correspond with the facts of reality. He wrote: “Some now even introduce authorial intent or cultural context of language as specious rationalizations for this crime against the Bible, much as some rapist might assure me that he is assaulting my wife for my own or for her good. They misuse Scripture in order to champion as biblically true what in fact does violence to Scripture” (Henry in Earl Radmacher ed., *Hermeneutics, Inerrancy, and the Bible* [1984], 917). This is precisely what has happened with some of the participants in the *Five Views* book when they reduced meaning to purpose and then read their own extra-biblical speculations into the author’s supposed intention or

purpose. This will be discussed more when the genre presupposition is discussed below.

Limited inerrantists and non-inerrantists often take advantage of an ambiguity in the word “intention” of the author in order to insert their own heterodox views on the topic. When traditional unlimited inerrantists use the phrase “intention of the author” they use it in contrast to those who wish to impose their own meaning on the text in contrast to discovering what the biblical author intended by it. So, what traditional unlimited inerrantists mean by “intention” is not purpose (why) but *expressed intention* in the text, that is, meaning. They were not asking the reader to look for some *unexpressed intention* behind, beneath, or beyond the text. Expressed intention refers to the meaning of the text. And it would be better to use the word *meaning* than the word *intention*. In this way the word *intention* cannot be understood as *purpose* (why), rather than *meaning* or expressed intention (what) which is found in

the text. To put it simply, there is a *meaner* (author) who expresses his *meaning* in the text so that the reader can know what is *meant* by the text. If one is looking for this objectively expressed meaning (via historical-grammatical hermeneutics) it limits the meaning to the text and eliminates finding the meaning beyond the text in some other text (i.e., in some alien extra-biblical genre).

Mike Licona is a case in point. He redefines “error” to include genre that contains factual errors. He claims that “intentionally altering an account” is not an error but is allowed by the Greco-Roman genre into which he categorizes the Gospels, insisting that a CSBI view cannot account for all the data (MP3 recording of his ETS lecture 2013).

Propositional Revelation. It is not uncommon for non-inerrantists to attempt to modify or deny propositional revelation. Vanhoozer cites John Stott as being uncomfortable with inerrancy because the Bible

“cannot be reduced to a string of propositions which invites the label truth or error” (Vanhoozer, 200). Similarly, he adds. “Inerrancy pertains directly to assertions only, not to biblical commands, promises, warnings, and so on. We would therefore be unwise to collapse everything we want to say about biblical authority into the nutshell of inerrancy” (Vanhoozer, 203).

Carl Henry is criticized by some for going “too far” in claiming that “the minimal unit of meaningful expression is a proposition” and that only propositions can be true or false (Vanhoozer, 214). However, it would appear that it is Vanhoozer’s criticisms that go too far. It is true that there are more than propositions in the Bible. All propositions are sentences, but not all sentences are propositions, at least not directly. However, the CSBI inerrantist is right in stressing propositional revelation. For only propositions express truth, and inerrancy is concerned with the truthfulness of the Bible. Certainly, there are exclamations,

promises, prophecies, interrogations, and commands that are not formally and explicitly propositions. But while not all of the Bible is propositional, most of the Bible is propositionalizable. And any text in the Bible which states or implies a proposition can be categorized as propositional revelation. And inerrantists claim that all propositional revelation is true. That is to say, all that the Bible affirms to be true (directly or indirectly) is true. And all that the Bible affirms to be false is false. Any attack on propositional revelation that diminishes or negates propositional truth has denied the inerrancy of the Bible. Hence, inerrantists rightly stress propositional revelation.

The fact that the Bible is many more things than inerrant propositions is irrelevant. Certainly, the Bible has other characteristics, such as infallibility (John 10:35), immortality (Ps 119:160), indestructibility (Matt 5:17-18), indefatigability (it can't be worn out—Jer 23:29), and indefeasibility (it can't be overcome—Isa 55:11). But

these do not diminish the Bible's inerrancy (lack of error). In fact, if the Bible were not the inerrant Word of God, then it would not be all these other things. They are complementary, not contradictory to inerrancy. Likewise, the Bible has commands, questions, and exclamations, but these do not negate the truth of the text. Instead, they imply, enhance, and compliment it.

Accommodationism. Historically, most evangelical theologians have adopted a form of divine condescension to explain how an infinite God could communicate with finite creatures in finite human language. This is often called analogous language (see Geisler, *Systematic Theology: Volume 1*, chap. 9). However, since the word "accommodation" has come to be associated with the acceptance of error, we wish to distinguish between the legitimate evangelical teaching of God's *adaptation to human finitude* and the illegitimate view of non-inerrantists who assert God's *accommodation to human error*. It

appears that some participants of the inerrancy dialogue fit into the latter category. Peter Enns believes that accommodation to human error is part of an Incarnational Model which he accepts. This involves writers making up speeches based on what is not stated but is only thought to be “called for,” as Greek historian Thucydides admitted doing (Enns, 101-102). This accommodation view also allows for employing Hebrew and Greco-Roman literary genres which include literature with factual errors in them (Enns, 103). The following chart draws a contrast between the two views:

ADAPTATION VIEW	ACCOMMODATION VIEW
GOD ADAPTS TO FINITUDE	GOD ACCOMMODATES TO ERROR
BIBLE USES ANALAGOUS LANGUAGE	IT USES EQUIVOCAL LANGUAGE
BIBLE STORIES ARE FACTUAL	SOME STORIES ARE NOT FACTUAL

Peter Enns believes that “details” like whether Paul’s companions heard the voice or not (Acts 9, 22) were part of

this flexibility of accommodation to error. In brief, he claims that “biblical writers shaped history creatively for their own theological purposes” (Enns, 100). Recording “what happened” was not the “primary focus” for the Book of Acts but rather “interpreting Paul for his audience” (Enns, 102). He adds, “shaping significantly the portrayal of the past is hardly an isolated incident here and there in the Bible; it’s the very substance of how biblical writers told the story of their past” (Enns, 104). In brief, God accommodates to human myths, legends, and errors in the writing of Scripture. Indeed, according to some non-inerrantists like Enns, this includes accommodation to alien worldviews.

However, ETS/CSBI inerrantists emphatically reject this kind of speculation. The CSBI declares: “We affirm the unity and internal consistency of Scripture” (CSBI, Art. 14). Further, “We deny that Jesus’ teaching about scripture may be dismissed by appeals to

accommodation or to any natural limitation of His humanity” (CSBI, Art. 15). “We affirm that inspiration, though not conferring omniscience, guaranteed true and trustworthy utterances on all matters of which the Biblical authors were moved to speak and write. We deny that finitude or fallenness of these writers, by necessity or otherwise, introduced distortion or falsehood into God’s Word” (CSBI, Art. 9). Also, “We deny that human language is so limited by our creatureliness that it is rendered inadequate as a vehicle for divine revelation. We further deny that the corruption of human culture and language through sin has thwarted God’s work in inspiration” (CSBI, Art. 4).

Reasons to Reject the Accommodation to Error View

There are many good reasons for rejecting the non-inerrantist accommodation to error theory. Let’s begin with the argument from the character of God.

First, it is contrary to the nature of God as truth that He would accommodate to error. Michael Bird states the issue well, though he wrongly limits God to speaking on only redemptive matters. Nevertheless, he is on point with regard to the nature of inerrancy in relation to God. He writes: “God identifies with and even invests his own character in his Word.... The accommodation is never a capitulation to error. God does not speak erroneously, nor does he feed us with nuts of truth lodged inside shells of falsehood” (Bird, 159). He cites Bromley aptly, “It is sheer unreason to say that truth is revealed in and through that which is erroneous” (cited by Bird, 159).

Second, accommodation to error is contrary to the nature of Scripture as the inerrant Word of God. God cannot err (Heb 6:18), and if the Bible is His Word, then the Bible cannot err. So, to affirm that accommodation to error was involved in the inspiration of Scripture is contrary to the nature of Scripture as the Word of God.

Jesus affirmed that the “Scripture” is the unbreakable Word of God (John 10:34-35) which is imperishable to every “iota and dot” (Matt 5:18). The New Testament authors often cite the Old Testament as what “God said” (cf. Matt 19:5; Acts 4:24-25; 13:34.35; Heb 1:5, 6, 7). Indeed, the whole Old Testament is said to be “God-breathed” (2 Tim 3:16). Bird wrongly claimed “God directly inspires persons, not pages” (Enns, 164). In fact, the New Testament only uses the word “inspired” (*theopneustos*) once (2 Tim 3:16) and it refers to the *written* Scripture (*graphe*, writings). The writings, not the writers, are “breathed out” by God. To be sure, the writers were “moved by” God to write (2 Peter 1:20-21), but only what they *wrote* as a result was inspired. So if the Scriptures are the very *writings* breathed out by God, then they cannot be errant since God cannot err (Titus 1:2).

Third, the accommodation to error theory is contrary to sound reason. Anti-inerrantist Peter Enns saw

this logic and tried to avoid it by a Barthian kind of separation of the Bible from the Word of God. He wrote, “The premise that such an inerrant Bible is the only kind of book God would be able to produce..., strikes me as assuming that God shares our modern interest in accuracy and scientific precision, rather than allowing the phenomena of Scripture to shape our theological expectations” (Enns, 84). But Enns forgets that any kind of error is contrary, not to “modern interest” but to the very nature of the God as the God of all truth. So, whatever nuances of truth there are which are borne out by the phenomena of Scripture cannot, nevertheless, cannot negate the naked truth that God cannot err, nor can his Word. The rest is detail.

The Lack of Precision

The doctrine of inerrancy is sometimes criticized for holding that the Bible always speaks with scientific

precision and historical exactness. But since the biblical phenomena do not support this, the doctrine of inerrancy is rejected. However, this is a “straw man” argument. For the CSBI states clearly: “We further deny that inerrancy is negated by biblical phenomena such as a lack of modern technical precision..., including ‘round numbers’ and ‘free citations’” (CSBI. Art. 13). Vanhoozer notes that Warfield and Hodge (in *Inspiration*, 42) helpfully distinguished “accuracy” (which the Bible has) from “exactness of statement” (which the Bible does not always have) (Vanhoozer, 221). This being the case, this argument does not apply to the doctrine of inerrancy as embraced by the CSBI since it leaves room for statements that lack modern “technical precision.” It does, however, raise another issue, namely, the role of biblical and extra-biblical phenomena in refining the biblical concept of truth.

With regard to the reporting of Jesus’ words in the Gospels, there is a strong difference between the inerrantist

and non-inerrantist view, although not all non-inerrantists in the *Five Views* book hold to everything in the “non-inerrantist” column:

USE OF JESUS’ WORDS AND DEEDS IN THE GOSPELS

<i>INERRANTIST VIEW</i>	<i>NON-INERRANTIST VIEW</i>
<i>REPORTING THEM</i>	<i>CREATING THEM</i>
<i>PARAPHRASING THEM</i>	<i>EXPANDING ON THEM</i>
<i>CHANGE THEIR FORM</i>	<i>CHANGE THEIR CONTENT</i>
<i>GRAMMATICALLY EDITING THEM</i>	<i>THEOLOGICALLY REDACTING THEM</i>

Inerrantists believe that there is a significant difference between *reporting* Jesus words and *creating* them. The Gospel writings are based on eye-witness testimony, as they claim (cf. John 21:24; Luke 1:1-4) and as recent scholarship has shown (see Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*). Likewise, they did not put words in Jesus’ mouth in a theological attempt to interpret Jesus in a certain way contrary to what He meant by them. Of course, since Jesus probably spoke in Aramaic (cf. Matt 27:46) and

the Gospels are in Greek, we do not have the exact words of Jesus (*ipsissima verba*) in most cases, but rather an accurate rendering of them in another language. But for inerrantists the New Testament is not a re-interpretation of Jesus words; it is an accurate translation of them. Non-inerrantists disagree and do not see the biblical record as an accurate report but as a reinterpreted portrait, a literary creation. This comes out clearly in the statement of Peter Enns that conquest narratives do not merely “report events” (Enns, 108). Rather, “Biblical history shaped creatively in order for the theological purposes” to be seen (Enns, 108).

Vanhoozer offers a modified evangelical version of this error when he speaks of not “reading Joshua to discover ‘what happened’ [which he believes] is to miss the main point of the discourse, which is to communicate a theological interpretation of what happened (that is, God gave Israel the land) and to call for right participation in the covenant” (Vanhoozer, 228). So, the destruction of Jericho

(Josh 6), while not being simply a “myth” or “legend,” Vanhoozer sees as an “artful narrative testimony to an event that happened in Israel’s past” (ibid.). A surface reading of Vanhoozer’s view here may appear to be orthodox, until one remembers that he believes that only the “main point” or purpose of a text is really inerrant, not what it affirms. He declares, “I propose that we identify the literal sense with the illocutionary act an author is performing” (Vanhoozer, 220). That is, only the theological purpose of the author is inerrant, not everything that is affirmed in the text (the locutionary acts). He declared elsewhere, “the Bible is the Word of God (in the sense of its illocutionary acts)...” (Vanhoozer, *First Theology*, 195).

The implications of his view come out more clearly in his handling of another passage, namely, Joshua 10:12: “Sun, stand still....” This locution (affirmation) he claims is an error. But the illocution (purpose of the author) is not in

error—namely, what God wanted to say through this statement which was to affirm his redemptive purpose for Israel (Vanhoozer, *Lost in Interpretation*, 138). This is clearly not what the CSBI and historic inerrancy position affirms. Indeed, it is another example of the fallacious “purpose determines meaning” view discussed above and rejected by CSBI.

The Role of Biblical and Extra-Biblical Data

The claim that in conflicts between them one should take the Bible over science is much too simplistic. Space does not permit a more extensive treatment of this important question which we have dealt with more extensively elsewhere (see our *Systematic*, chapters 4 and 12). Al Moher was taken to task by Peter Enns for his seemingly *a priori* biblical stance that would not allow for any external evidence to change ones view on what the Bible taught about certain scientific and historical events (Mohler, 51,

60). Clearly the discussion hinges on what role the external data have (from general revelation) in determining the meaning of a biblical text (special revelation).

For example, almost all contemporary evangelical scholars allow that virtually certain scientific evidence from outside the Bible shows that the earth is round, and this must take precedence over a literalistic interpretation of the phrase “four corners of the earth” (Rev 20:8). Further, interpretation of the biblical phrase “the sun set” (Josh 1:4) is not to be taken literalistically to mean the sun moves around the earth. Rather, most evangelical scholars would allow the evidence for a helio-centric view of modern astronomy (from general revelation) to take precedence over a literalistic pre-Copernican geo-centric interpretation of the phrase the “Sun stood still” (Josh 10:13).

On the other hand, most evangelicals reject the theistic evolutionary interpretation of Genesis 1–2 for the literal (not literalistic) interpretation of the creation of life

and of Adam and Eve. So, the one million dollar question is: when does the scientist's interpretation of general revelation take precedent over the theologian's interpretation of special revelation?

Several observations are in order on this important issue. First, there are two revelations from God, general revelation (in nature) and special revelation (in the Bible), and they are both valid sources of knowledge. Second, their domains sometimes overlap and conflict, as the cases cited above indicate, but no one has proven a real contradiction between them. However, there is a conflict between some *interpretations* of each revelation. Third, sometimes a faulty interpretation of special revelation must be corrected by a proper interpretation of general revelation. Hence, there are few evangelicals who would claim that the earth is flat, despite the fact that the Bible speaks of "the four corners of the earth" (Rev 20:8) and

that the earth does not move: “The world is established; **it shall never be moved**” (Ps 93:1, emphasis added).

However, most evangelical theologians follow a literal (not literalistic) understanding of the creation of the universe, life, and Adam (Gen 1:1, 21, 27) over the Darwinian macro-evolution model. Why? Because they are convinced that the arguments for the creation of a physical universe and a literal Adam outweigh the Darwinian speculations about general revelation. In brief, our understanding of Genesis (special revelation) must be weighed with our understanding of nature (general revelation) in order to determine the truth of the matter (see our *Systematic*, chapters 4 and 12.). It is much too simplistic to claim one is taking the Bible over science or science over the Bible—our understanding about both are based on revelations from God, and their interpretations of both must be weighed in a careful and complimentary way to arrive at the truth that is being taught on these matters.

To abbreviate a more complex process which is described in more detail elsewhere (ibid.): (1) we start with an **inductive** study of the biblical text; (2) we make whatever necessary **deduction** that emerges from two or more biblical truths; (3) we do a **retroduction** of our discovery in view of the biblical phenomena and external evidence from general revelation; and then (4) we draw our final **conclusion** in the nuanced view of truth resulting from this process. In brief, there is a complimentary role between interpretations of special revelation and those of general revelations. Sometimes, the evidence for the interpretation of one revelation is greater than the evidence for an interpretation in the other, and vice versa. So, it is not a matter of taking the Bible over science, but when there is a conflict, it is a matter of taking the interpretation with the strongest evidence over the one with weaker evidence.

The Role of Hermeneutics in Inerrancy

The ICBI (International Council on Biblical Inerrancy) framers of the “Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy” (CSBI) were aware that, while inerrancy and hermeneutics are *logically distinct*, hermeneutics cannot be *totally separated* from inerrancy. It is for this reason that a statement on historical-grammatical hermeneutics was included in the CSBI presentation (1978). Article 18 reads: “We affirm that the text of Scripture is to be interpreted by the grammatico-historical exegesis, taking account of its literary forms and devices, and that Scripture is to interpret Scripture. We deny the legitimacy of any treatment of the text or quest for sources lying behind it leads to relativizing, **dehistoricizing**, or discounting its teaching, or rejecting its claim to authorship” (emphasis added).

The next ICBI conference after the CSBI in 1978 was an elaboration on this important point in the hermeneutics conference (of 1982). It produced both a

statement and an official commentary as well. All four documents are placed in one book, titled *Explaining Biblical Inerrancy: Official Commentary on the ICBI Statements* (available at www.BastionBooks.com). These four statements contain the corpus and context of the meaning of inerrancy by nearly 300 international scholars on the topic of inerrancy. Hence, questions about the meaning of the CSBI can be answered by the framers in the accompanying official ICBI commentaries.

Many of the issues raised in the *Five Ways* are answered in these documents. Apparently, not all the participants took advantage of these resources. Failure to do so led them to misunderstand what the ICBI framers mean by inerrancy and how historical-grammatical hermeneutics is connected to inerrancy. So-called genre criticism of Robert Gundry and Mike Licona are cases in point.

The Role of Extra-Biblical Genre

Another aspect of non-inerrantist's thinking is Genre Criticism. Although he claims to be an inerrantist, Mike Licona clearly does not follow the ETS or ICBI view on the topic. Licona argues that "the Gospels belong to the genre of Greco-Roman biography (*bios*)" and that "*Bioi* offered the ancient biographer great flexibility for rearranging material and inventing speeches..., and the often include legend." But, he adds "because *bios* was a flexible genre, it is often difficult to determine where history ends and legend begins" (Licona, *The Resurrection of Jesus*, 34). This led him to deny the historicity of the story of the resurrection of the saints in Matthew 27:51-53 (ibid., 527-528; 548; 552-553), and to call the story of the crowd falling backward when Jesus claimed "I am he" (John 14:5-6) "a possible candidate for embellishment" (ibid., 306) and the presence of angels at the tomb in all four Gospels may be "poetic language or legend" (ibid., 185-186).

Later, in a debate with Bart Ehrman (at Southern Evangelical Seminary, Spring, 2009), Licona claimed there was a contradiction in the Gospels as to the day of Jesus' crucifixion. He said, "I think that John probably altered the day [of Jesus' crucifixion] in order for a theological—to make a theological point here." Then in a professional transcription of a YouTube video on November 23, 2012 (see http://youtu.be/TJ8rZukh_Bc), Licona affirmed the following: **"So um this didn't really bother me in terms of if there were contradictions in the Gospels. I mean I believe in biblical inerrancy but I also realized that biblical inerrancy is not one fundamental doctrines of Christianity.** The resurrection is. So if Jesus rose from the dead, Christianity is still true even if it turned out that some things in the Bible weren't. So **um it didn't really bother me a whole lot even if some contradictions existed"** (emphasis added).

This popular Greco-Roman genre theory adopted by Licona and others is directly contrary to the CSBI view of inerrancy as clearly spelled out in many articles. First, Article 18 speaks to it directly: **“We affirm that the text of Scripture is to be interpreted by grammatico-historical exegesis**, taking account of its literary forms and devices, and that **Scripture is to interpret Scripture**” (emphasis added). But Licona rejects the strict “grammatico-historical exegesis” where “Scripture is to interpret Scripture” for an extra-biblical system where Greco-Roman genre is used to interpret Scripture. Of course, “Taking account” of different genres within Scripture, like poetry, history, parables, and even allegory (Gal 4:24), is legitimate, but this is not what the use of extra-biblical Greco-Roman genre does. Rather, it uses extra-biblical stories to determine what the Bible means, even if using this extra-biblical literature means denying the historicity of the biblical text.

Second, the CSBI says emphatically that “We deny the legitimacy of any treatment of the text or quest for sources lying behind it that leads to relativizing, **dehistoricizing**, or discounting its teaching, or rejecting its claim to authorship” (Art. 18, emphasis added). But this is exactly what many non-inerrantists, like Licona, do with some Gospel events. The official ICBI commentary on this Article adds, **“It is never legitimate, however, to run counter to express biblical affirmations”** (emphasis added). Further, in the ICBI commentary on its 1982 Hermeneutics Statement (Article 13) on inerrancy, it adds, **“We deny that generic categories which negate historicity may rightly be imposed on biblical narratives which present themselves as factual. Some, for instance, take Adam to be a myth, whereas in Scripture he is presented as a real person. Others take Jonah to be an allegory when he is presented as a historical person and [is] so referred to by Christ”** (emphasis added). Its

comments in the next article (Article 14) add, **“We deny that any event, discourse or saying reported in Scripture was invented by the biblical writers or by the traditions they incorporated”** (emphasis added). Clearly, the CSBI Fathers rejected genre criticism as used by Gundry, Licona, and many other evangelicals.

Three living eyewitness framers of the CSBI statements (Packer, Sproul, and Geisler) confirm that authors like Robert Gundry were in view when these articles were composed. Gundry had denied the historicity of sections of the Gospel of Matthew by using a Hebrew “midrashic” model to interpret Matthew (see Mohler on Franke, 294). After a thorough discussion of Gundry’s view over a two year period and numerous articles in the ETS journal, the matter was peacefully, lovingly, and formally brought to a motion by a founder of the ETS, Roger Nicole, in which the membership, by an overwhelming 70% voted and asked Gundry to resign from

the ETS. Since Licona's view is the same in principle with that of Gundry's, the ETS decision applies equally to his view as well.

Mike Licona uses a Greco-Roman genre to interpreting the Gospels, rather than Jewish *midrash* which Gundry used. The Greco-Roman genre permits the use of a contradiction in the Gospels concerning the day Jesus was crucified. However, the ICBI official texts cited above reveal that **the CSBI statement on inerrancy forbids “dehistoricizing” the Gospels** (CSBI Art. 18). Again, living ICBI framers see this as the same issue that led to Gundry's departure from ETS. When asked about the orthodoxy of Mike Licona's view, CSBI framer R.C. Sproul wrote: "As the former and only President of ICBI during its tenure and as the original framer of the Affirmations and Denials of the Chicago Statement on Inerrancy, **I can say categorically that Dr. Michael Licona's views are not even remotely compatible with the unified Statement of**

ICBI" (Personal Correspondence, 5/22/2012, emphasis added). The role of extra-biblical genre in Gospel interpretation can be charted as follows:

THE USE OF EXTRA-BIBLICAL GENRE

LEGITIMATE USE	ILLEGITIMATE USE
A MATERIAL CAUSE	THE FORMAL CAUSE
HELP PROVIDE PARTS	DETERMINE THE WHOLE
ILLUMINATES SIGNIFICANCE	DETERMINES MEANING

The formal cause of meaning is in the text itself (the author is the efficient cause of meaning). No literature or stories outside the text are hermeneutically determinative of the meaning of the text. The extra-biblical data can provide understanding of a part (e.g., a word), but it cannot decide what the meaning of a whole text is. Every text must be understood only in its immediate or more remote contexts. Scripture is to be used to interpret Scripture.

Of course, as shown above, general revelation can help modify our understanding of a biblical text, for the

scientific evidence based on general revelation demonstrates that the earth is round and can be used to modify one's understanding of the biblical phrase "for corners of the earth." However, no Hebrew or Greco-Roman literature genre should be used to determine what a biblical text means since it is not part of any general revelation from God, and it has no hermeneutical authority.

Further, the genre of a text is not understood by looking outside the text. Rather, it is determined by using the historical-grammatical hermeneutic on the text in its immediate context, and the more remote context of the rest of Scripture to decide whether it is history, poetry, parable, an allegory, or whatever.

Furthermore, similarity to any extra-biblical types of literature does not demonstrate identity with the biblical text, nor should it be used to determine what the biblical text means. For example, the fact that an extra-biblical piece of literature combines history and legend does not

mean that the Bible also does this. Nor does the existence of contradictions in similar extra-biblical literature justify transferring this to biblical texts. Even if there are some significant similarities of the Gospels with Greco-Roman literature, it does not mean that legends should be allowed in the Gospels since the Gospel writers make it clear that they have a strong interest in historical accuracy by an “orderly account” so that we can have “certainty” about what is recorded in them (Luke 1:1–4). And multiple confirmations of geographical and historical details confirm that this kind of historical accuracy was achieved (see Colin Hemer, *The Book of Acts in the Setting of Hellenic History*, 1990).

The Issue of Gospel Pluralism

Another associated error of some non-inerrantism is pluralism. Kenton Sparks argues that the Bible “does not contain a single coherent theology but rather numerous

theologies that sometimes stand in tension or even contradiction with one another” (Cited by Mohler, 55). So, God accommodates Himself and speaks through “the idioms, attitudes, assumptions, and general worldviews of the ancient authors” (Enns, 87). But he assures us that this is not a problem, because we need to see “God as so powerful that he can overrule ancient human error and ignorance, [by contrast] inerrancy portrays as weak view of God” (Enns, 91). However, it must be remembered that contradictions entail errors, and God cannot err.

By the same logical comparison, Christ must have sinned. For if the union of the human and divine in Scripture (God’s written Word) necessarily entails error, then by comparison the union of the human and divine in Christ must result in moral flaws in Him. But the Bible is careful to note that, though Christ, while being completely human, nonetheless, was without sin (Heb 4:15; 2 Cor 5:21). Likewise, there is no logical or theological reason

why the Bible must err simply because it has a human nature to it. Humans do not always err, and they do not err when guided by the Holy Spirit of Truth who cannot err (John 14:26; 16:13; 2 Peter 1:20–21). A perfect Book can be produced by a perfect God through imperfect human authors. How? Because God can draw a straight line with a crooked stick! He is the ultimate cause of the inerrant Word of God; the human authors are only the secondary causes.

Enns attempts to avoid this true incarnational analogy by arguing the following: (1) This reasoning diminishes the value of Christ's Incarnation. He tried to prove this by noting that the Incarnation of Christ is a unique "miracle" (Enns, 298). However, so is the union of the human and divine natures of Scripture miraculous (2 Sam 23:2; 2 Peter 1:20-21). In effect, Enns denies the miraculous nature of Scripture in order to exalt the miraculous nature of the Incarnation of Christ. (2) His

comparison with the Quran is a straw man because it reveals his lack of understanding of the emphatic orthodox denial of the verbal dictation theory claimed by Muslims for the Quran, but denied vigorously by orthodox Bible scholars about the Bible. (3) His charge of “bibliolatry” is directly opposed to all evangelical teaching that the Bible is not God and should not be worshiped.

Of course, Christ and the Bible are not a *perfect* analogy because there is a significant difference: Christ is God, and the Bible is not. Nonetheless, it is a *good* analogy because there are many strong similarities: (1) both Christ and the Bible have a divine and human dimension; 2) both have a union of the two dimensions; (3) both have a flawless character that in Christ is without sin and in the Bible is without error; and (4) both are the Word of God, one the written Word of God and other the incarnate Word of God. Thus, a true incarnational analogy calls for the

errorlessness of the Bible, just as it calls for the sinlessness of Christ.

The Acceptance of Conventionalism

Some non-inerrantists hold the self-defeating theory of meaning called conventionalism. Franke, for example, argues that “since language is a social construct...our words and linguistic conventions do not have timeless and fixed meanings...” (Franke, 194). There are serious problem with this view which Franke and other contemporary non-inerrantists have adopted.

Without going into philosophical detail, the most telling way to see the flaws of this view is to reflect on its self-defeating nature. That is, it cannot deny the objectivity of meaning without making an objectively meaningful statement. To claim that all language is purely conventional and subjective is to make a statement which is not purely conventional and subjective. In like manner,

when Franke claims that truth is perspectival (Franke, 267), he seems to be unaware that he is making a non-perspectival truth claim. This problem is discussed more extensively elsewhere (see Geisler, *Systematic*, chap. 6). We would only point out here that one cannot consistently be an inerrantist and a conventionalist. For if all meaning is subjective, then so is all truth (since all true statements must be meaningful). But inerrancy claims that the Bible makes objectively true statements. Hence, an inerrantist cannot be a conventionalist, at least not consistently.

The Issue of Foundationalism

The CBSI statement is taken to task by some non-inerrantists for being based on an unjustified theory of foundationalism. Franke insists that “the Chicago Statement is reflective of a particular form of epistemology known as classic or strong foundationalism” (Franke, 261). They believe that the Bible is “a universal and indubitable

basis for human knowledge” (Franke, 261). Franke believes that: “The problem with this approach is that it has been thoroughly discredited in philosophical and theological circles” (ibid.,262).

In response, first of all, Franke confuses two kinds of foundationalism: (1) deductive foundationalism, as found in Spinoza or Descartes where all truth can be deduced from certain axiomatic principles. This is rejected by all inerrantist scholars I know and by most philosophers; (2) However, reductive foundationalism which affirms that truths can be reduced to or are based on certain first principles like the Law of Non-contradiction is not rejected by most inerrantists and philosophers. Indeed, first principles of knowledge, like the Law of Non-contradiction, are self-evident and undeniable. That is, the predicate of first principles can be reduced to its subject, and any attempt to deny the Law of Non-contradiction uses the

Law of Non-contradiction in the denial. Hence, the denial is self-defeating.

Second, not only does Franke offer no refutation of this foundational view, but any attempted refutation of it self-destructs. Even so-called “post-foundationalists” like Franke cannot avoid using these first principles of knowledge in their rejection of foundationalism. So, Franke’s comment applies to deductive foundationalism but not to reductive foundationalism as held by most inerrantists. Indeed, first principles of knowledge, including theological arguments, are presupposed in all rational arguments, including theological arguments.

Third, Franke is wrong in affirming that all inerrantists claim that “Scripture is the true and **sole** basis for knowledge on all matters which it touches.” (Franke, 262, emphasis added). Nowhere does the CSBI statement or its commentaries make any such claim. It claims only that the “Scriptures are the supreme **written** norm” “in all

matters on which it touches” (Article 2 and A Short Statement, emphasis added). Nowhere does it deny that God has revealed Himself outside His written revelation in His general revelation in nature, as the Bible declares (Rom 1:1–20; Ps 19:1; Acts 14, 17).

As for “fallibilism” which Franke posits to replace foundationalism, CSBI explicitly denies creedal or infallible basis for its beliefs, saying, “We do not propose this statement be given creedal weight” (CSBI, Preamble). Furthermore, “We deny creeds, councils, or declarations have authority greater than or equal to the authority of the Bible” (CSBI, Art. 2). So, not only do the ICBI framers claim their work is not a creed nor is it infallible, but they claim that even the Creeds are not infallible. Further, it adds. “We invite response to this statement from any who see reason to amend its affirmations about Scripture by the light of Scripture itself, under whose infallible authority we stand as we speak” (CSBI, Preamble). In short, while the

doctrine of inerrancy is not negotiable, the ICBI statements about inerrancy are revisable. However, to date, no viable revisions have been proposed by any group of scholars such as those who framed the original CSBI statements.

Dealing with Bible Difficulties

As important as the task may be, dealing with Bible difficulties can have a blinding effect on those desiring the clear truth about inerrancy because they provide a temptation not unlike that of a divorce counselor who is faced with all the problems of his divorced counselees. Unless, he concentrates on the biblical teaching and good examples of many happy marriages, he can be caught wondering whether a good marriage is possible. Likewise, one should no more give up on the inerrancy (of God's special revelation) because of the difficulties he finds in explaining its consistency than he should give up on the

study of nature (God's general revelation) because of the difficulties he finds in it.

There are several reasons for believing that both of God's revelations are consistent: First, it is a reasonable assumption that the God who is capable of revealing Himself in both spheres is consistent and does not contradict Himself. Indeed, the Scriptures exhort us to "Avoid... contradictions" (Gk: *antheseis*—1 Tim 6:20 ESV). Second, persistent study in both spheres of God's revelations, special and general revelation (Rom 1:19–20; Ps 19:1), have yielded more and more answers to difficult questions. Finally, contrary to some panelists who believe that inerrancy hinders progress in understanding Scripture (Franke, 278), there is an investigative value in assuming there is no contradiction in either revelation, namely, it prompts further investigation to believe that there was no error in the original. What would we think of scientists who gave up studying God's general revelation in nature

because they have no present explanation for some phenomena? The same applies to Scripture (God's special revelation). Thus, assuming there is an error in the Bible is no solution. Rather, it is a research stopper.

Augustine was right in his dictum (cited by Vanhoozer, 235). There are only four alternatives when we come to a difficulty in the Word of God: (1) God made an error, 2) the manuscript is faulty, 3) the translation is wrong, or 4) we have not properly understood it. Since it is an utterly unbiblical presumption to assume the first alternative, we as evangelicals have three alternatives. After over a half century of studying nearly 1000 such difficulties (see *The Big Book of Bible Difficulties*, Baker, 2008), I have discovered that the problem of an unexplained conflict is usually the last alternative—I have not properly understood.

That being said, even the difficult cases the participants were asked to respond to are not without

possible explanations. In fact, some of the participants, who are not even defenders of inerrancy, offered some reasonable explanations.

Acts 9 and 22. As for the alleged contradiction in whether Paul's companions "heard" (Acts 9:4) and did not "hear" (Acts 22:9) what the voice from heaven said, two things need to be noted. First, the exact forms of the word "hear" (*akouo*) are not used in both case. First, Vanhoozer (229) notes that Acts 9:4 says *akouein* (in the accusative) which means hear a sound of a voice. In the other text (Acts 22:9) *akouontes* (in the genitive) can mean understand the voice (as the NIV translates it). So understood, there is no real contradiction. Paul's companions heard the *sound* of the voice but did not *understand* what it said.

Second, we have exactly the same experience with the word "hear" today. In fact, at our house, hardly a day or two goes by without either my wife or I saying from

another room, “I can’t hear you.” We heard their voice, but we did not understand what they said.

One thing is certain, we do not need contorted attempts to explain the phenomenon like Vanhoozer’s suggestion that this conflict serves “Luke’s purpose by progressively reducing the role of the companions, eventually excluding them altogether from the revelatory event” (230). It is totally unnecessary to sacrifice the traditional view of inerrancy with such twisted explanations.

Joshua 6. This text records massive destruction of the city with its large walls falling down, which goes way beyond the available archaeological evidence. Peter Enns insists that “the overwhelmingly dominant scholarly position is that the city of Jericho was at most a small settlement and without walls during the time of Joshua” (Enns, 93). He concludes that “these issues cannot be reconciled with how inerrancy functions in evangelicalism

as articulated in the CSBI” (92). He further contends that the biblical story must be a legendary and mythological embellishment (96).

In response, it should be noted that: (1) This would not be the first time that the “dominant scholarly position” has been overturned by later discoveries. The charge that there was no writing in Moses’ day and that the Hittites mentioned in the Bible (Gen 26:34; 1 Kings 11:1) never existed, are only two examples. All scholars know that both of these errors were subsequently revealed by further research. (2) There is good archaeological evidence that other events mentioned in the Bible did occur as stated. The plagues on Egypt and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah are examples in point. The first fits well with the Uperwer Papyrus and the second with the recent discoveries at the Tall el Hamman site in Jordan (see Joseph Holden, *A Popular Handbook of Archaeology and the Bible*, Harvest House, 2013, 214–24).

Indeed, Enns admits that the Joshua description of some other cities around Jericho fits the archaeological evidence (Enns, 98). He even admits that “a trained archaeologist and research director” offers a minority view that fits with the Joshua 6 record (Enns, 94), only the alleged time period is different. However, since the dating issue is still unresolved by scholars, a date that fits the biblical record is still possible.

The fact that the belief in the full historicity of Joshua 6 is in the minority among scholars poses no insurmountable problem. Minority views have been right before. Remember Galileo? As for the alleged absence of evidence for a massive destruction of a walled city of Jericho, two points are relevant: 1) the absence of evidence is not necessarily the evidence of absence since other evidence may yet be found; 2) the main dispute is not over whether something like the Bible claimed to have happened actually did happen to Jericho, but whether it happened at

the alleged time. However, the dating of this period is still disputed among scholars. Hence, nothing like “overwhelmingly” established evidence has disproven the biblical picture of Joshua 6. Certainly there is no real reason to throw out the inerrantist’s view of the historicity of the event. On the contrary, the Bible has a habit of proving the critics wrong.

Deuteronomy 20 and Matthew 5. Again, this is a difficult problem, but there are possible explanations without sacrificing the historicity and inerrancy of the passages. The elimination of the Canaanites and the command to love one’s enemies are not irreconcilable. Even Enns, no friend of inerrancy, points out that an “alternate view of the conquest that seems to exonerate the Israelites” (Enns, 108), noting that the past tense of the Leviticus statement that “the land vomited [past tense] out its inhabitants” (Lev. 18:25) implies that “God had already

dealt with the Canaanite problem before the Israelites left Mt. Sinai” (ibid.).

But even the traditional view that Israel acted as God’s theocratic agent in killing the Canaanites poses no irreconcilable problem for many reasons. First of all, God is sovereign over life and can give and take it as He wills (Deut 32:39; Job 1:21). Second, God can command others to kill on his behalf, as He did in capital punishment (Gen 9:6). Third, the Canaanites were wildly wicked and deserved such punishment (cf. Lev 18). Fourth, this was a special theocratic act of God through Israel on behalf of God’s people and God’s plan to give them the Holy Land and bring forth the Holy One (Christ), the Savior of the world. Hence, there is no pattern or precedent here for how we should wage war today. Fifth, loving our enemy who insults us with a mere “slap on the right cheek” (Matt 5:39) does not contradict our killing him in self-defense if he attempts to murder us (Exod 22:2), or engaging him in a

just war of protecting the innocent (Gen 14). Sixth, God gave the Canaanites some 400 years (Gen 15:13–15) to repent before He found them incorrigibly and irretrievably wicked and wiped them out. Just as it is sometimes necessary to cut off a cancerous limb to save one's life, even so God knows when such an operation is necessary on a nation which has polluted the land. But we are assured by God's words and actions elsewhere that God does not destroy the righteous with the wicked (Gen 18:25). Saving Lot and his daughters, Rahab, and the Ninevites are examples.

As for God's loving kindness on the wicked non-Israelites, Nineveh (Jonah 3) is proof that God will save even a very wicked nation that repents (cf. 2 Peter 3:9). So, there is nothing in this Deuteronomy text that is contradictory to God's character as revealed in the New Testament. Indeed, the judgments of the New Testament God are more intensive and extensive in the book of

Revelation (cf. Rev 6–19) than anything in the Old Testament.

Responding to Attacks on Inerrancy

We turn our attention now to some of the major charges leveled against CSBI inerrancy. We begin with two of the major objections: It is not biblical and it is not the historical view of the Christian Church. But before we address these, we need to recall that the CSBI view on inerrancy means *total* inerrancy, not *limited* inerrancy. Total or unlimited inerrancy holds that the Bible is inerrant on both redemptive matters and all other matters on which it touches, and limited inerrancy holds that the Bible is only inerrant on redemptive matters but not in other areas such as history and science. By “inerrancy” we mean total inerrancy as defined by the CSBI.

The Charge of Being Unbiblical

Many non-inerrantists reject inerrancy because they claim that it is not taught in the Bible as the Trinity or other essential doctrines are. But the truth is that neither one is taught formally and explicitly. Both are taught in the Bible only implicitly and logically. For example, nowhere does the Bible teach the formal doctrine of the Trinity, but it does teach the premises which logically necessitate the doctrine of the Trinity. And as *The Westminster Confession of Faith* declares, a sound doctrine must be “either set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequences may be deduced from Scripture” (Chap. I, Art. 6). Both the Trinity and inerrancy of Scripture fall into the latter category. Thus, the Bible teaches that there are three Persons who are God: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (Matt 29:18–20). Furthermore, it teaches that there is only one God (1 Tim 2:5). So, “by good and

necessary consequences” the doctrine of the Trinity may be deduced from Scripture.

Likewise, while inerrancy is not formally and explicitly taught in Scripture, nonetheless, the premises on which it is based are taught there. For the Bible teaches that God cannot err, and it also affirms that the Bible is the Word of God. So “by good and necessary consequences [the doctrine of inerrancy] may be deduced from Scripture.”

Of course, in both cases the conclusion can and should be nuanced as to what the word “person” means (in the case of the Trinity), and what the word “truth” means (see below) in the case of inerrancy. Nevertheless, the basic doctrine in both cases is biblical in the sense of a “good and necessary consequence” of being logically “deduced from Scripture.”

The Charge of Being Unhistorical

Many non-inerrantists charge that inerrancy has not been the historic doctrine of the Church. Some say it was a modern apologetic reaction to Liberalism. Outspoken opponent of inerrancy, Peter Enns, claims that “... ‘inerrancy,’ as it is understood in the evangelical and fundamentalist mainstream, has not been the church’s doctrine of Scripture through its entire history; Augustine was not an ‘inerrantist’” (Enns, 181). However, as the evidence will show, Enns is clearly mistaken on both counts. First of all, Augustine (5th century) declared emphatically, “I have learned to yield respect and honour only to the canonical books of Scripture: of these alone do I most firmly believe that the authors were completely free from error” (*Augustine, Letters* 82, 3).

Furthermore, Augustine was not alone in his emphatic support of the inerrancy of Scripture. Other Fathers both before and after him held the same view.

Thomas Aquinas (13th century) declared that “it is heretical to say that any falsehood whatever is contained either in the gospels or in and canonical Scripture” (*Exposition on Job* 13, Lect. 1). For “a true prophet is always inspired by the Spirit of truth in whom there is no trace of falsehood, and he never utters untruths: (*Summa Theologica* 2a2ae, 172, 6 ad 2).

The Reformer Martin Luther (16th century) added, “When one blasphemously gives the lie to God in a single word, or say it is a minor matter, . . . one blasphemes the entire God...” (*Luther’s Works*, 37:26). Indeed, whoever is so bold that he ventures to accuse God of fraud and deception in a single word...likewise certainly ventures to accuse God of fraud and deception in all His words. Therefore it is true, absolutely and without exception, that everything is believed or nothing is believed (cited in Reu, *Luther and the Scriptures*, 33).

John Calvin agreed with his predecessors, insisting that “the Bible has come down to us from the mouth of God (*Institutes*, 1.18.4). Thus “we owe to Scripture the same reverence which we owe to God; because it has proceeded from Him alone....The Law and the Prophets are...dictated by the Holy Spirit (Urquhart, *Inspiration and Accuracy*, 129–130). Scripture is “the certain and unerring rule” (Calvin, *Commentaries*, Ps 5:11). He added that the Bible is “a depository of doctrine as would secure it from either perishing by neglect, vanishing away amid errors, of being corrupted by the presumptions of men (*Institutes*, 1.6.3).

Furthermore, it is nit-picking to claim, as some non-inerrantists suggest (Franke, 261), that the Church Fathers did not hold precisely the same view of Scripture as contemporary evangelicals. Vanhoozer claims they are “not quite the same” (73). Bird asserted, “The biggest problem I have with the AIT [American Inerrancy Tradition] and the CSBI [Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy] are their

lack of catholicity. What Christians said about inerrancy in the past might have been similar to the AIT and CSBI, but they were never absolutely the same!” (Bird, 67).

However, identical twins are not absolutely the same in all “details,” but, like the doctrine of inerrancy down through the years, both are *substantially* the same. That is, they believed in total inerrancy of Scripture, that it is without error in whatever it affirms on any topic.

The basic truth of inerrancy has been affirmed by the Christian Church from the very beginning. This has been confirmed by John Hannah in *Inerrancy and the Church* (Moody, 1984). Likewise, John Woodbridge provided a scholarly defense of the historic view on inerrancy (*Biblical Authority and Interpretation of the Bible: A Critique of the Rogers/McKim Proposal*, Zondervan, 1982) which Rogers never even attempted to refute. Neither Rogers nor anyone else has written a refutation of the standard view on inerrancy, as defended

by Woodbridge, expressed in the ETS and explained by the ICBI.

Of course, other difficulties with the historic doctrine of inerrancy can be raised, but B. B. Warfield summed up the matter well, claiming: “The question is not whether the doctrine of plenary inspiration has difficulties to face. The question is, whether these difficulties are greater than the difficulty of believing that the whole Church of God from the beginning has been deceived in her estimate of Scripture committed to her charge—are greater than the difficulties of believing that the whole college of the apostles, yes and of Christ himself at their head were themselves deceive as to the nature of those Scripture....” (cited by Mohler, 42).

The Charge of the “Slippery Slope Argument”

An oft repeated charge against inerrancy is that it is based on a “Slippery Slope” argument that it should be accepted

on the basis of what we might lose if we reject it (Enns, 89). The charge affirms that if we give up the inerrancy of the Bible's authority on historical or scientific areas, then we are in danger of giving up on the inerrancy of redemptive passages as well. In brief, it argues that if you can't trust the Bible in all areas, then you can't trust it at all. Enns contends this is "an expression of fear," not a valid argument but one based on "emotional blackmail" (ibid.). Franke states the argument in these terms: "If there is a single error at any place in the Bible, [then] none of it can be trusted" (Franke, 262).

One wonders whether the anti-inerrantist would reject Jesus' arguments for the same reason when He said, "If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things" (John 3:12)? The truth is that there are at least two different forms of the "slippery slope" reasoning: one is valid and the other is not. It is not valid to argue that if we don't

believe everything one says, then we cannot believe anything he says. For example, the fact that an accountant makes an occasional error in math does not mean that he is not reliable in general. However, if one claims to have divine authority, and makes one mistake, then it is reasonable to conclude that nothing he says has divine authority in it. For God cannot make mistakes, therefore, anyone who claims to be a prophet of God who does make mistakes (cf. Deut 18:22) cannot be trusted to be speaking with divine authority on anything (even though he may be right about many things). So, it is valid to say, if the Bible errs in anything, then it cannot be trusted to be the inerrant Word of God in anything (no matter how reliable it may be about many things).

The Charge of being Parochial

Vanhoozer poses the question: “Why should the rest of the world care about North American evangelicalism’s

doctrinal obsession with inerrancy (Vanhoozer, 190). There are no voices from Africa, Asia, or South America that had “any real input into the formation of the CSBI” (Franke, 194). “Indeed, it is difficult to attend a meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society and not be struck by the overwhelming white and male group it is” (Franke, 195).

However, “It is a genetic fallacy to claim that the doctrine of inerrancy can’t be right because it was made in the USA” (Vanhoozer, 190). While it is true that “in the abundance of counselors there is wisdom” (Prov 11:14), it is not necessarily true that universality and inter-ethnicity is more conducive to orthodoxy. Would anyone reject Newton’s Laws simply because they came from a seventeenth-century Englishman? Vanhoozer rightly asks, “Is it possible that the framers of the Chicago statement, despite the culturally conditioned and contingent nature of the North American discussion, have discovered a necessary implication of what Christians elsewhere might

have to say about Scripture’s truth?” (Vanhoozer, 190). Is it not possible that inerrancy represents a legitimate development of the doctrine of Scripture that arose in response to the needs and challenges of our twentieth-century context? I don’t see why not.” (Vanhoozer, 191).

The early Christian Creeds on the deity of Christ and the Trinity were all time-bound, yet they rightly attained the status of a Creed—an enduring and universal statement which is accepted by all major sections of Christendom. Although the CSBI statement does not claim creedal status, nonetheless, being time-bound does not hinder its deserved wide representation and acceptance in historic evangelical churches.

Franke claims that one of the problems with claiming inerrancy as a universal truth is that “it will lead to the marginalization of other people who do not share in the outlooks and assumptions of the dominant group. Inerrancy calls on us to surrender the pretensions of a

universal and timeless theology” (Franke, 279). However, he seems oblivious to the universal and timeless pretension of his own claim. As a truth claim, the charge of parochialism is self-defeating since it too is conditioned by time, space, and ethnic distinctiveness. Indeed, it is just another form of the view that all truth claims are relative. But so is that claim itself relative. Thus, the proponent of parochialism is hanged on his own gallows.

The Charge of being Unethical

The alleged unethical behavior of inerrantists seems to have been the hot-button issue among most of the participants in the dialogue, including the editors. They decry, sometimes in strong terms, the misuse of inerrancy by its proponents. In fact, this issue seems to simmer beneath the background of the anti-inerrancy discussion as a whole, breaking forth from time-to-time in explicit condemnation of its opponents. In fact, the editors of the *Five Views* book

appear to trace the contemporary inerrancy movement to this issue (see Merrick, 310).

Both the editors and some participants of the *Five Views* book even employ extreme language and charges against the inerrancy movement, charging it with evangelical “fratricide” (Merrick, 310). The word “fratricide” is repeated a few pages later (317). Three participants of the dialogue (Franke, Bird, and Enns) seem particularly disturbed about the issue, along with the two editors of the book. They fear that inerrancy is used as “a political instrument (e.g., a tool for excluding some from the evangelical family)” (Vanhoozer, 302) in an “immoral” way (Enns, 292). They speak of times “when human actions persist in ways that are ugly and unbecoming of Christ...” (Merrick, 317).

Enns, for example, speaks strongly to the issue, chiding “those in positions of power in the church... who prefer coercion to reason and demonize to reflection.” He

adds, “Mohler’s position (the only one explicitly defending the CSBI inerrancy view) is in my view intellectually untenable, but wielded as a weapon, it becomes spiritually dangerous” (Enns, 60). He also charges inerrantists with “manipulation, passive-aggressiveness, and...emotional blackmail” (Enns, 89). Further, he claims that “inerrancy regularly functions to short-circuit rather than spark our knowledge of the Bible” (Enns, 91). In spite of the fact that he recognizes that we cannot “evaluate inerrancy on the basis of its abusers,” Enns hastens to claim that “the function of inerrancy in the fundamentalist and evangelical subculture has had a disturbing and immoral partnership with power and abuse” (Enns, 292).

Franke joins the chorus against inerrantists more softly but nonetheless strongly expresses his disappointment, saying, “I have often been dismayed by many of the ways in which inerrancy has commonly been used in biblical interpretation, theology, and the life of the

church.... Of even greater concern is the way in which inerrancy has been wielded as a means of asserting power and control” over others (Franke, 259).

A Response to the Ethical Charges

Few widely read scholars will deny that some have abused the doctrine of inerrancy. The problem is that while we have a perfect Bible, there are imperfect people using it—on both sides of the debate.

Misuse Does Not Bar Use

However, the misuse of a doctrine does not prove that it is false. Nor does the improper use of Scripture prove that there is no proper way to use it. Upon examination of the evidence, the abuse charge against inerrantists is overreaching. So far as I can tell, virtually all the scholars I know in the inerrancy movement were engaged in

defending inerrancy out of a sincere desire to preserve what they believed was an important part of the Christian Faith.

Often those who speak most vociferously about the errors of another are unaware of their own errors. Ethics is a double-edged sword, as any neutral observer will detect in reading the above ethical tirade against inerrantists.

Certainly, the charges by non-inerrantists are subject to ethical scrutiny themselves. For example, is it really conducive to unity, community, and tranquility to charge others with a form of evangelical fratricide, a political instrument for excluding some from the evangelical family, ugly and unbecoming of Christ, a means of asserting power and control, a means of coercion, spiritually dangerous, manipulation, a passive-aggressiveness attack, emotional blackmail, and a disturbing and immoral partnership with power and abuse? Frankly, I have never seen anything that approaches this kind of unjustified and unethical outburst coming from inerrancy scholars toward those who do not

believe in the doctrine. So, as far as ethics is concerned, the charge of abuse looks like a classic example of the kettle calling the pot black!

The Log in One's Own Eye

Non-inerrantists are in no position to try to take the ethical speck out of the eye of inerrantists when they have an ethical log in their own eye. Harold Lindsell pointed out (in *The Battle for the Bible*) the ethical inconsistency of the Fuller faculty in voting inerrancy out of their doctrinal statement which they had all signed and was still in effect when they were voting it out of existence. But how could they be against it, if they were on record as being for it. We know they were for it *before* they were against it, but how can they be against it *when* they were for it? Is there not an ethical commitment to keep a signed document? When one comes to no longer believe in a doctrinal statement he has signed, then the ethical thing to do is to

resign one's position. Instead, at Fuller, in ETS, and in organization after organization, those who no longer believe what the framers meant will stay in the group in an attempt to change the doctrinal statement to mean what they want it to mean. This is a serious ethical breach on the part of non-inerrantists.

Let me use an illustration to make the point. If one sincerely believes in a flat earth view and later comes to change his mind, what is the ethical thing to do? It is to resign and join the Round Earth Society. To stay in the Flat Earth Society and argue that (1) it all depends on how you define flat; (2) from my perspective it looks flat; (3) I have a lot of good friends in the Flat Earth Society with whom I wish to continue fellowship, or (4) the Flat Earth Society allows me to define "flat" the way I would like to do so—to do any of these is disingenuous and unethical. Yet it is what happened at Fuller and is currently happening at ETS and in many of our Christian institutions today.

An important case in point was in 1976 when the ETS Executive Committee confessed that “Some of the members of the Society have expressed the feeling that a measure of **intellectual dishonesty prevails among members who do not take the signing of the doctrinal statement seriously.**” Later, an ETS Ad Hoc Committee recognized this problem when it posed the proper question in 1983: **“Is it acceptable for a member of the society to hold a view of biblical author’s intent which disagrees with the Founding Fathers and even the majority of the society, and still remain a member in good standing?”** (emphasis added). The Society never said no, leaving the door open for non-inerrantists to come in. This left a Society in which the members could believe anything they wished to believe about the inerrancy statement, despite what the Framers meant by it.

The ETS Committee further reported that other “members of the Society have come to the realization that

they are not in agreement with the creedal statement and have voluntarily withdrawn. That is, **in good conscience** they could not sign the statement” (1976 Minutes, emphasis added). This is exactly what all members who no longer believed what the ETS framers believed by inerrancy should have done. A member who is now allowed to sign the ETS statements but “disagrees with the Founding Fathers” is not acting in “good conscience.” Thus, it is only a matter of time before the majority of the members disagree with the ETS Founders, and the majority of the Society then officially deviates from its founding concept of inerrancy. As someone rightly noted, most religious organizations are like a propeller-driven airplane: they will naturally go left unless you deliberately steer them to the right.

No Evidence for Any Specific Charges Ever Given

The *Five Views* dialogue book contains many sweeping claims of alleged unethical activity by inerrantists, but no

specific charges are made against any individual, nor is any evidence for any charges given. Several points should be made in response.

First, even secular courts demand better than this. They insist on due process. This means that: (1) Evidence should be provided that any persons who have allegedly violated an established law. This is particularly true when the charge is murder of a brother!—"fratricide." In the absence of such evidence against any particular person or group, the charge should be dropped, and the accusers should apologize for using the word or other words like demonize, blackmail, or bullying. (2) Specifics should be given of the alleged crime. Who did it? What did they do? Does it match the alleged crime? The failure of non-inerrantists to do this is an unethical, divisive, and destructive way to carry on a "dialogue" on the topic, to say nothing of doing justice on the matter. Those who use such terms about other brothers in Christ, rather than sticking to

the issue of a valid critique of deviant views, are falling far short of the biblical exhortation to speak the truth in love (Eph 4:15).

The Robert Gundry Case

The so-called “Gundry—Geisler” issue is a case in point. First, ethical charges by non-inerrantists reveal an offensive bias in narrowing it down to one inerrantist in opposition to Gundry when in fact there were was a massive movement in opposition to Gundry’s position, including founders of ETS. Indeed, the membership vote to ask him to leave the society was an overwhelming 70%. Even though I was an eyewitness of the entire process, I never observed hard feelings expressed between Gundry and those asking for his resignation before, during, or after the issue.

Long-time Dean of Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Dr. Kenneth Kantzer was the first one to express concern about the issue to me. An ETS founder, Roger

Nicole made the motion for Gundry’s resignation with deep regret. Knowing I was a framer of the CSBI statement, Gundry personally encouraged me to enter the discussion, saying, he did not mind the critique of his view because he had “thick skin” and did not take it personally. So, to make charges of ethical abuse against those who opposed Gundry’s “dehistoricizing” (see CSBI, Article 18) of the Gospel record is to turn an important doctrinal discussing into a personal attack and it is factually unfounded and ethically unjustified.

Second, the CSBI principles called for an ethical use of the inerrancy doctrine. CSBI framers were careful to point out that “Those who profess faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior are called to show the reality of their discipleship humbly and faithfully obeying God’s written Word. To stray from Scripture in faith or conduct is disloyalty to our Master” (Preamble to CSBI). It also acknowledges that “submission to the claims of God’s own

Word...marks true Christian faith.” Further, “those who confess this doctrine often deny it in life by failing to bring our thoughts and deeds, our traditions and habits, into true subjection to the Divine Word” (ibid.). The framers of CSBI added, “We offer this statement in a spirit, not of contention, but of humility and love, which we purpose by Gods’ grace to maintain in any future dialogue arising out of what we have said” (ibid.). To my knowledge, the ETS procedure on the Gundry issue was in accord with these principles, and none of the participants of the *Five Views* book provided any evidence that anyone violated these procedures.

Third, in none of the ETS articles, papers, or official presentations was Robert Gundry attacked personally or demeaned. The process to ask him to resign was a lawful one of principle and not a personal issue, and the parties on both sides recognized and respected this distinction.

Anyone who had any evidence to the contrary should have come forward a long time ago or forever held his peace.

Fourth, as for all the parties on the inerrancy discussion over Gundry's views, I know of none who did not like Gundry as a person or did not respect him as a scholar, including myself. In fact, I later invited him to participate with a group of New Testament scholars in Dallas (which he accepted), and I have often cited him in print as an authority on the New Testament and commended his excellent book defending, among other things, the physical nature of the resurrection body (Gundry, *Soma in Biblical Theology*, Cambridge, 1976).

Fifth, the decision on Gundry's views was not an unruly act done in the dark of night with a bare majority. It was done by a vast majority in the light of day in strict accordance with the rules stated in the ETS policies. It was not hurried since it took place over a two year period. It involves numerous articles *pro* and *con* published in the

ETS journal (JETS) as well as dozens of ETS papers and discussions. In short, it was fully and slowly aired in an appropriate and scholarly manner.

Sixth, the final decision was by no means a close call by the membership. It passed with a decisive majority of 70% of the members. So, any charge of misuse of authority in the Gundry case is factually mistaken and ethically misdirected.

Since there are no real grounds for the ethical charges against those who opposed Gundry's views on inerrancy, one has to ask why the non-inerrantists are so stirred up over the issue as to make excessive charges like blackmail, demonize, or fratricide? Could it be that many of them hold similar views to Gundry and are afraid that they may be called on the carpet next? As the saying goes, when a stone is tossed down an alley, the dog that squeals the loudest is the one that got hit! We do know this: there is some circumstantial evidence to support this possibility,

for many of the most vociferous opponents are the ones who do not accept the ICBI statement on inerrancy or they called for either modification or destruction of it.

For example, Enns argues “inerrancy should be amended accordingly or, in my view, scrapped altogether” (Enns, 84). But it has been reported that he himself left Westminster Theological Seminary under a cloud involving a doctrinal dispute that involved inerrancy. And as fellow participant of the *Five Ways* book, John Franke, put it: “His title makes it clear that after supporting it [inerrancy] for many years as a faculty member at Westminster Theological Seminary.... In reading his essay, I can’t shake the impression that Enns is still in reaction to his departure from Westminster and the controversy his work has created among evangelicals” (Franke, 137)

Putting aside the specifics of the Gundry case, what can be said about ethics of inerrantists as charged by the participants of the *Five Views* dialogue? Allow me to

respond to some specific issues that have been raised against inerrancy by non-inerrantists.

**Does the Abuse of Inerrancy
Invalidate the Doctrine of Inerrancy?**

Most scholars on both sides of this debate recognize that the answer is “No.” Abusing marriage does not make marriage wrong. The evil use of language does not make language evil. And abusing inerrancy by some does not make it wrong for all to believe it. Even if one would speak truth in an unloving way, it would not make it false. Likewise, one can speak error in a loving way, but it does not make it true. Of course, we should always try to “speak the truth in love” (Eph 4:15). But when the truth is not spoken in love it does not transform the truth into an error. Accordingly, Vanhoozer rightly wondered whether “Enns, too quickly identifies the concept of inerrancy itself with its aberrations and abuses” (Vanhoozer, 302).

**Is Animated Debate Necessarily
Contrary to Christian Love?**

Even the editors of the *Five Ways* book, who spent considerable time promoting harmony in doctrinal discussions, admit that the two are not incompatible. They claim: “There is a place for well-reasoned, lucid, and spirited argumentation” (Merrick, 312). They add, “Certainly, debate over concepts and ideas involve[s] description, analysis, and clear reasoning” (Merrick, 316). Indeed, the apostle Paul “reasoned” with the Jews from the Scriptures (Acts 17:2) and tried to “persuade Jews and Greek” (Acts 18:4). He taught Church leaders “to rebuke” those who contradict sound doctrine (Titus 1:9). Jude urged believers to “contend for the Faith” (v.3). In view of Peter’s defection, Paul “opposed him to his face” (Gal 2:11). Indeed, Paul and Barnabas “had no small dissension and debate” with the legalists from Judea (Acts 15:2). Sometimes, a refutation or even a rebuke is the most loving thing one can do to defend the truth.

Our supreme example, Jesus, certainly did not hesitate to use strong words and to take strong actions against his opponent's views and actions (Matt 23; John 2:15–17). There are in fact times when a vigorous debate is necessary against error. Love—tough love—demands it. All of these activities can occur within the bound of Christian. John Calvin and Martin Luther were certainly no theological pansies when it came to defending the truth of the Christian Faith. But by the standards of conduct urged by non-inerrantists, there would have been no orthodox creeds and certainly no Reformation. And should any knowledgeable evangelical charge the Reformers with being unethical because they vigorously defended Scripture or salvation by faith alone? Of course not!

Should Unity Be Put Above Orthodox?

One of the fallacies of the anti-inerrancy movement is the belief that unity should be sought at all cost. Apparently no

one told this to the apostle Paul who defended Christianity against legalism or to Athanasius who defended the deity of Christ against Arius, even though it would split those who believed in the deity of Christ from those, like Arius and his followers, who denied it. The truth is, when it comes to essential Christian doctrine, it would be better to be divided by the truth than to be united by error. If every doctrinal dispute, including those on the Trinity, deity of Christ, and inspiration of Scripture, used the unity over orthodoxy principle that one hears so much about in current inerrancy debate, then there would be not much orthodox Christian Faith left. As Rupertus Meldinius (d. 1651) put it, “in essentials, unity; in non-essentials, liberty, and in all things, charity.” But as we saw above, the inerrancy of Scripture is an essential doctrine of the Christian Faith because all other doctrines are based on it. So, it is epistemologically fundamental to all other biblical teachings.

Is it Improper to Place Scholarly Articles on the Internet?

Some have objected to carrying on a scholarly discussion on the Internet, as opposed to using scholarly journals. My articles on Mike Licona's denial of inerrancy (see www.normgeisler.com/articles) were subject to this kind of charge. However, given the electronic age in which we live, this is an archaic charge. Dialogue is facilitated by the Internet, and responses can be made much more quickly and by more people. Further, much of the same basic material posted on the Internet was later published in printed scholarly journals.

In a November 18, 2012 paper for The Evangelical Philosophical Society, Mike Licona speaks of his critics saying "bizarre" things like "bullying" people around, of having "a cow" over his view, and of engaging in a "circus" on the Internet. Further, he claims that scholarly critics of his views were "targeting" him and "taking actions **against**" **him**. He speaks about those who have

made scholarly criticisms of his view as “going on a rampage against a brother or sister in Christ.” And he compares it to the statement of Ammianus Marcellinus who wrote, “no wild beasts are such dangerous enemies to man as Christians are to one another.” Licona complained about critics of his view, saying, “I’ve been very disappointed to see the ungodly behavior of a few of my detractors. The theological bullying, the termination and internal intimidation put on a few professors in SBC...all this revealed the underbelly of fundamentalism.” He charged that I made contacts with seminary leaders in an attempt to get him kicked out of his positions on their staff. The truth is that I made no such contacts for no such purposes. To put it briefly, it is strange that we attack those who defend inerrancy and defend those who attack inerrancy.

While it is not unethical to use the Internet for scholarly articles, it wrong to make the kind of unethical

response that was given to the scholarly articles such as that in the above citations. Such name-calling has no place in a scholarly dialogue. Calling the defense of inerrancy an act of “bullying” diminishes their critic, not them. Indeed, calling one’s critic a “tar baby” and labeling their actions as “ungodly behavior” is a classic example of how not to defend one’s view against its critics.

What is more, while Licona condemned the use of the Internet to present scholarly critiques of his view as a “circus,” he refused to condemn an offensive YouTube cartoon produced by his son-in-law and his friend that offensively caricatured my critique of his view as that of a theological “Scrooge.” Even Southern Evangelical Seminary (where Licona was once a faculty member before this issue arose) condemned this approach in a letter from “the office of the president,” saying, “We believe this video was totally unnecessary and is in extremely poor taste” (Letter, 12/9/2011). One influential alumnus wrote the

school, saying, “It was immature, inappropriate and distasteful” and recommended that “whoever made this video needs to pull it down and apologize for doing it” (Letter, 12/21/2011). The former president of the SES student body declared: “I’ll be honest that video was outright slander and worthy of punishment. I was quite angry after watching it” (Letter, 12/17/2011). This kind of unapologetic use of the Internet by those who deny the CSBI view of inerrancy of the Bible is uncalled for and unethical. It does the perpetrators and their cause against inerrancy no good.

Is Disciplinary Action Sometimes Called For In Organizations Like ETS?

“Judge not” is a mantra of our culture, and it has penetrated evangelical circles as well. But ironically, even that statement is a judgment. Rational and moral people must make judgments all the time. This is true in theology as

well as in society. Further, discipline on doctrinal matters is not unprecedented in ETS. Indeed, the ETS By Laws provide for such action, saying: “A member whose writings or teachings have been challenged at an annual business meeting as incompatible with the Doctrinal Basis of the Society, upon majority vote, shall have his case referred to the executive committee, before whom he and his accusers shall be given full opportunity to discuss his views and the accusations. The executive committee shall then refer his case to the Society for action at the annual business meeting the following year. A two-thirds majority vote of those present and voting shall be necessary for dismissal from membership” (Article 4, Section 4). This procedure was followed carefully in the Robert Gundry case.

In point of fact, the ETS has expressed an interest in monitoring and enforcing its doctrinal statement on inerrancy from the beginning. The official ETS minutes record the following:

1. In 1965, ETS Journal policy demanded a disclaimer and rebuttal of Dan Fuller’s article denying factual inerrancy published in the ETS *Bulletin*. They insisted that, “that an article by Dr. Kantzer be published simultaneously with the article by Dr. Fuller and that Dr. Schultz include in that issue of the *Bulletin* a brief explanation regarding the appearance of **a view point different from that of the Society**” (1965).

2. In 1965, speaking of some who held “Barthian” views of Scripture, the Minutes of the ETS Executive Committee read: “President Gordon Clark invited them to leave the society.”

3. The 1970 Minutes of ETS affirm that “Dr. R. H. Bube for three years signed his membership form with a note on his own interpretation of infallibility. The secretary was instructed to point out that **it is impossible for the Society to allow each member an idiosyncratic interpretation of inerrancy, and hence Dr. Bube is to be**

requested to sign his form without any qualifications, his own integrity in the matter being entirely respected” (emphasis added). This reveals efforts by ETS to protect and preserve the integrity of its doctrinal statement.

4. In 1983, by a 70% majority vote of the membership, Robert Gundry was asked to resign from ETS for his views based on Jewish *midrash* genre by which he held that sections of Matthew’s Gospel were not historical, such as the story of the Magi (Matt 2:1–12).

5. In the early 2000s, while I was still a member of the ETS Executive Committee, a majority voted not to allow a Roman Catholic to join ETS largely on the testimony of one founder (Roger Nicole) who claimed that the ETS doctrinal statement on inerrancy was meant to exclude Roman Catholics.

6. In 2003, by a vote of 388 to 231 (nearly 63%) the ETS expressed its position that Clark Pinnock’s views were contrary to the ETS doctrinal statement on inerrancy. This

failed the needed two-third majority to expel him from the society, but it revealed a strong majority who desired to monitor and enforce the doctrinal statement.

Finally, preserving the identity and integrity of any organization calls for doctrinal discipline on essential matters. Those organizations which neglect doing this are doomed to self-destruction.

Should an Inerrantist Break Fellowship with a Non-Inerrantist over Inerrancy?

The ICBI did not believe that inerrancy should be a test for evangelical fellowship. It declared: “We deny that such a confession is necessary for salvation” (CSBI, Art. 19). And “we do not propose that his statement be given creedal weight” (CSBI, Preamble). In short, it is not a test of evangelical *authenticity*, but of evangelical *consistency*. One can be saved without believing in inerrancy. So, holding to inerrancy is not a test of *spiritual fellowship*; it is

a matter of *theological consistency*. Brothers in Christ can fellowship on the basis of belonging to the same spiritual family, without agreeing on all non-salvific doctrines, even some very important ones like inerrancy. In view of this, criticizing inerrantist of evangelical “fratricide” seriously misses the mark and itself contributes to disunity in the body of evangelical believers. Indeed, in the light of the evidence, the ethical charge against inerrantists seriously backfired.

Conclusion

In actuality, the *Five Views* book is basically a two views book: only one person (Al Mohler) unequivocally supports the standard historic view of total inerrancy expressed in the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy (CSBI), and the other four participants do not. They varied in their rejection from those who presented a more friendly tone, but undercut inerrancy with their alien philosophical

premises (Kevin Vanhoozer) to those who are overtly antagonistic to it (Peter Enns).

There was little new in the arguments against the CSBI view of total inerrancy, most of which has been responded to by inerrantists down through the centuries into modern times. However, a new emphasis did emerge in the repeated charge about the alleged unethical behavior of inerrantists. But, as already noted, this is irrelevant to the truth of the doctrine of inerrancy. Further, there is some justification for the suspicion that attacks on the person, rather than the issue, are because non-inerrantists are running out of real ammunition to speak to the issue itself in a biblical and rational way.

In short, after careful examination of the *Five Views* book, the biblical arguments of the non-inerrantists were found to be unsound, their theological arguments were unjustified, their historical arguments were unfounded, their philosophical arguments were unsubstantiated, and

their ethical arguments were often outrageous.

Nevertheless, there were some good insights in the book, primarily in Al Mohler's sections and from time to time in the other places, as noted above. However, in its representation of the ETS/ICBI view of total inerrancy, the book was seriously imbalanced in format, participants, and discussion. The two professors who edited the book (J. Merrick and Stephen Garrett) were particularly biased in the way the issue was framed by them, as well in many of their comments.

Intelligent Design and Some Thomist Philosophers

J. Thomas Bridges

Introduction

If one is aware of the impact that the Intelligent Design movement has made over the past decade, then one often thinks of opposition to this movement arising from an atheistic scientific community, liberal cultural thinkers, or anti-theistic philosophers.¹ Recently, however, opposition to the ID movement has arisen vociferously from a handful of Thomist philosophers. This might seem strange given the common ground of theism, but these Thomist scholars put forward some interesting and clarifying objections to ID. One point of contention is whether or not ID science can be made compatible with Aristotelian-Thomistic (A-T) philosophical principles. Some Thomist thinkers reject

¹ J. Thomas Bridges., B.S. Iowa State University, M.Div w/ Languages Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, M.A. Philosophy, Baylor University, Ph.D. Philosophy of Religion, Southern

such compatibility. This chapter will look at why thinkers such as Michael Tkcaz, Francis Beckwith and Edward Fesser believe Intelligent Design science is incompatible with their Thomistic philosophy. If they are right, then the fundamental commitments of this project are deeply flawed. I will argue from some of Etienne Gilson's writings that there is at least a version of Thomism (Gilson's) that can be made compatible with ID science, but only if the nature of ID science is specified and A-T philosophical principles are reasonably modified. One of the above Thomists, Feser, endorses Gilson's book *From Aristotle to Darwin and Back Again*. Feser writes, "Gilson shows us that those who glibly suppose that modern biology has refuted Aristotle's doctrine of final causality do not properly understand either. The reprinting of this classic will, we can hope, contribute to the long-overdue

Evangelical Seminary. He currently is a professor of philosophy and systematic theology at Southern Evangelical Seminary.

revival of the philosophy of nature as an active field of study.”² Feser respects Gilson’s writings in the area of teleology and Darwinism, we may assume that he would afford equal respect to Gilson’s other works. If so, then Feser may have reasons to moderate his views on the possible relationship between Thomistic philosophy and ID science.

Aristotle and Aquinas on Final Causality

Before embarking on a debate over whether ID thought is compatible with Aristotle and Aquinas’ views of teleology, it behooves the reader at least to look at what these philosophers thought. Jonathan Lear in his book, *Aristotle: The Desire to Understand*, clarifies Aristotle’s view of causality:

² <http://www.ignatius.com/Products/FADBA-P/from-aristotle-to-darwin-and-back-again.aspx> [accessed August 18, 2012]

[Aristotle] believed that for the generation of natural organisms and for the production artifacts there were at most two causes – form and matter. And matter ultimately has to be relegated to a secondary position, for it is ultimately unintelligible: at each level of organization what we come to understand is the principle of organization or form. The matter provides the brute particularity of an object: it can be perceived, but not understood. . . . He is not then picking out one of four causes for special honor: he is citing the one item, form, which can be considered either as the form it is or as the efficient cause or as the final cause.³

Here Lear is rejecting the view that Aristotle's four causes (formal, efficient, final, and material) are really to be understood as four separate causes; rather there is form and matter and since matter is essentially unintelligible, the intelligibility of a thing is its form. This form, moreover can be considered in three ways; one of them being the final cause. Lear goes on to write,

Aristotle does believe that there is *real* purposefulness in the world. And real

³ Jonathan Lear, *Aristotle: The Desire to Understand* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 27.

purposefulness requires that the end *somehow* govern the process along the way to its own realization. . . .Form as an actuality is the end or final cause. . . .Our appreciation of purposefulness is not, for Aristotle, a projection of (human) mind onto nature; it is a projection of purposeful, intelligible, ‘mindful’ nature onto the human mind.⁴

It is important to note the type of realism assumed in the Aristotelian metaphysic. The intelligibility of nature impresses itself onto the mind of the observer such that the form of the thing comes to be in the mind of the beholder. The one who appreciates the final cause of an acorn, sees that, if its natural growth is unimpeded, the acorn will transform into an oak tree. There is an inherent intelligibility to this process of change which the human mind picks out and

⁴ Ibid., 40-41. [emphasis in original]

considers; when it considers the oak tree as the end for which the acorn strives it is considering form from the perspective of final causality.⁵

In Aristotle we have a ‘secular’ philosopher considering the nature of final causality. In Thomas Aquinas, who is as famous a theologian as he is a philosopher, we have the notion of final causality considered in relation to God’s existence. Generally known as “the fifth way,” Aquinas argues that the purposefulness of nature (its being ordered to an end), is an effect of the divine mind. He writes,

The fifth way is based on the guidedness of nature. An orderedness of actions to an end is observed in all bodies obeying natural laws, even when they lack awareness. For their behaviour hardly ever varies, and will practically always turn out well; which shows that they truly tend to a goal, and do not merely hit it by accident. Nothing however that lacks awareness tends to a

⁵ Although we may use the language of intentionality, F.C. Copleston points out that the teleology of Aristotle is an “unconscious teleology.” See his *A History of Philosophy, Volume I*, esp. chapter XXIX.

goal, except under the direction of someone with awareness and with understanding; the arrow, for example, requires an archer. Everything in nature, therefore, is directed to its goal by someone with understanding, and this we call 'God.'⁶

According to Aquinas, then, it is enough to notice that there are things in the natural order that “tend to a goal” and that this directedness is not accounted for by the natural beings themselves because it is done without awareness. Though much could be said of Aristotle and Aquinas’ views of final causality, the above quotations are in place to give the reader some small example of their thoughts. The differences between teleology and ID science were elucidated earlier, but if one wants to make the case that Aquinas’ view is incompatible with ID, it is good to have his writings before us.

Certainly Dembski is aware that there is a difference between his scientific project and Aquinas’

⁶ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, Ia.Q2.a3, trans.

philosophical one (though his language at times does not always maintain this distinction). Recall that Dembski has written, “One of the consequences of methodological naturalism is to exclude intelligent design from science. Teleology and design, though perhaps real in some metaphysical sense, are, according to methodological naturalism, not proper subjects for inquiry in the natural sciences.”⁷ Here he conflates teleology with ID science. Elsewhere he displays more sensitivity between the boundaries of philosophy and science. He writes, “The design argument is at its heart a philosophical and theological argument. It attempts to establish the existence and attributes of an intelligent cause behind the world based on certain features in the world. By contrast, the design inference is a generic argument for identifying the effects of intelligence regardless of the intelligence’s

Timothy McDermott (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 17.

⁷ Dembski, *The Design Revolution*, 170.

particular characteristics and regardless of where, when, how or why the intelligence acts.”⁸ This implies that Dembski is aware to some degree of the methodological differences between philosophy and his scientific work in ID.

The different methodologies distinguish a philosophical-metaphysical approach to the organization of natural beings and the type of information found in specific biochemical structures. This difference is significant because some Thomist philosophers insist on chastising Dembski for having a flawed philosophy of nature, namely mechanism, which cannot be reconciled to an A-T philosophy of nature. But Dembski is clear about this when he writes,

In focusing on the machinelike features of organisms, *intelligent design is not advocating a mechanistic conception of life.* To attribute such a conception of life to

⁸ Ibid., 77.

intelligent design is to commit the fallacy of composition. Just because a house is made of bricks doesn't mean that the house itself is a brick. Likewise, just because certain biological structures can properly be described as machines doesn't mean that an organism that includes those structures is a machine. Intelligent design focuses on the machinelike aspects of life because those aspects are scientifically tractable and are precisely the ones that the opponents of design purport to explain by physical mechanisms.⁹

Here Dembski affirms that his view of ID does not commit one to a broader mechanistic philosophy of nature or “conception of life.” It is yet to be seen whether allowing for a mechanistic view of some biological structures can be reconciled to A-T philosophical principles. Some scholars say ‘no’.

⁹ William A. Dembski, *The Design Revolution*, 152. [emphasis added]

The Level of the Data

It will be important later to recognize that Dembski's view of ID relies on data of a certain type. As was mentioned before, it must be small-scale biochemical data that lends itself to information-probability analysis that is fed through the explanatory filter. Dembski goes on to explain the type of data that is most easily appropriated by his analytic tool.

He writes,

One might say that Darwinists have traditionally hidden behind the complexities of biological systems to shelter their theory from critical scrutiny. Choose a biological system that is too complex, and one can't even begin to calculate the probabilities associated with its evolution. . . . Michael Behe's great coup was to identify a class of simpler biological systems for which it is easier to assess the probabilistic hurdles that must be overcome for them to evolve. . . . But even with irreducibly complex biochemical systems (vastly simpler though they are than individual retinal cells, to say nothing of the eye itself), complexities quickly mount and become unwieldy. . . . Proteins reside at just the right level of complexity and simplicity to determine, at

least in some cases, their probability of evolving by Darwinian processes.¹⁰

This means that far from making observations of the processes taking place at the level of the organism or even an entire organ, Dembski's statistical approach to inferring design relies on very small-scale biological data at the level of biochemistry or molecular biology. This is well below the threshold of biology that impinges directly on a philosophy of nature looking at the final causality of organisms.

Just to confirm that this small-scale approach is his intended approach we can look at one more quotation that comes as a response to some criticism. Responding to an article by Mary Midgley¹¹, Dembski writes, "It is remarkable that Midgley refers to organisms as consisting of 'continuous tissue' as though this undercuts the ID proponents' 'mechanical analogy.' *ID stakes its claim at*

¹⁰ Ibid., 195-196.

the level of molecular biology, not at the level of ‘continuous tissues.’ At the level of molecular biology, we have protein machines that are machines literally and not just analogically.”¹² This idea of protein machines being machines “literally and not just analogically” does seem to be the sort of mechanistic language to which a Thomist would object. We must determine if Dembski’s scientific project commits him to such a view or not. If not, then the above statement can be ameliorated to fit with the Thomistic view. Perhaps, in context, Dembski is not espousing a mechanistic philosophy of nature, which he elsewhere denies. Rather it seems that he is emphasizing the literal goal-oriented nature of biochemical systems that those of a neo-Darwinian bent constantly deny. If this is the case then Dembski has stated his case somewhat

¹¹ www.dur.ac.uk/resources/ias/IntelligentDesignArticle.doc; accessed August 18, 2012.

¹² <http://www.uncommondescent.com/intelligent-design/mary-midgley-id-is-going-to-give-us-a-great-deal-of-trouble/> posted December 2, 2007; accessed April 26, 2010.

imprecisely, but it is not evidence that his ID science is incompatible with a non-mechanistic philosophy of nature.

Not everyone, however, is pleased with the ID movement and below we will explore several thinkers who have criticisms, some valid, of ID argumentation. Below we will look at Michael Tkacz's general criticisms as to why ID theory cannot be reconciled in principle with Aquinas' philosophical theology due to his view of divine action and natural causation.

Michael Tkacz's Thomistic Objections

Due to considerations of space, this section will provide representative quotations from an article Tkacz has written in order to criticize ID from the point of Thomism. Instead of providing a thoroughly original analysis, there is a rebuttal to Tkacz from Thomist and Discovery Institute fellow Jay W. Richards which will be excerpted below.

In an article titled “Aquinas vs. Intelligent Design,” Michael W. Tkacz, philosopher at Gonzaga University, takes pains to explain to the reader that, according to Aquinas, creation is not a change of some sort wherein a pre-existing material is modified into something else. He says, “*Creatio non est mutatio* says Aquinas: The act of creation is not some species of change. . . . Creation is not a change. Creation is a cause, but of a very different, indeed unique, kind. Only if one avoids the Cosmogonical Fallacy is one able to correctly understand the Christian doctrine of Creation ex nihilo.”¹³ This “cosmogonical fallacy” can be extended into one’s view of the natural process of organisms. Tkacz goes on to say,

A large quadrapedic mammal, such as a hippopotamus, gives live birth to its young. Why? Well, we could answer this by saying that “God does it.” Yet, this could only mean that God created the hippopotamus—indeed the mammalian order—with the

¹³ <http://www.catholic.com/thisrock/2008/0811fea4.asp> accessed April 27, 2010.

morphology, genetic makeup, etc. that are the causes of its giving live birth. God does not "reach into" the normal operations of hippopotamuses to cause them to give live birth. Were one to think that "God does it" means that God intervenes in nature in this way, one would be guilty of the Cosmogonical Fallacy.

Now, if this distinction between the being of something and its operation is correct, then nature and her operations are independent in the sense that nature operates according to the way she is, not because something outside of her is acting on her. God does not act on nature the way a human being might act on an artifact to change it. Rather, God causes natural beings to be in such a way that they work the way they do.¹⁴

Tkacz is concerned that one not have the impression that God, in order to keep natural operations going consistently, actively "makes" them do what they do by nature at all times. On such a view, natural order is not established because God has provided things with particular natures then allows them to act according to their kind, but rather that God "reaches into" nature in so that it is indeed

orderly. Tkacz is correct that such a view, something like an occasionalist view, would be wholly incompatible with Aquinas' essentialist philosophy of nature.

Finally, Tkacz charges ID with being founded on the cosmogonical fallacy and using god of the gaps reasoning. He states, "It would seem that ID theory is grounded on the Cosmogonical Fallacy. Many who oppose the standard Darwinian account of biological evolution identify creation with divine intervention into nature. . . . This insistence that creation must mean that God has periodically produced new and distinct forms of life is to confuse the fact of creation with the manner or mode of the development of natural beings in the universe. This is the Cosmogonical Fallacy." He ends his article with the commentary,

Insofar as ID theory represents a "god of the gaps" view, then it is inconsistent with the Catholic intellectual tradition. Thanks to the

¹⁴ Ibid.

insights of Aquinas and his many followers throughout the ages, Catholics have available to them a clearer and more consistent understanding of Creation. If Catholics avail themselves of this Thomistic tradition, they will have no need to resort to "god of the gaps" arguments to defend the teachings of the faith. They will also have a more complete and harmonious understanding of the relationship of the Catholic faith to scientific reason.¹⁵

Tkacz's article focuses on the cosmogonical fallacy or misunderstandings that can arise when one thinks about the causal relation of God to his creation. If Tkacz is right then the central question is: Does Intelligent Design scientific reasoning commit this fallacy by confusing the unique causal activity of God in creation with natural changes? As we will see, Jay Richards responds with a resounding 'no'. One point to be made, however, is that those who follow in the Thomistic tradition may not see the need for arguments like those that ID science raises. I believe that if one understands the metaphysical realism of Aquinas, then the

¹⁵ Ibid.

sort of materialist assumptions that motivate the conclusions of many modern scientists will be exposed as untenable. But thinking that one's philosophy is more powerful than a body of scientific research does not, of itself, render this evidence irrelevant or unimportant.

In his article specifically responding to Tkacz, Jay W. Richards explains that there is another aspect to God's causal activity between the unique act of creation and the natural causes that arise due to the essences given to natural beings. In a section entitled, "**Creation *Ex Nihilo* Isn't the Whole Story**," Richards points out,

Thomas considers creation *ex nihilo* to be the pre-eminent meaning of the word "create." And it distinguishes God's creative power from the kind of "creation" of which human beings are capable. As he puts it: "To create [in the unique sense attributable to God] is, properly speaking, to cause or produce the being of things." (*ST* I:45:6). In other words, God doesn't just take a pre-existing substratum and fashion it, as does the Demiurge in Plato's *Timaeus*. God calls the universe into existence without using pre-existing space, matter, time, or anything else. So when he creates the universe from

nothing, God's creative act does not involve changing one thing into another, as Tkacz notes.¹⁶

It is not the case that Richards disagrees with the fundamental philosophical theology of the nature of God's creative power. Along with Tkacz, Richards recognizes that God's power of creation *ex nihilo* is to "produce the being of things" or to produce the act of existing by which a particular type of being exists. Though he understands and agrees with this doctrine as Tkacz does, Richards does not see this doctrine God's creative activity is in conflict with other types of activities of God. He writes,

But as we've already seen, for Thomas (and Christianity for that matter), this isn't the only thing God does. It's not God's only mode of action. . . . God made Eve, according to St. Thomas, not *ex nihilo*, but from Adam's rib, which obviously pre-existed Eve. These actions may not be "creation properly speaking," but they involve God exercising his creative power in

¹⁶http://www.evolutionnews.org/2010/04/response_to_michael_tkacz_cri.html, posted April 26, 2010; accessed April 27, 2010.

a different but still direct way within the created order.

God takes matter and does something with it that it wouldn't do on its own. Call it "making," "crafting," "producing," "quasi-creating," "fashioning," "fiddling," "tinkering," "breaking the rules," or whatever you like. But contrary to Tkacz's assertion, the "Thomistic understanding of divine agency" (assuming that locution refers to Thomas' view of the matter, in conformity with the settled teaching of the Church) includes God creating *ex nihilo* both initially and subsequent to his initial creation of the world, his acting directly in nature—sometimes using pre-existing material—and his acting through secondary causes. And by implication, this would include every permutation of these options.¹⁷

It seems that Richards has mounted a satisfactory response.

Tkacz made his central thesis the idea that ID commits the cosmogonical fallacy because it misrepresents God's causal relationship with his creation. Richards has shown that while Tkacz is correct that Aquinas presents creation *ex nihilo* as the "pre-eminent meaning for the word 'create'" it

¹⁷ Ibid.

is not the only understanding of the way in which God causally interacts with the created order. As not just a philosopher but a theologian, Aquinas accepts the veracity of the Bible including God fashioning Eve from Adam's rib. Though, as Richards points out, this is not creation *ex nihilo*, it is an example of God directly causing a change in the natural order by means other than natural causes or natural beings interacting in some way. He says, "God takes matter and does something with it that it wouldn't do on its own."

Besides successfully rebutting Tkacz's main objection to ID theory, Richards also gives the reader insight into how Tkacz could, while committed to the same body of Thomistic thought, come to conclusion vastly different than Richards' own (or Thomas' it seems).

Richards explains, "Tkacz is a so-called "River Forest" Thomist. This school of Thomists interprets Thomas in a highly Aristotelian fashion. Other Thomists disagree with

them.” Because of this emphasis on Aristotelian elements in Thomas, the naturalism in Aristotle’s thought tends to supplant St. Thomas’ dedication to revelation. Richards concludes, “Tkacz’s assertions look more like deductions from naturalism, rigid Aristotelianism, or a hybrid of the two, than like implications of Thomism. Naturalism and orthodox Aristotelianism seem to require that everything in nature have a cause within nature, because there aren’t any other possibilities. . . . In Tkacz’s article, I think we’re dealing with an overbearing Aristotelianism refracted through modern naturalistic science.”¹⁸ I would agree with Richards. As we will see later in the response to Feser, there are some Thomists, e.g. Gilson, that think the Aristotelianism in Thomism needs to be moderated in order to make Thomism more consistent with its own fundamental principles.

¹⁸ Ibid.

Francis Beckwith's Doubt about Intelligent Design

On the website *The BioLogos Forum*, Francis Beckwith has posted a two-part essay related to his early involvement and subsequent distancing from the Intelligent Design movement. He mentions Michael Tkacz as one of the Thomistic thinkers that has influenced his current position so hearing echoes of Tkacz in Beckwith's article should be expected. This section will be dedicated to looking at Beckwith's unease and offering an analysis and rebuttal of several issues he raises. In part II of the essay Beckwith states,

. . . IDers, like Dembski and Behe, and atheists, like Richard Dawkins and Jerry Coyne, wind up agreeing that without "gaps" in nature belief in an intelligent designer is not justified. The IDer thinks he can fill the gaps with intelligent agents;

Thomists and many other Christian philosophers do not accept this philosophy of nature. For them, design is immanent in the universe, and thus even an evolutionary account of the development of life requires a universe teeming with final causes. What is a final cause? It is a thing's purpose or end.

So, for example, even if one can provide an evolutionary account of the development of the human lungs without any recourse to an intervening intelligence, there remains the fact that the lungs develop for a particular purpose, the exchange of oxygen for the sake of the organism's survival. This fact, of course, does not contravene the discoveries of modern biology. And neither does it mean that final causes should be inserted into scientific theories. All it means is that the deliverances of the sciences—even if needing no intelligent intervention to be complete—are not nature's whole story.¹⁹

Beckwith's article is a good example of some of the confusion that ID sometimes inspires. According to what was presented above as the essence of Dembski's thought, the formal analysis that makes ID what it is, requires certain data at the level of biochemistry/molecular biology which lends itself to the complexity-specification criterion and the explanatory filter. Beckwith has taken this formal scientific analysis for Dembski's *philosophy of nature*, but one may accept such an analysis while denying it

¹⁹ <http://biologos.org/blog/intelligent-design-and-me-part-ii->

represents a broader philosophy of nature, as Dembski does explicitly.

It must be said that Beckwith's confusion is well-founded because there are some instances wherein ID proponents do not make clear the demarcations, for example, between science and philosophy. For example, in his *Design of Life*, Dembski defines Intelligent Design as, "The study of patterns in nature that are best explained as the product of intelligence."²⁰ This definition of ID is much more ambiguous than the explanations given later in the book. Defining ID as "the study of patterns in nature" does not clearly distinguish its method and conclusion from similar *philosophical* arguments, though Dembski clearly does recognize this distinction. The point here is that one need not regard Dembski's more rigorous scientific work as

confessions-of-a-doting-thomist/ posted March 20, 2010; accessed April 27, 2010.

²⁰ William Dembski and Jonathan Wells, *The Design of Life: Discovering Signs of Life in Biological Systems* (Dallas; Foundation for Thought and Ethics, 2008), 3.

philosophical. Beckwith's language indicates that Dembski thinks specified complexity and his explanatory filter can or should be applied to the whole of "nature's order, including its laws and principles," when this is clearly not the case. Dembski has admitted above that the filter must only be applied selectively to data of a certain type so as to pick out earmarks of design and eliminate chance.

Finally, it seems that Beckwith's concerned about ID science relying on 'gaps in nature.' He states above, "IDers, like Dembski and Behe, and atheists, like Richard Dawkins and Jerry Coyne, wind up agreeing that without 'gaps' in nature *belief in an intelligent designer is not justified.*" Because he has taken Dembski's position as his philosophy of nature (which is obvious from the next line, "Thomists and many other Christian philosophers do not accept this philosophy of nature") he thinks that Dembski's ID argument constitutes philosophical justification for the Designer's existence. But if the earlier analysis of ID

science is correct, Dembski is taking our intuitions of design in biology and turning them into, a formal *scientific* analysis. If this is the case, then Beckwith's concern is unfounded because the "justification" at issue is a narrow, scientific one, *not* a philosophical one. I agree with Beckwith's view that if ID fails as a *scientific* justification for belief in an intelligent designer, we would still have the whole tradition of Aristotelian-Thomism at our disposal to argue against philosophical naturalism. But above he confuses the scientific role of ID and potential philosophical consequences of the scientific theory.

If this analysis of Beckwith is correct then his last point does not follow. That is, he says that some Thomists and other Christian philosophers reject ID as a justification for belief in a Designer because we have philosophical recourse to final causality. He goes on to say, "And neither does it mean that final causes should be inserted into scientific theories. All it means is that the deliverances of

the sciences—even if needing no intelligent intervention to be complete—are not nature’s whole story.” This just means that the Thomist and Christian philosophers have *philosophical* justifications for accepting final causality and the orderliness of nature apart from any ID arguments. This is true, but one also need not reject ID arguments in order to preserve A-T notions of final causality. They do not occupy overlapping conceptual space. They are different modes of investigation that end up converging on the same facet of reality. ID science does this in a limited scientific mode and Thomism does this in a more general philosophical mode.

There is a deeper concern that a Thomist should have with Beckwith’s position, however, and it strikes at the heart of adopting a neo-Darwinian scientific theory along with a Thomistic philosophy of nature. Beckwith seems to indicate that one can be happy as a philosophical Thomist and accept neo-Darwinian theory. In the above

quote he writes, “For them [Thomists and Christian philosophers], design is immanent in the universe, and thus even an evolutionary account of the development of life requires a universe teeming with final causes.” Beckwith indicates that one can be a Thomist holding to final causality and evolutionary theory, but is this accurate? There are reasons to think it is not. In an article titled “Can a Thomist be a Darwinist?” philosopher Logan Gage points to several things between neo-Darwinian theory and Thomism that are fundamentally incompatible. He writes,

The first conflict between Darwinism and Thomism, then, is the denial of true species or essences. For the Thomist, this denial is a grave error, because the essence of the individual (the species in the Aristotelian sense) is the true object of knowledge. As Benjamin Wiker observes in *Moral Darwinism*, Darwin reduces species to “mere epiphenomena of matter in motion.” What we call a “dog,” in other words, is really just an arbitrary snapshot of the way things look at present...there is no species “dog” but only a collection of individuals, connected in a long chain of changing

shapes, which happen to resemble each other today but will not tomorrow.²¹

If, at the level of the individual organism, neo-Darwinian theory holds there is really nothing but an accidental shape wherein individuals come to resemble one another and no real metaphysical reality they share, then this biological theory seems more consistent with nominalism than essentialism. Perhaps Gage is a bit hyperbolic when he writes “the essence of the individual is the true object of knowledge” for this has a bit of rationalist overtone. It might be more precisely stated, ‘the universal abstracted from the individual of a particular kind is the sole object of the intellect.’ This is better stated because it does not imply that sense cognition is of an inferior type of knowledge (as rationalism implies). Gage’s point remains, however, that if there are no real species then there are not real specific differences by which we define the essence/nature of a

²¹ Logan Paul Gage, “Can a Thomist be a Darwinist?” in *God*

thing. A biological theory that commits one to a nominalist view seems more radically divergent from Thomism than a theory that purports to identify mathematical markers for design given the nature of a specific type of information (CSI) found in some molecular biological systems.

Gage sees that there is another potential conflict between neo-Darwinian theory and a Thomistic philosophy of nature. He comments,

The second conflict is very similar to the first. The Thomist, as we have seen, is committed to the reality of universals, for universals are the objects of higher knowledge. But it is not only the existence of species which Darwinism destroys; it is also their stability.

Darwinian Theory posits that all living things are related through one or very few ancestors (referred to as “Universal Common Ancestry”) via solely material processes. But if living things have unchangeable essences, how can these living things change (or “transform”) in to other living things though mere material causes?²²

and Evolution, ed. Jay Richards (Seattle, WA: Discovery Institute Press, 2010), 190.

²² *Ibid.*, 192.

Again, and this is solely personal proclivity, I find Gage's terminology less precise than it could be. When he writes that universals are the "objects of higher knowledge" it is perhaps better to think of universals as "more abstract objects of human reason." This, again, is simple to halt any underlying rationalist tendencies that have crept in from modernity. While it is true that the knowledge of a thing's nature is abstract metaphysical knowledge, the term "higher knowledge" implies that less abstract, more sensible knowledge is "lower knowledge." This in turn could imply that sense knowledge is somehow inferior to knowledge that is purely intellectual, which is false. This is why I prefer to cast the discussion in terms of knowledge that is more or less abstract rather than "higher" and "lower."

Despite this jousting over terminology, Gage makes another good point, namely, that even if one could espouse some type of essence or species from neo-Darwinism, there is no way that the term would include the idea of

permanence or stability, which it most certainly does for Aristotle and Aquinas. Gage concludes, “Thus those defending the tradition of natural philosophy found in Aristotle and St. Thomas simply cannot accept transformism...”²³

It seems that Beckwith’s concerns that ID theory leads to a poor philosophy of nature are eclipsed by the more inimical threat that Darwinian theory poses to A-T metaphysical and epistemological realism. And Tkacz’s criticisms, that ID entails views of divine causation at odds with Thomism, have been met with satisfactory responses. In the next section, William Dembski’s work comes under direct scrutiny by another Thomist thinker, Edward Feser. To these criticisms we now turn.

²³ Ibid., 193.

Edward Feser's Objections to ID Science

Edward Feser, a professor of philosophy at Pasadena City College, is a Thomist philosopher who has recently taken an interest in highlighting the dangers inherent in contemporary Intelligent Design science. Since Feser's critique of ID is the most recent on the web it and is directed specifically at William Dembski's work, it will be fruitful to look at it in depth. Assumedly, if one can find grounds for defending Dembski's position from Feser's fundamental concerns, then one should rest comfortable in the compatibility of ID science and A-T philosophy. This section will be broken down into 1) Feser's A-T model and his angst over a mechanistic view of nature and 2) His specific criticism of Dembski's ID science.

Feser's A-T Model and Angst over Mechanism

Feser has recently published a book defending the Aristotelian-Thomistic approach to just about everything.

He says in his work *The Last Superstition*, “How significant is Aristotle? Well, I wouldn’t want to exaggerate, so let me put it this way: *Abandoning Aristotelianism, as the founders of modern philosophy did, was the single greatest mistake ever made in the entire history of Western thought...* this abandonment has contributed to the civilizational crisis through which the West has been living for several centuries...”²⁴ Anyone interested in a contemporary defense of A-T philosophical principles and the practical and philosophical consequences of abandoning them will appreciate Feser’s work.

When it comes to the articulation of Aristotelian essentialism and modern science, for example, Feser sides unashamedly with Aristotle. He writes,

...to affirm the existence in physical phenomena of inherent powers or capacities is to acknowledge phenomena that are directed at or point to states of affairs

²⁴ Edward Feser, *The Last Superstition: A Refutation of the New Atheism* (South Bend, IN; St. Augustine Press, 2008), 51. [emphasis in original]

beyond themselves. For example, to be fragile is to point to or be directed at *breaking*, and a fragile thing of its nature points to or is directed at this particular state even if it is never in fact realized. To be soluble is to point at or be directed a *dissolving*, and a soluble thing of its nature points to or is directed at this particular state even if it is never in fact realized. And so forth...It is also amazing that the persistence of final causality within the purportedly mechanistic modern physics is not more generally acknowledged...²⁵

This quotation shows that, for Feser, it is Aristotelianism all the way down. There is no place for a mechanistic view of natural substances even at the level of physics and (given the solubility example) chemistry. For Feser, even aspects of science like fragility and solubility should be recognized as being examples of final causality. But earlier Gilson recognized that treating something in a way that ignores final causality is incomplete but it is not false. Therefore, the modern chemist might ignore aspects of final causality in his method of studying chemical reactions, but this only

²⁵ Ibid., 263-264.

makes is view of chemical reactions philosophically uninformed (“incomplete”), not mistaken.

Feser’s criticism of the modern philosophy of nature seems correct. He argues that modern philosophers replaced Aristotle’s natural forms for a view of nature in which everything is machinelike. He writes,

That is to say, one must substitute for common sense the idea that a natural substance is a kind of artifact. One must think of plants and animals, solar systems and galaxies, as comparable to (say) mousetraps, watches, or outboard motors. And that is, of course, exactly what the “mechanical” conception of the world that the early modern philosophers put in place of the Scholastics’ Aristotelian philosophy of nature made possible. The world was reconceived as a machine or collection of machines. Break a natural object down into its parts and identify the efficient-causal relations holding between them, and you know (so the moderns claim) everything there is to know about its *intrinsic* nature.²⁶

²⁶<http://edwardfeser.blogspot.com/2010/04/nothing-but.html>, accessed April 29, 2010. [emphasis in original]

He goes on to note that this view of nature as an artifact means that, as opposed to the A-T conception, the natural order could go on existing in the absence of the artist. This, he believes lead to deism and then eventually to either atheism or a very poor theology that is incompatible with A-T. Given his traditional Aristotelian philosophy of science and allergy to mechanism of any degree, distaste for contemporary ID science is perhaps inevitable. His reference to “mousetraps, watches, or outboard motors” (icons of ID thinking) shows that in Feser’s mind ID proponents are inextricably linked to the same modernistic thinking that historically abandoned Aristotle, to the detriment of Western thought.

He writes more explicitly after stating that modern science cannot avoid implying the metaphysics of Aristotle, “Please note that this has nothing whatsoever to do with “irreducible complexity” or any of the other Paleyan red herrings familiar from the debate over “Intelligent Design,”

whose advocates foolishly concede the mechanistic assumptions of their opponents.”²⁷ As we will see below, there is a modification to Aristotelian thinking that does more justice to the nature of some of the modern sciences *qua* sciences, and provides a way to look at ID science that makes it consistent with the A-T tradition.

It is perhaps understandable that as Feser is critiquing the “new atheists” for ignoring teleology, he discards anything that does not help in this essentially philosophical debate. He is correct, as Beckwith is correct, that a proper understanding of metaphysical and epistemological realism means that the insufficiency of naturalism as a metaphysic will be patent. Thus, there is no need for the convinced Thomist to rely on the sciences to tell him about the nature of final causality (since it is presupposed by all the sciences). Nevertheless, it is also not a proof of ID science’s illegitimacy to say that it does

²⁷ Feser, *The Last Superstition*, 255.

not have the power of a more robust philosophical argument. Below we will see the proper attitude that a Thomist should have regarding ID science.

Feser's Criticism of Dembski's ID Science

If Francis Beckwith's concern over ID was misperceiving it as a broader philosophy of science and Michael Tkacz's concern was rooted in his view of A-T causation, then Feser's criticisms can be seen as a combination of these with the specific concern over Dembski's commitment to a mechanistic philosophy of nature that is fundamentally at odds with Scholasticism. Feser writes, "The A-T critique of Paley and of ID theory has nothing whatsoever to do with Darwinism – Aristotle and Aquinas were not Darwinians, after all – and it has nothing to do either with any objection to probabilistic arguments for God's existence *per se*. It has to do instead with the metaphysical and theological errors A-T sees as implicit in the methodological assumptions underlying Paley's "design argument" and contemporary

ID theory.”²⁸ Presumably, since Feser does not have “any objection to probabilistic arguments for God’s existence *per se*” if one could provide an account of ID science that neither commits one to a mechanistic philosophy of nature nor commits obvious metaphysical or theological errors, it should satisfy Feser’s concerns. Just such an account will be provided below. We will look first at the specific criticism of Dembski’s work that Feser has publicized on the web.

Feser criticizes Dembski for having a view of the nature of life that conflicts with A-T philosophical principles. He writes,

Dembski goes on explicitly to acknowledge that just as “the art of shipbuilding is not in the wood that constitutes the ship” and “the art of making statues is not in the stone out of which statues are made,” “so too, *the theory of intelligent design contends that the art of building life is not in the physical stuff that constitutes life but requires a designer*”

²⁸<http://edwardfeser.blogspot.com/2010/04/nothing-but.html>, accessed April 29, 2010.

(emphasis added). And there you have it: Living things are for ID theory to be modeled on ships and statues, the products of *techne* or “art,” whose characteristic “information” is not “internal” to them but must be “imposed” from “outside.” And that *just is* what A-T philosophers mean by a “mechanistic” conception of life.

The way God creates living things, then, is the same way He creates everything else, viz. by conjoining an essence to an act of existence, which in the case of material things (including plants and animals) entails conjoining a certain kind of prime matter/substantial form composite to an act of existence.²⁹

In the Dembski quote nested in Feser’s article, Dembski explicitly talks about ‘the art of building life’ not the creation of life or the “conception of life”. Feser moves from the “physical stuff” that Dembski refers to, to the notion of ‘living things’ implying, contrary to the intent in Dembski’s quote, that Dembski has a mechanistic concept of life. Furthermore, in an online post responding to Feser’s criticism, Dembski states, “ID’s critique of

naturalism and Darwinism *should not be viewed as offering a metaphysics of nature* but rather as a subversive strategy for unseating naturalism/Darwinism on their own terms.”³⁰ This is the same mistake that Beckwith makes, that is, interpreting the scientific theoretic of ID as a philosophy of nature, which Dembski explicitly denies. Further, if, when Feser refers to “the way God creates living things” if this is talking about creation “properly speaking” (as Tkacz referred to), then yes this is just what creation in its most metaphysically basic sense. But Jay Richards has already pointed out in the example of God ‘making’ (not creating *per se*) Eve from Adam’s rib, that God can engage in ‘making’ as well as ‘creating.’ In this case, the end result is still an act of existence conjoined to a certain kind of prime matter/substantial form, but the

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ <http://www.uncommondescent.com/intelligent-design/does-id-presuppose-a-mechanistic-view-of-nature>, accessed April 29, 2010, [emphasis added]

“making” is from something pre-existent. I fail to see the essential incompatibility here.

Besides confusing ID science with a philosophy of nature, Feser misunderstands the limits of Dembski’s project. He criticizes Dembski’s ID approach because it leaves out things that, under the A-T model, obviously count as examples of design. Feser writes,

For example, at p. 140 of *The Design Revolution*, Dembski flatly asserts that “lawlike [regularities] of nature” such as “water’s propensity to freeze below a certain temperature” are “as readily deemed brute facts of nature as artifacts of design” and thus “can never decisively implicate design”; only “specified complexity” can do that. But for A-T, such regularities are paradigm examples of final causality.... Even the simplest causal regularities thus suffice “decisively” to show that there must be a supreme ordering intelligence keeping efficient causes directed toward their ends from instant to instant, at least if Aquinas’s Fifth Way is successful.³¹

³¹<http://edwardfeser.blogspot.com/2010/04/nothing-but.html>, accessed April 29, 2010. [emphasis in original]

Keeping in mind Dembski's project is helpful here. The fact that, in Dembski's case, he is looking for a type of information that indicates an intelligent source means that he cannot point to things of a certain type (remember, given his project he cannot even take the organized operations of an entire organ like the human eye as a case for design because "the complexities [would] quickly mount and become unwieldy.") For example, as a theist Dembski would surely agree that salt crystals were ultimately created by God (as all things are), but because of their repeating structure (low information content) they cannot be *proved*, via his filter, as being designed and therefore could just as easily be "deemed brute facts of nature" by his antagonistic naturalistic interlocutor. So, he looks for evidence that does have the right type of information content (CSI).

Feser is content to denigrate Dembski for not arguing philosophically for the A-T view. Feser says of lawlike regularities, "But for A-T, such regularities are

paradigm examples of final causality...” Only if one thinks that ID science should shoulder the burden of a philosophical proof for teleology does this criticism make sense. This is really a simple category mistake. It is not incoherent to say, ‘For Dembski’s scientific analysis to go through, he cannot use the regularity of water freezing as the proper data, but for the A-T philosopher water freezing constitutes an example of final causality.’ They do not conflict as science and philosophy; they only conflict if ID is misrepresented as a mechanistic philosophy of nature. Feser may believe that one does not need ID science to argue against naturalism because it is far poorer and limited in both content and scope. He may be right that A-T should be the preferred method for dealing decisive blows to naturalism, but this does not make ID science wrong or incompatible with A-T principles.

One final quote from Feser will highlight the sort of mechanistic philosophy he thinks ID is committed to and

set the stage for showing how Dembski's work, read through Etienne Gilson, can satisfy Feser's frustrations. On Dembski's mechanistic tendencies Feser writes,

that the ambiguity in question here – denying mechanism in some places while affirming it in others – has parallels elsewhere in Dembski's work. . . . Dembski seems intent on sidestepping potential objections by making ID as flexible as possible, so long as the word “design” is preserved. This explains why some readers assume that there is nothing in ID that is incompatible with A-T metaphysics. But imprecision and incoherence are not the same as compatibility. And amidst all the ambiguity, Dembski's commitment to an essentially mechanistic conception of nature (as A-T understands “mechanistic”) stands out as one of the more consistent themes of his work.³²

This quote is important because it does raise some valid criticisms of Dembski's presentation of the nature of ID. Sometimes his terminology indicates that perceiving the design in a chair is the same sort of thing as perceiving that

³² <http://edwardfeser.blogspot.com/2010/04/intelligent-design-theory-and-mechanism.html> accessed April 29, 2010.

the bacterial flagella was designed, but these sorts of perceptions are obviously different. One does not need an explanatory filter to determine that a chair was designed. Our justification of such an assertion would take a more philosophical rather than scientific turn. Similarly, we saw in the chapter on ID science that most of Dembski's criteria for picking out specified complexity are mathematical in nature. We criticized some of the quotes by Dembski and Meyer for not keeping ID science distinct from the metaphysical issue of teleology. Regardless, Feser's criticism raises the question: How could Dembski possibly be justified in rejecting the sort of mechanistic philosophy of life that naturalists (à la Dawkins and Dennett) employ since it seems that his ID science is committed to just that view? Why does Dembski seem to support a mechanistic view and reject it at the same time? Further, how could any A-T model, which wholly rejects a mechanistic view of life, be made consistent with ID science? These questions

will be answered below by referring to the thought of Etienne Gilson.

A Gilsonian Moderation of ID Science and A-T Philosophy

As a thinker who is interested in Thomistic philosophy and the philosophy of science, I have sympathy for both frustrated Thomist philosophers and ID proponents in this debate. As a Thomist, I am eager to filter out of my thinking any negative vestiges of modern thought that lead to its unfortunate philosophical cul-de-sacs. As a Christian philosopher, I am eager to find resources from history, philosophy, or science that may be of aid in arguing against anti-theistic sentiment. If there is a way to harmonize Thomistic thought with a version of ID science, then it would be valuable. Fortunately, respected Thomistic philosopher and historian, Etienne Gilson, provides the tool for just such a harmonization. As we will see, Gilson

recommends a modification of both mechanism and Aristotelianism.

Gilson's Modification

To those unfamiliar with Etienne Gilson's work as a historian or philosopher, it should be noted that he was fond of looking at the history of thought in terms of "philosophical experiments."³³ These experiments show which ideas accurately describe reality and which ones lead us astray into absurdity (conceptually) or despair (practically). With this in mind, we will begin by reading Gilson's critique of Aristotelianism in the history of science. He writes,

It is generally agreed that the only branches of positive knowledge in which Aristotelianism has been responsible for some progress are those connected with morphology and the functions of living

³³ See especially his *The Unity of Philosophical Experience* (San Francisco, Ignatius Press, 1964).

creatures. . . . Struck by the dominant role of form in the living creature he [Aristotle] made it not only a principle for explaining the phenomena of life, but extended it beyond living beings to mobile beings in general. . . This is what explains the relative sterility of scholastic philosophy in the field of physics and even in that of chemistry...³⁴

Gilson here admits that because Aristotle generalized the idea of form from the biological world to “mobile beings in general” this led to its “relative sterility” in physics and chemistry. This might lead one to believe that one must abandon A-T in favor of a more ‘productive’ scientific worldview; such was the response of the modern era.

Gilson, however, counters this thought when he writes,

We are not therefore required to get rid of the hylomorphism of inorganic beings, but what seems to be needed is a clear distinction between the notion of organic form and that of inorganic form. *Formae naturales sunt actuose et quasi vivae* [natural forms are active and quasi-living], said the Scholastics. Between Cartesian “artificialism” which turned animals into

³⁴ Etienne Gilson, *Methodical Realism* (Front Royal, VA: Christendom Press, 1990), 101.

machines, and Aristotelian vitalism which treated physical bodies as if they were animals, *it should be possible to find room for mechanism in the physical order and vitalism in the biological.* Every “nature” requires a formal principle, but not every form is a living form.³⁵

This is an amazing example of a thinker who is committed to truth above all else. Where his philosophical tradition has fallen short because of issues unforeseen by its founders, Gilson makes a healthy modification that can accommodate the fruits from the modern sciences of physics and chemistry but leave the perennial philosophy of the scholastic tradition firmly in place. Gilson says explicitly that it does not require one to give up A-T metaphysics to admit that one can treat the physical order different from the biological order, “not every form is a living form.” Whereas Feser is committed Aristotelian vitalism against any sort of mechanistic philosophy, Gilson

³⁵ Ibid., 104.[emphasis added]

implies that treating inorganic being as though living is a misrepresentation of its being.

A question remains: how are A-T philosophical principles affected by this modification? Gilson explains,

...it is apparent that the failure of medieval physics leaves the value of its philosophy untouched...Nothing ties it to Ptolemy's astronomy, to geocentrism, to explaining the movements of heavenly bodies by the propulsive power of heavenly intelligences. It has no obligation to believe with St. Thomas that bodies receive from their substantial forms a pre-determined inclination towards a particular spot...No one is so wrong-headed as not to recognize that what is false is false. Not only does all this scientific rubbish deserve to collapse, as it has already collapsed, but everything in the metaphysical and psychological order based on it necessarily collapses with it. Therefore, a reevaluation of the medieval tradition must start with its principles...to put them freely to the test in order to discover their value as a means of explaining reality and to see how far it extends.³⁶

³⁶ Ibid., 105-106.

The implication by Gilson is that one need not wed Thomistic philosophical principles to bad scientific applications. In fact one could make the argument that if Aquinas were aware of modern science he would make the same division between mechanism and vitalism that Gilson argues for. Take, for example, what Aquinas says here,

Now with respect to the manner of acting, every action of a soul must transcend the operation or action of an inanimate nature. For every operation of a soul must proceed from some intrinsic agent, because an action of a soul is a vital action...However, so far as the effect produced is concerned, not every action of a soul transcends an action of the nature of an inanimate thing. For the effect produced, that is, a natural mode of existing (*esse naturale*), and the things necessary for it, must be present in the case of inanimate bodies just as they are in the case of animate ones. But in the case of inanimate bodies, the effect is brought about by an extrinsic agent, whereas in the case of animate bodies, it is caused by an intrinsic agent.³⁷

³⁷ Thomas Aquinas, *The Soul*, lec. XIII, trans. John Patrick Rowan (St. Louis: B. Herder Book Co., 1949), 166.

Notice that Aquinas recognizes that the distinction between inanimate and animate beings is that the former is moved by an extrinsic cause while the latter is moved by an intrinsic cause. In the previous quote by Gilson, he indicates that Aquinas' view of, for example, the heavenly bodies was "by the propulsive power of heavenly intelligences." This means that Aquinas is under the false impression that the heavenly bodies move by some intrinsic vital force rather than being moved by forces extrinsic to them, as with all inanimate objects. What do we mean by a mechanistic view of some natural phenomena other than that each phase of change is conditioned by the forces/factors extrinsic to the things and their nature? That is, what makes frozen water melt is not some animate, intrinsic desire by water. It is rather simply the nature of the water and the external factors (e.g. air temperature) acting upon it extrinsically. This gives us some evidence that Gilson's view is one that Aquinas might have held

were he aware of the truly inanimate nature of some natural phenomena.

As metaphysical principles, here Feser and Beckwith are correct, the A-T views of being, existence, essence, potentiality and actuality stand firm. It does not matter how many ‘gaps’ are filled in by modern science in explaining physical causes in nature. Modern science, if allowed to dominate as a worldview, will always lead to a worldview destitute of any justifiable metaphysical ground.

Gilson is quite aware of this, he writes,

Science can account for many things in the world; it may some day account for all that which the world of phenomena actually is. But why anything at all is, or exists, science knows not, precisely because it cannot even ask the question. To this supreme question, the only conceivable answer is that each and every particular existential energy, each and every particular existing thing, depends for its existence upon a pure Act of existence.³⁸

³⁸ Etienne Gilson, *God and Philosophy* (New Haven, CT; Yale University Press, 2002), 139-140.

Let man have a comprehensive scientific explanation for all natural phenomena and it will not touch one bit the need for a true metaphysical reflection on why such a collection of natural beings exist in the first place or how they continue to exist. Maritain says something similar about what he calls a “positivistic view” of science. I add it here only because it is a very poignant way of making the same point. He writes, “the positivistic scientist, the scientist as positivism conceives him, would wind up analyzing the real perfectly in the quantitative and material order, yet on one condition: that he deal only with the corpses of reality.”³⁹ This point, made in the context of the relation between modern science and philosophy of nature, is essentially the same as Gilson’s above. Modern science cannot become a self-sufficient metaphysics because it lacks the resources for addressing the metaphysical grounds

³⁹ Jacques Maritain, *Philosophy of Nature* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1951), 53-54.

of its own existence. This is the task of philosophy of nature and metaphysics proper. In these areas Aquinas is still very relevant.

A Gilsonian View of ID Science

Above, Dembski was criticized by several philosophers for having a mechanistic view of life. Particularly, Feser indicated that Dembski is inconsistent in sometimes holding to a mechanistic view and sometimes rejecting it. Having presented Gilson's modification to the A-T model so that one can look at things in physics and chemistry mechanistically and yet retain an A-T "vitalism" in the biological order, it seems that one can explain Dembski's apparent inconsistency. That is, because he is doing his science at the level of biochemistry/molecular biology, he can look at these objects mechanistically without being committed to a mechanistic 'conception of life.' Recall that Dembski has written, "just because certain biological

structures can properly be described as machines doesn't mean that an organism that includes those structures is a machine." These "biological structures" fall below the threshold of what we call 'living beings'.

This raises the question: Can Dembski's work come under the refuge of Gilson's analysis since he is working at the level of proteins and these are biological in nature not 'inorganic' as Gilson says? The level of science that Dembski is working with is admittedly at the level of biochemistry. This can be taken as biological but the proteins themselves are not 'living beings' but components of living beings. Unlike, say, viruses, proteins do not have the power of intentional self-movement, which seems to be the dividing line between the inorganic and the organic in Aristotelian thought. Though his work can be seen as 'biological' in nature, according to the gist of Gilson's thought, it seems that Dembski's focus on molecular biology/biochemistry places him at a level more similar to

physics and chemistry then, say, zoology. Because of this, Dembski's work can avail itself of the modification Gilson supplies and, according to Gilson, be made consistent with A-T metaphysics.

Finally, the use that ID science makes in pointing to the similarities between machines and the machine-like workings of biological subsystems is not illegitimate in Thomistic thinking. Gilson says, "Machines are artificial imitations of organisms."⁴⁰ Gilson says that in looking at what the artist does in making his artifacts we see an imperfect imitation of what things in nature do naturally. He writes,

The analogy with art, then, assists us to recognize the presence in nature of a cause analogous to that which is intelligence in the operations of man, but we do not know what this cause is....Mysterious or not, the fact is there. It is not incomprehensible because of its complexity, which we can only hope science will one day clarify, but because of

⁴⁰ Gilson, *From Aristotle to Darwin and Back Again*, 146.

its very nature, which does not allow it to be expressed in a formula.⁴¹

Here is Gilson stating that final causality in nature is essentially mysterious. Of itself, we do not know from whence it arises except that the cause is “analogous to that which is intelligence in the operations of man.” Second, he indicates that someday science will be able to clarify the complexity of nature and even when it does this, final causality will remain a metaphysical and not a mathematical reality. For those who think that ID science with its analysis of CSI just is the concepts of teleology, Gilson is an opponent. But, as was argued earlier, if we maintain the conceptual distinctions between a scientific analysis of complexity on the one hand and unknown cause of teleology in nature which resembles human intelligence as it is present in human machines, Gilson would agree.

⁴¹ Ibid., 13-14.

Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to take a closer look at some of the debates which have raged online and in print over the potential relationship between ID science and the philosophical traditions founded of Aristotle and St. Thomas Aquinas. In looking at the thoughts of philosophers such as Michael Tkacz, Francis Beckwith, and Edward Feser we saw that objections to ID, and specifically to Dembski's work, tend to rest on the misconception that ID science is synonymous with a philosophy of nature and entails a mechanistic philosophy of nature that is incompatible with the A-T philosophical tradition. In the rebuttal to Tkacz, Jay Richards reminds us that Aquinas has a broader view of divine causality than what is entailed by 'creation proper.' Beckwith and Feser are united in their view that ID is a philosophy of nature that lacks the power and scope of Aquinas' original project. Their criticisms hinge on a mischaracterization of ID science that ID

proponents sometimes invite due to a lack of precision. Given all of this, however, we found evidence in the writings of Gilson that he believes that one can sufficiently modify one's philosophy of nature to allow for mechanism in modern science at the level of physics and chemistry without being committed to a mechanistic view of biology. We also saw that there is some indication that Aquinas might whole-heartedly agree.

Some of the conflict between ID and Thomists can be ameliorated if ID is carefully limited to its scientific role and not confused with issues of final causality, which is a metaphysical perception. This issue was dealt with in an earlier chapter. It is obvious that Gilson would have rejected any suggestion that ID is the same as teleology, but also that he highly valued the use of mathematics in the sciences. He states, "...mathematics provides science with its most perfect mode of expression, and it also turns out that there is nothing more human than that mathematical

formulation of knowledge. . . . The more science becomes mathematical, the more anthropomorphic it is, and it is for the scientist a cause of wonderment that the certitude and efficacy of his hold on nature grows in direct proportion as the language of science, itself mathematicized, satisfies more completely the abstract exigencies of his mind.”⁴² I think Gilson would have had room in his Thomism for a scientific theory that points to the reality of teleology.

⁴² Gilson, *From Aristotle to Darwin and Back Again*, 158.

How to Convince Biblical Skeptics of Jesus'

Divine Self-Understanding

Kirk R. MacGregor

Introduction

I am a firm believer in biblical inerrancy. However, I frequently deal with students at the colleges where I teach and with Muslim acquaintances who do not believe in biblical inerrancy. ¹ (I live in a suburb of Chicago with a heavily Muslim population.) For my students and my Muslim acquaintances, the Bible is guilty until proven innocent, and no biblical statement may be accepted as historically reliable unless independent evidence can be adduced to establish its historicity beyond a reasonable doubt. So how can one convince people who disbelieve in inerrancy that the historical Jesus thought of himself as not only human but also divine? I have found that the best

strategy for dialoging with my students and Muslim acquaintances is to take the approach of critical, mainstream biblical scholarship and employ it to prove that Jesus possessed a divine self-understanding. The present article will demonstrate how to effectively carry out this strategy.

In my conversations, I explain that within the academic discipline of religious studies there exists a professional guild of biblical scholarship made up of researchers from both secular and religious institutions of higher education. These scholars include atheists, agnostics, Jews, Christians, Muslims, and persons of other religious and non-religious persuasions. I inform them that, according to all such scholars, the writings which now make up the New Testament of the Bible were originally separate documents which circulated independently of each

¹ Kirk R. MacGregor., Carthage College and College of DuPage.

other during the first century AD. Between the mid-second century and the mid-fourth century AD, these documents were gradually collected into a group and finally placed between two covers to form “the New Testament.” As a result, I gently draw the conclusion that we cannot reject the entire Bible out of hand, since this would be analogous to rejecting in one fell swoop all the books in an entire library. Such a move is absurd, because each book is obviously separate from the others and stands or falls on its own merits. So even if a person disagrees with something in one book of the Bible, this simply has no impact on what is said in other books of the Bible. I then describe—without necessarily endorsing—the consensus that exists among the broad mainstream of biblical scholars concerning the literary relationship between the Gospels and their pre-Gospel sources. Accordingly, the Gospel of Mark, Q (a written sayings source containing around 250 of the best-memorable *logia Jesu*), M (a stream of oral

tradition known to Matthew), L (a stream of oral tradition known to Luke), and the Gospel of John originally constituted independent sources. (The Gospel of Matthew is said to have utilized Mark, Q, and M as sources, while the Gospel of Luke is said to have utilized Mark, Q, and L as sources.)

I proceed to emphasize that in researching the historical Jesus, we must avoid the temptation to look for Jesus down the long well of history only to see our own reflections or the reflections of our own belief systems in the bottom.² To eliminate this possibility, we can use several historical tests, collectively known as the criteria of authenticity, for determining beyond a reasonable doubt whether any allegedly factual item is indeed factual.³ These criteria have the advantage of not presupposing

² George Tyrell, *Christianity at the Crossroads* (London: Longman, Green, and Company, 1909), 44.

³ A comprehensive list of such criteria is furnished by John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, 4 vols. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1991-2009), 1:168-84.

anything about the reliability of the source reporting the item. So even if the source is almost totally unreliable with only a nugget of truth, these criteria enable us to mine that nugget. Hence I explain that, for the sake of argument, if a particular New Testament document were almost entirely fictional with only a few authentic sayings of Jesus here and there, the criteria of authenticity enable us to find those sayings. I then invite my students and my Muslim acquaintances to put themselves in the shoes of the historian, who like a trial lawyer carefully examines the evidence to reconstruct the most probable course of events. I point out that the criteria of authenticity are quite closely akin to the rules of evidence in a court of law: if an item passes any one of these criteria, its factuality surpasses reasonable doubt, and the item is termed “demonstrably authentic.” I delineate five of these criteria as follows:

1. *Multiple independent attestation*: An item found in at least two independent sources which are in

a position to report accurate history⁴ should be judged authentic. This is because it is highly unlikely for two witnesses who have no contact with each other to both fabricate the same point. To illustrate, if two newspaper reporters, one from the Houston Chronicle and one from the Boston Globe, attended a conference at the White House without consulting each other and, upon returning to their home cities, both reported that President Obama made a particular remark, then it is beyond reasonable doubt that Obama actually said what they claimed.

2. *Dissimilarity*: An item reported by a source in a position to report accurate history that is totally dissimilar from what happened before, during,

⁴ By “in a position to report accurate history,” I mean geographically and chronologically. So in the case of the Gospels, they would need to be written in the Mediterranean basin during the first century AD, which is granted by virtually all scholars (including the Jesus Seminar).

and after the item allegedly occurred should be deemed historical. This is because, in the words of the old adage “truth is sometimes stranger than fiction,” the event is so strange that there is no material out of which the event could have been fabricated. For instance, the 1890 report of the German chemist Freidrich August Kekulé that he discovered the ring shape of the benzene molecule through a dream in 1862 of a snake seizing its own tail should be taken as factual, since it could not have been invented on the basis of how any other scientific discovery occurred before 1862, in the year 1862, or in the period between 1862 and 1890.⁵ That no other scientific discovery occurred via dream before, contemporaneous with, or after the discovery of

⁵ Freidrich August Kekulé, “Benzolfest: Rede,” *Berichte der Deutschen Chemischen Gesellschaft* 23.1 (1890), 1302-11.

the benzene structure shows that Kekulé's claim is too unusual to be fiction.

3. *Embarrassment*: An item which is embarrassing or counterproductive to the source in which it is found should be considered factual if that source is in a position to report accurate history. This is why Tiger Woods' December 11, 2009 written admission of "infidelity" on his website is undoubtedly true, since Woods would never have confessed to such a damaging offense if he had not actually committed adultery.⁶
4. *Form criticism*: An item contained in a memorizable oral tradition tightly constrained by mnemonic devices to prevent information loss and which is formulated shortly after the item allegedly occurred should be regarded

⁶ Tiger Woods, "Tiger Woods taking hiatus from golf," <http://web.tigerwoods.com/news/article/200912117801012/news/> (December 11, 2009).

authentic.⁷ A memorizable oral tradition is the polar opposite of the game of telephone, where the original message is so altered and corrupted as it is passed along from person to person that, at the end of the chain, little if any of the original remains. Rather, in the ancient world, transmission of large tracts of material via memorizable oral tradition was a very developed and highly prized skill; in first-century Palestine, children were taught from the earliest age in their homes, compulsory synagogue schools (akin to elementary schools today), and services of worship how to

⁷ What I claim here is style the criterion of form criticism is a simplified conflation of Meier's criteria of traces of Aramaic and Palestinian environment, Birger Gerhardsson's rules for distinguishing the transmission of *ho logos tou kyriou* (the word of the Lord), and Oscar Cullmann's principles for determining pre-New Testament creedal formulae. See Gerhardsson, *Memory and Manuscript with Tradition and Transmission in Early Christianity* (trans. Eric J. Sharpe; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 214-61, 274-80 and Cullmann, *The Earliest Christian Confessions* (trans. J. K. S. Reid; London: Lutterworth, 1949), 32-64.

formulate memorizable oral traditions. Such oral traditions, known as forms, contain such mnemonic devices as meter, alliteration, repetition, parallelism, and rhyme scheme which ensure that as long as the tradition remains, the information contained therein cannot be changed.⁸ These are the same devices used by contemporary musicians to ensure that people subconsciously memorize the lyrics to their songs after hearing them only a few times on the radio. Some examples of forms are parables, hymns, and creeds; a form composed just after an event it describes provides strong evidence for the historicity of that event. Thus a parable attributed by an ancient source to Jesus that can

⁸ Rainer Riesner, *Jesus als Lehrer*, 7th ed. (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 246-76.

be traced back to the time of Jesus should be regarded as actually uttered by Jesus.

5. *Coherence*: An item reported in a contemporaneous source which is logically implied by a previously established historical fact or facts is also factual. In other words, the known fact or facts only make sense if the item under consideration really occurred. For instance, that Richard Nixon actually participated in the Watergate conspiracy is implied by his resignation of the United States Presidency on August 9, 1974. By this criterion, the authenticity of Nixon's participation is guaranteed.

After explaining these criteria, I state that one of the strongest inferences which can be drawn from the demonstrably authentic sayings of Jesus—namely, sayings

which pass one or more criteria—is Jesus’ divine self-understanding.

“The Son of Man”

I begin with the designation “the Son of Man,” which, with the solitary exception of some Jesus Seminar members, is universally regarded as belonging to the historical Jesus. This is because it passes three criteria of authenticity. First, it is verified by multiple independent attestation, as it is found on Jesus’ lips in all the Gospel strata (Mark 2:10 *et passim*; Q = Matt. 12:32/Luke 12:10; M = Matt. 10:23; L = Luke 6:22; John 1:51 *et passim*). Second, it is verified by dissimilarity, as “the Son of Man” was not used as a title in either late antique Judaism, the early church, or Greco-Roman religions. In the Judaism of Jesus’ day, the phrase “son of man” (Hebrew *ben adam*; Aramaic *bar enash*) was a generic expression that simply meant “a human being,” and it was not used with the

definite article. Moreover, the early church almost never referred to Jesus as “the Son of Man,” describing him with the title “the Son of God” instead.⁹ Third, Jesus’ use of “the Son of Man” is verified by form criticism, as it is contained in several memorable oral traditions, like parables (*e.g.*, Matt. 25:31; Luke 18:8) and pronouncement stories (Mark 3:28 *et pars.*; Matt. 13:40), which were formulated prior to the composition of any New Testament document (*i.e.*, between AD 30–45). As even conceded by John Dominic Crossan, the original co-chairman of the Jesus Seminar, fifteen years after the events in question is too short a time span for legend to have developed.¹⁰ Hence it is indisputable that Jesus referred to himself as “the Son of Man.” But what is the significance of this self-designation? Contrary to popular belief, this title does not

⁹ C. K. Barrett, *Jesus and the Gospel Tradition* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1968), 67.

¹⁰ John Dominic Crossan, “The Historical Jesus in Earliest Christianity,” in *Jesus and Faith* (ed. Jeffrey Carlson and Robert A. Ludwig; Maryknoll: Orbis, 1994), 19.

refer to Jesus' humanity. Were Jesus simply referring to his humanity, he would have omitted the definite article, calling himself "son of man." But the definite article (the *ho* in *ho huios tou anthropou*) meant that Jesus was identifying himself with a particular "son of man" that would be recognizable to his Jewish audience. In the Hebrew Bible, there are several times when "son of man" is used generically to denote a human being (e.g., Num. 23:19; Ezek. 2:1 *et passim*), but only once when it is used to denote a particular individual.

That solitary instance is Daniel 7:13-14, which reads: "In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory, and sovereign power; all peoples, nations, and men of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one

that will never be destroyed.” Here the Son of Man is a divine figure who will come at the end of the world to establish the kingdom of God and judge humanity. Such was recently observed by the editors of the Q Project, who point out that “the saying in question suggests a superhuman person...in analogy to the capitalization of ‘God’ and ‘Father.’”¹¹ “The Son of Man” was Jesus’ favorite self-description, which he used some eighty times. Therefore, by calling himself “the Son of Man,” Jesus was referring to himself as the divine end-time figure of Daniel 7. It may well be, as Robert Gundry suggests, that Jesus preferred this title to “Messiah,” because the latter title had become so overlaid with political and temporal considerations in Jewish thinking that to claim to

¹¹ James M. Robinson, Paul Hoffmann, and John S. Kloppenborg, *The Critical Edition of Q* (Hermeneia Supplements; Fortress, 2000), lxx.

be the Messiah would obscure rather than elucidate the true character of his mission.¹²

Perhaps the most famous and best authenticated Son of Man saying comes from Jesus' trial: "Again the high priest was questioning him, and he said to him, 'Are you yourself the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?' And Jesus said, 'I am, and you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power and coming with the clouds of heaven.' But the high priest, having torn his tunic, said, 'What further need do we have of witnesses? You heard the blasphemy; how does it seem to you?' And they all condemned him to be deserving of death" (Mark 14:60-64). It should be noted that grammatical, linguistic, and textual analysis reveal this particular saying, as regarded by most Markan commentators, to belong to an earlier oral Aramaic source that Mark used, upon translation, in writing

¹² Robert H. Gundry, *Mark: A Commentary on His Apology for the Cross* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 118-20.

his gospel.¹³ The foremost German critic of Mark, Rudolf Pesch, has definitively shown that this source, commonly referred to as the pre-Markan passion narrative, can be dated no later than AD 37.¹⁴ For the sake of space, we will allow one of the many pieces of evidence Pesch offers for this date to suffice. The pre-Markan passion narrative is situated in Jerusalem with Galilee as a horizon (thus indicating a Jerusalem provenance), and it refers to Caiaphas as simply “the high priest” without mentioning his name (14:46, 54, 60, 61, 63, 66). This implies that Caiaphas was still the high priest when the pre-Markan passion narrative was formulated, as there would be no need to mention his name. I give my students and Muslim acquaintances this parallel from American historiography to illustrate the point. Suppose we found a source referring

¹³ Maurice Casey, *Aramaic Sources of Mark's Gospel* (Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series 102; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 253-5.

¹⁴ Rudolf Pesch, *Das Markusevangelium* (2 vols.; Freiburg: Herder, 1977), 2:21, 364-77.

to something “the President” had done (whom the author and his readers naturally took to mean the man contemporaneously in office), and the actions described were carried out by James K. Polk. Obviously, we would conclude that the source must have been formulated between 1845–1849. By the same token, since Caiaphas was high priest from AD 18–37, the latest possible date for the pre-Markan passion narrative is AD 37. On any scholar’s reckoning, this is far too early for its contents to be a creation of the primitive church. Thus Mark 14:62 goes directly back to the lips of Jesus.

In this quote, Jesus quotes verbatim from Daniel 7:13-14 and Psalm 110:1; the latter text reads, “Yahweh says to my Adonai, ‘Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.’” Hence this saying contains two unmistakable claims to deity. On the one hand, Jesus claims to be the divine Son of Man in Daniel 7. On the other hand, Jesus asserts not only that he would be

seated at the Father's right hand, but also that he was the preexistent one whom David worshiped as his *Adonai* or Lord. This leads to an absolutely stunning conclusion: even if, for the sake of argument, Mark 14:60-64 were the only historically authentic saying of Jesus in the entire New Testament, it alone proves the conclusion that Jesus claimed to be a divine person alongside of and equal to God the Father.

On a similar note, other independently well-attested Son of Man sayings include the Son of Man forgiving sins (Mark 2:9-11)¹⁵ and determining people's eternal destiny before God (Luke 12:8-9).¹⁶ In Mark 2:9-11, Jesus again quotes verbatim from Daniel 7:13-14 (which I have parenthesized): "Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Stand and pick up your

¹⁵ For specific evidence supporting the authenticity of Mark 2:9-11 see Craig L. Blomberg, *The Historical Reliability of the Gospels* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1987), 157.

mattress and walk?’ But in order that you may know that *the Son of Man has authority to forgive sins on earth...* ‘I say to you, stand, pick up your mattress and go to your home.’” Since ancient Jewish theology stipulated that only God could forgive sins, either directly or indirectly through Temple sacrifice, and Jesus was doing neither, Jesus is doubly asserting his divine self-understanding: he is both Danielic Son of Man and the authoritative forgiver of earthly sins. Royce Gordon Gruenler rightly explains that Jesus is “consciously speaking as the voice of God on matters that belong only to God....The evidence clearly leads us to affirm that Jesus implicitly claims to do what only God can do: to forgive sins....The religious authorities correctly understood his claim to divine authority to forgive sinners, but they interpreted his claims as blasphemous and

¹⁶ For specific evidence supporting the authenticity of Luke 12:8-9 see Wolhart Pannenberg, *Jesus—God and Man* (trans. L. L. Wilkins and D. A. Priebe; London: SCM, 1968), 58-60.

sought his execution.”¹⁷ In Luke 12:8-9 (a Q text), Jesus goes one step further: “But I say to you, everyone who confesses me before men, the Son of Man will also confess him before the angels of God; but the one having denied me before men will be denied before the angels of God.” Here Jesus claims that people’s salvation is determined before him on the basis of their response to him. I point out to my students and my Muslim acquaintances that here we can make no mistake: if Jesus did not believe himself to be deity, then, in the words of William Lane Craig, “this claim could only be regarded as the most narrow and objectionable dogmatism.”¹⁸ For Jesus is asserting that each person’s salvation (or damnation) depends on his or her confession (or lack thereof) to Jesus himself.

¹⁷ Royce Gordon Gruenler, *New Approaches to Jesus and the Gospels* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1982), 46, 59, 49.

¹⁸ William Lane Craig, *Reasonable Faith* (3rd ed.; Wheaton: Crossway, 2008), 326.

Jesus highlights his self-consciousness as a divine person alongside of and equal to God the Father in Mark 12:35-37 by explicitly spelling out the conclusion he implied at his trial before the Sanhedrin. Since Mark 12:35-37 meets the specifications for a pre-New Testament pronouncement story, this text is authenticated by the criterion of form criticism.¹⁹ It reads: “While Jesus was teaching in the Temple, he was saying, ‘How can the scribes say that the Messiah is the son of David? David himself said by the Holy Spirit, ‘The Lord said to my Lord, “Sit at my right hand, until I put your enemies under your feet.”’ David himself calls him ‘Lord’; so how can he be his son?’” In this remarkable pericope Jesus denies that he is merely a human being, or physical descendant of David, but rather affirms that he is the divine person whom David called Lord 1,000 years prior to his day.

¹⁹ Ben Witherington III, *The Christology of Jesus* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 189-91.

The Sermon on the Mount

I then turn with my students and my Muslim acquaintances to the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5–7). Although not often realized by Christian expositors of the Sermon on the Mount, Jewish authorities and scholars who work in the Judaism of late antiquity (200 BC–AD 200) are quick to realize the diametric opposition between the teaching styles of Jesus and the rabbis contemporaneous with him. The typical rabbinic style of teaching was to either quote extensively from the Hebrew Bible or from learned teachers, who provided the basis of authority for one’s own teaching. We find in the Talmud, for example, numerous examples of biblical expositions proceeding as follows: “You have heard that it was said (the passive “it was said” was a circumlocution for “Yahweh said” to avoid uttering the divine name) to the ancients: [insert biblical text]. Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Here is how you shall do what it says: [list life

applications].” But Jesus did exactly the opposite—he first listed what Yahweh said to the ancients and then, on his own authority, proceeded to add to what Yahweh said. In other words, Jesus places his own personal authority on a par with Yahweh.²⁰ To put it colloquially, one doesn’t mess with the Ten Commandments unless one has the authority to mess with the Ten Commandments! Most New Testament scholars regard the Sermon on the Mount as authentic to Jesus, since it comes from the allegedly earliest written source (namely Q) and contains several form critical earmarks of authenticity.²¹

So that it was impossible for his audience to misunderstand his intention, Jesus began: “You have heard that it was said to the ancients,” even quoting two of the Ten Commandments (number six on murder immediately followed by number seven on adultery) back to back, and

²⁰ Robert Guelich, *The Sermon on the Mount* (Waco: Word, 1982), 185.

²¹ Dale C. Allison, *The Sermon on the Mount* (New York:

then juxtaposed them with his own authority: “But I myself am saying to you,” and gave his own teaching (Matt. 5:21-30). Regarding divorce, in both the Sermon on the Mount and its independent Markan parallel (Mark 10:2-12) Jesus explicitly quotes Torah (Deut. 24:1-4) and modifies it with his teaching. In Mark 10:5-8 Jesus even goes so far as to declare that Moses did not represent the perfect will of God on this matter and presumes to alter Torah on his own authority as to what really is the will of God: “It was because your hearts were hard that Moses wrote you this law. But from the beginning of creation God ‘made them male and female.’ ‘For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united with his wife, and the two will become one flesh. So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let humans not separate.” But no human being, whether prophet or teacher or charismatic, has that kind of authority over

Crossroad, 1999), 7-10.

Torah. Hence Ben Witherington III comments: “Jesus seems to assume an authority over Torah that no Pharisee or Old Testament prophet assumed—the authority to set it aside.”²²

In his illuminating dialogue *A Rabbi Talks with Jesus*, Jacob Neusner, the leading Jewish scholar of late antiquity, reveals that it is exactly on this score that, as a Jew, he would not have believed in Jesus if he had lived in first-century Israel:

Jews believe in the Torah of Moses...and that belief requires faithful Jews to enter a dissent at the teachings of Jesus, on the grounds that those teachings at important points contradict the Torah....And therefore, because [Jesus’] specific teaching was so broadly out of phase with the Torah and covenant of Sinai, I could not then follow him and do not now either. This is not because I am stubborn or unbelieving. It is because I believe God has given a different Torah from the one that Jesus teaches; and that Torah, the one Moses got at Sinai, stands in judgment of the torah of Jesus, as it dictates true and false for all other torahs

²² Witherington, *Christology*, 65.

that people want to teach in God's name....Jesus speaks not as a sage or a prophet. At many points in this protracted account of Jesus' specific teachings, we now recognize that at issue is the figure of Jesus, not the teachings at all...by the criterion of the Torah, Jesus has asked for what the Torah does not accord to anyone but God....So if I could respond, in the quiet of a long evening, out of the shouting mobs, and if Jesus cared to listen, what would I say to him? I turn to him and look him right in the eye: 'Who do you think you are—God?'"²³

But since Jesus' juxtaposition of his personal teaching to the Torah is an authentic facet of the historical Jesus—as even the Jesus Seminar admits—it is historically inescapable that Jesus did assume for himself the authority of God.²⁴

²³ Jacob Neusner, *A Rabbi Talks with Jesus* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2000), xii, 46-47, 88, 152.

²⁴ Craig, *Reasonable Faith*, 321.

“*Amēn*, I say unto you”

That Jesus claimed divine status for himself is corroborated by his use of *Amēn*, as the expression “*Amēn*, I say unto you” meets both the criteria of multiple attestation (*e.g.*, Mark 3:28 *et passim*; Q = Matt. 24:47/Luke 12:44; M = Matt. 6:2; L = Luke 23:43; John 1:51 *et passim*) and dissimilarity (it is unique to Jesus, with no parallels in prior Judaism, later Christianity, or contemporaneous Greco-Roman religion). All critics therefore acknowledge it to have been utilized by Jesus to preface his teaching. To explain the meaning of “*Amēn*, I say unto you” we can do no better than quote from Witherington’s celebrated study on the Christology of Jesus:

It is insufficient to compare it to “thus says the Lord,” although that is the closest parallel. Jesus is not merely speaking for Yahweh, but for himself and on his own authority....This strongly suggests that he considered himself to be a person of authority above and beyond what prophets claimed to be. He could attest to his own truthfulness and speak on his own behalf, and yet his words were to be taken as having

the same or greater authority than the divine words of the prophets. Here was someone who thought he possessed not only divine inspiration...but also divine authority and the power of direct divine utterance.²⁵

By beginning his teachings with “*Amēn*, I say unto you,” Jesus swore in advance and on his own authority to the truthfulness of what he was going to say. In the Hebrew Bible, this was a prerogative reserved only for Yahweh (Gen. 22:16; Isa. 45:23; Jer. 22:5; Jer. 44:26).

**“I am the shepherd, the good one” with
“No one is good but God alone”**

Since the Gospels of Mark and John were, in the opinion of most scholars, written independently of each other, we may employ the criterion of coherence to chronologically reconstruct the full course of various historically authentic events which are recorded partially in each Gospel.

Through this criterion, it can be shown that the events of

²⁵ Witherington, *Christology*, 188.

Mark 10:17-31 almost directly followed the sermon recorded in John 10:1-18.²⁶ Both of these pericopes are pronouncement stories which are established by form criticism as having come from the historical Jesus.²⁷ I lay out for my students and Muslim acquaintances the historical sequence of events. First, Jesus gives a sermon in which he twice says: “I am the shepherd, the good one” (John 10:11, 14; literal translation of Greek *Egō eimi ho poimēn ho kalos*—the conflation “good shepherd” obscures the point). After hearing this sermon and before “Jesus started on his way, a man ran up to him and fell on his knees before him. ‘Good teacher,’ he asked, ‘what must I do to inherit eternal life?’ Jesus answered, ‘Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone” (Mark 10:17-18). Now certainly the young man would have

²⁶ Kurt Aland, ed., *Synopsis of the Four Gospels* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1982), 213-8.

²⁷ Gundry, *Mark*, 559-69; Craig L. Blomberg, *The Historical Reliability of John’s Gospel* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2002), 158-60.

immediately thought, “Wait a minute, Jesus—you were the one who called yourself good!” Placed in its context, we see that Jesus was denying neither that he was good nor that he was God. Rather, Jesus was indirectly yet powerfully proclaiming that he was deity, as he could not be “the good one” without also being God. As John D. Grassmick puts it, “Jesus’ response did not deny his own deity but was a veiled claim to it.”²⁸ Norman Geisler concurs: “The young man did not realize the implications of what he was saying. Thus Jesus was forcing him into a very uncomfortable dilemma. Either Jesus was good and God, or else he was bad and man. A good God or a bad man, but not merely a good man. Those are the real alternatives with regard to Jesus, for no good man would claim to be God when he was not.”²⁹ Piecing together the

²⁸ John D. Grassmick, “Mark,” in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament* (ed. John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck; Colorado Springs: Victor, 1983), 150.

²⁹ Norman Geisler and Thomas Howe, *When Critics Ask: A Popular Handbook of Bible Difficulties* (Colorado Springs: Victor,

historical evidence, we may summarize Jesus' statement to the young ruler this way: "You have given me a title which belongs only to God, a title I claimed for myself. Do you also understand and mean it?"

The Power Jesus Believed He Wielded as an Exorcist

Finally, I tell my students and my Muslim acquaintances that, regardless of whether someone holds to the existence of demons or thinks that Jesus exorcised them, it is historically certain that both Jesus and his opponents at least believed he had the power to cast out demons. In a saying which meets the criterion of embarrassment (since Jesus' opponents were accusing him of casting out demons by the power of Satan), Jesus declared: "But if I myself by the finger of God cast out demons, then the kingdom of God came upon you" (Luke 11:20). This saying is

1992), 350.

noteworthy for two reasons. It proves that Jesus claimed divine authority over the spiritual powers of evil, and it proves that Jesus believed that in himself the kingdom of God had come.³⁰ According to ancient Jewish hermeneutics, the coming of God's kingdom was a reverential circumlocution for the coming of Yahweh himself.³¹ But by affirming that in himself the kingdom of God had already arrived, as illustrated by events which he and his contemporaries regarded as exorcisms, Jesus was declaring that in himself God had arrived, thereby putting himself in the place of God.

Conclusion

I conclude by telling my students and my Muslim acquaintances that, taken together, the aforementioned evidence constitutes a broad cross-section of the reasons

³⁰ Craig, *Reasonable Faith*, 322.

leading to the conclusion that Jesus possessed a self-understanding according to which he was a divine person equal in nature and authority to God the Father. Since this evidence is verified by the criteria of authenticity, I emphasize to my listeners that it stands as factual beyond a reasonable doubt, regardless of what one thinks of anything or everything else in the Bible. As Gruenler observes: “It is a striking fact of modern New Testament research that the essential clues for correctly reading the implicit christological self-understanding of Jesus are abundantly clear.”³² Because of the “absolutely convincing evidence” (in Gruenler’s words)³³ that Jesus intended to stand in God’s place, James D. G. Dunn is driven to ask: “One last question cannot be ignored: Was Jesus mad?”³⁴ This question clearly indicates the only two possible

³¹ Ben F. Meyer, *The Aims of Jesus* (London: SCM, 1979), 155-6.

³² Gruenler, *New Approaches*, 74.

³³ *Ibid.*

alternatives: either Jesus was deity or he was a lunatic.³⁵

Because an honest assessment of the life of Jesus makes his sanity difficult to indict, I have found that biblical skeptics are forced by the evidence to personally wrestle with the significance of Jesus' claims for their own lives.

³⁴ James D. G. Dunn, *Jesus and the Spirit* (London: SCM, 1975), 86.

³⁵ C. S. Lewis' option that Jesus was a liar in his famous trilemma (Lord, liar, or lunatic) is vitiated by our demonstration that Jesus really believed he was divine, so reducing the trilemma to a dilemma.

Contextualization, Biblical Inerrancy, and the Orality Movement

Cameron D. Armstrong

Introduction

Since its inception, the Church has always struggled to find the most effective evangelistic strategies to engage its cultural context; strategies both consistent with the gospel message and culturally appropriate.¹ Navigating this ministerial fine line is no simple task, since any overemphasis on either side can cause devastatingly harmful results to the church in that context. This concept is what missiologists call “contextualization” – ministry based on rigorous biblical fidelity wrapped in culturally relevant forms. Church leaders are called to critically

¹ Cameron D. Armstrong is a missionary with the International Mission Board. He holds a Bachelor of Arts in History from Union University, the Master of Divinity and Master of Theology degrees from Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, and is also currently a Ph.D. student at Biola University. Cameron and his wife, Jessica, live in Bucharest, Romania.

analyze again and again the ministry models they are currently using or are considering for the future so that their cultural accommodation will not undermine biblical fidelity.² Contextualization in missions constantly pushes us back to the Scriptures, examining our methods by using the biblical text as our standard.

How, then, might international missionaries think contextually about the lostness that surrounds them? First, they must ascertain a proper perspective of just how dire is the situation. According to the evangelical³ research group known as The Joshua Project, we live in a world where 2.90 billion of the world's 7.13 billion people (40.7 %)

²Probably the most straightforward and helpful resource in explaining contextualization is missiologist Paul Hiebert's essay, entitled "Critical Contextualization." Paul Hiebert, "Critical Contextualization," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 11, no. 3 (1987): 104-112.

³David W. Bebbington has outlined four definitive characteristics of evangelical Christians: Conversionism, Activism, Biblicism, and Crucicentrism. David W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 2.

remain unreached with the gospel message.⁴ Most of these men, women, and children live in lands with scarce availability of education, so their literacy levels are low at best.

Forty percent of the world population is a breathtaking statistic, but even that does not tell the whole truth. Embedded within the remaining 60% of the world population are people who are counted as “reached,” but still cannot understand the biblical gospel because their learning styles for deep, worldview-altering information is not based on the printed word. They are people modern missions scholars are beginning to term “oral learners.”⁵ Instead of picking up a book or a newspaper, oral-

⁴The Joshua Project, “The Joshua Project,” <http://www.joshuaproject.net/> (accessed October 14, 2013). The Joshua Project is a research device relating the numbers of the world’s peoples unreached by evangelical missionaries. The term “unreached” is used by evangelical mission agencies to refer to cultural groups that are less than 2% evangelical.

⁵Most of the leading authors of the Orality Movement trace this new line of scholarship to the writings of literacy scholar Walter J. Ong, especially his findings from *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (London: Routledge, 1982).

preference learners glean their information from a story they heard, a song sung to them, or a video they watched. By some estimates, the world population of those who prefer to learn orally may be as high as 80%.⁶ The study of orality – reliance on the spoken rather than the written word – has exposed, for missiologists, a logistical and experiential gap between the way missions has been conducted in the past and the learning preferences of the world’s peoples. The way forward in contextualized world evangelization, these writers say, is by taking orality seriously. Their arguments are compelling.

Contextualization requires a constant re-examining of our missionary methods based on biblical revelation. For conservative evangelicals, specifically those who maintain the standard that the Bible is the *inerrant* Word of God, every step taken in gospel proclamation agendas must

⁶Grant Lovejoy, “The Extent of Orality: 2012 Update,” *Orality Journal* 1, no. 1 (2012): 29.

display strict adherence to the biblical text. For confessional evangelicals, any oral adaptation in the wording of a biblical story, though reworked in culturally appropriate terms, must take inerrancy seriously. There are some Christian groups, however, who have become so excited about the potential of the orality movement that, according to time-tested evaluations of biblical inerrancy, namely the Chicago Statement (1978), lead to the conclusion that proper contextualization is not being done.⁷ As such, one may logically question their views concerning the authority of the biblical text.

Contextualization is the key in navigating world missions strategies such as the orality movement, upholding biblical fidelity while still maintaining that, as

⁷Although I will address this in greater detail below, consider specifically some of the routes taken by the Network of Biblical Storytellers, often going beyond the telling of a biblical story to the relating assumptions and expansions about how the biblical events might have looked or sounded based on the perspective of minor characters. See especially Dennis Dewey, “Biblical Storytelling as Spiritual Discipline Grounded in Scholarship,” (2011), Link for

long as unsaved men, women, and children still walk our streets, our missional task is not yet complete. Orality strategists firmly believe an oral-based approach to missions is the way forward. On the other hand, conservative theologians rightly caution anchoring everything in the inerrant text of the Bible. In what follows, therefore, I will attempt to explain the key assertions of the orality movement, issues raised by the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy, and where proponents of both might notice potentially sensitive touch-points. Finally, I will suggest a way forward that takes orality, inerrancy, and contextualization seriously.

The Orality Movement

In the early 1900s, classical literature scholars Milman Parry and Albert Lord suggests the ancient poet Homer was

footnote 7: <http://www.nbsint.org/assets/1408/8-22->

in fact an illiterate “master-poet” who compiled several traditionally oral legends together in a highly memorable fashion to form his *Iliad* and *Odyssey*.⁸ Comparing their findings to how tales are passed down by an oral people group called the Southern Slavs of former Yugoslavia, Parry and Lord suggests that oral poets do not concern themselves with verbatim memorization of traditional legends, but rather artistically and musically craft such pieces in order to preserve the fundamental content of their culture’s stories. In this way, the indigenous Southern Slavic listeners understood these “culturally crafted” legends to be virtually identical. Parry and Lord’s theory has been called the “oral-formulaic theory.”

Literacy scholar Walter J. Ong expands the oral-formulaic theory with his research on the cognitive differences between learners who prefer oral to print-based

2011_biblicalstorytellingspiritualityscholarship.pdf.

⁸Albert B. Lord, *The Singer of Tales* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1960).

information.⁹ Most prominently, Ong categorizes oral-preference learners into two categories: primary and secondary oral learners. Primary oral learners, according to Ong, are those peoples who have never seen a printed word. In contrast, secondary oral learners can read but prefer televised broadcasts, radio, or video to reading.¹⁰ Also significant, Ong notes that words are not objectively frozen in time for oral peoples, but their traditions are constantly being passed on through performative, memorable stories, songs, and proverbs. Ong writes,

Textual, visual representation of a word is not a real word, but a 'secondary modeling system.' Thought is nested in speech, not in texts . . . Chirographic and typographic folk find it convincing to think of the word, essentially a sound, as a 'sign' because 'sign' refers primarily to something visually apprehended . . . Our complacency in thinking of words as signs is due to the tendency, perhaps incipient in oral cultures but clearly marked in chirographic cultures and far more marked in typographic and

⁹Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (London: Routledge, 1982).

¹⁰Ong, 11.

electronic cultures, to reduce all sensation and indeed all human experience to visual analogues.¹¹

One of the first documented ways this oral and literate divide was put into practice on the mission field is a short analysis from 1957. In *Communicating the Gospel to Illiterates*, Hans Rudi Weber discusses his missionary work among primarily oral Indonesians, whom he terms “illiterate.” Weber challenged literate-based mission sending agencies to rethink their prejudice against working with oral-based approaches. Whenever he would ask a question that assumed a rehearsed, point-by-point definition, Weber was surprised to find that these oral groups would often respond by embedding their answers within a story or proverb. Weber concludes his findings both by challenging foreign missionaries among oral

¹¹Ibid., 75-76.

cultures to proclaim the Christian message dramatically and picturesquely, not merely intellectually.¹²

Weber's challenge is still warranted today. In the groundbreaking *Making Disciples of Oral Learners*, originally published as a Lausanne Paper in 2005, the authors expose the fact that 90% of the world's evangelical missionary force presents the gospel using highly literate means.¹³ This indicates that, for example, an indigenous person who prefers oral-based learning is almost certainly evangelized and later disciplined *via* books and fill-in-the-blank worksheets.¹⁴

Since the early 1980s, oral-based mission strategies have grown from localized phenomena among a small

¹²H. R. Weber, *The Communication of the Gospel to Illiterates* (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1957), 79.

¹³International Orality Network and Lausanne Committee for World Evangelization, *Making Disciples of Oral Learners* (Lima, NY: Elim Publishing, 2005), 3.

¹⁴One such evangelistic tool that is used the world over is *The Four Spiritual Laws*, wherein each of the four laws are thoroughly explained (often by using a word-filled, 16-page tract), and before progressing to the next law, one must first apprehend the previous one.

group of international missionaries to a rising discussion confronting contextualization and missiology. Roughly two decades following the publication of Weber's study, New Tribes missionary Trevor McIlwain began to develop a method for orally and chronologically teaching through the Bible among the primarily oral people group he was working with in the Philippines. McIlwain's model, called Chronological Bible Teaching, moves in an expository manner through the stories from Genesis to Revelation. Southern Baptist missionaries Jim Slack and J.O. Terry, also working in the Philippines, later adapted McIlwain's idea to form the oral strategy that is now most-widely used in conservative evangelical missionary circles, Chronological Bible Storying (CBS).¹⁵

The tract can be found in pdf form at <http://www.campuscrusade.com/downloads/4laws.pdf>.

¹⁵For a more detailed understanding of how CBS developed out of McIlwain's writings, see Tom Steffen and J. O. Terry, "The Sweeping Story of Scripture Taught through Time," *Missiology* 35 (July 2007): 315-335.

At the heart of CBS is the idea that, as much as possible, biblical stories should be allowed to speak for themselves. The great temptation for Western-trained Bible teachers is to leap from simply relating the biblical story to delineating points of interest and application that should be gleaned from the teaching. But such is not necessarily the point of CBS, through which storytellers work hard to select biblical stories that specifically target the audience's worldview and then put in great effort to tell the story as closely as possible to the biblical text, while still remembering to encase their verbal and non-verbal presentation in properly contextualized forms.

True CBS “storying sessions” often progress as follows: (1) the leader will tell the biblical story, (2) retell it, (3) ask the group for their input in retelling it, (4) divide everyone into partners to retell the story, and (5) finally ask the group discussion questions. In this way, the biblical story is often heard four or five times by everyone present

before discussion begins. As an example, the present researcher has on several occasions told the story of the Prodigal Son (Lk. 15:11-32) in CBS fashion. After moving through the story session steps, it is amazing to see the biblical story become an internalized and easily reproducible tool that often garners very helpful responses and fruitful discussion. Though the present researcher has never participated in a CBS session among primary oral learners; only secondary oral learners who have admitted afterward that studying the Bible in this way drives them to pick up the Bible they have not read in a while to see if the “exciting story” they learned is “really in the Bible.”¹⁶

The orality movement in modern missions has begun to truly steam forward in the last decade. In 2005, several evangelical missionary agencies that noticed the effects of orality strategies in missions formed the

¹⁶Interestingly, both Christian believers and unbelievers have responded in this way.

International Orality Network (ION) as a coalition that is committed to communicating the need for oral-based discipleship needs to the world's evangelical churches.¹⁷ ION is now in their second year of producing a biannual *Orality Journal*.¹⁸ In 2012, ION and its partners hosted a conference at Wheaton College concerning oral-based theological education, which led to the publication of the fascinating book, *Beyond Literate Western Models: Contextualizing Theological Education in Oral Contexts* (2013).¹⁹ Finally, one of the most helpful resources chronicling the forward march of oral-based missionary methods is missiologist and orality studies pioneer Tom Steffen's new article, "Chronological Practices and

¹⁷See specifically the International Orality Network's page, "How We Began," at http://orality.net/how_we_began.

¹⁸The *Orality Journal* may also be accessed at <http://orality.net/>.

¹⁹Samuel E. Chiang and Grant Lovejoy, eds., *Beyond Literate Western Models: Contextualizing Theological Education in Oral Contexts* (Hong Kong: Capstone Enterprises Ltd., 2013).

Possibilities in the Urban World.”²⁰ According to these recently published materials, oral-based ministry models are quickly finding a home in the United States, making the awareness of orality and its theological implications a movement with which even American theologians will soon have to deal.²¹

Biblical Inerrancy

In a word, biblical inerrancy is the confession that, since God cannot err, and the Bible is the Word of God, the Bible cannot err. The concept of inerrancy is at its heart a statement concerning the nature of God. Maintaining the conviction that biblical inerrancy is a powerful and

²⁰Tom Steffen, “Chronological Practices in the Urban World,” *Global Missiology* 4, no. 10 (2013). The article from this online journal can be accessed at <http://ojs.globalmissiology.org/index.php/english/article/viewFile/1215/2796>.

²¹For example, see the newly-released *The Lost World of Scripture* by John H. Walton and D. Brent Sandy (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2013), which claims that new studies in orality should cause theologians to rethink their traditional commitments to inerrancy.

necessary anchor for the flourishing of the Christian missionary enterprise. On the contrary, the idea that God has erred in His written Word inevitably chips away at believers' passion for sharing God's Word with others. In other words, a robust belief that critics will not find "errors" in the Bible solidifies the Christian missionary enterprise as a work of God, and as such cannot fail. To date, the most thorough convictional statement of inerrancy among conservative evangelicals, moreover, is found in the Chicago Statement (1978).²²

Yet before understanding why this is the case, it is important to understand the theological milieu that led up to the publication of the 1978 Chicago Statement. Although debates centering on the nature of Scripture have occurred since the time of the Church Fathers, most evangelical scholars siding with the ICBI contend that the first modern

²²The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy (1978) can be found in myriad books, journals, and websites. See, for example, the

inerrancy crisis occurred nearly a hundred years before the council met.²³ Princeton theologians Archibald A. Hodge and Benjamin B. Warfield participated in lively written and oral exchanges about the nature of inspired Scripture with inclusivistic Union Theological Seminary professor Charles Briggs. Hodge and Warfield insisted that, if the entirety of Scripture is inspired by God, and God does not inspire error, then God's word cannot contain errors: "[God] presided over the sacred writers in their entire work of writing, with the design and effect of rendering that writing an errorless record of the matters he designed them to communicate."²⁴

The second issue leading up to the inerrancy debates is that Social Darwinism crept into the halls of

PDF version from the Journal for the Evangelical Theological Society here: http://www.etsjets.org/files/documents/Chicago_Statement.pdf.

²³See John D. Hannah, ed., *Inerrancy and the Church* (Chicago: Moody, 1984) and Gregg R. Allison, *Historical Theology: An Introduction to Christian Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 99-119.

higher education after the First World War also took a toll on theological education, as one by one, denominations began following their seminaries' higher critical theologians into a denial of the biblically miraculous. Multiple books came out in defense of biblical inerrancy during the middle decades of the twentieth century, but especially noteworthy are Southern Baptist pastor W. A. Criswell's *Why I Preach the Bible is Literally True* (1973) and former Fuller Seminary faculty member Harold Lindsell's *The Battle for the Bible* (1976).²⁵ Lindsell's work blew the lid off the boiling kettle by relaying the fallout from inerrancy crises within seminaries such as Fuller and denominations such as the Lutheran Missouri Synod and the Southern Baptist Convention. Lindsell challenges his readers to consider that, while a denial of

²⁴Archibald A. Hodge and Benjamin B. Warfield, *Inspiration* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979), 17-18. This short work was originally printed in *The Presbyterian Review* (April 1881).

biblical inerrancy is not salvific, such a denial would start church members on the slippery slope to outright disregard for historic Christianity. Conviction in the doctrine of inerrancy, Lindsell writes, “. . . makes possible the unsullied continuance of the group that holds it, whereas the surrender of this principle virtually guarantees that such a possibility does not exist.”²⁶

Beginning in the early 1970s, meetings began to be held by key theologians to formulate an evangelical statement responding to the growing controversy. Philosopher and theologian Norman L. Geisler recalls that the initial leaders of such discussions, including Geisler, J. I. Packer, and R. C. Sproul, came together to respond to the gathering storm of evangelical institutions turning away

²⁵W. A. Criswell, *Why I Preach the Bible is Literally True* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1973); Harold Lindsell, *The Battle for the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976).

²⁶Lindsell, 143.

from the historic teaching of inerrancy.²⁷ According to the Chicago Statement’s preamble, the document is based on the declaration that the “recognition of the total truth and trustworthiness of Holy Scripture is essential to a full grasp and adequate confession of its authority.” An unhindered belief that God does not contradict himself through false testimony and uninhibited clarity is central to the teaching of inerrancy. The nineteen articles of the confession affirm several basic tenets of evangelicalism and deny many charges against evangelicalism, such as the affirmation that the written Bible in its entirety is revelation (Article III) and the denial that normative revelation has been given since the New Testament writings (Article V). Yet some of the essential elements of the Chicago Statement’s definition of inerrancy may be found in Articles X and following, such as that inerrancy applies only to the original

²⁷Norman L. Geisler and William C. Roach, *Defending Inerrancy: Affirming the Accuracy of Scripture for a New Generation* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2011), 22.

manuscripts (Article X) and the affirmation that Scripture should interpret Scripture using grammatical-historical exegetical methods (Article XVIII). In the following section of this paper, the present researcher will interact with these final two articles in particular (X and XVIII) to discuss how their proper application will aid inerrantists considering oral missions strategies.

Before moving to this next element, however, a word about inerrancy-based hermeneutics is in order. There are pastors, scholars, and missionaries who may verbally assent to biblical inerrancy as defined by the Chicago Statement but deny it in practice.²⁸ Chicago Statement framer J. I. Packer draws the line in the sand when he pens the following, “Preachers whose belief about biblical

²⁸The example of biblical scholar Robert Gundry comes to mind. Although signing a statement affirming biblical inerrancy in order to remain in the Evangelical Theological Society, Gundry declared that unilateral acceptance of literal inerrancy was not possible. The following year, Gundry was proved by several ETS members to have moved outside the inerrantist position and was subsequently voted

interpretation and inerrancy vacillate can hardly avoid trying from time to time to guard against supposedly unworthy thoughts which the Bible, if believed as it stands, might engender.”²⁹ Christians, charged with unashamedly taking the gospel to the ends of the earth, will always minister out of their deepest convictions concerning the authenticity of their message. It will not take long for skeptics to see through doubt-riddled views.

The need is great for missionaries to remain confident that their convictional anchor will outlast the storms of uncertainty that will inevitably arise. Lindsell is again helpful in showing that biblical inerrancy is a watershed issue for mission practitioners:

I will contend that embracing a doctrine of an errant Scripture will lead to disaster down the road. It will result in the loss of missionary outreach; it will quench

out of the organization. See Geisler and Roach, *Defending Inerrancy*, 53.

²⁹J. I. Packer, “Preaching as Biblical Interpretation,” in Roger R. Nicole and J. Ramsey Michaels, eds., *Inerrancy and Common Sense* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980), 203.

missionary passion; it will lull congregations to sleep and undermine their belief in the full-orbed truth of the Bible; it will produce spiritual sloth and decay; and it will finally lead to apostasy.³⁰

The downfall of one's faith begins, Lindsell is saying, occurs when Christians relinquish their belief that the Bible is inerrant. It is therefore imperative that any and all "new missions movements" be evaluated in light of the deeply significant commitment to biblical inerrancy.

Orality and Inerrancy Touch-Points

At first glance, orality and inerrancy may seem categorically untouchable, since orality emphasizes the spoken word and inerrancy majors on God's written word. This is not necessarily so. As mentioned above, there are at least two specific articles from the historic Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy that must be examined in

³⁰Lindsell, 25.

light of recent discussions generated by the leaders shaping the orality movement. These two critical articles are X and XVIII. Each will be analyzed briefly.

First, Article X of the Chicago Statement declares that the term “inerrancy” only applies to the original manuscripts. The common objection often goes, however, that we do not possess the original manuscripts and therefore should not use the term “inerrancy.” Christian theologian Greg L. Bahnsen helpfully distinguishes between the original *text* of the autographs, meaning the actual words, and the original *codex*, meaning the document. Bahnsen writes, “Some may still ask, ‘If God took the trouble and deemed it crucial to secure the entire accuracy of the original text of Scripture, why did He not take greater care to preserve the copies errorless? . . . In so saying, however, they make the same mistake made by many critics . . . namely, of confusing the autographic text

with the autographic codex.”³¹ This means, then, that the confession of inerrancy refers to the accuracy of the *words* themselves.

Concentration on the *words* themselves is significant for orality strategists, especially those that wrongly take greater care to preserve the tone, or voice, of the biblical story than the original wording. Inerrantists claim, however, that it is through the preaching of the unchanging *words* of the Bible that Almighty God saves, blesses, and protects his people throughout all generations. For missionaries utilizing oral-based methods, then, it is incumbent upon them to remain as close as possible to the Bible in all their oral-style ministries in order to stay true to

³¹Greg L. Bahnsen, “The Inerrancy of the Autographa,” in Norman L. Geisler, ed., *Inerrancy* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980), 182. Also see Daniel Wallace’s similar argument in Daniel Wallace, “Inerrancy and the Text of the Autographa: Assessing the Logic of the Agnostic View,” in *Evidence for God: 50 Arguments for Faith from the Bible, History, Philosophy, and Science*, eds. William A. Dembski and Michael R. Licona (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010): 211-219.

their confession of biblical inerrancy. Proper contextualization demands no less.

In the world of oral storytelling, the Network of Biblical Storytellers (NOBS) is a large organization that pours forth voluminous books, articles, and conferences. NOBS was founded in 1977, growing out of founder Tom Boomershine's PhD dissertation about reading the Gospel of Mark with the view that it was written in order to be read aloud in story form.³² This organization by no means professes biblical inerrancy, and from its inception has advocated using biblical stories as a launching point to new revelation and experiencing the presence of Jesus. Boomershine writes,

When our/my story is connected appropriately with the story of God, there is revelation. It is a sacramental moment when ordinary human reality discloses the presence of God. Through the words of the story, the Word of God becomes present. In

³²A short online biography of Tom Boomershine and his journey toward the creation of NOBS can be found here: <http://www.tomboomershine.org/pages/abouttom.html>.

that moment, it becomes a sacred story through which God speaks . . . And when these moments of authentic connection take place, Jesus is really there. Thus, telling the stories of the Gospels is one of the forms of the real presence of Christ.³³

For the confessor of biblical inerrancy, Boomershine's thoughts here are deeply troubling. Labeling *revelation* the interweaving of the personal story of the storyteller with a Gospel narrative should raise multiple red flags for even the more moderate Christian. Yet since Boomershine began his "story journey," the NOBS organization has grown to include several international mission points, national and regional conferences, a "Storytelling Academy," and currently Boomershine has begun offering a Doctor of Ministry program in "Biblical Storytelling in Digital Culture."³⁴ NOBS storyteller and Presbyterian Church (USA) reverend Dennis Dewey states the following about

³³Thomas A. Boomershine, *Story Journey* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1988), 21.

³⁴Network of Biblical Storytellers, International, "About Us," <http://www.nbsint.org/aboutus> (accessed October 25, 2013).

NOBS' philosophy concerning the biblical text: "The Network of Biblical Storytellers affirms that biblical storytelling takes many forms: from paraphrase to first-person monologue, to midrashic expansion, to contemporization."³⁵ Such a statement clearly distances NOBS storytellers from the more biblically conservative practitioners of CBS, yet the danger to expand, paraphrase, or "contemporize" a biblical story is real and accepted in some circles within the orality movement.

Second, Article XVIII of the Chicago Statement is significant for discussions with the orality movement use of grammatico-historical exegesis and that Scripture should interpret Scripture. Preachers that maintain biblical inerrancy must give accurate attention to both the immediate and broad context of the passage they are teaching in order to truly comprehend the meaning of their

³⁵Dennis Dewey, "Biblical Storytelling as Spiritual Discipline Grounded in Scholarship," (2011),

text. Grammatical usage that identifies the type of biblical genre instructs the studious preacher, as well as noting the historical context of the biblical author, but never should exegetical methods or genre criticism be placed hierarchically above other biblical passages in illuminating the meaning of a text. Apologists Norman Geisler and William Roach correctly warn, “*Look for meaning in the text, not beyond it. The meaning is not found beyond the text (in God’s mind), beneath the text (in the mystic’s mind), or behind the text (in the author’s unexpressed intention); it is found in the text (in the author’s expressed meaning).*”³⁶ If such context-based hermeneutics are applied rightly, a biblical story’s meaning will not be hidden from an audience of either hearers or readers.

This is not to say that extra-biblical resources cannot inform one’s understanding and interpretation of a

http://www.nbsint.org/assets/1408/8-22-2011_biblicalstorytellingspiritualscholarship.pdf, page 1.

³⁶Geisler and Roach, 292. (Emphasis theirs.)

biblical text. Missionaries using oral-based methods like CBS should be quick on their feet with exegetical instruments, but they must also remember that it is God's Word, not their own word, that is inspired and gives correct meaning. In the same vein, skeptics of the orality movement would do well to remember it is God's Word rightly administered that changes hearts. God's Word told in a foreign form is not effective, for either the oral or literate learner. The learning curve goes both ways.

Unfortunately, NOBS orality strategists have also moved "beyond , beneath, and behind the text" in this arena, as well. Commenting on the great lengths storytellers may take to interpret their text, Dennis Dewey says:

The Network embraces the scholarship of the historical-critical method, including form criticism, source criticism, redaction criticism, narrative criticism and performance criticism. It welcomes the insights of socio-political analysis, feminist theology, liberation theology and other approaches to the texts that attempt to

understand them in their fullness and not as mere historical or scientific truth.³⁷

Again, this is a grave problem for storytellers who maintain biblical inerrancy. The interpretive practices that NOBS promotes, according to Dewey's quote above, force the biblical text to submit to modernist and presuppositions that will always lead to the interpreter's preconceived conclusions.

The Chicago Statements declaration that grammatical-historical methods, as opposed to those used by NOBS, is helpful in maintaining a solid belief in the sufficiency of Scripture. For example, reading up on the historical background of the Roman occupation of first century Palestine better equips the "storying" of passages that deal with the events surrounding Jesus' crucifixion. In all things, historical and literary research must be rightly regarded as an aid to finding textual meaning.

³⁷Dewey, page 2.

Charting a Way Forward

As a practitioner of the oral-based strategy known as CBS, the present researcher has found it is possible to peacefully strive for the goals of the orality movement and still hermeneutically maintain the conviction of biblical inerrancy. Highly literate theologians who hold firmly to the doctrine of biblical inerrancy need not be frightened by the contextualized “storying” strategy known as CBS, which attempts to tell God’s stories in ways that are appropriate to the target culture’s worldview. Both theologians and cultural exegetes note that every worldview (biblical, Muslim, postmodern, etc.) is itself a story that unites and shapes communities.³⁸

The bringing together of orality and inerrancy is, academically, a discussion in largely uncharted waters. Therefore, this paper will now move to first answering

³⁸See Micheal W. Goheen and Craig G. Bartholomew, *Living at the Crossroads: An Introduction to Christian Worldview* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 6.

seven objections commonly raised against CBS, and afterward I will briefly suggest how a path forward might take shape if CBS as a methodology can be said to faithfully partner with the evangelical standard of inerrancy.³⁹

Objection One: “Preliterates.” First, the objection that CBS fails to assist “preliterate” people groups in learning to read the Bible for themselves is untenable and betrays an inherently “colonial-type” mentality.

Noteworthy evangelical pastor John Piper composed a blog post dated November 16, 2005, that asks nine questions concerning missionary practitioners of oral methods and

³⁹These objections have been identified by the author. I have already dealt with three of these objections in my article, “The Efficiency of Storying,” *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 49, no. 2 (2013): 322-326. Also consider veteran missionary Larry Dinkins’ superb article exposing and countering objections to oral methods in general in Larry Dinkins, “Objections and Benefits to an Oral Strategy for Bible Study and Teaching,” *William Carey International Development Journal* 2, no. 2 (Spring 2013): 11-17.

their adherence to Scripture.⁴⁰ Throughout his post, Piper consistently refers to oral cultures as “preliterate.”

Although an unflagging mission advocate, Piper’s words confuse the missionary mandate by labeling primary oral groups as deficient and calling for literacy education in addition to making disciples. Most of the frontier regions using CBS do not possess a Bible in their language, and many of these languages are not written at all. When push comes to shove, missionaries must consider what would be the most effective use of their limited time: evangelism or literacy training. Wycliffe Bible Translators, the most prominent of the Bible translation agencies, estimates that over 2,000 languages have currently been identified as needing a missionary to begin translation work.⁴¹ Most translation agencies, including Wycliffe, acknowledge that

⁴⁰John Piper, “Missions, Orality, and the Bible,” <http://www.desiringgod.org/resource-library/taste-see-articles/missions-orality-and-the-bible> (accessed January 31, 2012).

translation of the New Testament alone can take upwards of ten or twenty years. And even then these cultural groups must be convinced that reading is a desirable task. Waiting until such “preliterate” people become “literate” with their own Bible could mean withholding saving truth from thousands of souls in the process.

Also, the cost of resources needed to train young, oral-preference Christians to pastor their churches filled with oral-preference members may be unproductive. Indeed, if time prohibits such men from learning to read and attending years of seminary classes taught by foreigners, one wonders why any indigenous Christian would aspire to become a pastor. The goal of missions as spreading the glory of God by producing passionate disciples who gather into reproducing churches is impeded when mission leaders place unbiblical requirements on

⁴¹Wycliffe Bible Translators, “The Worldwide Status of Bible Translation (2011),” <http://www.wycliffe.org/About/Statistics.aspx> (accessed June 5, 2012).

upcoming indigenous pastors. Inerrancy is not compromised when pastors who are oral learners continue to teach in manners that consistently judge biblical truth as supreme authority.

Objection Two: Original Language Proficiency.

The second objection follows in the same vein with the first, that healthy churches need pastors adept in the original biblical languages in order to access the full and inerrant counsel of God. On the contrary, plenty of evangelical pastors who championed inerrancy throughout the centuries were not Hebrew and Greek scholars.⁴² In the blog post cited above, Piper twice states that incompetency in the original biblical languages will cause “dependency on outsiders.” Again, one must ask whether or not obtaining a seminary degree in biblical language proficiency is necessary to produce obedient disciples. For

⁴²For example, see the remarkable history of Baptist pastors who have held firmly to the doctrine of inerrancy who were not Greek

missionaries to declare, as Piper challenges them, “that this Bible was first written in Greek and Hebrew, the languages that God used centuries ago,” it is at least possible that pastors in oral communities will become discouraged because it seems God speaks only to the educated.⁴³ Long-range goals of higher education will be useless if lay believers become convinced that God only communes with literate professionals.⁴⁴

Exegesis, the act of drawing out from the words of Scripture what is meant, does not necessarily entail literacy. Returning to the fact that, according to the framers of the Chicago Statement, meaning is found in the text itself and not anywhere else, story crafters must make sure that the words they have labored over retain the proper textual meaning. One example is replacing the phrase “kill the

or Hebrew scholars in L. Russ Bush and Tom J. Nettles, *Baptists and the Bible*, revised edition, (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1999).

⁴³John Piper, “Missions, Orality, and the Bible.”

fatted calf” with “prepare a great feast” from the story of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32). Although there exists a great deal of cultural baggage surrounding cows among Hindu listeners, the full force of the verse may be lost if the phrase is left out or reworded. Story crafters must explain their reasoning behind word substitutes and ensure their listeners are not precisely equating their compilation of oral stories with divine Scripture. Indeed, the original biblical text does state “fatted calf,” but the cultural significance is not lost when replaced in the story with “great feast.” Inerrancy is concerned with the words themselves, and therefore claiming culturally altered stories as inerrant Scripture cannot be said to pass the inerrancy test.

Objection Three: Word Variation. The objection against the variation of wording in biblical stories stems from the fact that no orally told story is ever truly relayed

⁴⁴In addition, one of the core tenants of the Reformation, the priesthood of all believers, is denied if biblical language competency is required for church leadership.

verbatim. That inerrancy cannot accept such variation is unwarranted at best. Under Article XIII of the Chicago Statement, inerrantists deny, among several other things, that “variant selections of material in parallel accounts” undermine biblical inerrancy. R. C. Sproul, in the official commentary to the Chicago Statement entitled *Explaining Inerrancy*, writes,

Though biblical writers may have arranged their material differently, they do not affirm that Jesus said on one occasion what he never said on that occasion. Neither are they claiming that another parallel account is wrong for not including what they themselves include. As an itinerant preacher, Jesus no doubt said many similar things on different occasions.⁴⁵

One of the more significant examples of variation within the Bible is the slightly differing accounts of the temptations of Christ in the wilderness. For sake of brevity, only a few brief observations will be offered. Matthew 4:1-

⁴⁵R.C. Sproul, *Explaining Inerrancy: A Commentary* (Oakland, CA: International Council on Biblical Inerrancy, 1980), 43.

11 notes that Jesus was tempted first to turn the stones into loaves of bread (4:3-4), next to jump off the pinnacle of the temple in the “holy city” (4:5-6), and finally to bow down to Satan after being shown the world’s kingdoms atop a high mountain (4:7-10). Mark allots only two verses to the biblical story (1:12-13), simply stating that Jesus was in the wilderness being tempted by Satan. In Luke 4:1-13, a fuller picture similar to the one in Matthew is given, though the chronology of the temptations is not precisely the same. Luke says that Jesus was first tempted to turn the stones into bread (4:3), shown the world’s kingdoms and asked to bow down to Satan (4:5-6), and last admonished to throw himself off the pinnacle of the temple in “Jerusalem” (4:9). Also, only Matthew and Mark mention the attendance of angels after the ordeal (Matt. 4:11, Mk. 1:13). Clearly, specific audiences were in the authors’ minds as they wrote these inspired texts: Matthew writing to Jews who would understand that the term “holy city” meant Jerusalem and

Luke knowing that the non-Jews he wrote to would require a more specific rendering. The variation does not negate the claims of biblical inerrancy, however, because such variation is allowed within the definition laid out by the Chicago Statement framers. The concept of the full inspiration of the Bible judges the whole of Scripture as equally inspired in the same manner.

This idea plays out in numerous ways on the mission field when using oral strategies such as CBS. Practitioners may wonder which of the different variations to choose from as their source. Returning to the temptations of Jesus story, the question will arise to tell the story based on the accounts in Matthew, Mark, Luke, or some sort of combination of all three. Also, storytellers must deal with questions that develop concerning the amount of embellishment, individual commentary, and ordering of the events. This is why CBS has for many become the preferred model, clasping tightly to the story itself, and

reinforcing the “story and only the story” through several rounds of culturally appropriate repetition. Fidelity within variety is acceptable and does not threaten inerrancy.

Objection Four: Equating Stories with Scripture.

The objection that stories told using CBS cannot be equated with inerrant Scripture, which has already been alluded to above, is affirmed by conservative CBS strategists. CBS as a methodology is best described as a form of preaching.⁴⁶

In the New Testament, the differing forms for the word *euangelizo* connote (in the active and middle tenses) “bring the good news; preach the good news; proclaim”.⁴⁷

Storying as a method of evangelism and preaching is authoritative in the same way a pastor’s sermon concerning a biblical text is authoritative. While this judgment may

⁴⁶To be sure, this designation will not satisfy either extreme, whether unflagging advocates of traditional preaching models (expository, topical, etc.) or determined Bible storyers who consider theirs as the only method that works.

⁴⁷Barbara Aland, Kurt Aland, et. al., eds., *The Greek New Testament*, 4th ed. (Stuttgart, Germany: United Bible Societies-Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2001), 74-75.

seem fair enough, there are at least three major implications of this fact that are worth mentioning.

The first implication of viewing CBS as a form of preaching necessitates healthy hermeneutical standards in line with good preaching that views God’s revealed word as chiefly authoritative. Preachers who consistently preach out of the conviction that the words God has provided are inerrant will demonstrate humility in their handling of it. Second, CBS equips storytellers to “preach” the good news in a memorable fashion that is easy both to recall and reproduce. People love to hear and tell stories, and CBS affords practitioners to tell the world’s greatest stories. CBS offers Christians yet another tool to preach the good news in a non-threatening manner that penetrates deeply the hearts of the masses that will listen to stories but never enter a church building. In his superbly-written *Reconnecting God’s Story to Ministry*, missiologist Tom Steffen quotes an old Hasidic proverb: “Tell people a fact

and you touch their minds. Tell people a story and you touch their souls.”⁴⁸ Third, labeling CBS as preaching should not be discounted by preachers of more traditional models such as expository or topical preaching. If storytelling causes obedience to the truths of God’s Word, preachers who use traditional models and have previously seen a lack of obedience in church members would do well to reconsider their biases against CBS. Temporary discomfort for the sake of obedience is a worthy exchange of which many in the worldwide evangelical mission community have already begun to take note. Even the recently published “Cape Town Commitment” from the Third Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization (2010) boldly exhorts, “As we recognize and take action on issues

⁴⁸Tom A. Steffen, *Reconnecting God’s Story to Ministry: Cross-Cultural Storytelling at Home and Abroad*, revised edition, (Waynesboro, GA: Authentic Media, 2005), 56.

of orality, let us make greater use of oral methodologies in discipling programmes, even among literate believers.”⁴⁹

Objection Five: Absence of Systematic Theology.

Systematic theology is almost always laid out in linear, bullet-point form, and, as has already been shown, oral communicators do not prefer to learn this way.⁵⁰ Nestled within a wonderful collection of essays authored by missionaries serving in Buddhist countries, former missionary Miriam Adeney recognizes that, at the end of the day, it is the uniquely human stories of biblical characters that people remember. Adeney comments, “The

⁴⁹Third Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization, “The Cape Town Commitment: A Confession of Faith and a Call to Action,” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 35, no. 2 (April 2011): 74. The Lausanne Covenant (1974), widely recognized by the worldwide evangelical missionary community, also affirms that the Bible is “without error in all that it affirms.” The Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization, “The Lausanne Covenant,” Lausanne.org, <http://www.lausanne.org/en/documents/lausanne-covenant.html> (accessed June 8, 2012).

⁵⁰Wayne Grudem notes that systematic theology seeks to “collect” and “summarize” the biblical passages that speak to a particular subject. Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 23.

Bible is not primarily doctrines. It is primarily the stories of people who have known God.”⁵¹ Systematic theology often replaces biblical narratives that retell the exquisite dealings of God and his people with lists describing what principles can be gleaned from these stories. Though not always the case, systematic texts simply reference individual verses within these beautiful stories. CBS does not pit itself against systematic theology, but instead takes a different path.

By moving through the Bible chronologically, CBS designs story sets in such a way that oral-preference Christians begin to construct a formidable “biblical theology.” In the helpful study entitled *The Promise-Plan of God*, Walter C. Kaiser, Jr. defines “biblical theology” as theology that views the entire 66 books of the Bible as

⁵¹Miriam Adeney, “Feeding Giraffes, Counting Cows, and Missing True Learners: The Challenge of Buddhist Oral Communicators,” in Paul De Neui, ed., *Communicating Christ Through Story and Song: Orality in Buddhist Contexts*, (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2008), 88.

consisting of one overarching story with a distinct introduction, plot, climax, and conclusion. Kaiser traces the historical development of the biblical concept of the fulfilled promises of God, displayed in the Bible from beginning to end.⁵² Viewing theology from this perspective allows Christians the opportunity to see the “big picture” of the Bible, to step back and distinguish “the forest from the trees.”

In the book *Making Disciples of Oral Learners*, the authors recount how seventeen young evangelists from North Africa were trained for two years to tell 135 biblical stories chronologically, moving from Genesis through Revelation. The focus of the story set considered both their people group’s worldview and the stories within the grand biblical narrative that are foundational to Christianity (creation, Adam and Eve’s sin, the giving of the Law, the

⁵²Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *The Promise-Plan of God: A Biblical Theology*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008). See also

crucifixion, etc.). Each story also included one or more songs that the evangelists themselves developed in order to easily teach others. After the learning phase, a North American seminary professor then administered to the students a six-hour oral exam, asking questions about both facts within the stories and systematic theology. Even when asked to describe doctrines such as the nature of God and salvation, the students referred to the stories they had learned and passed with flying colors.⁵³ Drawing upon the stories they had told and sung many times over, the North African evangelists were faithfully equipped to perform the work God had set them apart to do.

Objection Six: Cross-Cultural Reproducibility.

Such an objection stems from the concept the CBS must only be used in cross-cultural contexts as a “first step” in outreach. Only non-readers, it is thought, would truly

Geerhardus Vos, *Biblical Theology* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1975).

benefit from something like CBS; those who actively read their Bibles need not apply. Since this objection has already been touched on above, there is no need to go into great detail here. However, there are at least three elements to recall concerning CBS as an evangelistic methodology.

First, CBS is designed to be reproduced. From the worldview analysis pondered at the start of the process to the ongoing repetition of the biblical narratives, reproducibility in order to produce more effective and obedient evangelists is the heart cry of CBS trainers. Second, there is not a culture in the world whose members are not daily retelling generational stories. Storyteller Marti Steussy suggests that stories are not only important for cultural remembrance but also for ongoing health. Steussy writes, “Contemporary studies in neurobiology and psychology suggest story is not only common among

⁵³International Orality Network, *Making Disciples of Oral Learners*, 46-47.

humans, but necessary: the left brain's compulsion to create a coherent story out of events is so strong that when it does not have access to a plausible story it will fabricate one."⁵⁴

Third, CBS as a methodology for producing healthy disciple-making churches has been found possible in the United States as well as abroad. The expressed purpose of Avery Willis' and Mark Snowden's *Truth That Sticks* is to show the effectiveness of CBS among oral-preference learners in North America. Paralleling their information about CBS is the story of the exponential growth of a church in Idaho called Real Life Ministries, which grew from a small congregation to a megachurch with multiple small groups simply because they readjusted their teaching at every level to the use of CBS methods.⁵⁵ In an oral-

⁵⁴Marti J. Steussy, "Life, Story, and the Bible," in Hearon, Holly E. and Philip Ruge-Jones, eds, *The Bible in Ancient and Modern Media: Story and Performance* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2009), 114.

⁵⁵Avery T. Willis, Jr. and Mark Snowden, *Truth That Sticks: How to Communicate Velcro Truth in a Teflon World* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2010).

preference context, more Christians will likely step forward as leaders when they have been taught simple and reproducible models of sharing their faith.

Objection Seven: “Passing Fad” Missiology. If Christ’s return is to be delayed, the skeptics argue, only giving Bible stories does not do justice to teaching them to obey all of Christ’s commands.⁵⁶ Such reasoning is again flawed because it overlooks the fact that Christ himself, as well as many other biblical personalities, often taught using stories and oral-based strategies. Consider briefly the cases of Moses’ instruction in Deuteronomy and the Pauline epistles.

After leading the Israelites out of Egypt, they stood at the banks of the Jordan River and Moses preached three sermons that charged the Israelites to remember the mighty

⁵⁶John Piper asks, “Will we labor for the long-term strength of the church among all unreached and less-reached peoples, by empowering them with the ability to read and study the Bible in the original languages, in the desire that the Lord may come very soon, but

deeds of their Redeemer and lovingly obey all their God had commanded them. Deuteronomy 6:4-9 instructs the Israelites to “teach their children” all of God’s commands, talking about them as they “sit at home and walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up” (6:7 NCV). Then Moses says, “Write them down” as a reminder (6:8). Clearly, then, there is both an oral and a written aspect to the Israelite parents’ teaching. Old Testament scholar Susan Niditch argues convincingly from these and other corresponding verses that orality and literacy always existed simultaneously, although she believes that, with the majority of the ancient Israelites being oral-preference learners, written teaching was probably considered more of an “iconic” teaching tool.⁵⁷ Verbalized teaching through the

in the sober possibility that he may delay his return for centuries?” John Piper, “Missions, Orality, and the Bible.”

⁵⁷Susan Niditch, *Oral World and Written Word* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), 70. Niditch is probably right, since ancient literacy historian William Harris has shown that, even in the educational center of classical Athens, the literacy rates of the ancient Mediterranean world were never higher than 15%. See

use of traditional stories recounting the God of Israel defeating the Egyptian pretender gods would serve to inspire awe and faith for future generations in the Promised Land. Niditch further says that oral forms can be deduced throughout the entire Old Testament, declaring that “an oral aesthetic infuses Hebrew Scripture as it now stands.”⁵⁸

The question will then be raised as to how passages such as Romans may be taught using oral methods such as CBS. For non-narrative passages based on propositional logic, where one principle builds off its preceding principle, two possibilities may be offered. Using the example of Romans, the story surrounding the founding of the church at Rome might first be told and the specific teaching encased within the narrative. A second option may be to

William V. Harris, *Ancient Literacy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991).

⁵⁸Niditch, 24. New Testament theologian John Harvey agrees: “The fact that vowel pointing was not added to the Hebrew Scriptures until the time of the Massorettes attests to the heavy reliance on oral tradition in Jewish culture well after the first century.” John D. Harvey,

incorporate other types of oral forms, such as song, drama, or chants. Missionary and biblical storyteller Dale Jones calls this second option “layering” because it uses several oral strategies on top of CBS. Jones admits, “We must recognize the limitations of oral approaches and seek to find ways to incorporate the wealth of the written Word among [oral learners]. We must also seek to utilize other oral communication methods besides storying.”⁵⁹ Honest ministers must recognize that a one-size-fits-all approach does not exist.

In sum, a critically contextualized proposal that does justice hermeneutically to the doctrine of inerrancy while still maintaining the oral framework of CBS will obviously differ according to cultural context but should retain the three following characteristics. First, CBS-type

Listening to the Text: Oral Patterning in Paul's Letters (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 50.

⁵⁹Dale Jones, “Moving Towards Oral Communication of the Gospel: Experiences from Cambodia,” in Paul De Neui, ed.,

methodology should be balanced dialogically, taking into account both the learning preferences of the sending and host culture in textual study. CBS practitioners hailing from literate Western institutions should not be discouraged from studying before their storying session in ways they are comfortable (consulting commentaries, listening to sermon podcasts, etc.). More oral communicators, especially those from the target culture, must be involved in every area of the studying process - from helping to select biblical story sets to assisting the missionary in finding culturally informed words and phrases that move as close as possible to the words of a biblical text. Comfortable dialogue between the oral and literate is the key.

Second, CBS trainers should not be ashamed to tell the members of their storying sessions that the Source of the biblical stories exists in written form. Even among the

Communicating Christ Through Story and Song: Orality in Buddhist Contexts (Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library, 2008), 197.

small minority of primary oral groups who have never seen a written word, storytellers taking biblical inerrancy seriously must declare that the standard they uphold is outside themselves. Pushing for literacy is not what is being done here; pushing for the listeners to look beyond the storyteller to the Source of his or her stories is. Missionary Larry Dinkins writes, “Our experience is that when an oral person becomes excited about Bible narratives, they often show a hunger for more stories. At that point they realize that literacy is a means to gain access to more of God’s Word and their interest in reading and education is heightened.”⁶⁰

Third, although it seems that God is indeed blessing the orality movement, missionaries using oral-based strategies such as CBS go too far if they outrightly dismiss

⁶⁰Dinkins, 13. I have also had this happen to me. Two years ago, when I was first introduced to CBS, I employed this oral strategy in the counseling ministry I was involved in at the time. The guy I was counseling, a high school dropout who did not own a Bible, grabbed

other ministry models. For example, prominent CBS authors Mark Snowden and Avery Willis write,

The reality is that Christians and non-Christians are just not responding. Churches increasingly reduce or even stop their discipling efforts and focus instead on the worship “experience,” with the full intention of using twenty minutes of preaching on different verses scattered throughout the Bible to impact discipling. All this does is make churches and their ministries further out of touch with society.⁶¹

Such broad brush statements indict many Christians in churches committed to expository or topical preaching styles, and to say these churches are not at all sending out obedient believers is simply untrue. CBS is a tool that should be applied if change is needed. If it is not needed in

my Bible after our storying session to see if the story of Adam and Eve’s sin was “really in the Bible.”

⁶¹Mark Snowden and Avery Willis, “What God Hath Wrought,” in *Orality Breakouts: Using the Heart Language to Transform Hearts*, Samuel Chiang, et. al., eds. (Hong Kong: Capstone Enterprises, Ltd. and International Orality Network, 2010), 21.

a particular context, there should be no pressure to fix what is not broken.

Conclusion

In light of what has been stated above, the present researcher would like to make the following points:

- Contextualization may be defined as the balancing act of utilizing culturally appropriate ministry models that remain tightly tethered to the Scriptures.
- Orality as a missions movement is growing every day and in nearly every corner of the globe, albeit largely unnoticed by the Western ecclesiastical establishment. Researchers predict that over two-thirds of the global population consists of primary and secondary oral learners, and as such, ministry among the oral majority will continue to open new

discussions for missionaries, pastors, and theologians.

- The Chicago Statement (1978) provides a sure anchor for defining biblical inerrancy and can therefore be trusted to serve as an evangelical confession, even as mission practitioners wrestle with the task of taking the gospel to oral communicators.
- The confession of biblical inerrancy protects pastors and missionaries utilizing oral methods by reminding them not to equate their orally-told stories with Scripture. Oral-based tools such as Chronological Bible Storying should be considered a form of preaching; they should not be considered a form of special revelation.
- The new Orality movement should be given a proper seat at the theological table, since it has much to offer in discussions concerning the

furthering of God's Kingdom. Yet orality is not a silver bullet, and therefore needs constant, contextualized dialogue with the other theological disciplines.

In a world where new research exposes an unreached oral majority amidst a highly literate ministerial minority, it is not heretical to call for the rethinking of our missionary methods. The old saying that insanity means doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results holds more truth than is often admitted. What is heretical is to push away from our core convictions concerning the veracity of the Bible in order to elicit in our audience a response that points them to our own ingenuity instead of to the Lord. The confession of biblical inerrancy continues to fuel missionary passion.⁶² Can orality and inerrancy be reconciled? Without a doubt, they must.

⁶²Philip Jenkins, professor of religious history at Baylor University and author of the groundbreaking book *The Next Christendom*, notes: "Through the nineteenth and early twentieth

centuries, Western Christians who ventured into the mission fields were more commonly drawn from conservative churches . . . Less fervent believers, or the more broad-minded, tended to stay at home.” Philip Jenkins, *The New Faces of Christianity* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2006), 19.

An Exploration of Eleonore Stump's Theodicy

J. Brian Huffling

Introduction

Perhaps the strongest argument against theism is the problem of evil. Classical theists have held that God is omniscient, omnipotent, and omnibenevolent.¹ While these terms are difficult to define and are controversial, they basically mean that God in some way knows everything and can do anything and is completely good. This is where the problem of evil arises. It would seem that if God were all-powerful, then he would have the power to defeat or prevent evil. Further, it would seem that if God were all-knowing, then he would know how to abolish evil. Finally, if God were all-good, then he would desire to demolish evil. However, if anything is painfully apparent it is the fact

¹ J. Brian Huffling has an MA and Ph.D. from Southern Evangelical Seminary and a BA from Lee University. He is currently the Director of Undergraduate Program and Assistant Professor at Southern Evangelical Seminary and Bible College.

that evil exists. Such is the problem, viz., given a classical conception of God who has the ability and knowledge to conquer evil, why does he not do so? Such a question is used by atheists to argue against the existence of a being so commonly known as God. The problem is not only relevant to atheists but to theists. This issue haunts those who believe in a classical conception of the divine.

What follows is a brief examination of the problem of evil as understood by one of Christianity's leading philosophers, viz., Eleonore Stump, as outlined in *Philosophy of Religion: The Big Questions*.² In this work Stump examines the problem of evil, considers whether it actually is a logical problem, and then offers her own solution.

²Eleonore Stump, "The Problem of Evil," in *Philosophy of Religion: The Big Questions*, ed. Eleonore Stump and Michael J. Murray (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1999), 227-240. This is an adaptation of Eleonore Stump, "The Problem of Evil," *Faith and*

The Problem

In trying to prove the veracity of theism, many arguments are proffered for the existence of God, such as the cosmological argument, the teleological argument, and the moral argument. These arguments rest on basic categorical reasoning. The truth of the premises and the validity of the argument make the arguments sound. For example, in terms of the Kalam cosmological argument, the argument takes this form:

- (1) Everything that begins to exist has a cause.
- (2) The universe began to exist.
- (3) Therefore, the universe has a cause.

If the premises are true and no violation in the form of the argument has been committed, then the argument is sound. Such is the nature of logic and such is the nature of theistic proofs.

Philosophy 2 no. 4 (Oct 1985): 392-418. Citations will be made to the former.

A typical counter-argument to such theistic proofs is the problem of evil. The problem of evil often takes the below form, which is the form that Stump lays out:³

- (1) God is omnipotent;
- (2) God is omniscient;
- (3) God is perfectly good.

Most people, as Stump recognizes, claim:

- (4) There is evil in the world.

Philosophers who have used the problem of evil as an argument against theism and Christianity have sometimes argued that it is a logical problem. In other words, (4) is not compossible with (1)-(3). The only way to make sense of (4) is to reject at least one of the first three premises or define them in such a way as to make sense of (4). J. L. Mackie thus states, “It is true that there is no explicit contradiction between the statements that there is an omnipotent and wholly good god and that there is evil in

³Stump, *Philosophy of Religion*, 227-228.

the world.”⁴ However, after saying this, Mackie asserts that it becomes a logical problem “if we add the at least initially plausible premises that good is opposed to evil in such a way that a being who is wholly good eliminates evil as far as he can, and that there are no limits on what an omnipotent being can do, then we do have a contradiction.”⁵ “The problem of evil” then, for Mackie, “is essentially a logical problem.”⁶ Stump rejects the notion that the problem of evil is in fact a logical one. “To show such an inconsistency,” she argues, “one would need at least to demonstrate that this claim must be true:

(5) There is no morally sufficient reason for God to allow instances of evil.”⁷

One way of solving the problem, as mentioned, would be to deny at least one premise of (1)-(3). However, for a

⁴J. L. Mackie, *The Miracle of Theism: Arguments for and Against the Existence of God* (Oxford: Clarendon Press), 1982), 150.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Stump, *Philosophy of Religion*, 228.

classical Christian theist, such as Stump, this is no solution at all.

At this point Stump examines Alvin Plantinga's free will defense, which she says rests on the following two points:⁸

(6) Human beings have free will;

and

(7) Possession of free will and use of it to do more good than evil is a good of such a value that it outweighs all the evil in the world.

While Stump praises Plantinga for such a contribution to the discussion, she argues that Plantinga's point is only to show that the arguments for the problem of evil do not constitute a logical problem. While Plantinga's tactic may certainly be successful, as Stump says, it is not a theodicy

⁸Ibid. For a discussion of Plantinga's free will defense, cf. Alvin Plantinga, "The Free Will Defense," in *Philosophy in America*, ed. Max Black (London: Allen and Unwin, 1965), 204-220.

and does not bring satisfaction to either side of the debate.

Thus, Stump's aim is to construct a theodicy.

The Solution

In making a theodicy, Stump points out that “*mere* theists are relatively rare in the history of religion.”⁹ Thus, in constructing a theodicy she declares that it is imperative to examine what particular theistic religions teach. As she argues:

If we are going to claim that [a particular religion's] beliefs are somehow inconsistent, we need to look at a more complete set of Jewish or Muslim or Christian beliefs concerning God's goodness and evil in the world, not just at that limited subset of such beliefs which are common to all three religions, because what *appears* inconsistent if we take a partial sampling of beliefs may in fact look consistent when set in the context of a more complete set of beliefs.¹⁰

⁹Stump, *Philosophy of Religion*, 230 (emphasis in original).

¹⁰Ibid. (emphasis in original).

Since she, being a Christian, is an expert in Christian doctrine, Christianity serves as her paradigm. At this point she introduces more premises that to her are necessary to solve the problem of evil. They include:

- 8) Adam fell.
- 9) Natural evil entered the world as a result of Adam's fall.
- 10) After death, depending on their state at the time of their death, either (a) human beings go to heaven or (b) they go to hell.¹¹

She spends some time attempting to thwart certain problems and objections to these premises. However, for the sake of this paper the author will assume that these points, viz., (8)-(10) are true.

A key ingredient for a solution to the problem of evil is the notion of free will. Given the Christian understanding of the fall, man's will is also fallen. Stump

recognizes that Christians differ on what this means and to what extent the will is affected by sin. As Stump understands the situation, “all human beings since Adam’s fall have been defective in their free wills, so that they have a powerful inclination to will what they ought not to will, to will their own power or pleasure in preference to greater goods.”¹² Stump further argues that a person in this condition cannot go to heaven and be in union with God while his will is corrupt. Further, annihilation is not an option since God would be destroying a good, viz. existence, which he cannot do. Some may argue that an omnipotent being could make an agent will anything. The question, of course, is can an omnipotent being make an agent will something freely? The notion of an agent being forced to freely will something is a contradiction. Stump declares “he cannot fix the defect by using his

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Stump, *Philosophy of Religion*, 230.

omnipotence to remove it miraculously. The defect is a defect in *free* will, and it consists in a person's generally failing to will what he ought to will. To remove this defect miraculously would be to force a person's free will to be other than what it is."¹³ (It is important to emphasize that the defect according to Stump and orthodox Christianity is inherited from one's parents, and thus no one is exempt from the defect.)

Stump argues that if God cannot fix one's will, then it is up to the person to fix his own will. However, Stump does not think this is possible. As Stump notes:

The problem with a defect in the will is not that there is an inability to will what one ought to will because of some external restraint on the will, but that one does not and will not will what one ought to will because the will itself is bent towards evil. Consequently, changing the will is the end for which we are seeking the means; if one were *willing* to change one's will by willing what one ought to will, there would be no problem of a defect in the will. Self-repair,

¹³Ibid., 231 (emphasis in original).

then, is no more a solution to the problem of a defective will than is God's miraculous intervention.¹⁴

Thus, God cannot repair one's will via his omnipotence and man cannot repair his will because he will not seek that himself. In other words, as long as the will is corrupt, a fallen human will not choose self-repair. What then is left for a solution regarding the will?

At this point Stump explains what she believes is "the only remaining alternative."¹⁵ She writes, "Let a person will that God fix his defective will. In that case, God's alteration of the will is something the person has freely chosen, and God can then alter that person's will without destroying its freedom."¹⁶ Thus, God is not overriding one's will via his omnipotence, and the agent is not repairing his own will. Rather, he is freely willing that God repair it. She further explains, "The traditional

¹⁴Stump, *Philosophy of Religion*, 231 (emphasis in original).

¹⁵Ibid., 231-232.

¹⁶Ibid., 232

formulation of the crucial necessary condition for a person's being a Christian (variously interpreted by Protestants and Catholics) is that he wills God to save him from his sin; and this condition is, I think, logically (and perhaps also psychologically) equivalent to a person's willing that God fix his will."¹⁷ Further, "Willing to have God save one from sin is willing to have God bring one to a state in which one is free from sin, and that state depends essentially on a will which wills what it ought to will."¹⁸

As Stump notes, the way in which God relates to one's will is highly debated among Christian theologians. Some, following Pelagius, argue that one can simply change his own will. However, Stump rejects this position based on her previous objection to the idea of self-repair. Others, following Augustine and Calvin argue that God, solely apart from man, changes one's will. Stump argues

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Ibid.

for something in between these views. “Perhaps the correct view,” she says, “consists in postulating a cooperative divine and human effort.”¹⁹ Stump gives as an example

Socrates converting a man to philosophy:

When Socrates pursued a man with wit and care and passion for the truth, that man sometimes converted to philosophy and became Socrates’s disciple. Such a man converted freely, so that it is false to say Socrates *caused* his conversion; and yet, on the other hand, it would be ridiculous to say in consequence that the man bears sole responsibility for his conversion. The responsibility and the credit for the conversion belong to Socrates, whose effort and ingenuity were necessary conditions of the conversion. . . . I think that something along those lines can also be said of the process by which a man comes to will God’s help.²⁰

Stump further iterates, “If a man does will that God fix his will or save him from his sins, then I think that God can do so without detriment to free will, provided that he does so only to the extent to which man freely will that God do

¹⁹Stump, *Philosophy of Religion*, 232.

so.”²¹ She explains that God fixing one’s will is a process. “On Christian doctrine, this is the process of sanctification, which is not finally completed until after death when it culminates ‘in the twinkling of an eye’ in the last changes which unite the sanctified person with God.”²² Whatever the mechanics involved, one willing that God fix his will is for Stump “the foundation of a Christian solution to the problem of evil.”²³

But what should make a person will for God to change his will? According to Stump, a person needs to be in the right circumstances that will precipitate such a desire. The person in question must, first, be aware that he tends to do what he should not do and that he wills what he should not will, and second, have a desire for his will to change.²⁴ Stump argues that moral and natural evil (disease and

²⁰Ibid. (emphasis in original).

²¹Ibid.

²²Ibid.

²³Ibid., 233.

²⁴Stump, *Philosophy of Religion*, 233.

natural disasters) contribute to this set of circumstances. Moral evil alerts man to the fact that he is in a state that he should not be in. The history of man is replete with examples as to this being the case. Further, natural evil makes man humble and aware of his own mortality. Stump notes that “evil of this sort is the best hope . . . and maybe the only effective means for bringing men to such a state.”²⁵ Stump admits that making an argument for such a move is very difficult due to the nature of the data and how one would gather it, for the psychological state of a person both before and after an instance of evil would have to be known. This difficulty notwithstanding, she gives an example of how the argument might function. Suppose, she says, that a set of parents have a child with a terminal disease. Part of the disease causes the child to reject any cure. Thus, the parents subject the child to treatments, even though the treatments are painful and do not guarantee the

²⁵Ibid.

child will be cured. Analogously, Christianity claims that men have a spiritual terminal disease. Evil, Stump argues, may serve to move men to seek the cure, namely God. God allows men to suffer since such suffering may bring his creatures to him and help save them.²⁶ In this scheme, evil could bring about a good, viz., the recognition that man is in a horrible state and needs the salvation that only God can bring.

Stump gives another illustration to clarify her position: that of Cain and Abel. Cain and Abel both brought offerings to God. God was pleased with Abel's offering but not with Cain's. Cain became angry and jealous over this. The Lord approached Cain and inquired as to why he was upset. Afterwards, Cain killed his brother, Abel. At this point the Lord asked Cain about the incident. After declaring to Cain that he knew about what had happened, God punished Cain by declaring that the land

²⁶Ibid., 233-236.

would not bring forth food for him and that Cain would wander the land. Cain expressed fear at what God had declared, and complained that the punishment was too great for him, saying that he himself would be killed. In response to this complaint, God said that if anyone killed him that person would suffer seven times over. God then gave Cain a sign so that no one would kill him.²⁷

It is interesting, Stump points out, how God acts in this story. God does not intervene to save Abel; however, he intervenes in several ways in regard to Cain. First, God warns Cain of the danger of sin. Then, God, seemingly miraculously according to Stump, banishes Cain from the land to be a wanderer. Finally, God gives Cain a sign so that no one will kill him. Stump declares, “Clearly, any *one* of these things done on Abel’s behalf would have been enough to save him. But God does none of these things for *Abel*, the innocent, the accepted of God; he does them

²⁷This story is found in Genesis 4.

instead for *Cain*, a man whose offering was rejected and who is murderously angry at his brother.”²⁸ Stump’s point is that it seems odd for God to allow the innocent to die and yet seem to offer mercy and protection to the wicked.

However, this is her point. She informs, on the solution to the problem of evil which I have been developing . . . if God is good and has a care for his creatures, his overriding concern must be to insure not that they live as long as possible or that they suffer as little pain as possible in this life but rather that they live in such a way as ultimately to bring them to union with God.²⁹

Abel was righteous and his death did not bring him trouble. However, Cain was unrighteous and was in an immoral state in his relation to God. Thus, his death would have left him in an eternal state of disunion with God. On Stump’s account, Abel was in no danger at the time of his

²⁸Stump, *Philosophy of Religion*, 237 (emphasis in original).

²⁹Ibid.

death, whereas Cain was. Therefore, God used certain circumstances to bring Cain back into a proper relationship with himself. Analogously, evil is allowed in the world to help precipitate men to seek after God to have their wills corrected. Evil then for Stump is a type of medicine that God uses to bring ultimate health.

Stump closes her argument by revising (7) to (7''): (7'') Because it is a necessary condition for union with God, the significant exercise of free will employed by human beings in the process which is essential for their being saved from their own evil is of such great value that it outweighs all the evil of the world.³⁰

Stump argues that "(7'') constitutes a morally sufficient reason for evil and so is a counter-example to (5), the claim that there is no morally sufficient reason for God to permit instances of evil."³¹

³⁰Ibid., 238.

³¹Ibid.

Evaluation

Stump certainly has a philosophically rigorous argument and wonderful contribution to the discussion of the problem of evil. She recognizes that the problem of evil is not a logical problem. There is nothing in the form of the argument, at least as presented here, that makes God's existence a contradiction with evil (contra Mackie). Her way of dealing with the logical aspect of the problem is to introduce particular Christian themes into the discussion of general theism. She believes this not only demonstrates that there is no logical problem, but that the problem of evil is solved, or at least can be solved along these lines.

Her first and main contention is to introduce free will as understood from a (particular) Christian point of view. As she argues, God cannot change a person's will via his omnipotence in such a way as to destroy the nature of the will's freedom. In other words, God cannot force someone to freely choose something, as this would be

contradictory. Also, man does not seem to have the ability to alter or repair his will. This inability as she argues is not due to any extrinsic issue, but rather an intrinsic one based in the nature of the will itself. Man ought to will the good; however, he does not. Rather, he wills what he should not will. Thus, he will not will that his will change. Stump's answer then is for man to will that God change his (man's) will. She believes that this leaves freedom intact, and also allows the will to be changed.

It is at this point that there seems to be a difficulty. Consider what Stump argues: "The problem with a defect in the will is not that there is an inability to will what one ought to will because of some external restraint on the will, but that one does not and will not will what one ought to will because the will itself is bent towards evil."³² Thus, man "does not and will not will what" he ought. However, she goes on to say, "Willing to have God save one from

one's sin is willing to have God bring one to a state in which one is free from sin, and that state depends essentially on a will which wills what it ought to will."³³ In other words, the state of being in a right relationship with God depends on one willing "what [he] ought to will." However, if a man "does not and will not will what [he] ought," then how can he will that God bring him into such a state? It seems from what Stump says that willing that God fix one's will is something that one ought to will; however, man according to her will not will what he ought. Therefore, man will not will that God fix his will. Perhaps this difficulty is simply an exegetical one and is remedied by a different formulation or interpretation.

Another apparent problem with Stump's argument is the illustration that she uses to explain her view, viz., that of Socrates persuading one to become a disciple of his in

³²Stump, *Philosophy of Religion*, 231.

³³Stump, *Philosophy of Religion*, 232.

the discipline of philosophy. A theologian, especially of the Reformed ilk, may object that this is a false analogy. The theologian may argue that one cannot compare a man's relation with another man, and man's relation with God. Of course, Stump is not claiming this is a perfect analogy, only that it is "something along those lines."³⁴

Perhaps another possible problem is Stump's notion that if an omnipotent God changed one's will then it would abolish freedom. Is this actually the case? Can God make a person will something and the person still be free? While this work cannot give a robust exegetical investigation into what the Bible says, it may be instructive to examine a few short passages. Proverbs 21:1 declares, "The king's heart is *like* channels of water in the hand of the LORD; He turns it wherever He wishes."³⁵ In a discussion of the Passover, Ezra says, "And they observed the Feast of Unleavened

³⁴Ibid.

³⁵All Scripture will come from the *NASB*.

Bread seven days with joy, for the LORD had caused them to rejoice, and had turned the heart of the king of Assyria toward them to encourage them in the work of the house of God, the God of Israel” (6:22). Perhaps the most perplexing example is from Jesus in John 6. In verse 44 he says, “No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day.” However, in verse 37 he says, “All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out.” So on the one hand no one has the ability to come to Jesus, but at the same time the Father has given Jesus certain people who will go to him. There is no room left for uncertainty. It seems to be the case that God wills who will come to Jesus (as he gave them to him and did not give others). Such examples could be multiplied. To prove the point that God can use his omnipotence to change one’s will and it also be exercised freely would certainly need to be further investigated. *Prima facie*, however, it seems at

least possible from a biblical perspective that this can be done. Perhaps one might argue that the kings in question are not using free will, or that the interpretation and use of these Scriptures and those like them are misguided. Such may certainly be the case. More investigation needs to be done, it seems, to make Stump's point, at least in comparing the theological claims of Christianity with the philosophical problem of omnipotence and freedom.

Certainly from a philosophical point of view Stump's argument deserves great consideration. There is an exegetical component to this argument since it is based on sacred revelation; however, any serious work in this area is beyond the scope of this work.

Conclusion

The problem of evil is perhaps the greatest thorn in the theist's side. Stump points out that it is not a logical problem, however. She also lays out a philosophical

argument that attempts to take into consideration both the philosophical and theological complexities involved in the matter (at least as far as space will allow her to do so). Her argument is certainly one that deserves further investigation and thought.

There does seem, however, to be apparent problems with her view. These problems, if they are real, may not pose any serious problem to Stump's overall view. It may just be the case that certain aspects need reworking or rewording. However, it may be the case that these problems are due to the weakness of the author either in his philosophical acumen or his exegetical abilities. In either case, Christian philosophers can be thankful to Stump for her incredible insights and work.

The End of Apologetics: Christian Witness in a
Postmodern Context

Louis Markos

In the early 1990's I suffered a sea change from a PhD student at the University of Michigan to English professor at an evangelical liberal arts university in Texas.¹ The transition was a profound one, and it took me several years to grasp the full nature of my calling as a secular-trained academic who confessed Jesus as Lord and for whom the Trinity, Incarnation, Atonement, and Resurrection represented the pillars and touchstones of my faith, truth, and reality.

In working out my calling and identity I was aided greatly by three books which I read, serendipitously, in close proximity: Alasdair MacIntyre's *After Virtue*, Lesslie

¹ Dr. Louis Markos, Professor in English and Scholar in Residence at Houston Baptist University, holds the Robert H. Ray Chair in Humanities; his books include *From Achilles to Christ*, *Lewis*

Newbigin's *Foolishness to the Greeks*, and Mark Noll's *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*. Though the books differed in many ways, their combined witness opened my eyes to the ubiquitous dangers and the dangerous ubiquity of the fact/value split.

Whereas pre-modern people operated from what Francis Schaeffer called a unified field of knowledge, the Enlightenment drove a wedge between reason and revelation, history and myth, logic and emotion, science and religion, public and private. This Enlightenment split, which is ingrained in nearly all graduate students, has had the effect of silencing Christian professors who feel it would be unprofessional for them to bring their Christian beliefs into the classroom. As a result, secular humanism is allowed to reign supreme as the default paradigm of the academy.

Agonistes, Apologetics for the 21st Century, and On the Shoulders of Hobbits: The Road to Virtue with Tolkien and Lewis.

Against this relegating of Christianity to the sphere of private emotion, two generations of feisty apologists have asserted the rational/logical/historical/scientific foundations of the Christian worldview. They fought a good fight; however, in order to win it, they agreed to wage their war in an arena created by that very Enlightenment whose exaltation of reason over faith had been responsible for pushing the Christian witness out of the public square.

In *The End of Apologetics: Christian Witness in a Postmodern Context*, Myron Bradley Penner, an Anglican priest who holds a PhD from the University of Edinburgh, argues that this agreement should never have been made. Although Christians worship a savior who entered history at a specific time and place, and although that savior reached out to people as embodied individuals, modern apologists found their arguments upon abstract principles meant to appeal to disembodied minds.

Rather than treat the truths of Christianity as rooted in a tradition and in a community of faith (the Church), modern apologists, entrenched in the same Enlightenment mindset that they set out to conquer, treat reason as an “objective-universal-neutral complex,” a phrase which Penner cleverly refers to by the acronym, OUNCE. Indeed, though liberal and conservative apologists differ on how much of orthodox doctrine they will accept, they both agree that the doctrines that *can* be accepted must be supportable by OUNCE-based reason.

Parting company with apologists who follow a two-step method by which they first argue for theism and then move on to Christianity, Penner, with considerable gusto, argues that theism is “something of a modern intellectual fiction.” Theism as a concept was invented to facilitate OUNCE-based discussions of religion. “Actual believers in the so-called theistic religions are members of historically situated worshipping communities that engage in specific

practices and have beliefs—about God, the world, the nature of faith, etc.—that are a crucial part of making life and their world intelligible.” While people in faith communities look to prophets for a word from God, moderns look to expert apologists for rational justification. So reliant, in fact, has the church become upon such experts that apologetics itself has become an industry, marketing such consumer products as books, lecture series, God debates, and even culture wars.

In developing his distinction between experts and prophets, Penner borrows from Kierkegaard’s essay, “On the Difference between a Genius and an Apostle.” Unlike the genius, who appeals to the authority of abstract reason, the apostle appeals to tradition, revelation and the call of God. For the apostle/prophet, and those who follow him, truth is not something that one can possess and enshrine in universal propositions; truth is something that possesses us,

that exists within a specific context, and that can only be expressed in contingent language.

For Penner, what the church needs today are not expert apologists making airtight cases for faith but prophetic witnesses who seek to edify particular persons in particular situations. Though Penner is careful not to fall into an anti-dogmatic stance, he makes it clear that true Christian witnesses must first appropriate the faith for themselves. “As an individual believer I do not sit in authority over Scripture or tradition, but I must wrestle with them and struggle to make them mine and resituate their truths within my time, my life, and my community.”

Only once we have gone through such an internal wrestling process can we move outward toward others and help them embody the faith in their own community. In his famous “Here I stand” speech, Luther appeals, not to OUNCE truth, but to the contingent truth he has found through years of personal struggle. As it was for Luther, so,

Penner argues, it should be for us. “In our Christian witness we always testify—as Luther does—from our conscience and not from an epistemically secure and objectively demonstrable position.”

The End of Apologetics is a well-researched, effectively organized, lucidly written, mostly irenic work that succeeds in de-fanging postmodernism. By carefully marshalling the innovative theories of believers (Kierkegaard, Wittgenstein, Hauerwas, Volf, Kevin Vanhoozer) and non-believers (Lyotard, Foucault, Rorty, Ricoeur, Terry Eagleton) alike, Penner demonstrates persuasively that postmodernism, far from being a gateway to relativism, atheism, and the death of the church, offers resources for furthering the gospel and strengthening discipleship.

Still, Penner’s book is a troubling one. Although, like most postmodern thinkers, Penner works hard to avoid falling into an either/or binary, the clear message of his

book is that modern apologetics needs to give way to his own brand of prophetic, contingent witness. Penner is certainly right to argue that different people from different communities need to hear the gospel in personal ways, but he seems unwilling to concede that there are many in our modern world who need to hear reason-based arguments as a form of pre-evangelism. He quotes C. S. Lewis several times, always positively, and yet Lewis's effectiveness as a witness rests in great part on his ability to 1) balance reason and imagination in his apologetical works, 2) find common ground (like the existence of a cross-cultural moral/ethical code) that all people can identify with, and 3) tap a universal longing that cuts across all boundaries of time and space.

I will concede Penner's distrust of propositional statements (OUNCE), but Lewis's liar, lunatic, lord trilemma, though it rests on rational argumentation methods, is firmly grounded in the words of Jesus as

understood by the people who lived in Jesus's culture. Only by putting ourselves in the place of a first-century Jewish monotheist can we appreciate the absolutely radical nature of Jesus's claims: so radical that if Jesus was not the Son of God, then he could only have been insane or a blasphemer.

I will further concede Penner's contention that evangelists are most effective when they speak from the perspective of their own struggle. But such a contention obscures the fact that the apostles' chief testimony was to a historical event (the Resurrection) not a personal experience. In his critique, Penner fails to mention that defenses of the historicity of the Resurrection are absolutely central to modern apologetics.

Penner does well to expose how reliant modern apologetics is on Enlightenment reasoning, but he would do better if he cast a more critical eye on his own tendency to perpetuate the Enlightenment split by championing the personal, the emotional, and the intuitive over the public,

the rational, and the logical. If we are to love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, then we need to foster in ourselves, our churches, and our schools both forms of apologetics.

A Review of John H. Walton and D. Brent Sandy.
The Lost World of Scripture, Ancient Literary
Culture and Biblical Authority

F. David Farnell

The authors of *The Lost World of Scripture*, John H. Walton and D. Brent Sandy state that their, “specific objective is to understand better how both the Old and New Testaments were spoken, written and passed on, especially with an eye to possible implications for the Bible’s inspiration and authority” (p. 9).¹ They add, “part of the purpose of this book is to bring students back from the brink of turning away from the authority of Scripture in reaction to the misappropriation of the term *inerrancy*” (p. 9). They assert that as Wheaton University professors, they work “at an institution and with a faculty that take a strong

¹ Dr. Dave Farnell, Ph.D., Senior Professor of New Testament at The Master’s Seminary; his books include *The Jesus Crisis* and *The Jesus Quest*.

stand on inerrancy but that are open to dialogue” and that this openness “provided a safe context in which to explore the authority of Scripture from the ground up” (p. 10).

Walton wrote the chapters on the Old Testament, while Sandy wrote the chapters on the New Testament. W/S have written this book especially for “Christian students in colleges, seminaries and universities” with the hopes that they will find their work “useful,” as well as writing for “colleagues who have a high view of Scripture, especially for those who hold to inerrancy” (p. 10). The book is also “not intended for outsiders; that is, it’s not an apologetic defense of biblical authority.” Rather, “we’re writing for insiders, seeking to clarify how best to understand the Bible” (p. 9). The writers also assure the readers that they have a “very high view of Scripture; “[w]e affirm inerrancy” and that they “are in agreement with the definition suggested by David Dockery that the ‘Bible properly interpreted in light of [the] culture and

communication developed by the time of its composition will be shown to be completely true (and therefore not false) in all that it affirms, to the degree of precision intended by the author, in all matters relating to God and his creation” (David S. Dockery, *Christian Scripture; An Evangelical Perspective on Inspiration, Authority and Interpretation* (Nashville: B & H, 1994, p. 64).

The central thrust of the book is that the world of the Bible (both Old and New Testament) is quite different from modern times. W/S claim,

Most of us are probably unprepared . . . for how different the ancient world is from our own . . . We’re thousands of years and thousands of miles removed. It means we frequently need to put the brakes on and ask whether we’re reading the Bible in light of the original culture or in light of contemporary culture. While the Bible’s values were very different from ancient cultures’, it obviously communicated in the existing languages and within cultural customs of the day” (p. 13). Such a recognition and the “evidence assembled in this book inevitably leads to the question of inerrancy.” (p. 13).

W/S also suggest that, “[T]he truth of the matter is, no term, or even combination of terms, can completely represent the fullness of Scripture’s authority” (p. 13). W/S then quote the Short Statement of the Chicago Statement on Biblical inerrancy of 1978 (p. 14). This creates the impression that they are in agreement with the statement. However, this quote of the Short Statement is deceptive because book constitutes an essential challenge to much of what the Chicago Statements asserted in the Articles of Affirmation and Denial. This uneasiness with the Chicago Statement can also be seen in those who are listed as endorsers of the work, Tremper Longmann III who chairs the Robert H. Gundry professor of Biblical Studies, as well as Michael R. Licona who recently, in his *The Resurrection of Jesus*, used genre criticism to negate the resurrection of the saints in Jerusalem in Matthew 27:51-53 at Jesus crucifixion as apocalyptic genre rather than indicating a literal resurrection, and Craig Evans, Acadia Divinity

College, who is not known for his support of the Chicago Statements.²

The book consists of 21 propositions that seek to nuance biblical authority, interpretation and an understanding of inerrancy, with the essential thought of these propositions flowing basically from 2 areas: (1) their first proposition, “Ancient Near Eastern Societies were *hearing dominant* (italics added) and had nothing comparable to authors and books as we know them” [in modern times since the printing press] while modern societies today are “*text dominant*” (italics added) (p. 19, see also pp. 17-28) and (2) speech-act theory that they frequently refer to in their work (pp. 41-46, 48, 51, 200, 213-218, 229, 288). The authors qualify their latter acceptance of speech-act theory:

² For example, Craig A. Evans, “In Appreciation of the Dominical and Thomistic Traditions: The Contribution of J. D. Crossan and N. T. Wright to Jesus Research,” in *The Resurrection of Jesus, John Dominic Crossan and N. T. Wright in Dialogue*. Ed.

We do not agree with many of the conclusions with speech act theory, but we find its foundational premise and terminology helpful and have adopted its three basic categories. The communicator uses *locutions* (words, sentences, rhetorical structures, genres) to embody an *illocution* (the intention to do something with those locutions—bless, promise, instruct, assert) with a *perlocution* that anticipates a certain response from the audience (obedience trust, belief) (p. 41).

W/S go on to assert that God accommodated his communication in the Scripture: “. . . [a]ccommodation on the part of the divine communicator resides primarily in the locution, in which the genre and rhetorical devices are included.” (p. 42). And,

[G]enre is largely a part of the locution, not the illocution. Like grammar, syntax and lexemes, genre is a mechanism to convey an illocution. Accommodation takes place primarily at the locutionary level. Inerrancy and authority related to the illocution; accommodation and genre attach at the locution. Therefore inerrancy and authority cannot be undermined, compromised or

Robert B. Stewart (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2006), fn. 30, p. 195 where he denies the resurrection of the Saints in Matthew 27.

jeopardized by genre or accommodation. While genre labels may be misleading, genre itself cannot be true or false, errant or inerrant, authoritative or nonauthoritative. Certain genres lend themselves to more factual detail and others more toward fictional imagination. (p. 45).

While admittedly the book's propositions entail many other ideas, from these two ideas, an oral dominated society in ancient times of the OT and NT vs. a written/text dominant society of modern times and the implications of speech-act theory cited above, flow all that W/S develop in their assertions to nuance their take on what a proper view of inerrancy and biblical authority should be. The obvious implication of these assertions is that Robert Gundry, who was removed from ETS due to his dehistoricizing in 1983, was wronged because value judgments about genre does not impact the doctrine of inerrancy. Gundry was perfectly in the confines of inerrancy to dehistoricize because, according to W/S, it was ETS that misunderstood the concept of inerrancy as not genre driven. It is the illocution

(purpose or intent) not the wording that drives inerrancy. Gundry's theorizing of a midrashic genre, according to this idea, had nothing at all to do with inerrancy. Gundry believed sincerely in inerrancy but realized the midrashic, not historical, nature of Matthew 2.

The review will give commendations of the book. First, W/S are to be commended for their affirmation of inerrancy and their sincere desire to explore the authority of Scripture. Second, W/S also recognize that nowhere exists any perfect attempt by theologians of representing the fullness of Scripture's authority. As the IVP "Academic Alert" (Winter 2014, volume 22, number 4) noted on the front page, "Where Scholars Fear to Tread, *John Walton and Brent Sandy take on the juggernaut of biblical authority in **The Lost World of Scripture.***" Since W/S have taken on this "juggernaut," their theorizing about inerrancy opens itself up to critique.

Unfortunately, W/S propositions create more problems for inerrancy than they attempt to solve. Their idea of the orality of the ancient near east in which the OT and NT often gives the impression W/S imagine that these ancients were not only different in approach (ear-dominant vs. text dominant) but also rather primitive as well as unscientific in what they held in terms of their concept of the material world around them. From an historical point of view, W/S work is reminiscent of Rogers and McKim, in their now famous, *The Authority and Interpretation of the Bible* (1979), *An Historical Approach*, who made a similar error in their approach to Scripture. Rogers and McKim also spoke of “the central Christian tradition included the concept of accommodation;” that today witnesses a “scholastic overreaction to biblical criticism;” “the function and purpose of the Bible was to bring people into a saving relationship with God through Jesus Christ”; “the Bible was not used as an encyclopedia of information on all

subjects;” and “to erect a standard of modern, technical precision in language as the hallmark of biblical authority was totally foreign to the foundation shared by the early church.” (R/M, xxii).

W/S similarly assert in their implications of an oral society that “The Bible contains no new revelation about the material workings and understanding of the Material World” (Proposition 4, pp.49-59) so that the,

Bible’s ‘explicit statements about the material world are part of the locution and would naturally accommodate the beliefs of the ancient world. As such they are not vested with authority. We cannot encumber with scriptural authority any scientific conclusions we might deduce from the biblical text about the material world, its history or its regular processes. This means that we cannot draw any scientific conclusions about such areas as physiology, meteorology, astronomy, cosmic geography, genetics or geology from the Bible. For example, we should believe that God created the universe, but we should not expect to be able to derive from the biblical texts the methods that he used or the time that it took. We should believe that God created humans in his image and that through the choices they made sin and death came into the

world. Scientific conclusions, however, relating to the material processes of human origins (whether from biology in general or genetics in particular) may be outside the purview of the Bible. We need to ask whether the Bible is making those sort of claims in its illocutions (p. 55).

They continue,

The Bible's claims regarding origins, mechanics or shape of the world are, by definition of the focus of its revelation, mechanics or shape of the world are, by definition of the focus of its revelation in the theological realm. (p. 55).

According to W/S, what the Bible says plainly in the words of Genesis 1 may not be what it intends. Immediate special creation cannot be read into the text; rather the door is open for evolution and the acceptance of modern understandings of science. Thus, Genesis 1 and 2 may well indicate God's creation but not the means of how he created, even when the locutions say "evening and morning"; "first day" etc. Much of what is in Genesis 1 reflects "Old World Science": "one could easily infer from the statements in the biblical text that the sun and moon share space with the birds (Gen.

1). But this is simply a reflection of Old World Science, and we attach no authority to that conclusion. Rather we consider it a matter of deduction on the part of the ancients who made no reason to know better.” (p. 57). For them, “[t]he Bible's authority is bound into theological claims and entailments about the material world. For them, since the Bible is not a science textbook, its "authority is not found in the locution but has to come through illocution" (p. 54). Genesis 1-2, under their system, does not rule out evolution; nor does it signify creation literally in six "days." Such conclusions press the text far beyond its purpose to indicate God's creation of the world but not the how of the processes involved. W/S conclude, "we have proposed that reticence to identify scientific claims or entailments is the logical conclusion from the first two points (not a science textbook; no new scientific revelation) and that a proper understanding of biblical authority is dependent on recognizing this to be true" (p. 59). They assert that “it is

safe to believe that Old World Science permeates the Old Testament” and “Old World Science is simply part of the locution [words, etc.] and as such is not vested with authority” (p. 300).

Apparently, W/S believe that modern science has a better track record at origins. This assumption is rather laughable. Many "laws" of science for one generation are overturned in other generations. Scientific understanding is in constant flux. Both of these authors have failed to understand that modern science is predominated overwhelmingly by materialistic philosophies rather than presenting any evidence of objectivity in the area of origins. Since Science is based on observation, testing, measurement and repeatability, ideas of origins are beyond the purview of modern science too. For instance, the fossil record indicates the death of animals, but how that death occurred and what the implications of that fossil record are, delves more into philosophy and agendas rather than good

science. Since no transitional forms exist between species in the fossil record, evolution should be rendered tenuous as an explanation, but science refuses to rule it out due to a dogmatic *a priori*.

While W/S quote the ICBI "short statement" their work actually is an assault on the articles of affirmation and denial of the 1978 Chicago Statement on Inerrancy. In article IX, it noted that "**We affirm** that inspiration, though not conferring omniscience, guaranteed true and trustworthy utterance on all matters of which the biblical authors were moved to speak and write" and Article XII, "**we deny** that biblical infallibility and inerrancy are limited to spiritual, religious, or redemptive themes, exclusive of the fields of history and science. We further deny that scientific hypotheses about earth history may properly be used to overturn the teaching of Scripture on creation and the flood." Article XI related, "far from misleading us, it is true and reliable in all matters in addresses."

Another area that is troubling is in W/S theorizing of text-canonical updating. The adoption of multiple unknown redactor/editors by W/S, who updated the text over long periods of time in terms of geography, history, names, etc. actually constitutes an argument, not for inerrancy, but for deficiency in the text of Scripture and hence an argument for errancy, not inerrancy. Due to the OT being a oral or ear dominated society, W/S also propose a text-canonical updating hypothesis: "the model we propose agrees with traditional criticism in that it understands the final literary form of the biblical books to be relatively late and generally not the literary product of the authority figure whose words the book preserves (p. 66). This while Moses, Isaiah, and other prominent figures were behind the book, perhaps multiple, unknown editors were involved in any updating and final form of the books in the OT/NT that we have. For them, in the whole process of Scripture, "[t]he Holy Spirit is behind the whole process

from beginning to end" in spite of the involvement of unknown hands in their final development (p. 66). W/S negate the central idea of inerrancy that would center around original autographs that were inerrant, or that such autographs even existed: "Within evangelical circles discussing inerrancy and authority, the common affirmation is that the text is inerrant in the original autographs . . . since all copies were pristine, inerrancy could only be connected with the putative originals ("p. 66). Modern discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls has made it "clear that there was not only one original form of the final literary piece" of such books as Samuel and Jeremiah (p. 67). Which version is original cannot be determined.

Under W/S model it does not make any difference because "in the model that we have proposed here, it does not matter. The authority is associated with Jeremiah, no matter which compilation is used. We cannot be dependent on the 'original autographs,' not only because we do not

have them, but also because the very concept is anachronistic for most of the Old Testament" (p. 67). For W/S, "inerrancy and authority are connected initially to the figure or the authoritative traditions. We further accept the authority represented in the form of the book adopted by faith communities and given canonical status" (p. 67). "Inerrancy and authority attach to the final canonical form of the book rather than to putative original autographs" (p. 68). Later on in their work, W/S assert that "inerrancy would then pertain to the role of the authorities (i.e. the role of Moses or Isaiah as dominant, determinative and principle voice), not to so-called authors writing so-called books—but the literature in its entirety would be considered authoritative" (p. 281). For them, "[a]uthority is not dependent on the original autographs or an author writing a book. Recognition of authority is identifiable in the beliefs of a community of faith (of whom we are heirs) that God's communications through authoritative figures

and traditions have been captured and preserved through a long process of transmission and composition" (p. 68).

According to W/S, Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch "does not decide the matter" regarding its authority, for many may have been involved in the final form of the first five books of Moses (p. 69). The final form involved perhaps many unknown editors and updaters: "Our interest is in the identity of the prophet as the authority figure behind the oracles, regardless of the composition history of the book" (p. 72). Thus, while Moses, Jeremiah, for instance, were the originator of the tradition or document and names are associated with the books, this approach of many involved in the product/final form of the book and variations, "allows us to adopt some of the more important advances that critical scholarship has offered" (p. 74). For them, unknown editors over long periods of time would have updated the text in many ways as time passed. They argue "it is safe to believe that some

later material could be added and later editors could have a role in the compositional history of a canonical book” (p. 299). Their positing of such a scheme, however, is suggestive that the text had been corrected, updated, revised all which smacks of a case for biblical errancy more than inerrancy in the process. Again, orthodox views of inerrancy, like the 1978 Chicago Statement, were not so negative about determining the autographs as article X related, "**We affirm** that inspiration, strictly speaking, applies only to the autographs of Scripture, which in the providence of God can be ascertained from available manuscripts with great accuracy." W/S also assert that "exacting detail and precise wording were not necessary to preserve and transmit the truths of Scripture" (p. 181) because they were an "ear" related culture rather than a print related culture (Proposition 13).

In reply to W/S, while this may be true that the New Testament was oral, such a statement needs by W/S need

qualification in their propositions throughout. No matter what the extent of orality in the OT and NT as posed by W/S, the reportage in these passages is accurate though it may not be, at times precise. While they are correct that "exacting detail and precise wording were not necessary to preserve and transmit the truths of Scripture, two competing views need to be contrasted in that oral reportage that was written down in the text of Scripture: an orthodox view and an unorthodox view of that reportage. This important distinction is lost in W/S's discussion (see Norman L. Geisler, "Evangelicals and Redaction Criticism, Dancing on the Edge" [1987] for a full discussion):

<i>ORTHODOX VIEW</i>	<i>UNORTHODOX VIEW</i>
<i>REPORTING THEM</i>	<i>CREATING THEM</i>
<i>SELECTING THEM</i>	<i>CONSTRUCTING THEM</i>
<i>ARRANGING THEM</i>	<i>MISARRANGING THEM</i>
<i>PARAPHRASING THEM</i>	<i>EXPANDING THEM</i>
<i>CHANGE THEIR FORM</i> <i>(Grammatical Change)</i>	<i>CHANGE THEIR</i> <i>CONTENT</i> <i>(Theological Change)</i>
<i>CHANGE THEIR</i> <i>WORDING</i>	<i>CHANGE THEIR</i> <i>MEANING</i>
<i>TRANSLATE THEM</i>	<i>MISTRANSLATE THEM</i>

<i>INTERPRET THEM</i>	<i>MISINTERPRET THEM</i>
<i>EDITING</i>	<i>REDACTING</i>

Article XIII of the 1978 Chicago Statement was careful to note that inerrancy does not demand precision at all times in reportage. Any criticism of the Chicago Statements in this area is ill-advised. The Chicago Statement ARTICLE XIII, claims,

We further deny that inerrancy is negated by biblical phenomena such as a lack of modern technical precision, irregularities of grammar or spelling, observational descriptions of nature, the reportage of falsehoods, the use of hyperbole and round numbers, the topical arrangement of material, variant selections of material in parallel accounts, or the use of free citations.

W/S's caveat on harmonization needs qualification: "it is not necessary to explain away the differences by some means of harmonization in order to fit modern standards of accuracy" (p. 151). While anyone may note many examples of trite harmonization, this does not negate the legitimacy or need for harmonization. Tatian's *Diatessaron*

(c. 160-175) is a testimony to the ancient church believing that the Gospels could be harmonized since they were a product of the Holy Spirit. From the ancient Christian church through to the time of the Reformation, the church always believed in the legitimacy and usefulness of harmonization. It was not until modern philosophical presuppositions (e.g Rationalism , Deism, Romanticism, etc.) that created the historical-critical ideology arose that discredited harmonization. The orthodox position of the church was that the Gospels were without error and could be harmonized into a unified whole. The rise of modern critical methods (i.e. historical criticism) with its accompanying low or no views of inspiration discredited harmonization, not bad examples of harmonization. For harmonization during the time of the Reformation, see Harvey K . McArthur, “Sixteenth Century Gospel Harmonies,” in *The Quest Through the Centuries: The*

Search for the Historical Jesus (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1966) 85 -101).

On page 274, W/S assert “[o]ur intention is to strengthen the doctrine of biblical authority through a realistic application of knowledge of the ancient world, and to understand what inerrancy can do and what it can’t do.” They believe that the term inerrancy is a term that “is reaching its limits” and also that “the convictions it sought to express and preserve remain important” (p. 274). “Inerrancy” is no longer the clear, defining term it once was and that “has become diminished in rhetorical power and specificity, it no longer serves as adequately to define our convictions about the robust authority of Scripture” (p. 275). They cite several errors of inerrancy advocates in the past. Most notably are the following: inerrancy advocates, “have at times misunderstood ‘historical’ texts by applying modern genre criteria to ancient literature, thus treating it as having claims that it never intended.” Apparently, this

position allows W/S to read the findings of modern “scientism” into the ancient text that often conflicts with today’s hypothesis of origins (i.e. creation). “They have at times confused locution [words, sentences, rhetorical structures, genres] and illocution [the intention to do something with those locutions—bless, promise, instruct, assert”]. Inerrancy technically applies on to the latter, though of course, without locutions, there would be no illocution” (p. 279).

In these quotations, W/S confuse inerrancy with interpretation and understanding of a text with this supposition. Each word is inspired but the understanding or interpretation of those words may not be considered “inerrant” but a process of interpretation of those words in the context in which those words occur. If Genesis 1 says “evening and morning” and “first,” “second” day, it is tenuous to imply that these terms are so flexible in interpretation to allow for long periods of time to

accommodate evolutionary hypotheses. “They have been too anxious to declare sections of the Old Testament to be historical in a modern sense, where it may not be making those claims for itself.” Here, this principle allows W/S to negate any part of the Old Testament that does not accord with modern sensibilities. It creates a large opening to read into the text rather than allow the text to speak for itself. They assert that positions such as “young earth or premillennialism may be defensible interpretations, but they cannot invoke inerrancy as a claim to truth” (p. 282). For W/S,

. . . the Israelites shared the general cognitive environment of the ancient world At the illocutionary level we may say that traditions in the early chapters of Genesis, for example served the Israelites by offering an account of God and his ways and conveying their deepest beliefs about how the world works, who they are and how it all began. These are the same questions addressed by the mythological traditions of the ancient world, but the answers given are very different (p. 303-304).

One other area where the elasticity of W/S's concept of history centers in that they allow for hyperbolic use of numbers in the Old Testament: "It is safe to believe that the Bible can use numbers rhetorically with the range of the conventions of the ancient world" (p. 302). They claim, "we may conclude that they are exaggerated or even that contradictory amounts are given in sources that report the same event" (p. 302). These may well be inaccuracies or contradictions according to our conventions, but that doesn't mean that they jeopardize inerrancy. Again, numerical quantity is locution. Authority ties to the illocution and what the narrator is *doing* with those numbers" (p. 302). Whatever he is doing, he is doing with the accepted conventions of their world" (p. 302).

Finally, W/S argue that "our doctrine of authority of Scripture has become too enmeshed in apologetics If we tie apologetics and theology too tightly together, the result could be that we end up trying to defend as theology

what are really just apologetic claims we have made” (p. 306). W/S contend,

. . . ill-formed versions of inerrancy have misled many people into false understandings of the nature of Scripture, which has led to poor hermeneutics for interpreting Scripture and to misunderstandings of Bible translations. Even more serious, certain views of inerrancy have led people away from the Christian faith. Such views can also keep people from considering more important matters in Scripture. If there is a stumbling block to people coming to the faith, should it not be Christ alone rather than a wall that we inadvertently place in the way of spiritual pilgrimages? (p. 308).

This reviewer has one reply to the illogic of W/S. If the documents are cannot be trusted in their plain, normal sense (e.g. creation), then how can their testimony about Christ be trusted? If the documents have as much flexibility as hypothesized by W/S, how can they be trusted to give a reliable, accurate and faithful witness to Him? While W/S have wrapped their work in an alleged improvement of current concepts of inerrancy and its implications, they

have actually presented a system that is (1) quite inferior to that of the ICBI statements of 1978 and 1982 and (2) one that really is designed to undermine the years of evangelical history that went into the formulation of those documents against the onslaught of historical-critical ideologies that W/S now embrace. They treat that history and reasons of the formulation of ICBI statements in a dismissive fashion that is perilous for those who do not remember the events of the past are doomed to repeat its mistakes as evidenced in this work of W/S. A better title for this book would have been “The Lost World of Inerrancy” since W/S’s system undermines the very concept.