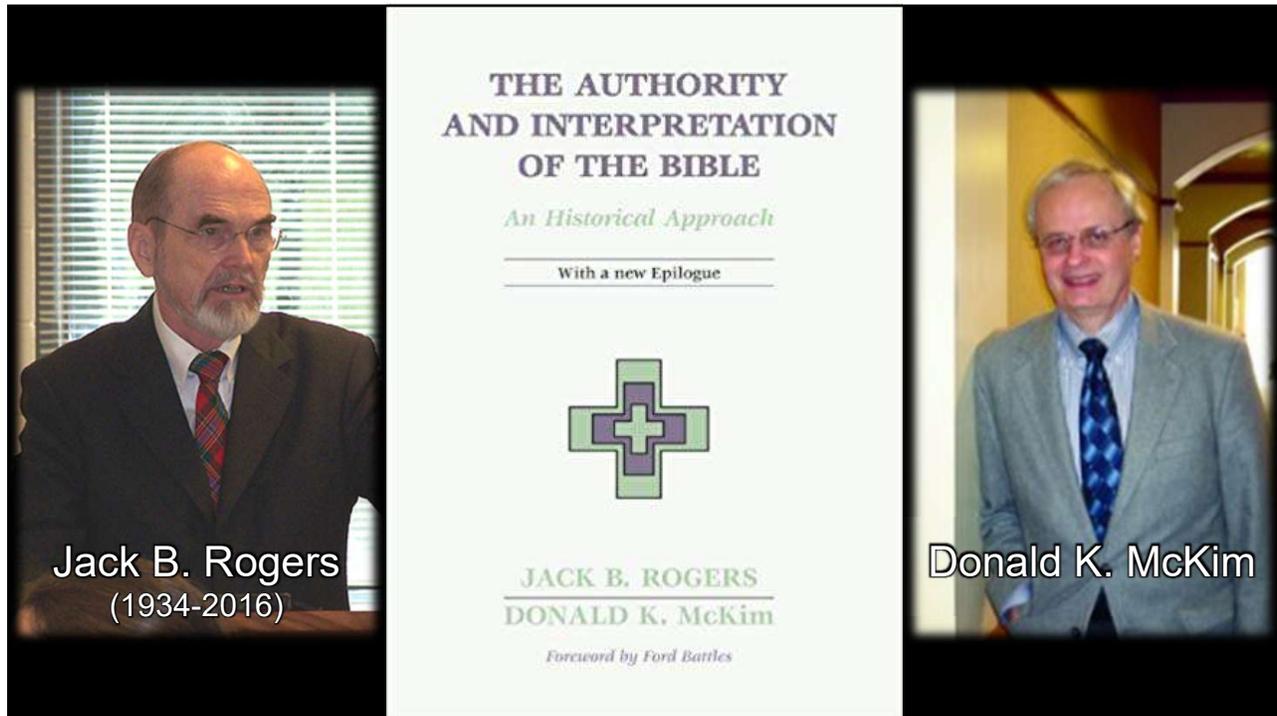


Introduction to
Christian Apologetics:
08 The Concept of Truth in the Inerrancy Debate
Revisited

Richard G. Howe, Ph.D.
Provost
Professor of Philosophy and Apologetics
Norman L. Geisler Chair of Christian Apologetics
Southern Evangelical Seminary, Rock Hill, South Carolina, USA

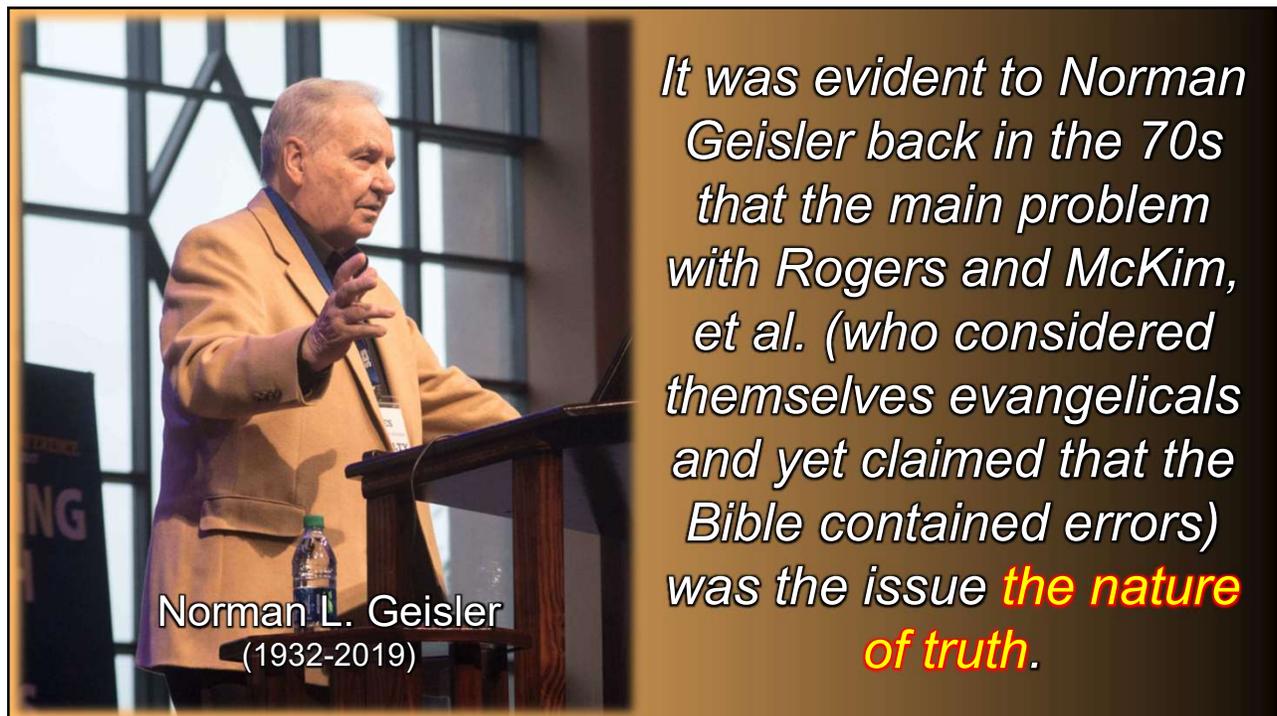


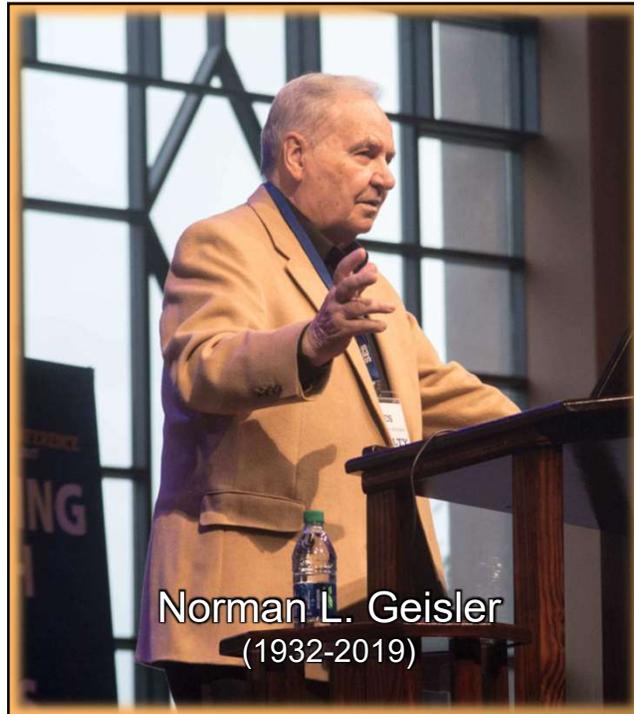
Motivation for
My Concerns



Jack B. Rogers
(1934-2016)

Donald K. McKim





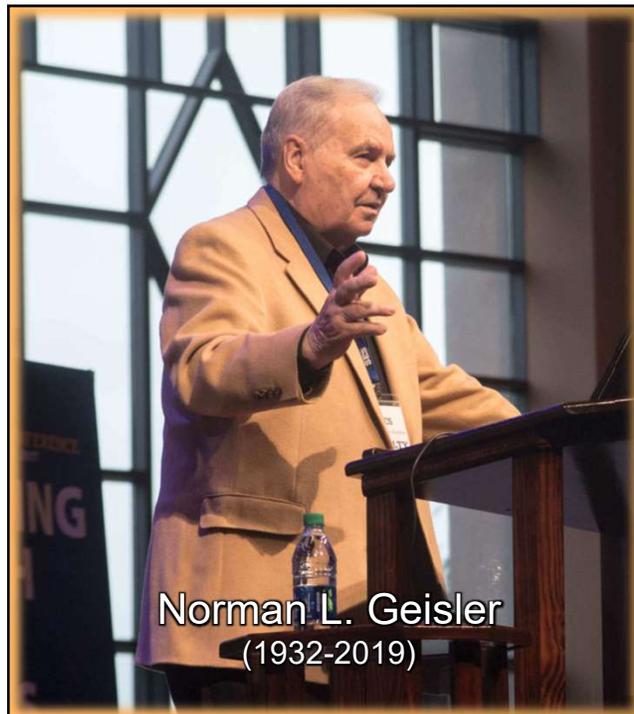
Norman L. Geisler
(1932-2019)

The Concept of Truth in the Inerrancy Debate

Norman L. Geisler

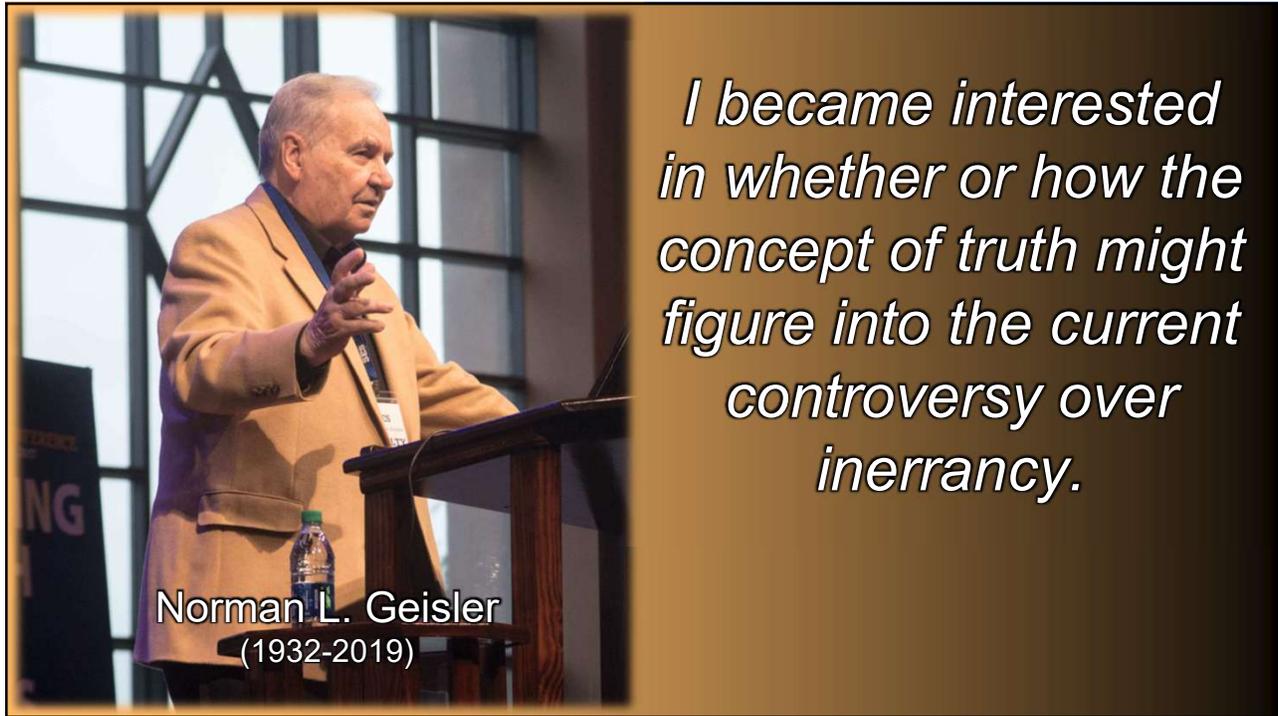
How is it that evangelicals on both sides of the inerrancy debate can claim the Bible is wholly true and yet one side believes that there can be minor mistakes of history or science affirmed by the biblical authors,¹ while the other side denies that there are any mistakes whatsoever? Some even claim to believe in inerrancy to the point that every word of the Bible is true,² and yet they hold that Jesus' statement that the mustard seed is the "smallest of all seeds" is scientifically incorrect.³ Some claim that the Bible is "the only infallible rule of faith and practice"⁴ but hold that Paul was wrong when he affirmed that the husband is the "head" of the wife.⁵ One errantist put it bluntly when he wrote, "We can speak of the Bible as being inspired from cover to cover, human mistakes and all."⁶

Is this duplicity? Are those who believe the Bible contains



Norman L. Geisler
(1932-2019)

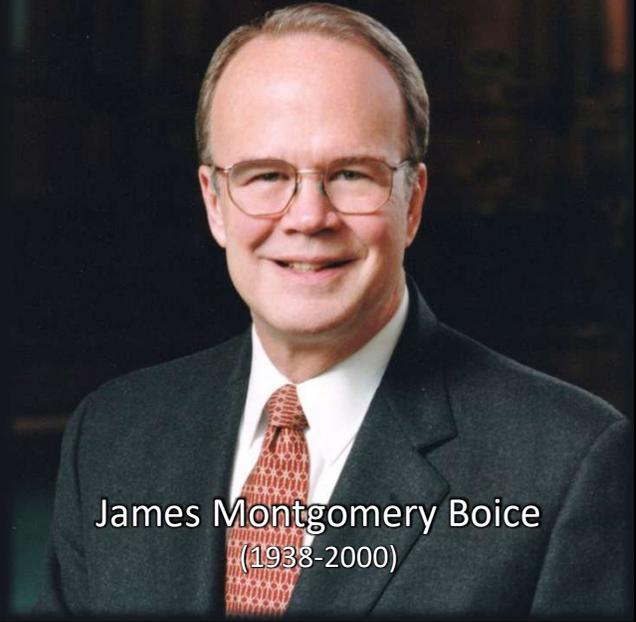
*In this seminal article, Geisler contrasts a prominent concept of truth held by Rogers and McKim (and others) with the **correspondence theory of truth.***

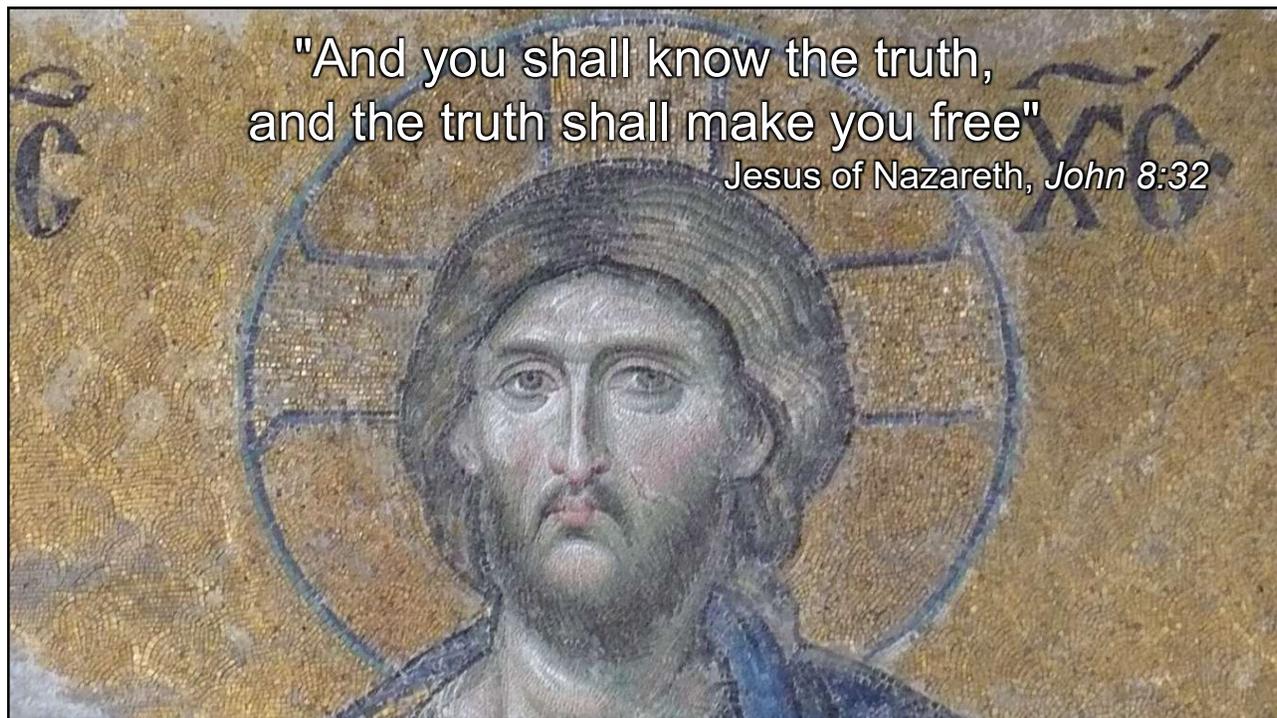
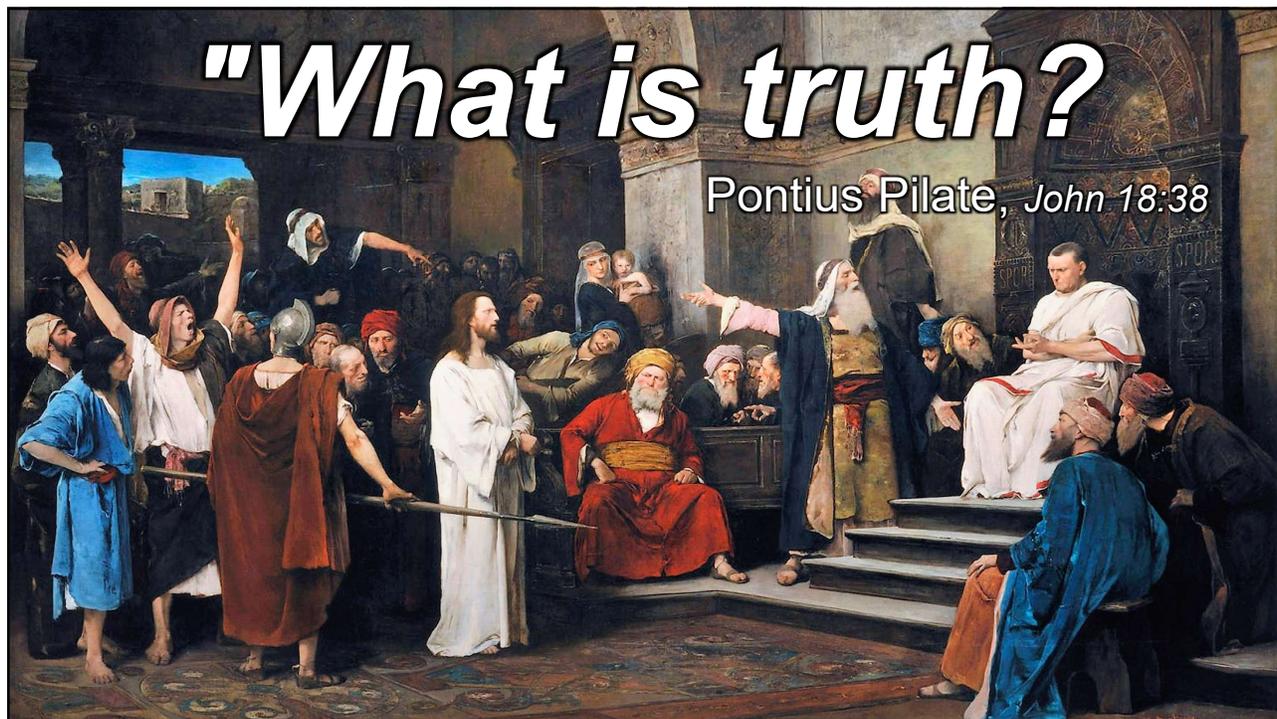


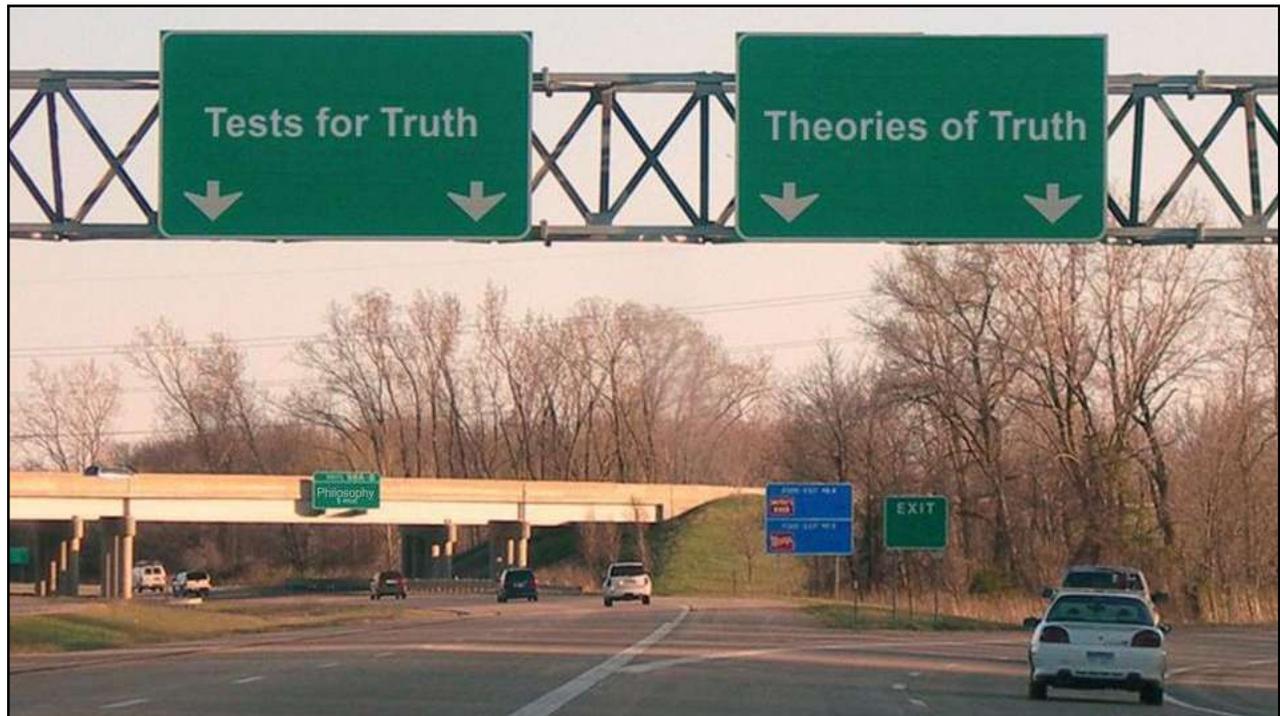
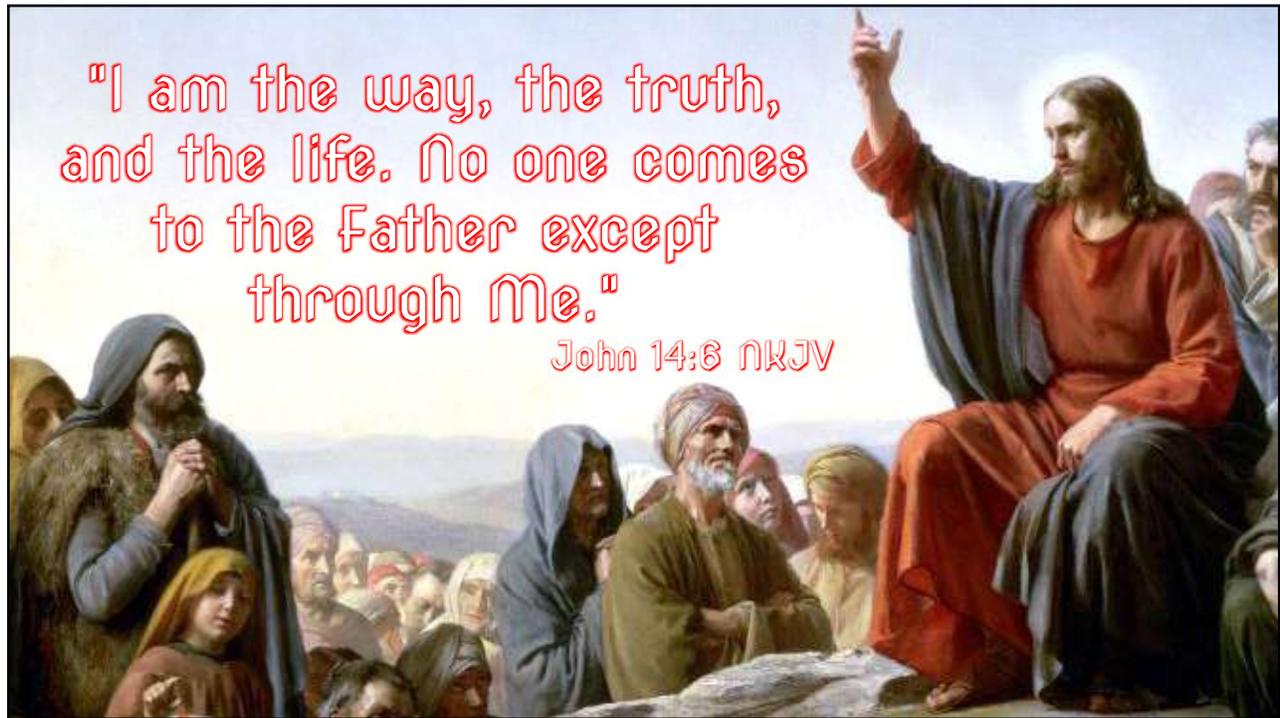
**"What
Scripture says,
God says—
through human
agents and
without **error**."**

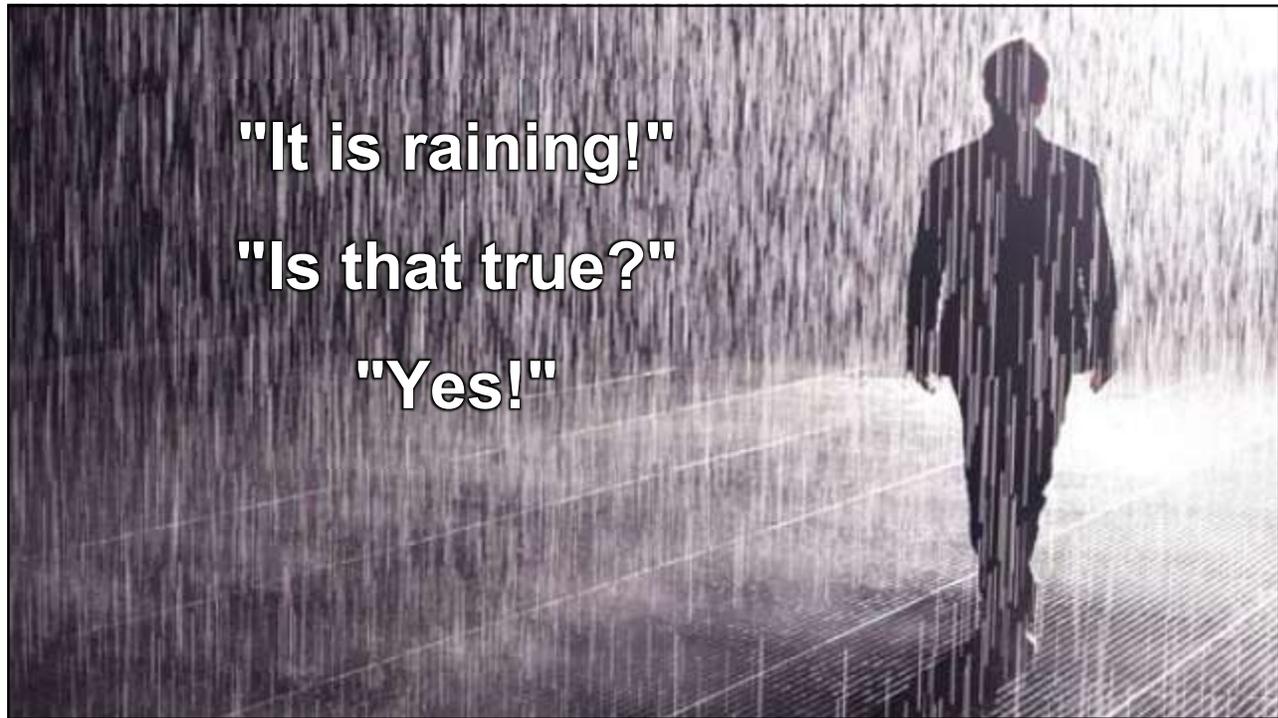
[Adapted from James Montgomery Boice, *Does Inerrancy Matter?*
(Oakland, CA: International Council on Biblical Inerrancy, 1979)]

James Montgomery Boice
(1938-2000)





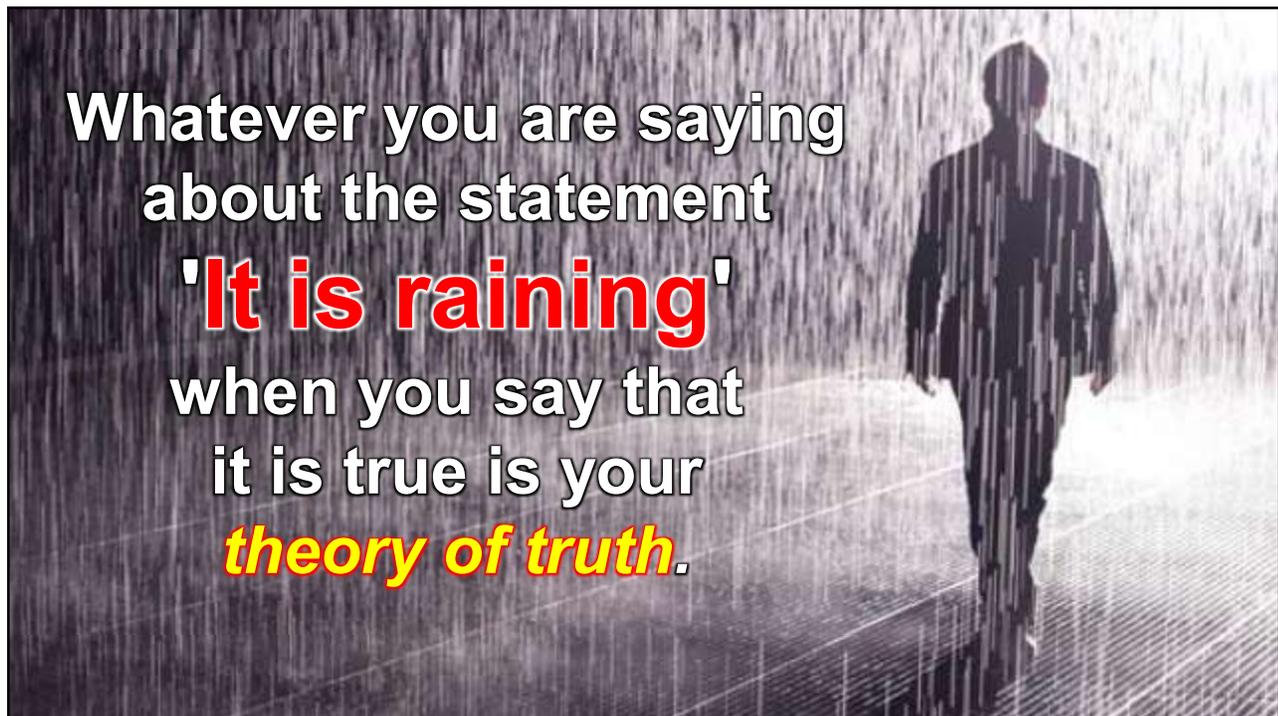




"It is raining!"

"Is that true?"

"Yes!"



Whatever you are saying
about the statement

'It is raining'

when you say that
it is true is your

theory of truth.



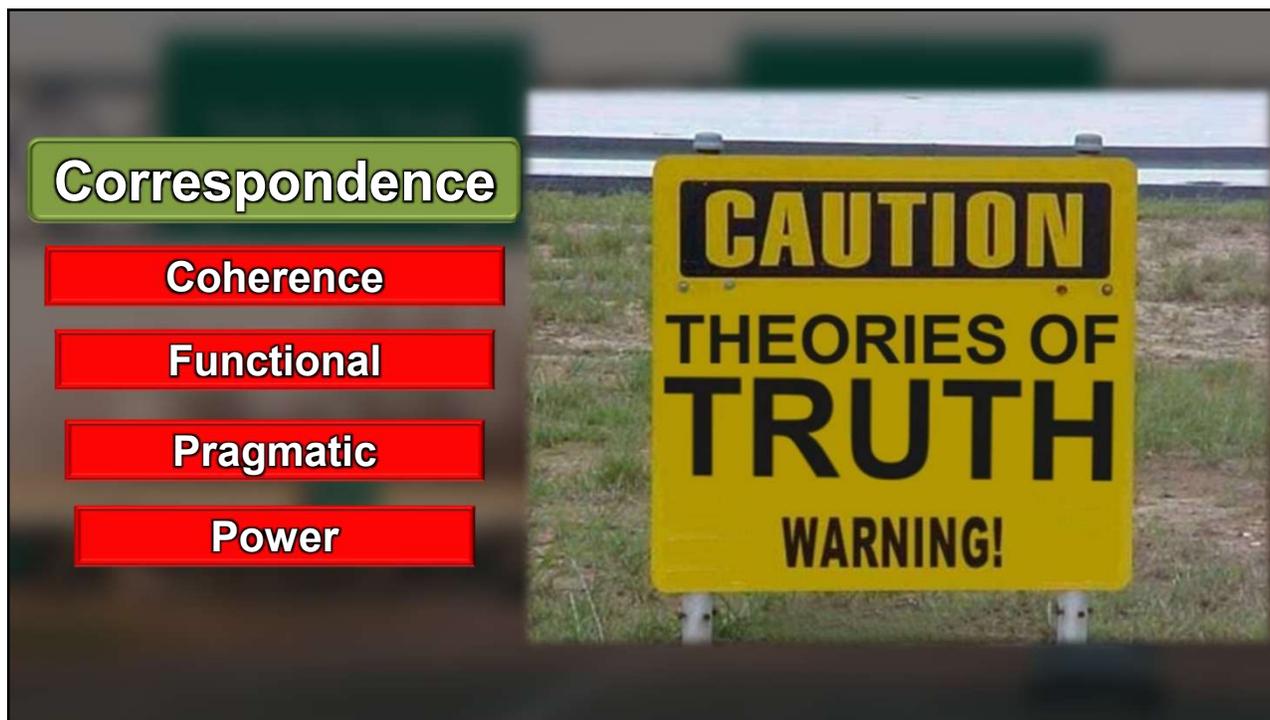
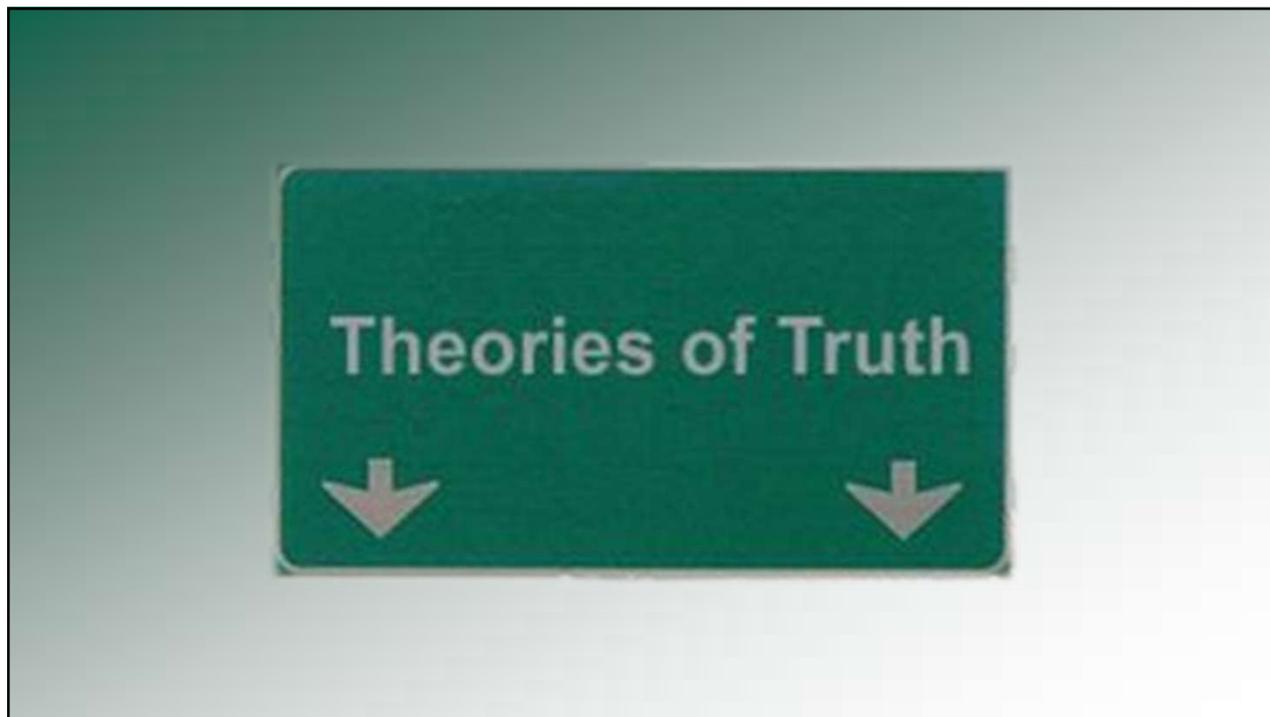
How you know whether it
is raining is your
test for truth.

∞ Theory of Truth ∞

how one **defines** the
terms 'true' and 'truth'
when saying that a
statement is true

∞ Test for Truth ∞

how one **discovers**
whether a statement is
true, regardless of
one's theory of truth



Correspondence

Truth is correspondence to reality.

- This says that a statement is true in as much as it corresponds to reality.
- Thus, the statement 'It is raining.'

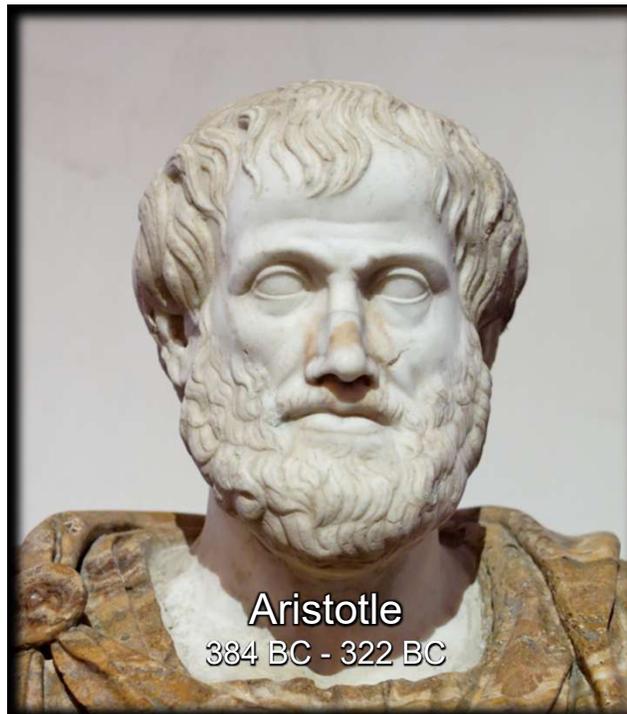
'It is raining'

would be a true statement if it is in fact raining in reality.



'It is raining'

would be a false statement if it is in fact not raining in reality.

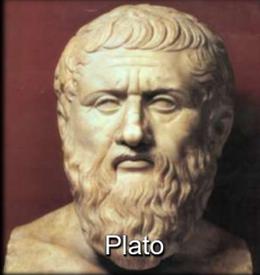


Aristotle
384 BC - 322 BC

"To say of what is, that it is not, or of what is not, that it is, is false, while to say of what is, that it is and of what is not, that it is not, is true."

Metaphysics, IV, 7, 1011^b26-29 Translation by W. D. Ross in Richard McKeon, *The Basic Works of Aristotle* (New York: Random House, 1941). τὸ μὲν γὰρ λέγειν τὸ ὄν μὴ εἶναι ἢ τὸ μὴ ὄν εἶναι ψεῦδος, τὸ δὲ τὸ ὄν εἶναι καὶ τὸ μὴ ὄν μὴ εἶναι ἀληθές.

Other Philosophers Who Hold to the Correspondence Theory of Truth



Plato

SOCRATES: *But how about truth, then? You would acknowledge that there is in words a true and a false?*

HERMOGENES: *Certainly.*

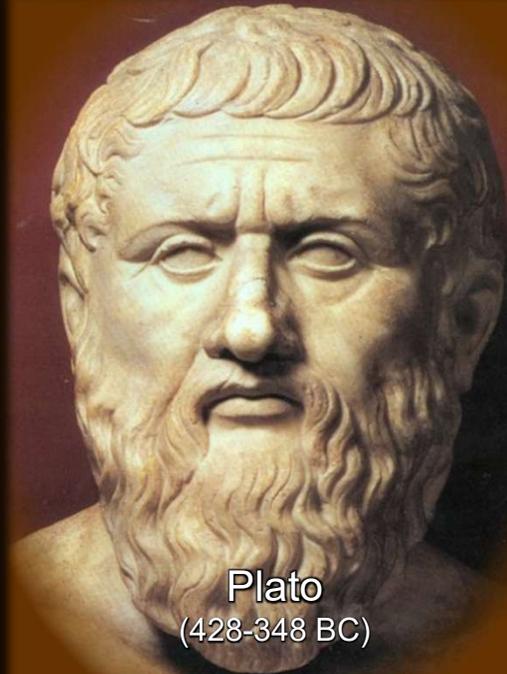
SOCRATES: *And there are true and false propositions?*

HERMOGENES: *To be sure.*

SOCRATES: *And a true proposition says that which is, and a false proposition says that which is not?*

HERMOGENES: *To be sure.*

[Cratylus, 385b, trans. Benjamin Jowett in Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns, eds. *Plato: The Collected Dialogues* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961, 423]



Plato
(428-348 BC)

STRANGER: Then what sort of character can we assign to each of these [statements]?

THEAETETUS: One is false, the other true.

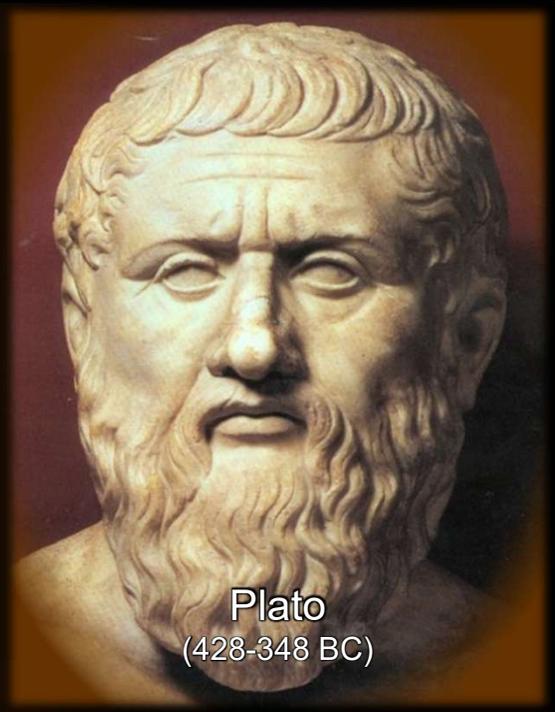
STRANGER: And the true one states about you the things that are as they are.

THEAETETUS: Certainly.

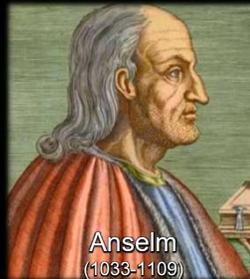
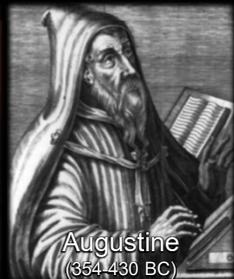
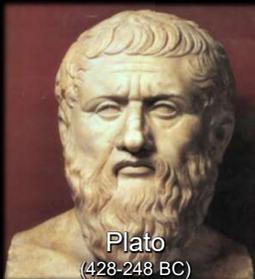
STRANGER: Whereas the false statement states about you things different from the things that are.

THEAETETUS: Yes.

[*Sophist*, 263b, trans. F. M. Cornford in Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns, eds. *Plato: The Collected Dialogues* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961, 1010]

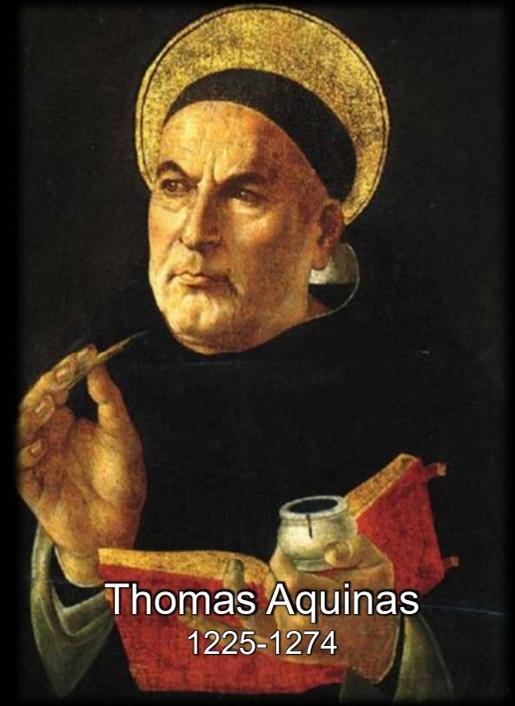


Other Philosophers Who Hold to the Correspondence Theory of Truth



"Truth is defined by the conformity of intellect and thing; and hence to know this conformity is to know truth."

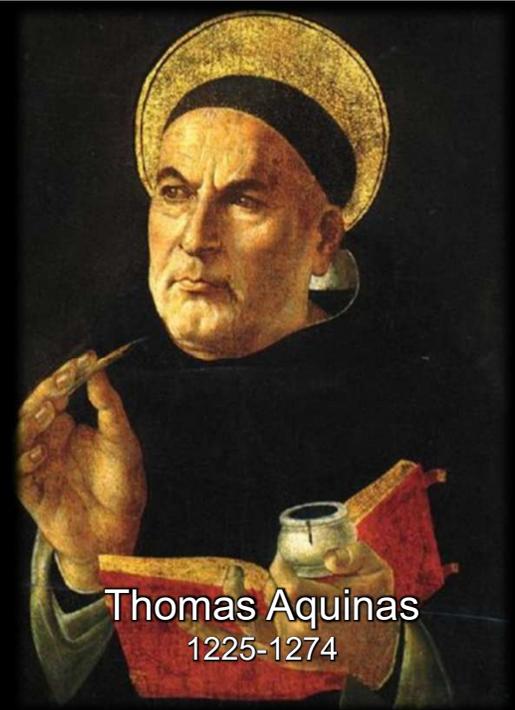
Summa Theologiae I, Q. 16, art. 2.



Thomas Aquinas
1225-1274

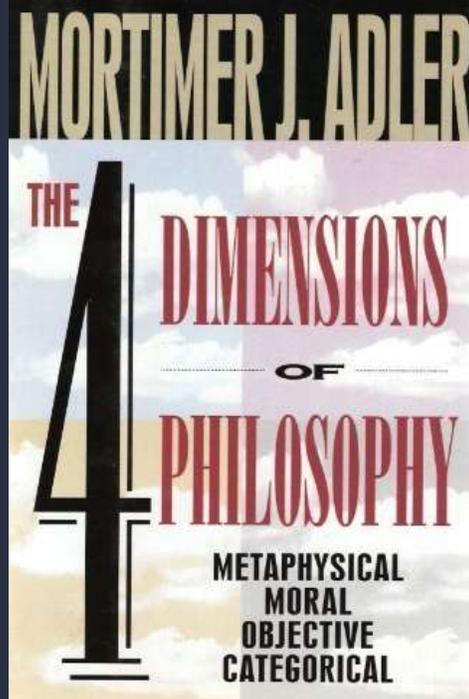
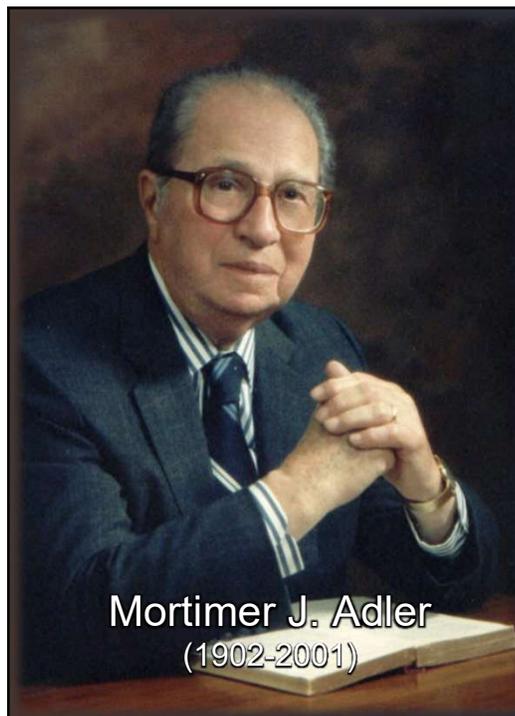
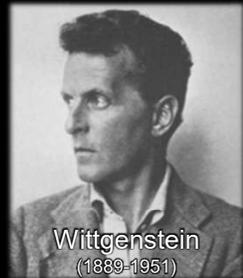
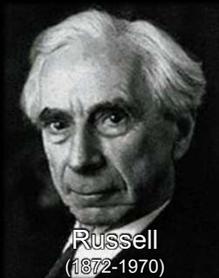
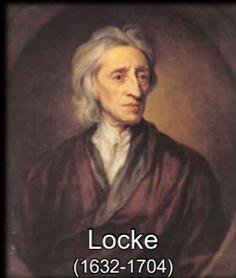
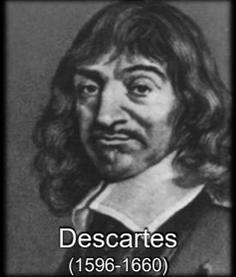
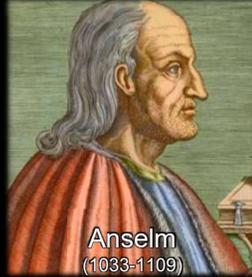
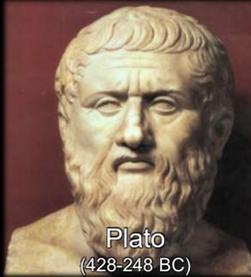
"The knowledge which we have by natural reason contains two things: images derived from the sensible object; and the natural intelligible light, enabling us to abstract from them intelligible conceptions."

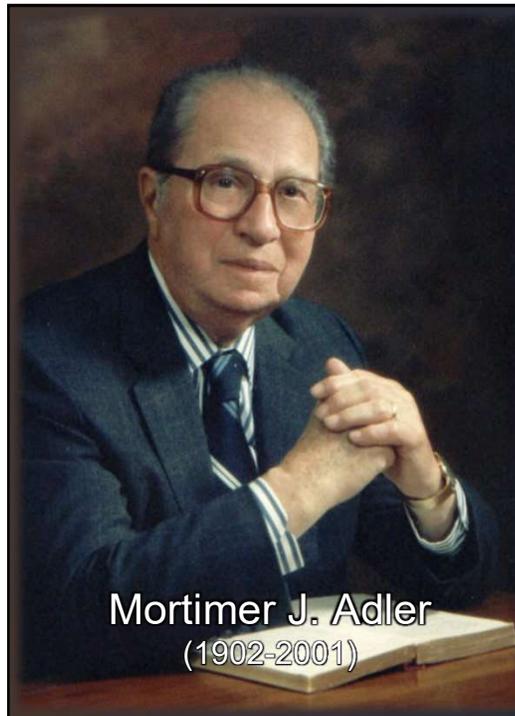
[Thomas Aquinas, *ST*, I, Q. 12, art. 13, p. 59]



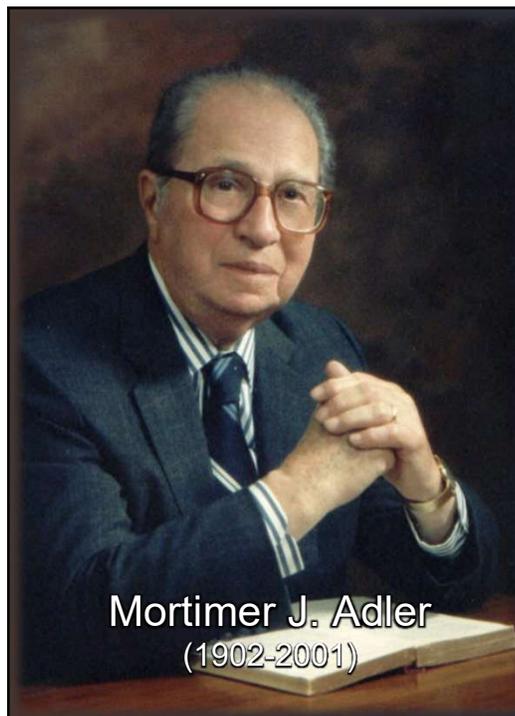
Thomas Aquinas
1225-1274

Other Philosophers Who Hold to the Correspondence Theory of Truth





"To avoid a confusion that runs through philosophical controversies about truth it must be remembered that the correspondence theory of truth is not itself a test of truth. It merely states the definition of truth—what it is. This underlies all empirical and pragmatic tests of truth. ..."

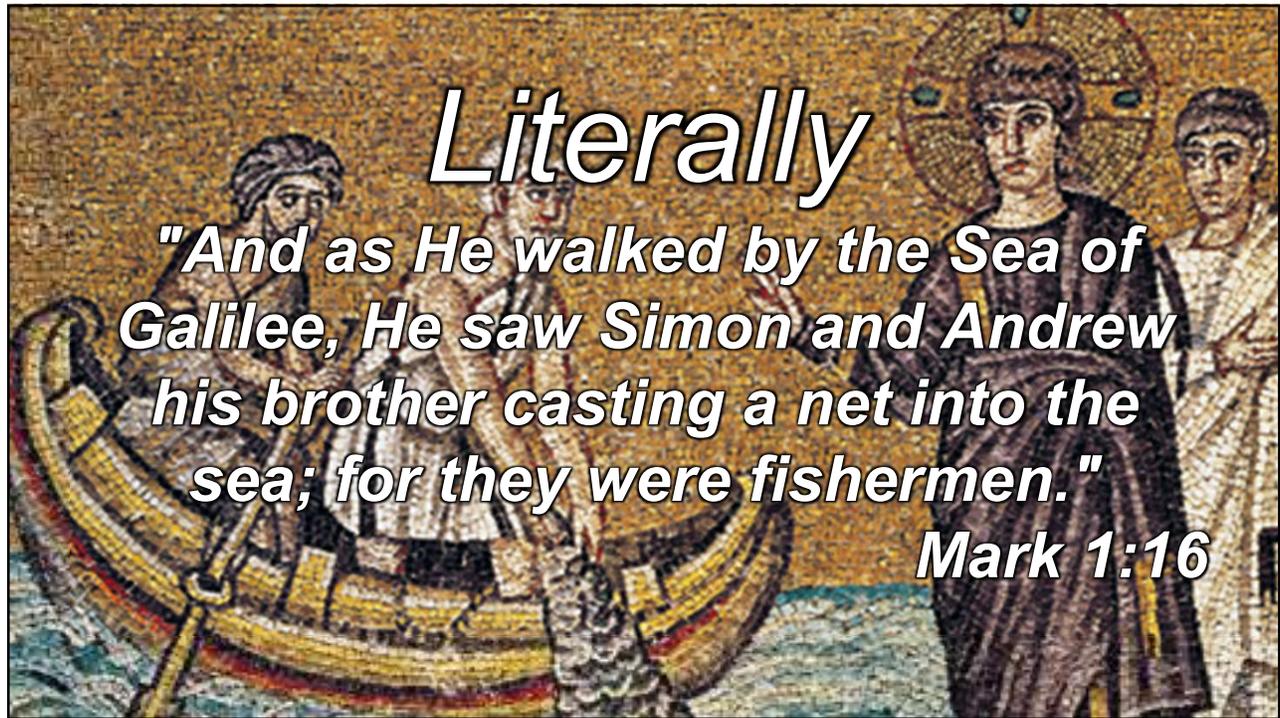


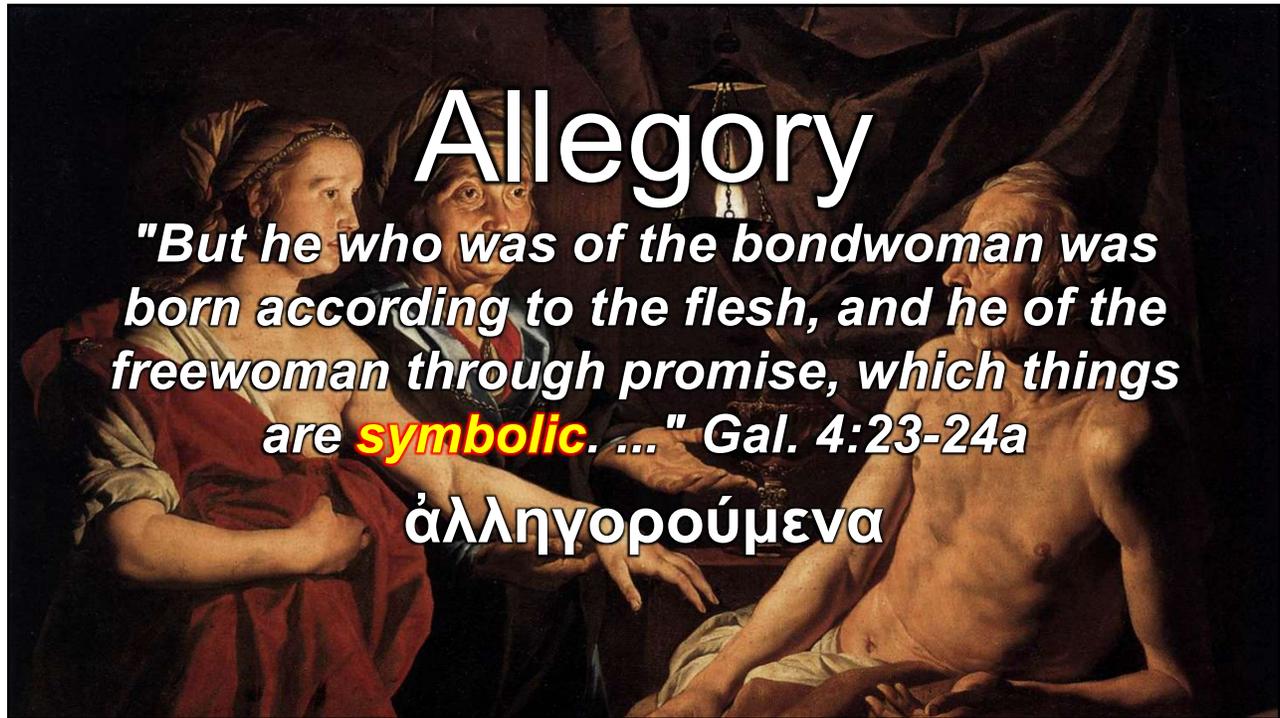
"The logical test of truth, such as coherence or the absence of intrinsic contradiction in a theory, do not presuppose the realist's definition of truth as agreement or conformity of our thinking with the way things, in fact, are. That is why idealists tend to define truth entirely in terms of coherence."

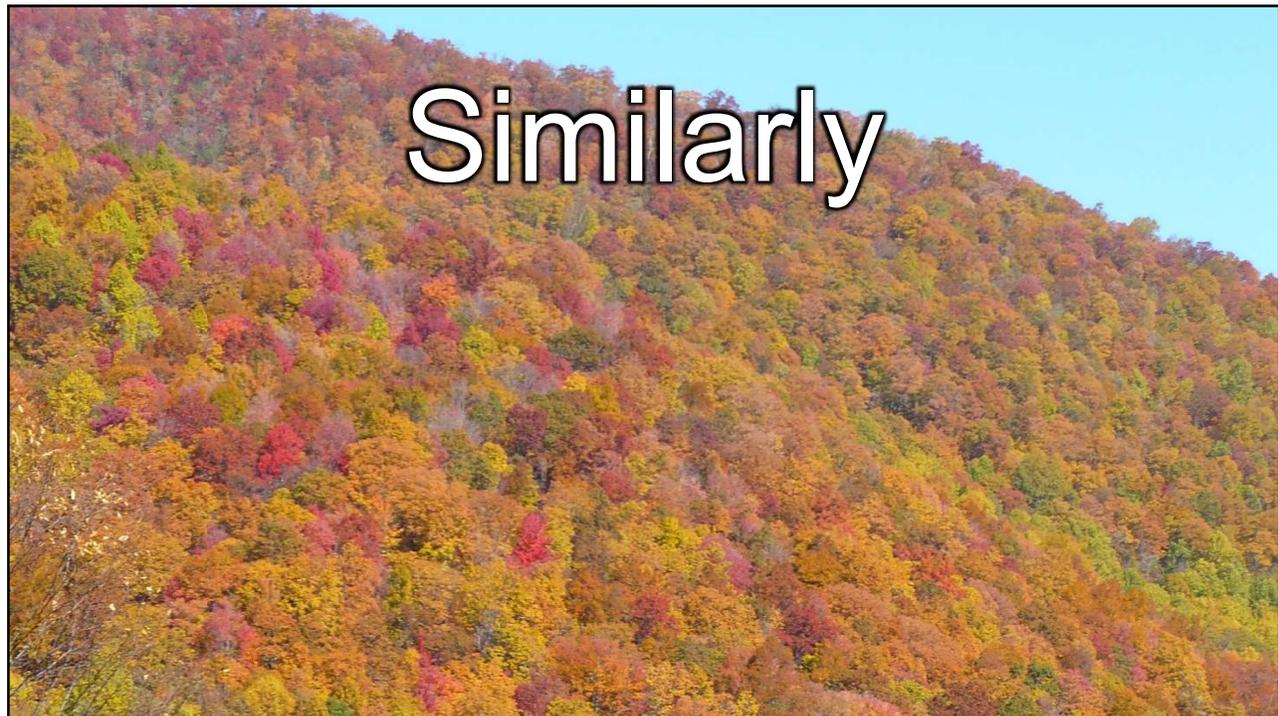
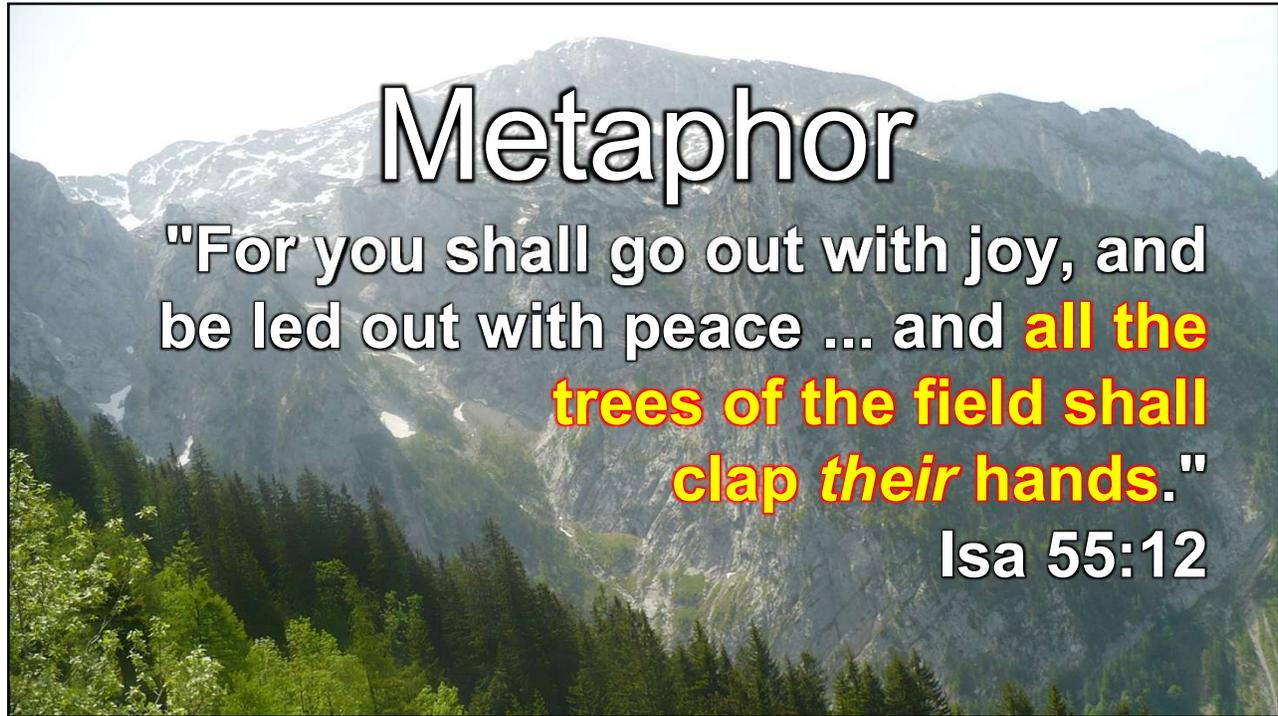
[Mortimer J. Adler, *The Four Dimensions of Philosophy: Metaphysical Moral Objective Categorical* (New York: MacMillan, 1993), 28]

What does it mean to correspond to reality?

***Truth is when a proposition corresponds to reality.
But there are a number of ways that a proposition can correspond to reality.***





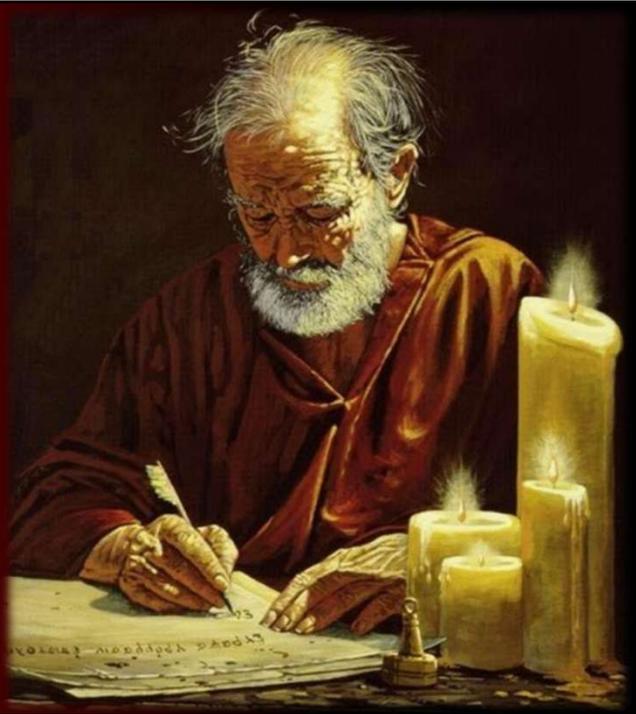


Simile

"So his heart and the heart of his people were moved as the trees of the woods are moved with the wind."

Isa 7:2

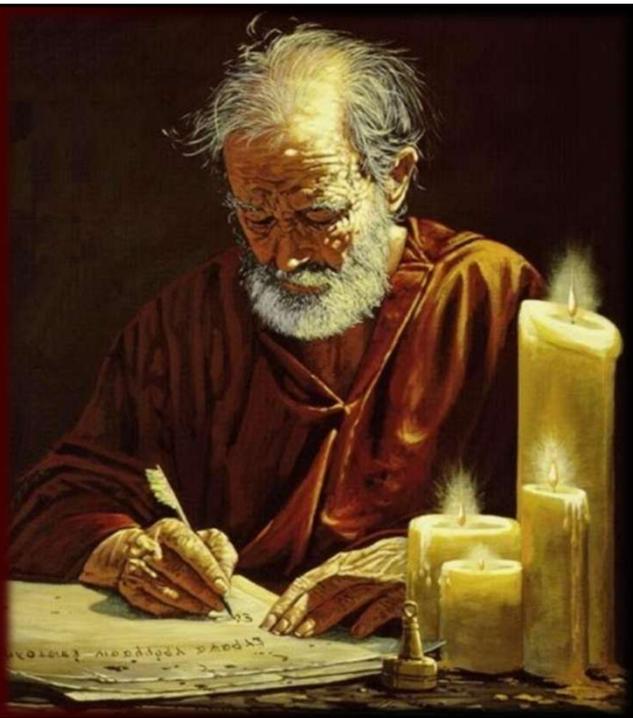
Analogically



Analogy

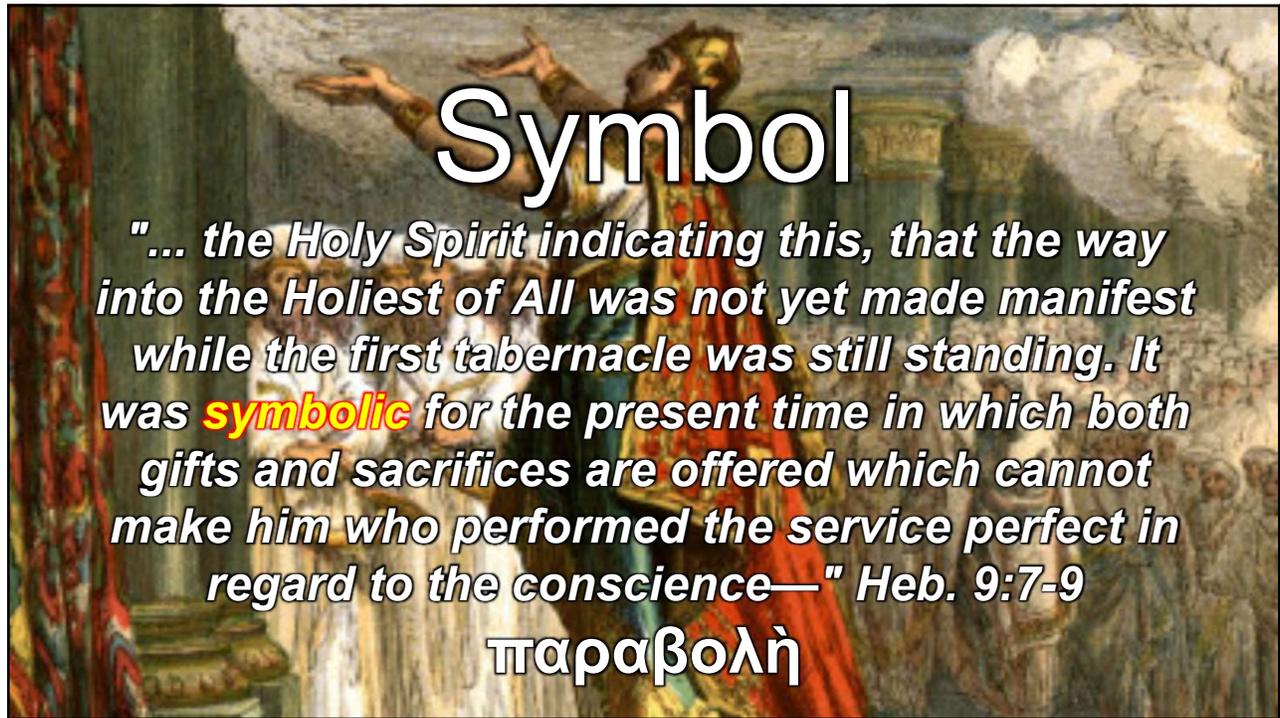
**"For we walk by
faith, not by
sight."**

2 Cor. 5:7



Symbolically





Hyperbole

"Now the Midianites and Amalekites, all the people of the East, were lying in the valley as numerous as locusts; and their camels were without number, as the sand by the seashore in multitude." Judges 7:12

Phenomenologically

" ... for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, ..."Matt. 5:45

Phenomenologically

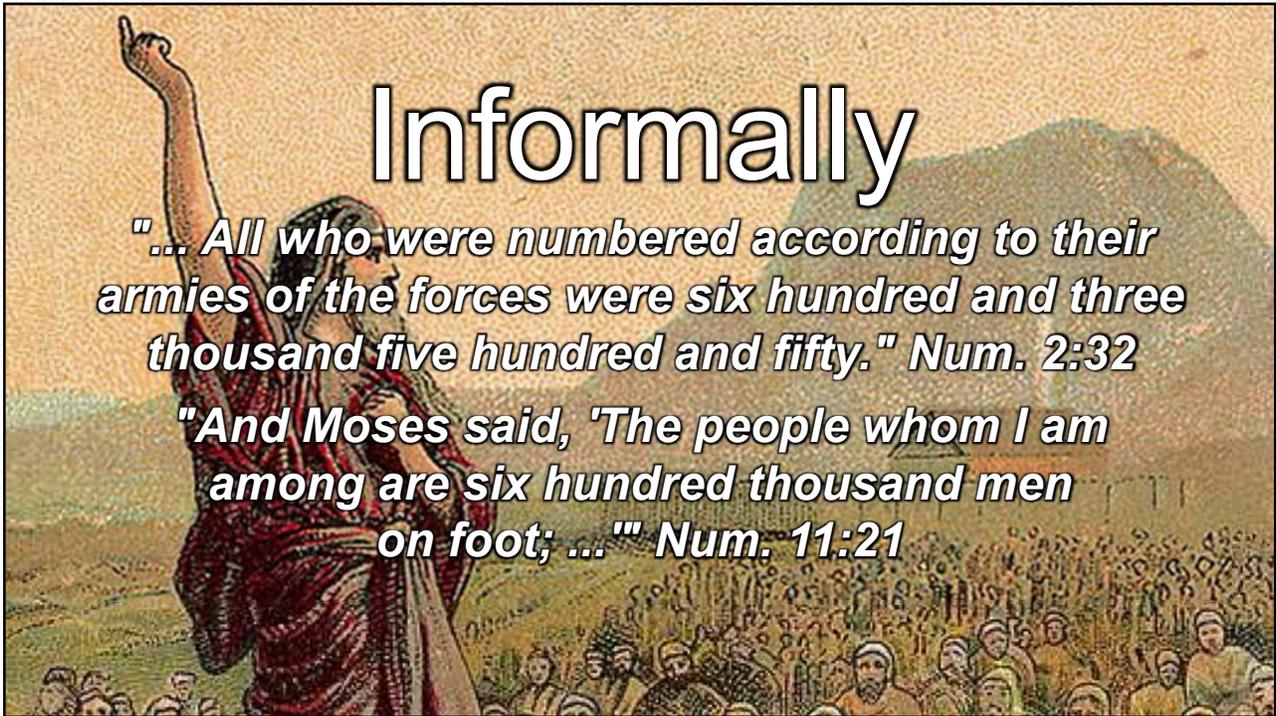


"The sun shall be turned into darkness, And the moon into blood, Before the coming of the great and awesome day of the LORD." Joel 2:31

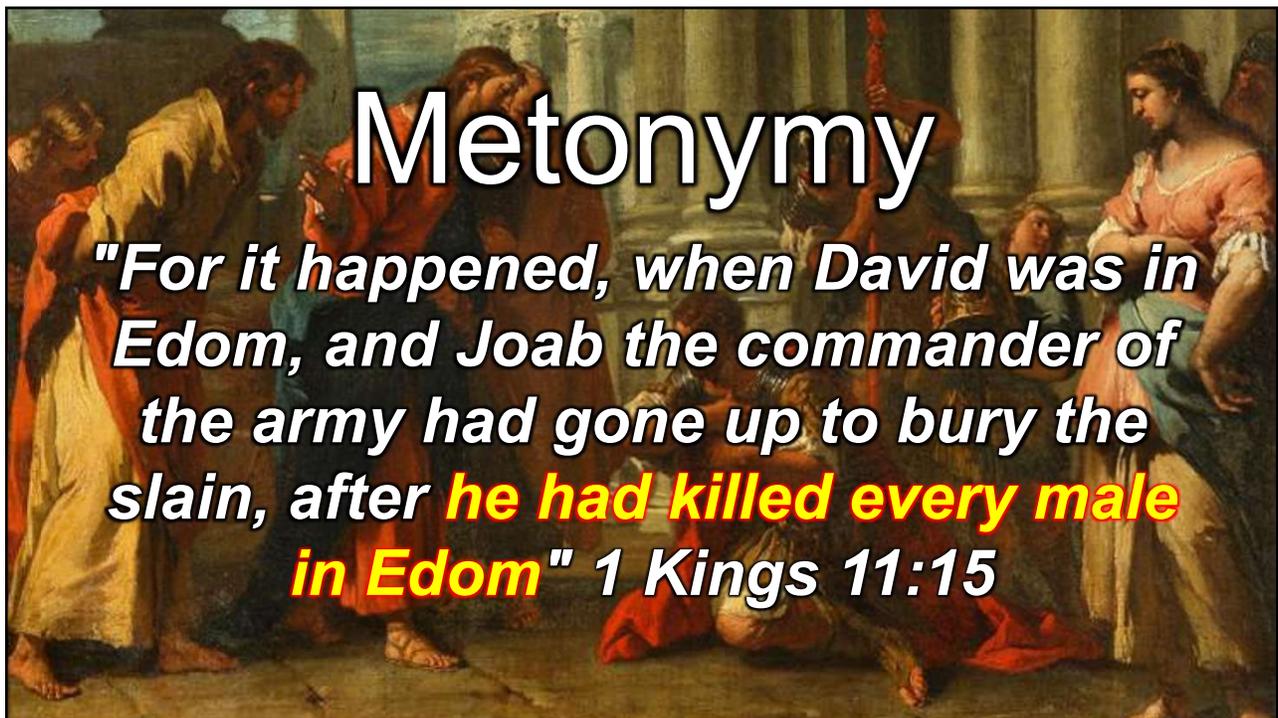
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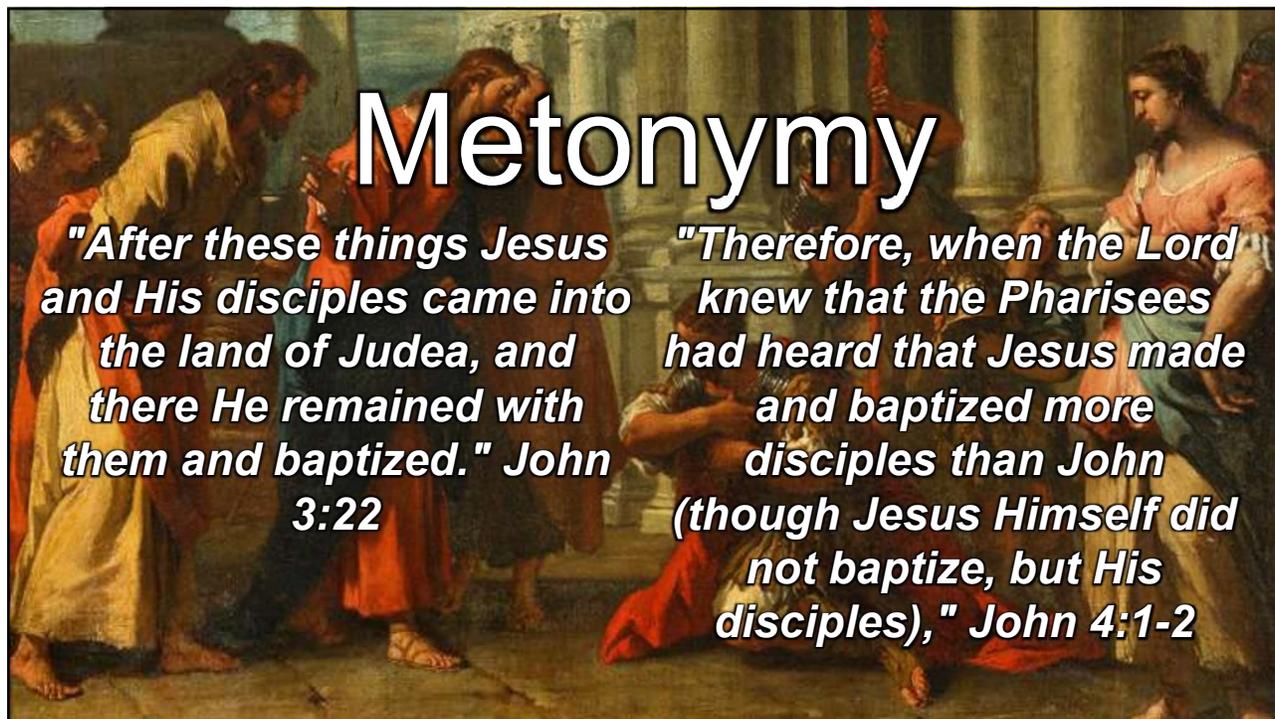
"... All who were numbered according to their armies of the forces were six hundred and three thousand five hundred and fifty." Num. 2:32

"And Moses said, 'The people whom I am among are six hundred thousand men on foot; ...'" Num. 11:21



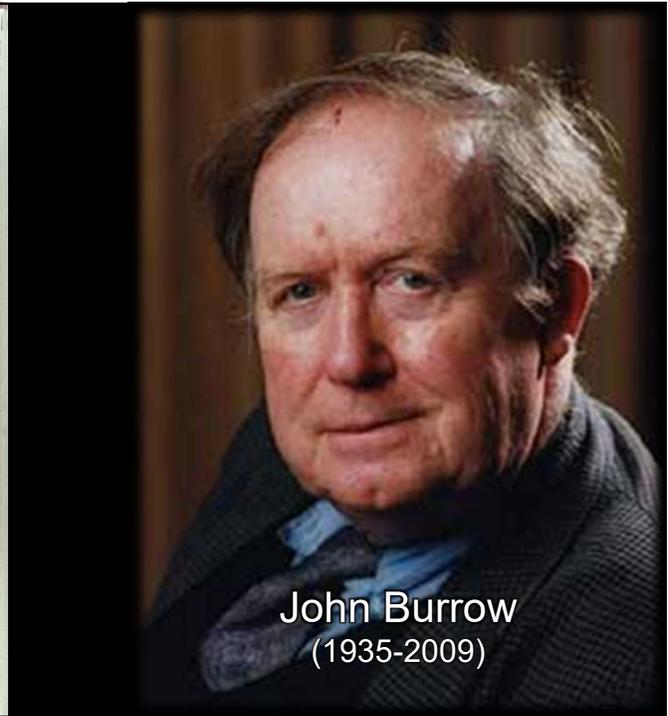
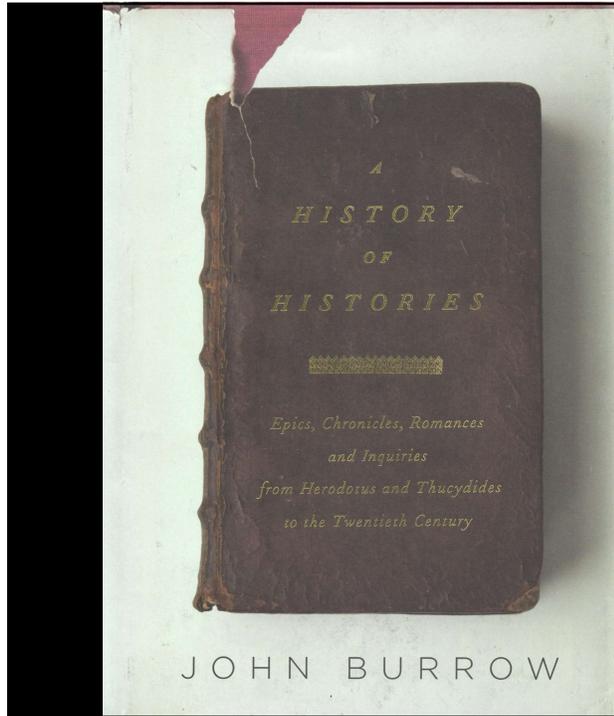






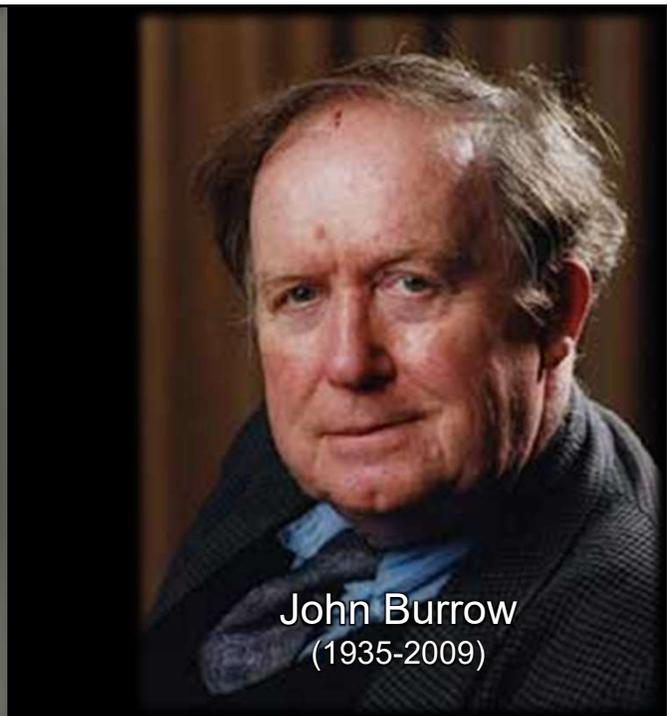


Did ancient writers care about historical accuracy and truth?



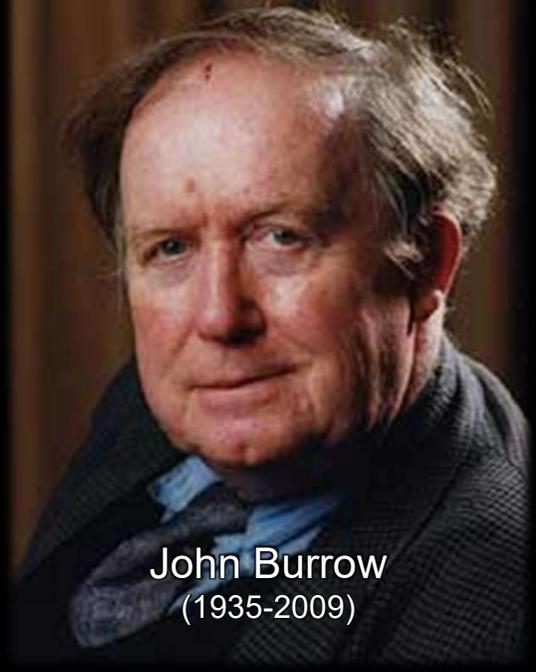
John Burrow
(1935-2009)

"The central concerns—above all with history as truth-telling and, at least as an ideal, as free from bias—were already very old ones and, though shaken, are still in some sense with us, for those of us for whom a distinction between say, history and imaginative fiction is still an important one."



John Burrow
(1935-2009)

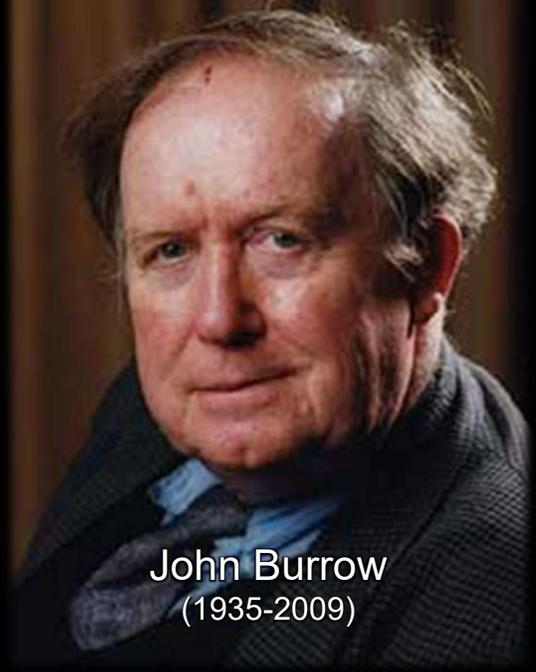
"In this view Herodotus was taking an important step in distinguishing his own Histories from the work of the poets, and Thucydides, though he may have judged unfairly, was invoking relevant criteria when he sneered by implication at Herodotus as belonging with authors less concerned to tell the truth than to entertain the public. ..."



John Burrow
(1935-2009)

"Of course, in the history of historiography zeal for truth had been a spectrum rather than an absolute—truth mattered, fairly obviously, more to Polybius than to Livy—but someone who wholly and perhaps willfully falls of the negative end of the scale ... counts rather as a parodist or imitator of history."

[John Burrow, *A History of Histories: Epics, Chronicles, Romances and Inquiries from Herodotus and Thucydides to the Twentieth Century* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2007), xiv-xv]

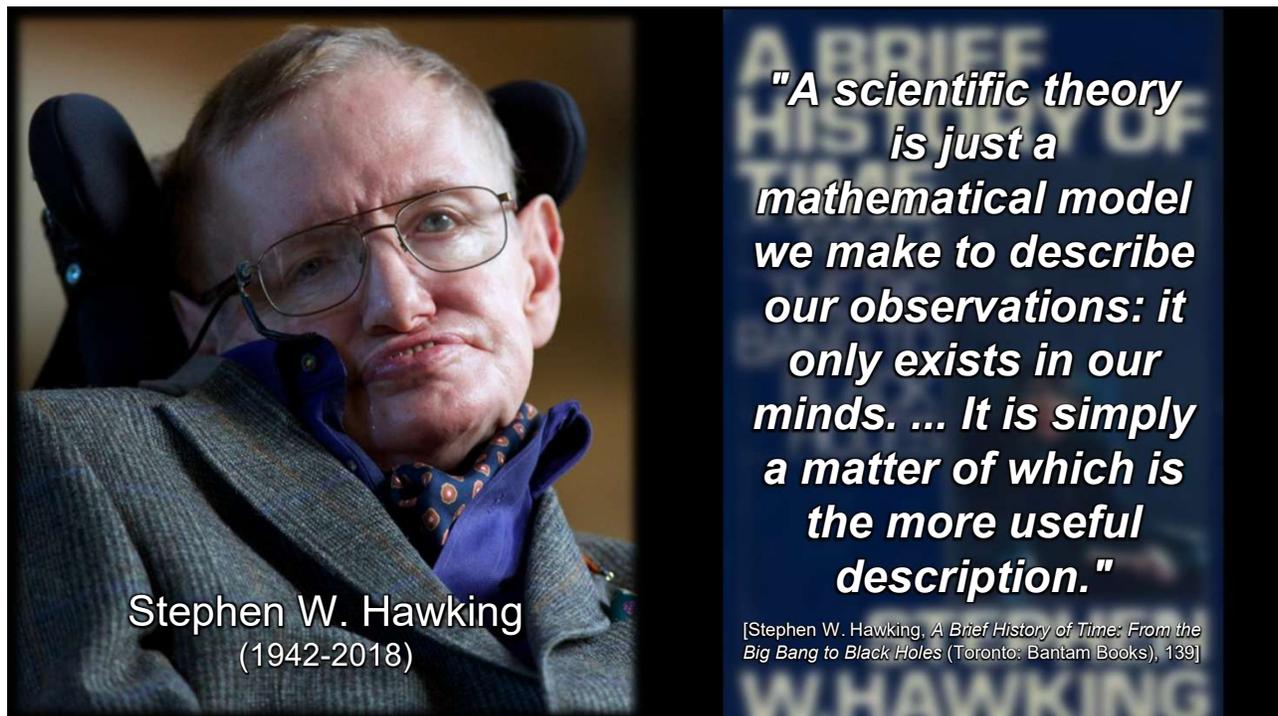
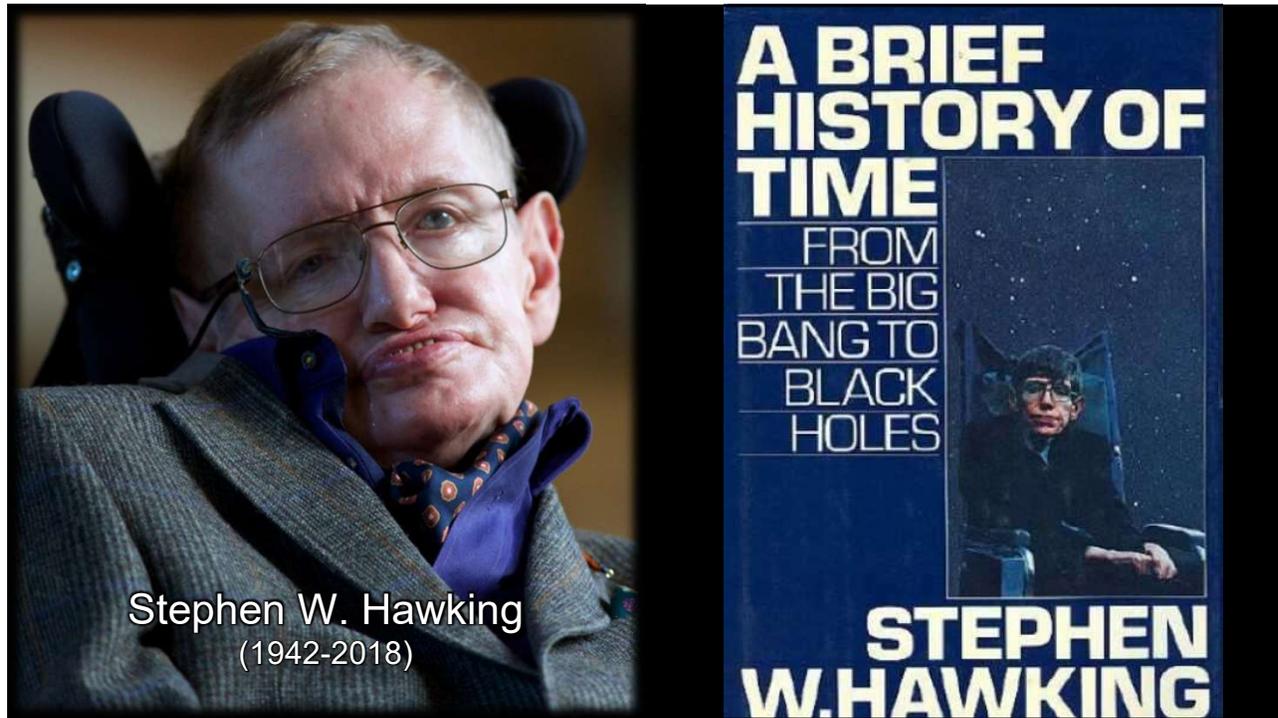


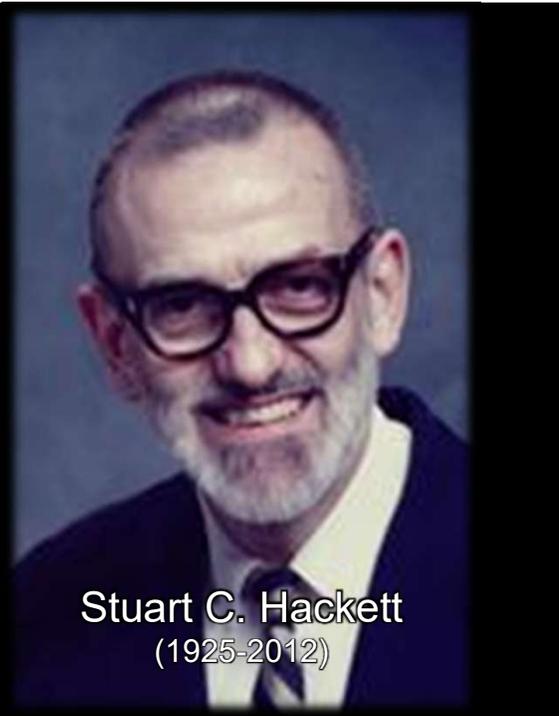
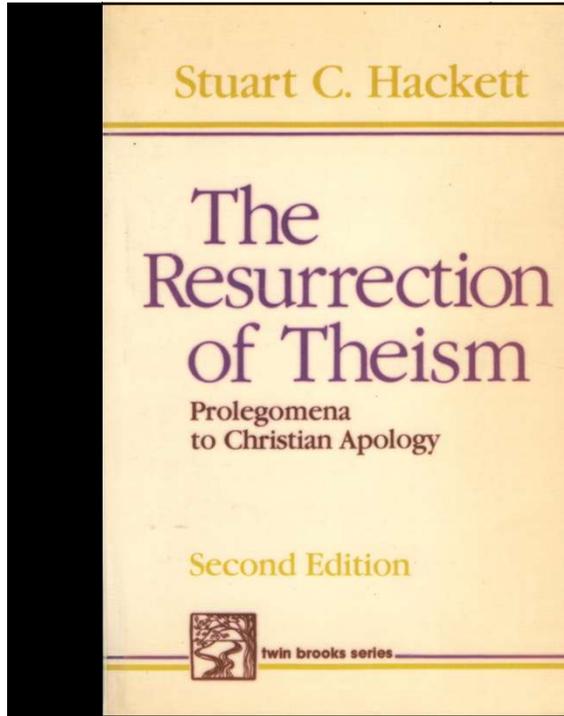
John Burrow
(1935-2009)

What about the other theories of truth?

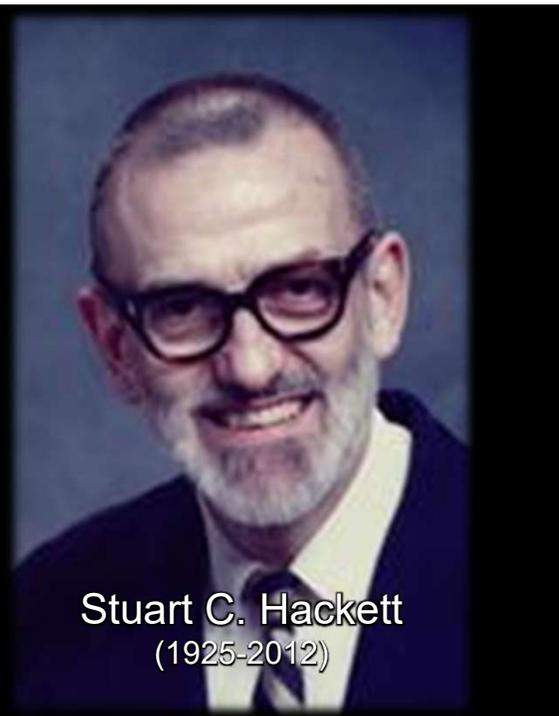
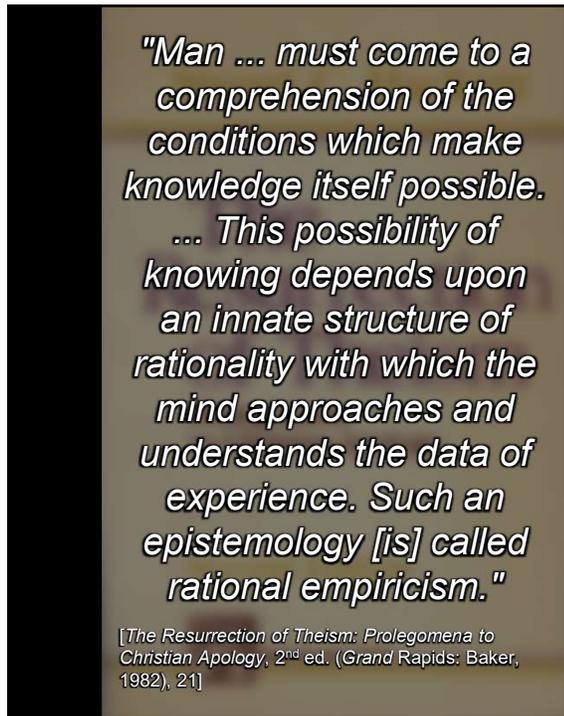
Coherence

➤ **Definition:** A statement is true when it coheres with or is consistent with a body of other statements.



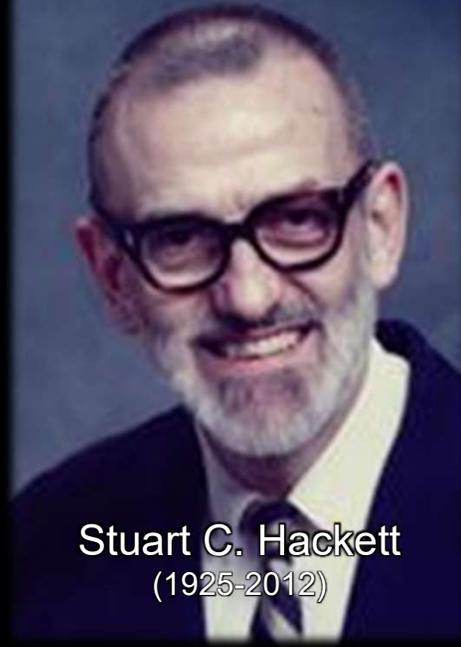


Stuart C. Hackett
(1925-2012)



Stuart C. Hackett
(1925-2012)

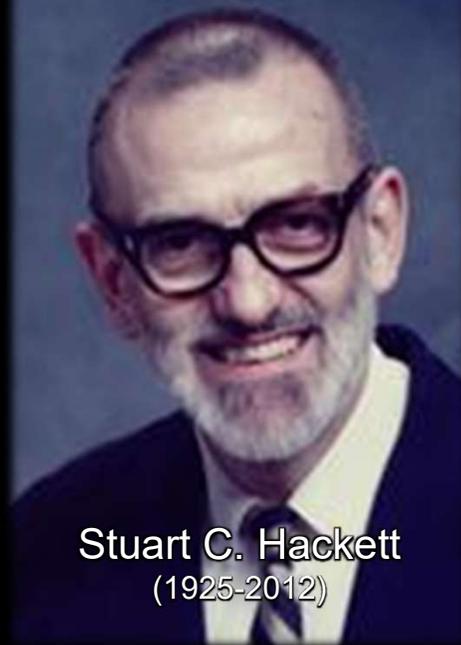
"Either we must be skeptics about the knowledge of things as they exist independently, or we must maintain that true knowledge of such entities is possible by the systematic correlation of our various experiences into a self-consistent whole."



Stuart C. Hackett
(1925-2012)

"Since ... skepticism is self-contradictory, the second alternative will necessarily be maintained. But the theory that the test of truth consists in such a systematic consistency of ideas is a logically coherent whole is precisely the coherence theory of truth."

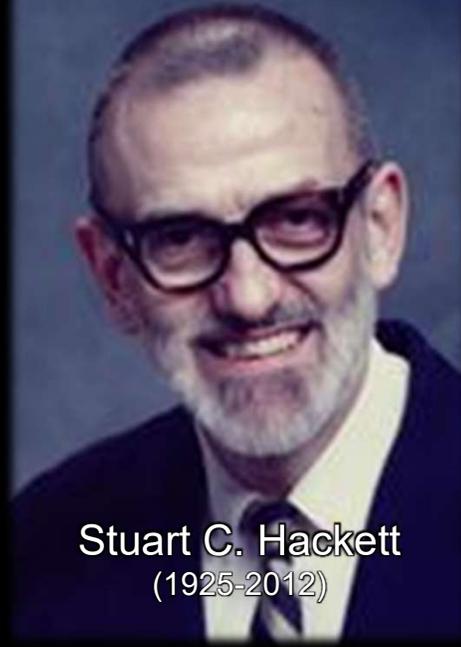
[The Resurrection of Theism: Prolegomena to Christian Apology, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1982), 38]



Stuart C. Hackett
(1925-2012)

" Since the position involves epistemological dualism, it necessitates an espousal of the coherence theory of truth."

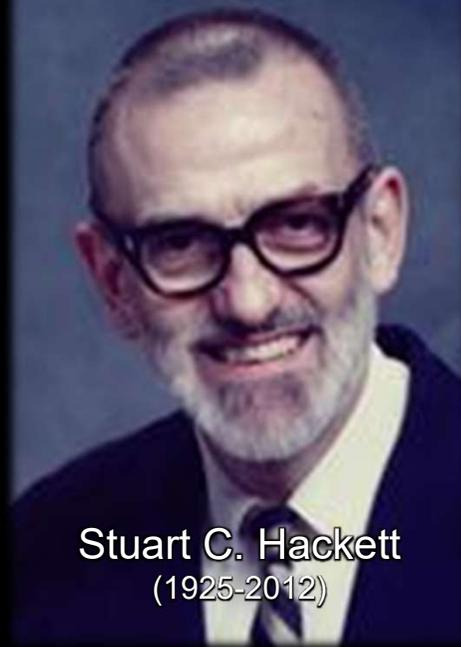
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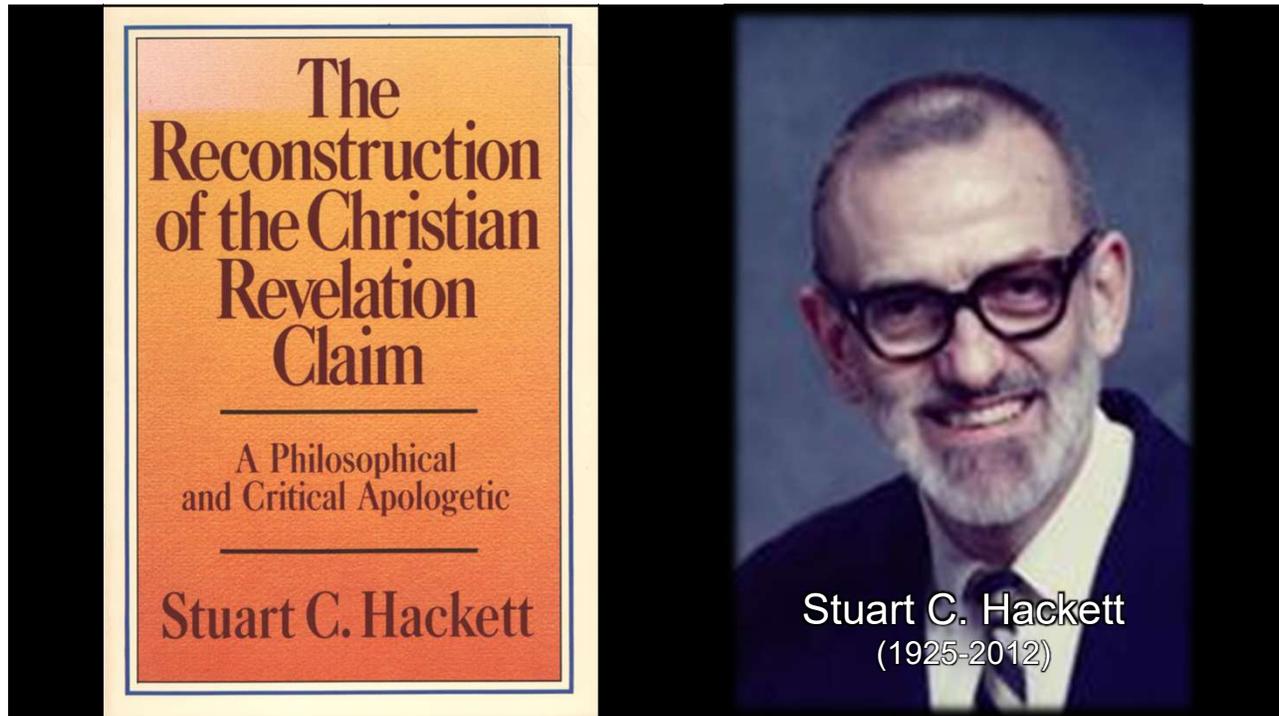
Stuart C. Hackett
(1925-2012)

"Epistemological dualism is the doctrine that the immediate object present to the mind is not the independently existing reality—say a box or what have you—but a representative idea of this object. All the mind knows directly are its ideas and nothing else."

[The Resurrection of Theism: Prolegomena to Christian Apology, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1982), 38]



Stuart C. Hackett
(1925-2012)

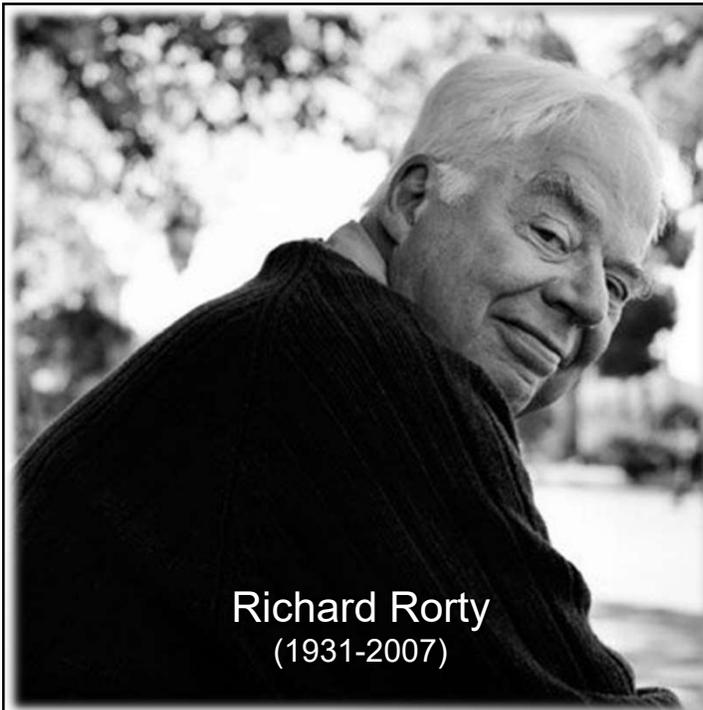


Coherence

- **Definition:** A statement is true when it coheres with or is consistent with a body of other statements.
- Truth cannot merely be coherence because by this theory, even a fairy tale could be "true."
- Every theory of truth, including coherence, requires the correspondence theory of truth to define itself.

Pragmatic

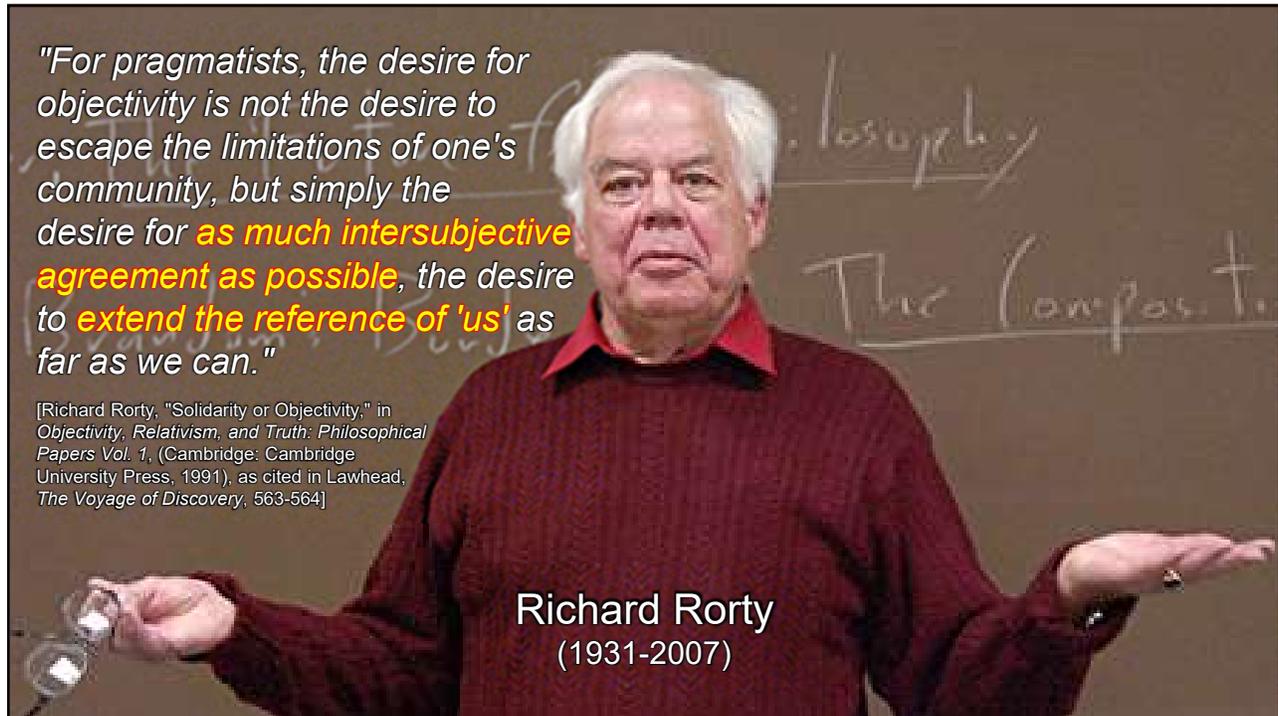
- **Definition: A statement is true in as much as it works or is practical.**
- **The pragmatic theory gives rise to the notion that something can be "true for you but not true for me."**



Richard Rorty
(1931-2007)

"Philosophy is "edifying discourse" the purpose of which is "finding new, better, more interesting, more fruitful ways of speaking" and "to keep the conversation going rather than to find objective truth."

[Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), 360, 377, as cited in William F. Lawhead, *The Voyage of Discovery: An Historical Introduction to Philosophy*, 2nd ed., (Belmont, Wadsworth/Thomson Learning, 2002), 563]





Paul Copan

Disagree—Relativism *Must* Be True." "You're Just Using Western Logic." "Who Are You to Judge Others?" "We're Intolerant of Other Viewpoints!" "What Right Do We Have to Convert Others to Your Views?" "It's All Just a Matter of Perspective." "Reality Is Perception." "Why That? Religion They're So Wildly Different?" "Your Values Are Right for You, But Not for Me." "Who Are You to Judge Others?" "You Can't Legislate Morality." "You Can't Say Your Values Are Better than Others'." "Biology and Evolution Explain It." "All Religions Lead to the Top of the Mountain." "Christianity Is a Religion, Up in Thailand, You'd Be Worshipping Gandhi Was a Saint If Ever There Was One." "You Can't Trust the Gospels—They're Unreliable." "Jesus' Followers Fabricated His Stories and Saying He Is Just Like Any Other Great Religious Leader." "Jesus Never Said, 'I Am God.'" "People Claim JFK Is Still Alive, Too!" "People Disagree." "Using Western Logic." "Who Are You to Judge Other Christians Are Intolerant of Other Viewpoints!" "V

TRUE FOR YOU

BUT

NOT FOR ME

Overcoming Objections to Christian Faith

PAUL COPAN

☞ Jeremiah 44:17-18 ☞

"But we will certainly do whatever has gone out of our own mouth, to burn incense to the queen of heaven and pour out drink offerings to her, as we have done, we and our fathers, our kings and our princes, in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem."



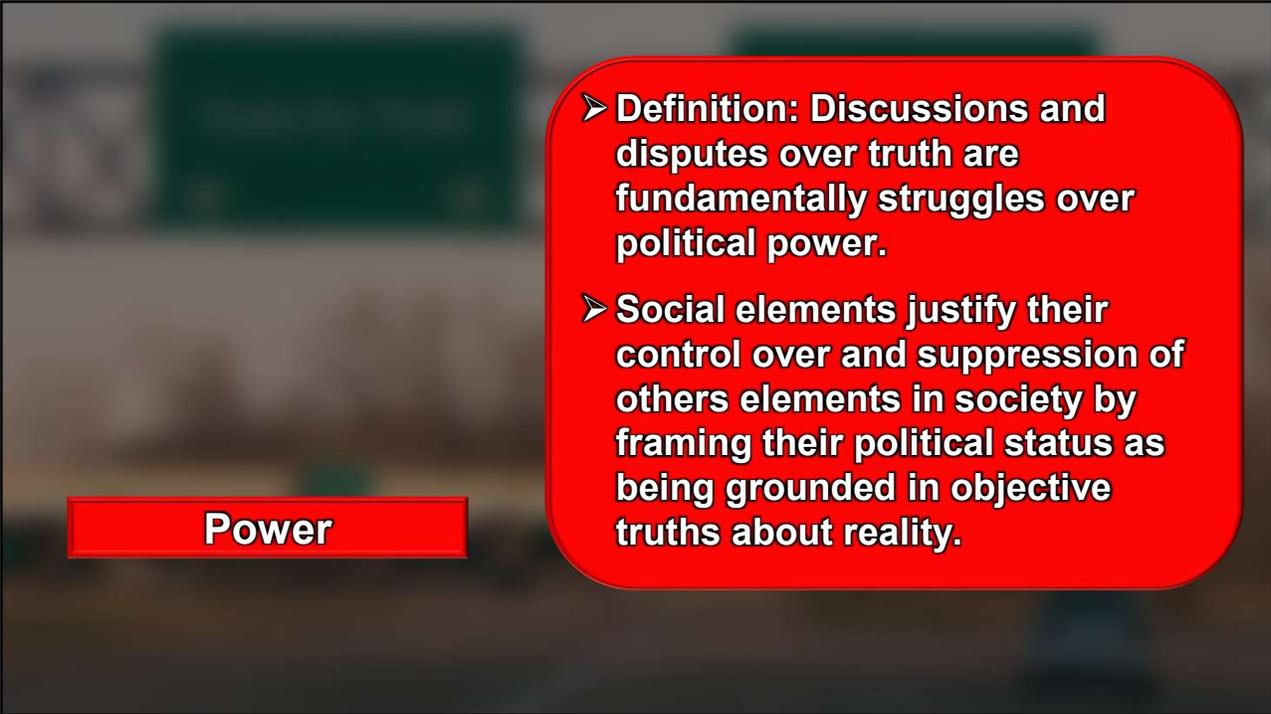
☞ Jeremiah 44:17-18 ☞

"For then we had plenty of food, were well-off, and saw no trouble. But since we stopped burning incense to the queen of heaven and pouring out drink offerings to her, we have lacked everything and have been consumed by the sword and by famine."



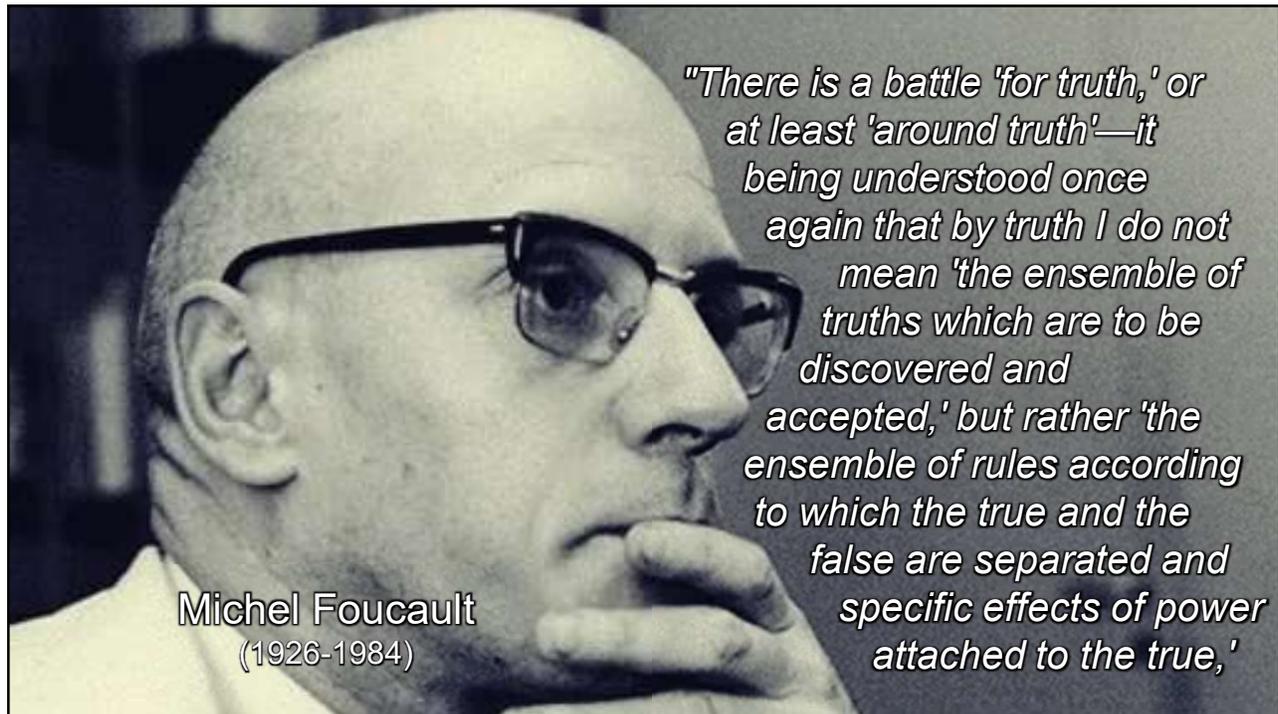
Pragmatic

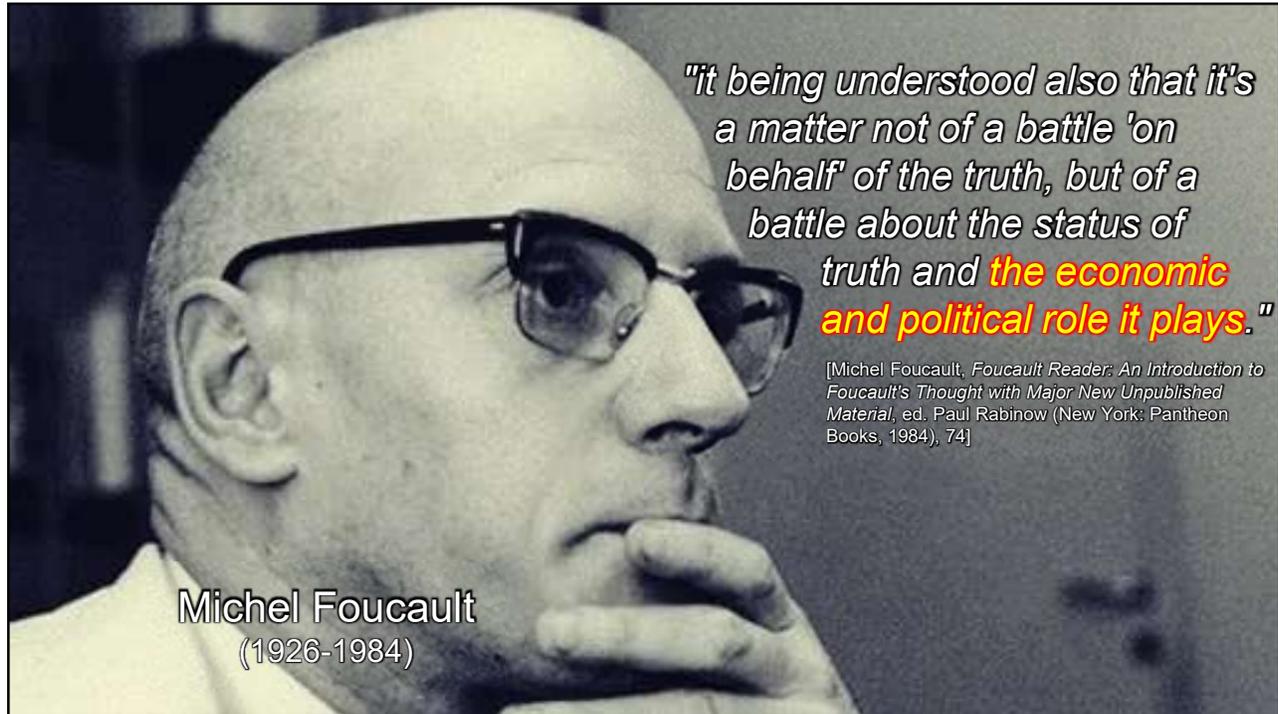
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- **Every theory of truth, including pragmatic, requires the correspondence theory of truth to define itself.**



Power

- **Definition: Discussions and disputes over truth are fundamentally struggles over political power.**
- **Social elements justify their control over and suppression of others elements in society by framing their political status as being grounded in objective truths about reality.**



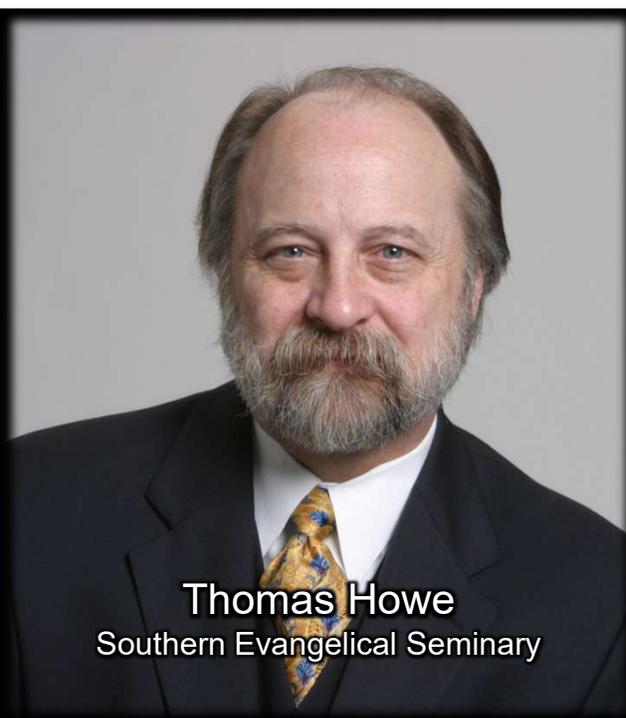
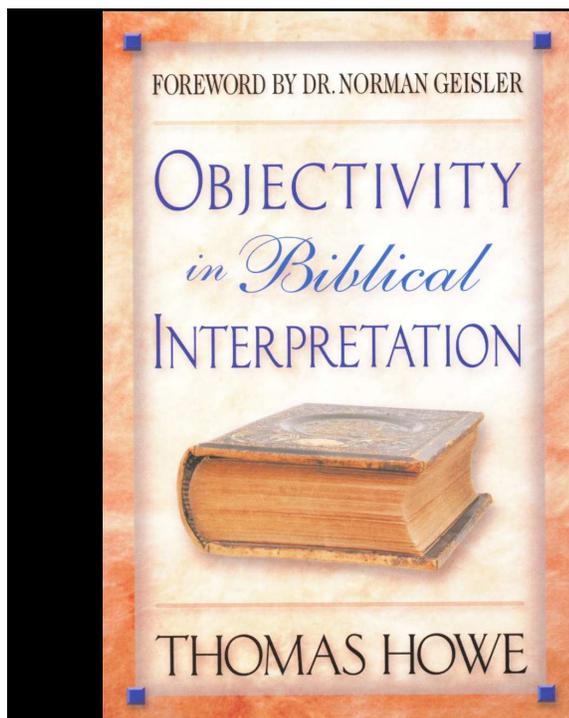


Michel Foucault
(1926-1984)

*"it being understood also that it's a matter not of a battle 'on behalf' of the truth, but of a battle about the status of truth and **the economic and political role it plays.**"*

[Michel Foucault, *Foucault Reader: An Introduction to Foucault's Thought with Major New Unpublished Material*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 74]

Two things (at least) are common to all tests for truth.



Thomas Howe
Southern Evangelical Seminary



∞ The Laws of Logic ∞

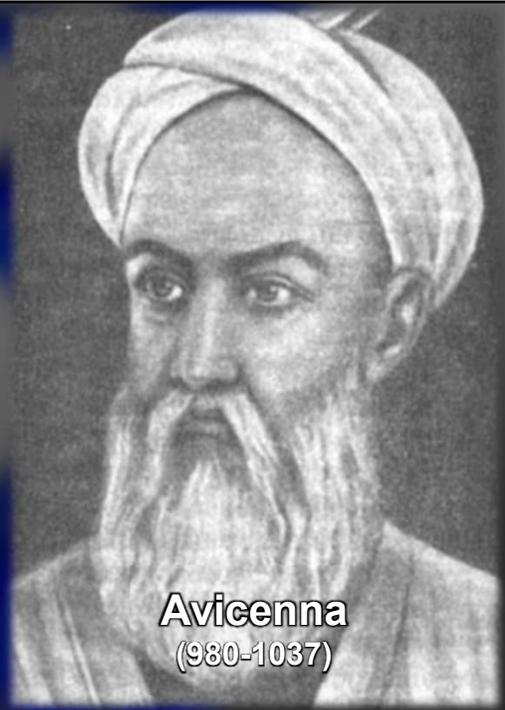
- ✓ *The Law of Non-Contradiction*
- ✓ *The Law of Excluded Middle*
- ✓ *The Law of Identity*

↻ The Law of Non-Contradiction ↻

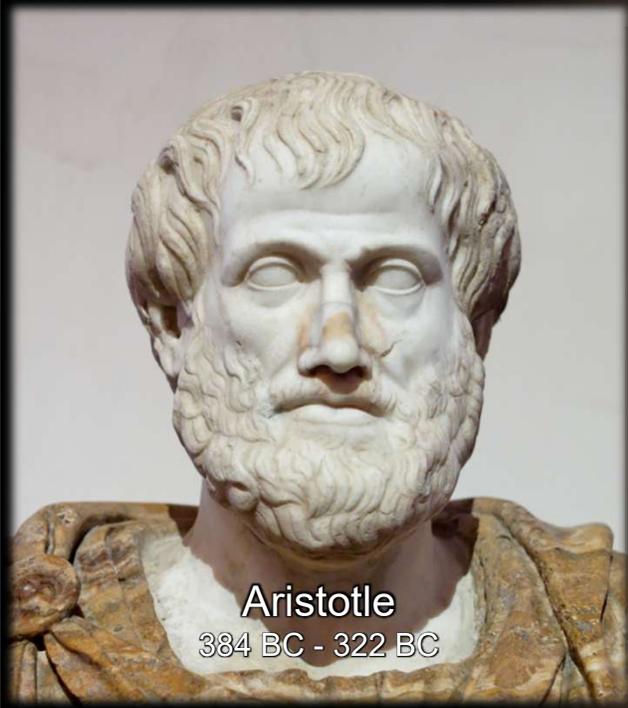
- essence ➤ A thing cannot be both 'A' and 'non-A' at the same time and in the same sense.
- existence ➤ A thing cannot both exist and not exist at the same time and in the same sense.
- truth value ➤ A statement cannot be both true and not true at the same time and in the same sense.

"Those who deny a first principle should be beaten and burned until they admit that to be beaten is not the same as to not be beaten and to be burned is not the same as not to be burned."

Metaphysics I



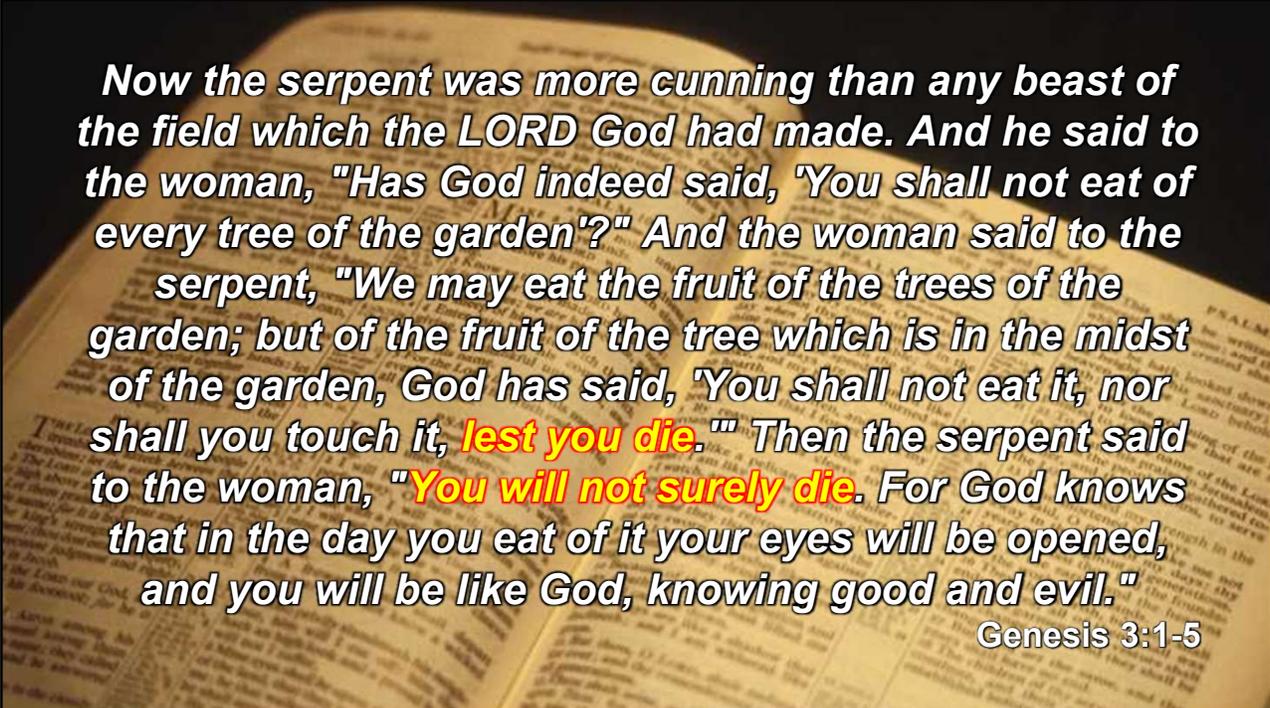
Avicenna
(980-1037)



Aristotle
384 BC - 322 BC

"But we have now posited that it is impossible for anything at the same time to be and not to be, and by this means have shown that this is the most indisputable of all principles. Some indeed demand that even this shall be demonstrated, but this they do through want of education, for not to know of what things one should demand demonstration, and of what one should not, argues want of education. For it is impossible that there should be demonstration of absolutely everything (there would be an infinite regress, so that there would still be no demonstration)."

[Metaphysics, IV, 4, 1006a5-10. Translation by Richard McKeon, *The Basic Works of Aristotle* (New York: Random House, 1941)]



Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, "Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden'?" And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.'" Then the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

Genesis 3:1-5

∞ The Law of Excluded Middle ∞

- essence ➤ A thing is either 'A' or 'non-A.'
- existence ➤ A thing either exists or does not exist.
- truth value ➤ A statement is either true or not true.

"Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or else make the tree bad and its fruit bad; for a tree is known by its fruit."

Matthew 12:33

∞ The Law of Identity ∞

essence ➤ If a thing is 'A' then it is 'A.'

existence ➤ If a thing exists, then it exists.

truth value ➤ If a statement is true then it is true.

Then Moses said to God, "Indeed, when I come to the children of Israel and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you.' and they say to me, 'What is His name?' what shall I say to them?" And God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM." And He said, "Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'"

Exodus 3:13-14

∞ The relationship of logic and reality ∞

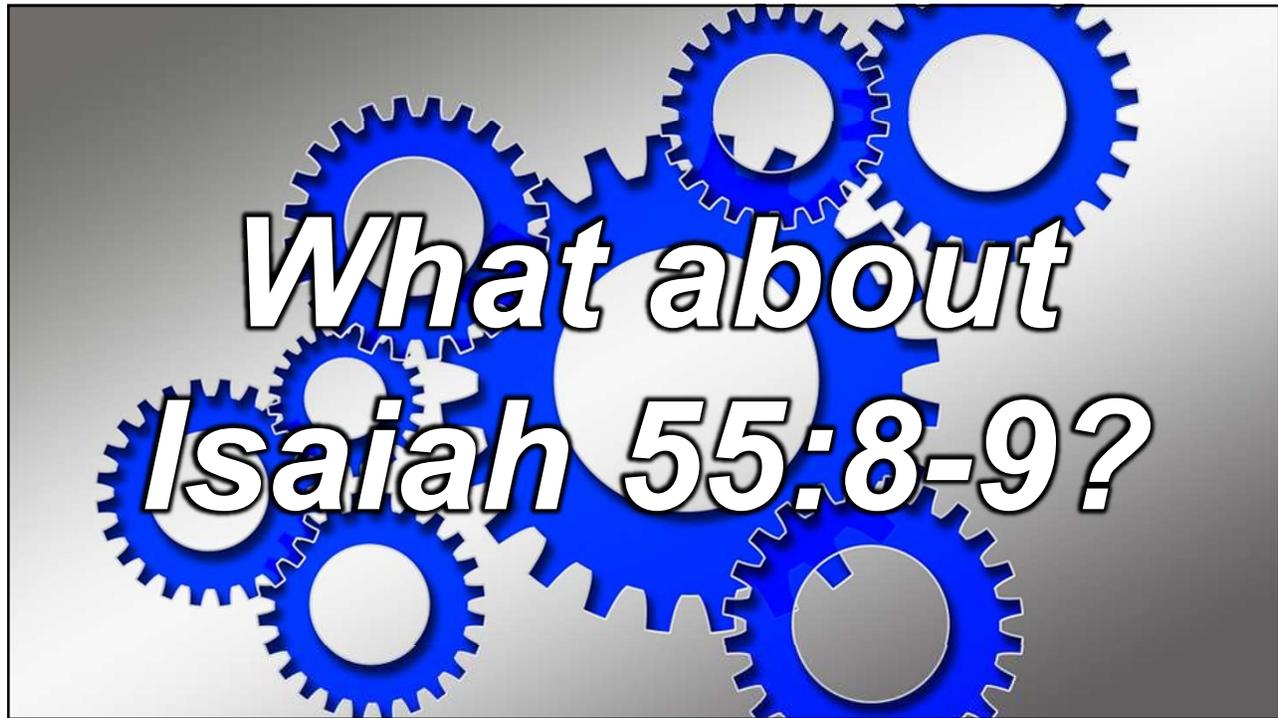
The laws of logic are undeniably true.

✓ *One has to use logic in order to deny logic.*

Reality is knowable.

✓ *To claim that '**reality is unknowable**' is to claim to know something about reality.*

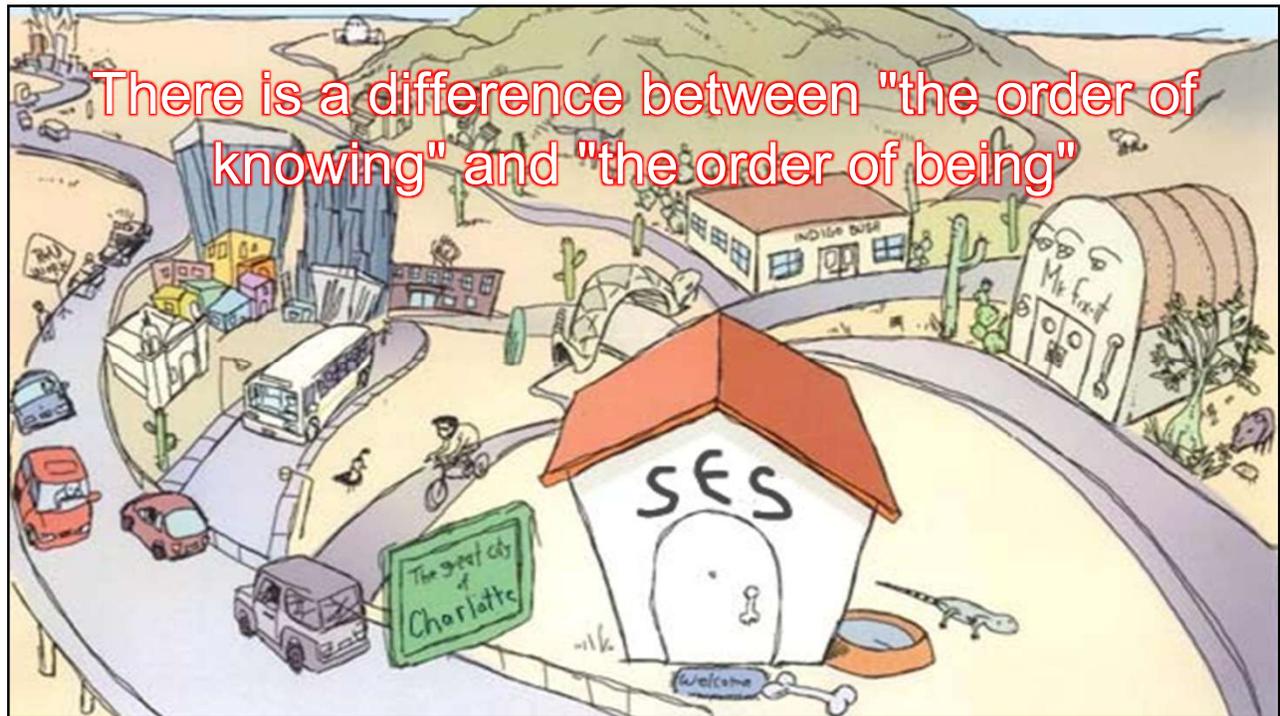




↻ Isaiah 55:6-9 ↻

{6} Seek the LORD while He may be found, Call upon Him while He is near. {7} Let the **wicked** forsake **his way**, And the **unrighteous man** **his thoughts**; Let him return to the LORD, And He will have mercy on him; And to our God, For He will abundantly pardon. {8} "For **My thoughts** are not your thoughts, nor are your ways **My ways**," says **the LORD**. {9} "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts."





There is a difference between "the order of knowing" and "the order of being"

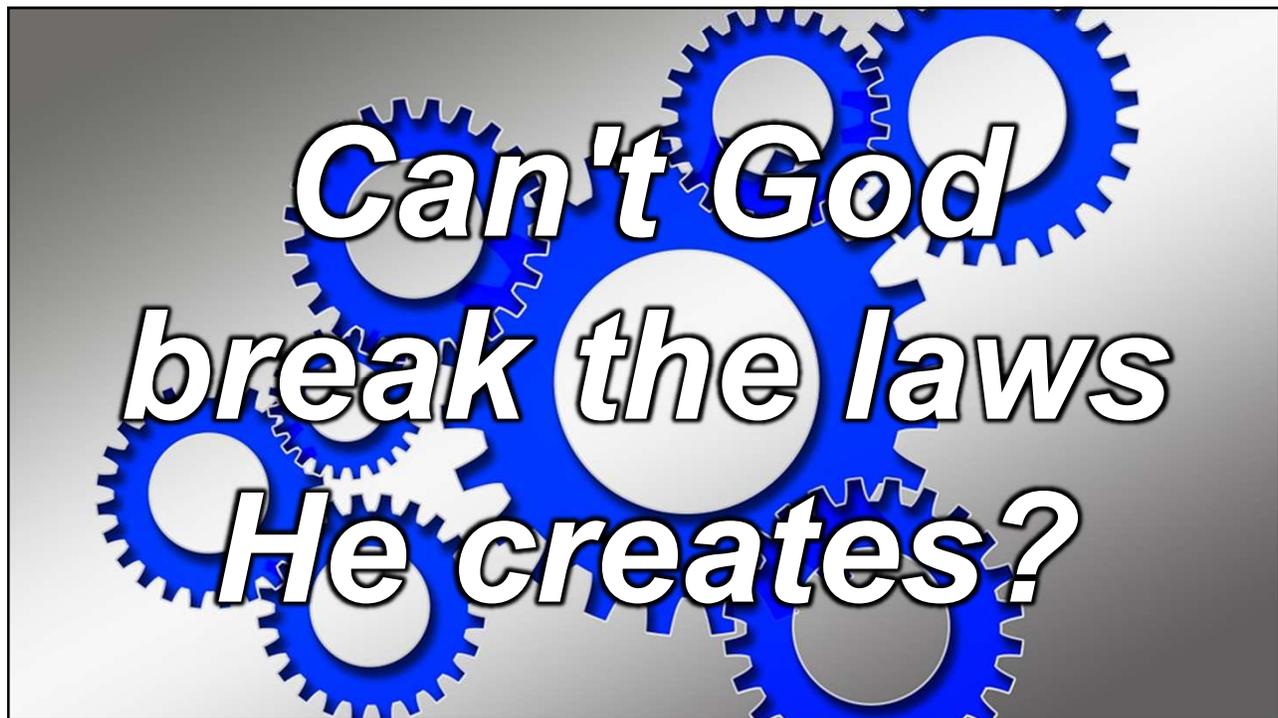
The map is first in the order of knowing.

SES is first in the order of being.



*Aren't we
putting OUR
logic before
God?*

- response: It is not "our" logic.
- Logic is an expression of the nature of God Himself.

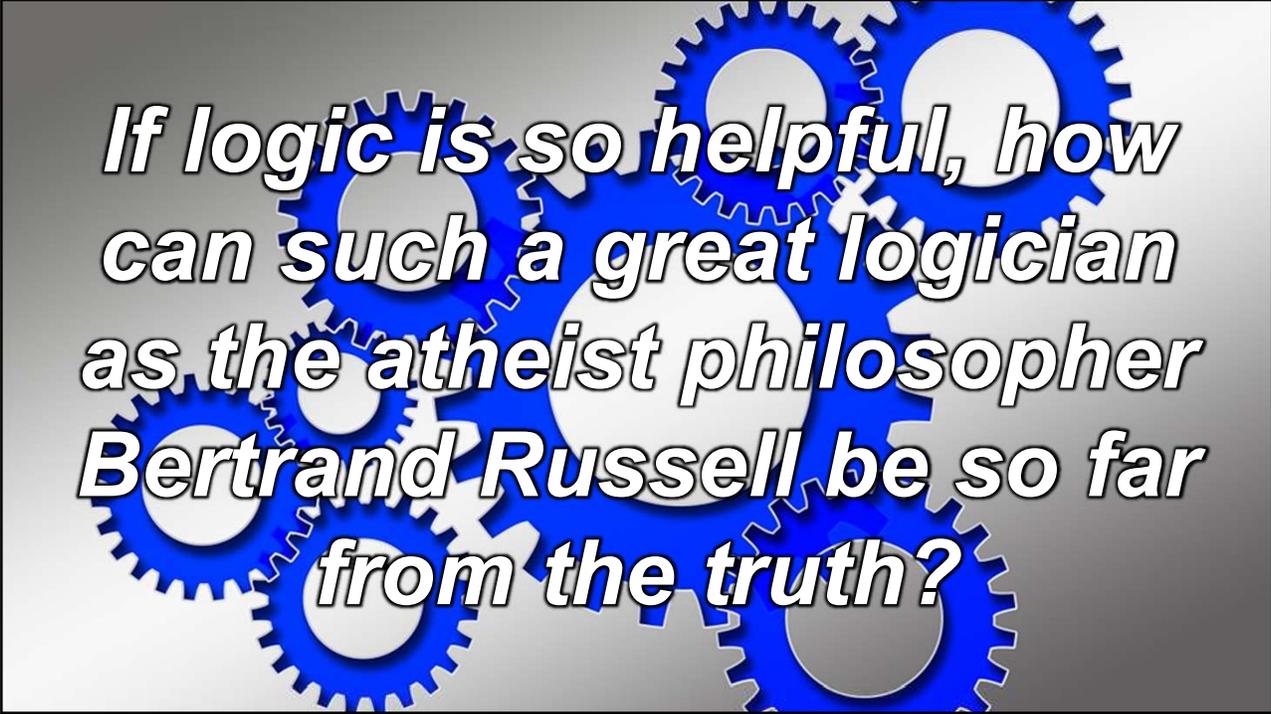


- response: Logic was not created by God. It is an expression of God. (like goodness)



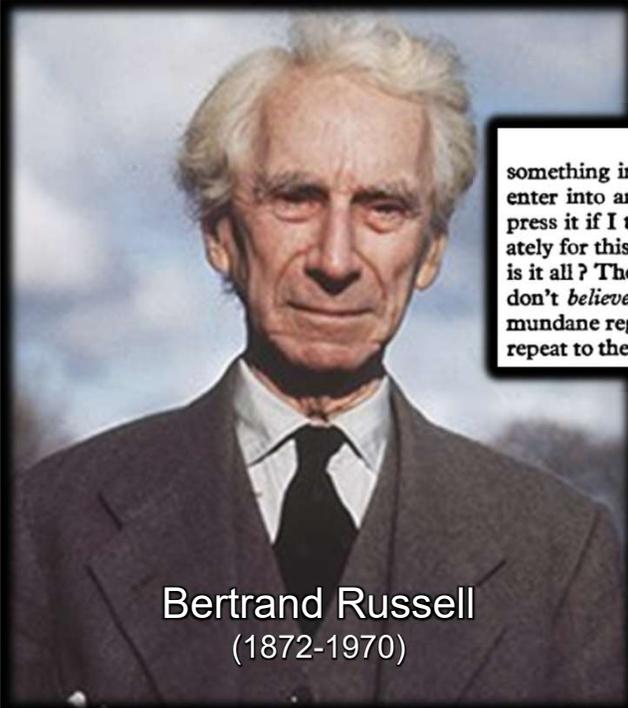
***Don't some
doctrines involve
contradictions,
like the Trinity?***

- response: There is nothing in the doctrine of the Trinity (or any other biblical doctrine) that is illogical.
- There is a difference between something being beyond reason and something being against reason.



If logic is so helpful, how can such a great logician as the atheist philosopher Bertrand Russell be so far from the truth?

- response: If you start a race facing the wrong direction, then the faster you can run, the quicker you will be in getting farther from the finish line.

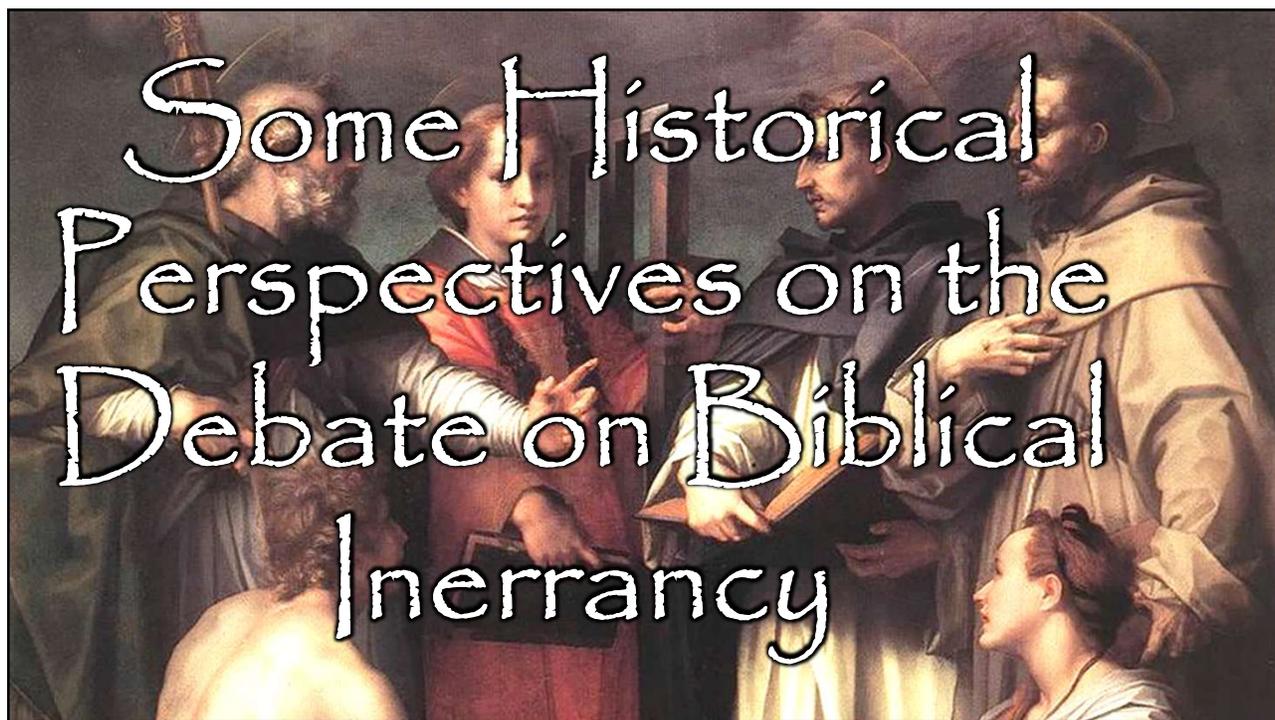
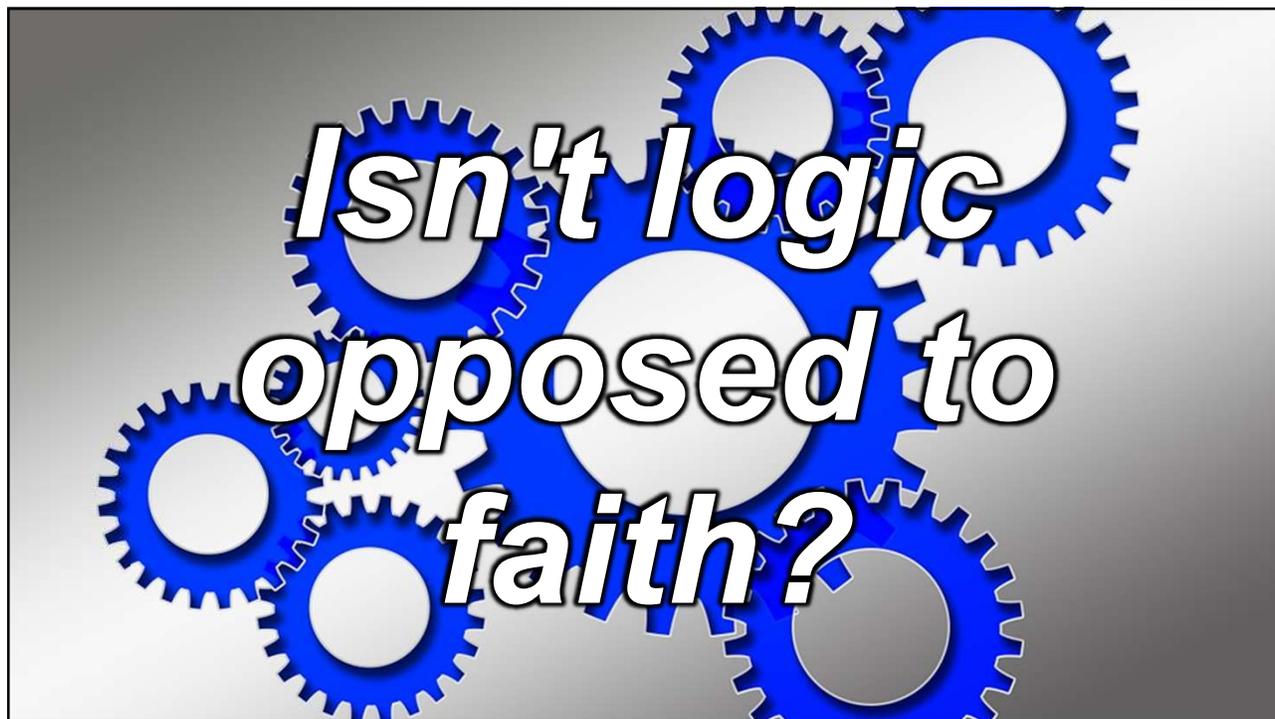


Bertrand Russell
(1872-1970)

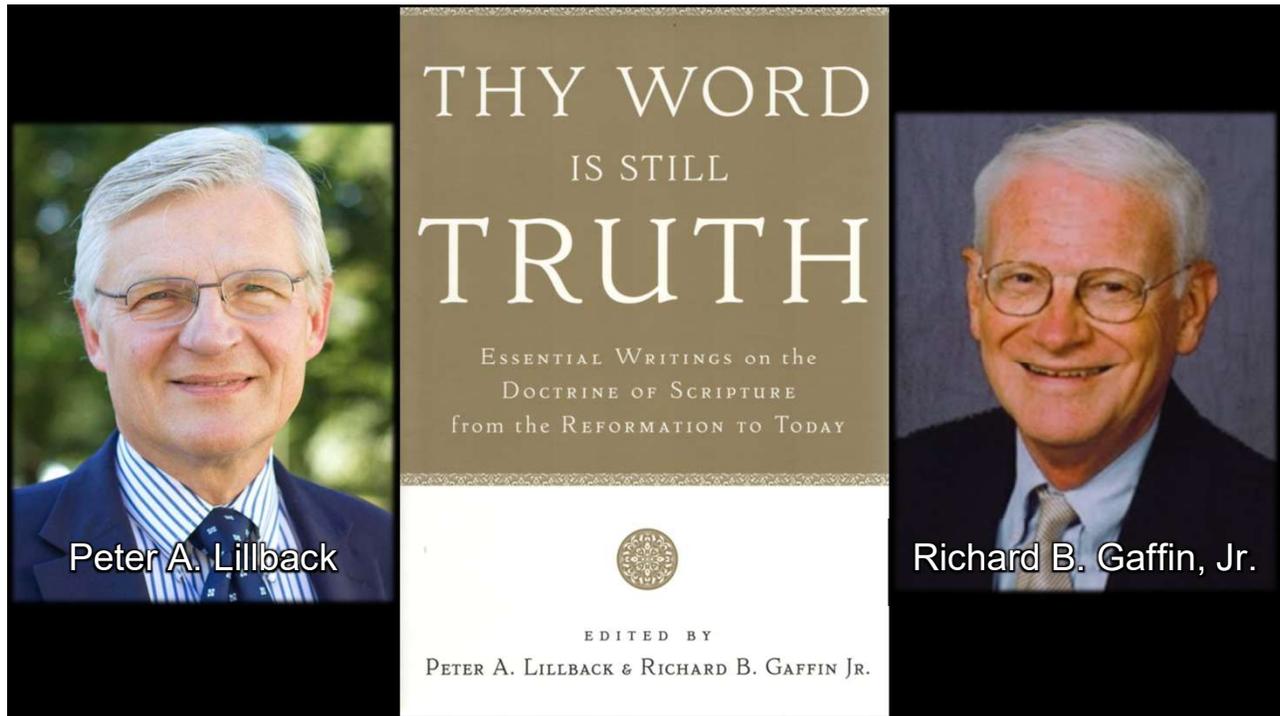
11th August, 1918
It is quite true what you say, that you have never expressed yourself – but who has, that has anything to express? The things one says are

Even when one feels nearest to other people, something in one seems obstinately to belong to God and to refuse to enter into any earthly communion – at least that is how I should express it if I thought there was a God. It is odd isn't it? I care passionately for this world, and many things and people in it, and yet . . . what is it all? There *must* be something more important, one feels, though I don't *believe* there is. I am haunted – some ghost, from some extramundane region, seems always trying to tell me something that I am to repeat to the world, but I cannot understand the message.

The outcome is that one is a ghost, floating through the world without any real contact. Even when one feels nearest to other people, something in one seems obstinately to belong to God and to refuse to enter into any earthly communion – at least that is how I should express it if I thought there was a God. It is odd isn't it? I care passionately for this world, and many things and people in it, and yet . . . what is it all? There *must* be something more important, one feels, though I don't *believe* there is. I am haunted – some ghost, from some extramundane region, seems always trying to tell me something that I am to repeat to the world, but I cannot understand the message. But it is from listening to the ghost that one comes to feel oneself a ghost. I feel I shall find the truth on my deathbed and be surrounded by people too stupid to understand – fussing about medicines instead of searching



Inerrancy and Church History



Spurgeon and the Downgrade Controversy



Charles Haddon Spurgeon
(1834-1892)

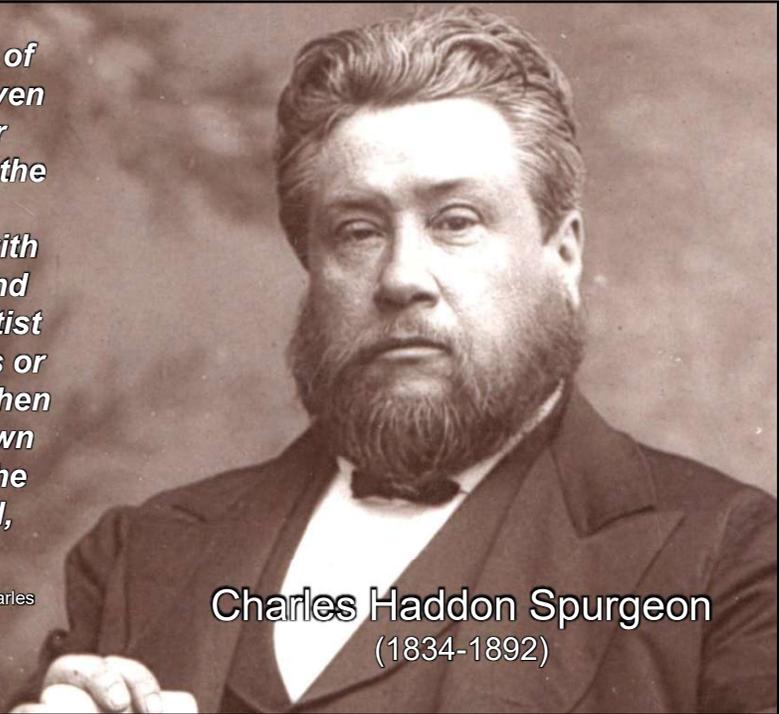


"The ejected [due to the 1662 Act of Uniformity], who were in one sense alone the first Nonconformists, were mainly Presbyterians; some, however, were Independents, and a few Baptists. The Churches they established were all Calvinistic in their faith, and such they remained for at least that generation. It is a matter of veritable history, however, that such they did not all continue for any great length of time.

Charles Haddon Spurgeon
(1834-1892)

"Some of them, in the course of two or three generations, or even less, became either Arian or Socinian. This was eventually the case with nearly all the Presbyterians, and later on, with some of the Independents, and with many of the General Baptist Communities. By some means or other, first the ministers, and then the Churches, got on "the down grade," and in some cases, the descent was rapid, and in all, very disastrous."

[Robert Shindler with the unqualified endorsement of Charles Spurgeon, *Sword and Trowel*, March 1887, http://www.romans45.org/spurgeon/s_and_t/dg01.htm, accessed 11/29/30]



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[Robert Shindler with the unqualified endorsement of Charles Spurgeon, *Sword and Trowel*, March 1887, http://www.romans45.org/spurgeon/s_and_t/dg01.htm, accessed 08/16/24]

Arianism was a Christological heresy that precipitated the Council of Nicaea in 325 AD.

Under the leadership of Athanasius, the Council of Nicaea affirmed that Jesus, the Son of God, was of the same substance (ὁμοούσια; homoousia; consubstantial) as the Father and, thus was fully God.

Arius maintained that Jesus, the Son of God, was of a similar substance (ὁμοιούσια; homoiouisia) as the Father and, thus was not fully God.

Current day Jehovah's Witnesses are Arians.

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Socinianism was a heresy that denied the Trinity altogether.

The term 'Socinian' comes from Laelius (uncle; 1525-1562) and Faustus (nephew; 1539-1604) Socinus (It. Sozzini) who denied the Trinity by denying the deity of Christ and the deity of the Holy Spirit.

THE
RACOVIAN CATECHISM,
 WITH NOTES AND ILLUSTRATIONS,
 TRANSLATED FROM THE LATIN:
 TO WHICH IS PREFIXED
 A SKETCH
 OF THE HISTORY OF UNITARIANISM
 IN POLAND AND THE ADJACENT COUNTRIES.

By **THOMAS REES, F.S.A.**

LONDON:
 PRINTED FOR LONGMAN, HURST, REES, ORME, AND
 BROWN, PATERNOSTER ROW.

1818.
 H. A.

ful. This is to be not happy merely, but blessed in the highest degree.

You have explained to me what things are necessary to be known concerning the attributes of God, in order to salvation: state, in the next place, what those are which you deem eminently conducive to the same end?

The principal thing is to guard against falling into the common error, wherein it is maintained, with palpable contradiction, that there is in God only *one* essence, but that he has three persons⁴.

Prove to me that in the one essence of God, there is but one Person?

This indeed may be seen from hence, that the essence of God is one, not in kind but in number. Wherefore it cannot, in any way, contain a plurality of persons, since a person is nothing else than an individual intelligent essence. Wherever, then, there exist three numerical persons, there must necessarily, in like manner, be reckoned three individual-essences; for in the same sense in which it is affirmed that there is one numerical essence, it must be held that there is also one numerical person.

⁴ Whether it be not necessary to salvation to know that God is one in person as well as in essence, may be easily ascertained from the testimony of our Lord, quoted a little further on, from John xvii. 3. And whether in maintaining that there is in the supreme God a plurality of persons, Christians do not involve themselves in the crime of polytheism, and consequently of idolatry, it behoves them again and again to consider. On this point, the observations of Crellius, in discussing this subject in his *Ethica Christiana*, may be consulted. *Vide lib. iii. cap. 2.*
—BEN. WISSOWATIUS.

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Who is this one divine Person?
The Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.
How do you prove this?

By most decisive testimonies of Scripture:—thus Jesus says (John xvii. 3) “This is life eternal, that they might know THEE, (the Father) THE ONLY TRUE GOD.” The apostle Paul writes to the Corinthians (1 Cor. viii. 6), “To us there is but ONE GOD, THE FATHER, of whom are all things:”—and again, in addressing the Ephesians (chap. iv. 6), he says, “There is—ONE GOD AND FATHER OF ALL; who is above all, and through all, and in you all.”

How happens it, then, that Christians commonly maintain, that, with the Father,—the Son and the HOLY SPIRIT are persons in one and the same Deity?
In this they lamentably err—deducing their arguments from passages of Scripture ill understood.

What are the arguments by which they endeavour to support their opinion?

The principal are these: first, they affirm, that in the Scriptures, not only the Father, but the Son also, and the Holy Spirit, are severally called and shown to be God; and, since the same Scriptures assert that God is only one, they infer that these three compose that one God.

How can this argument be invalidated?

I will reply to this question, first, as it respects the Son, and afterwards as it relates to the Holy Spirit.

What answer do you make in respect to the Son?

The term GOD is employed in the Scriptures chiefly in two senses. The former of these is, when it designates

How happens it, then, that Christians commonly maintain, that, with the Father,—the SON and the HOLY SPIRIT are persons in one and the same Deity?

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Chap. I.] OF THE PERSON OF CHRIST. 55

import. And the sacred author of the Epistle to the Hebrews (chap. i. ver. 5) shows from the words of the Psalmist (Psalm ii. 7), "Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee," that Christ was glorified by God, in order that he might be made a Priest, that is, the chief director of our religion and salvation,—in which office are comprised his supreme authority and dominion. He was, however, not merely the only begotten Son of God, but also A GOD, on account of the divine power and authority which he displayed even while he was yet mortal: much more may he be so denominated now that he has received all power in heaven and earth, and that all things, God himself alone excepted, have been put under his feet.—But of this you shall hear in its proper place.

But do you not acknowledge in Christ a divine, as well as a human nature or substance?

If by the terms divine nature or substance I am to understand the very essence of God, I do not acknowledge such a divine nature in Christ; for this were repugnant both to right reason and to the Holy Scriptures. But if, on the other hand, you intend by a divine nature the Holy Spirit which dwelt in Christ, united, by an indissoluble bond, to his human nature*, and

* It ought to be noticed here that in the opinion of the ancients, besides the Holy Spirit, which is the Power of God, being given to Christ without measure, the Wisdom of God also, as the Scriptures, indeed, intimate, or that divine energy and *energeia*, which seems to have been the Shechinah of the Hebrews, or the Logos of the first Christians, dwelt in the Messiah. So the great Grotius rightly remarks, in the Fifth Book of

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36 OF THE NATURE OF GOD. [Sect. III.]

God had honoured with the title of Gods, but rather greatly the superior of them all; and was on this very account God,—that the “Father had sanctified him, and sent him into the world:” which cause, and the whole of this reasoning of Christ, are accommodated to the latter, and not to the former signification of the term God.

What reply do you make respecting the Holy Spirit? The Holy Spirit is never expressly called God in the Scriptures. Nor is it to be inferred that it is itself God, or a person of the Divinity, because in some places those things are attributed to it which belong to God: but this proceeds from a very different cause, as you shall hear in its proper place.

What is the second argument whereby it is attempted to be proved that these three persons are united in one Deity?

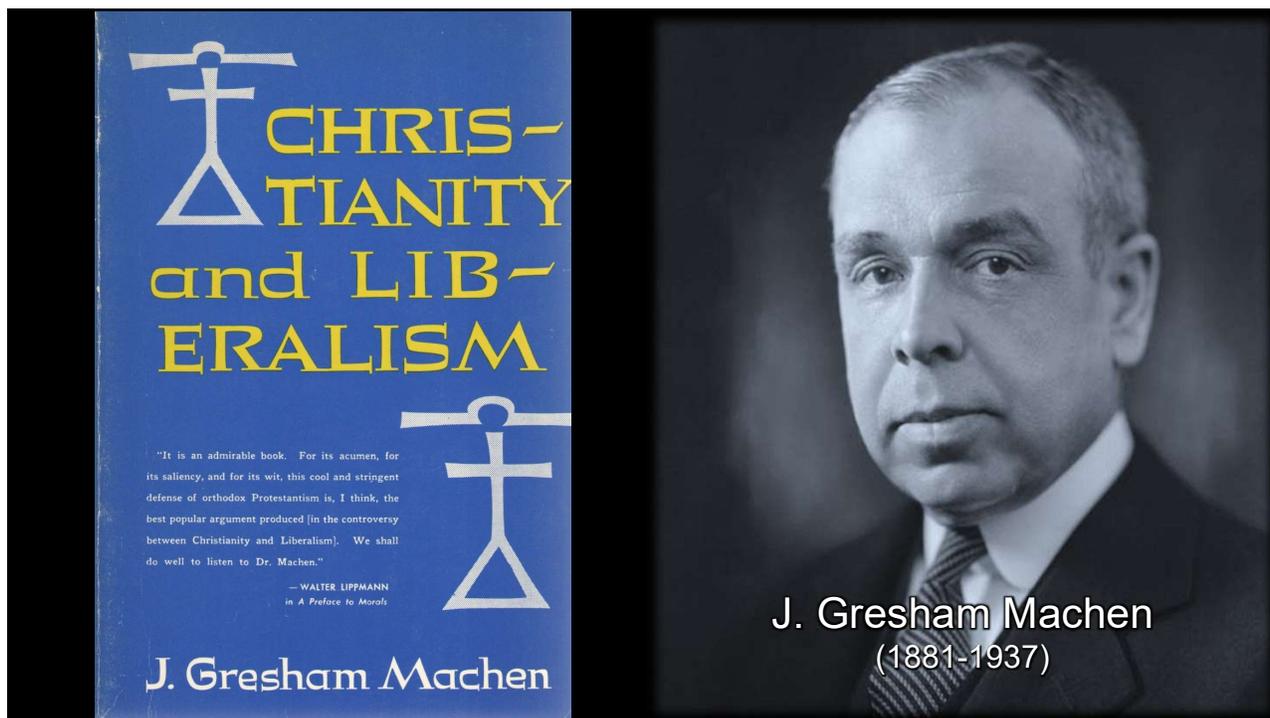
This argument is drawn from those passages of Scripture wherein the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are, on some account, joined together.

Which are those passages?

The first is the command of Jesus (Matthew xxviii. 19), to baptize “in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.” The second is comprised in the address of Paul to the Corinthians (1 Corinth. xii. 4—6), “There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit: and there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord: and there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all.” The third is found in the First Epistle of John, chap. v. 7, “There are three that bear

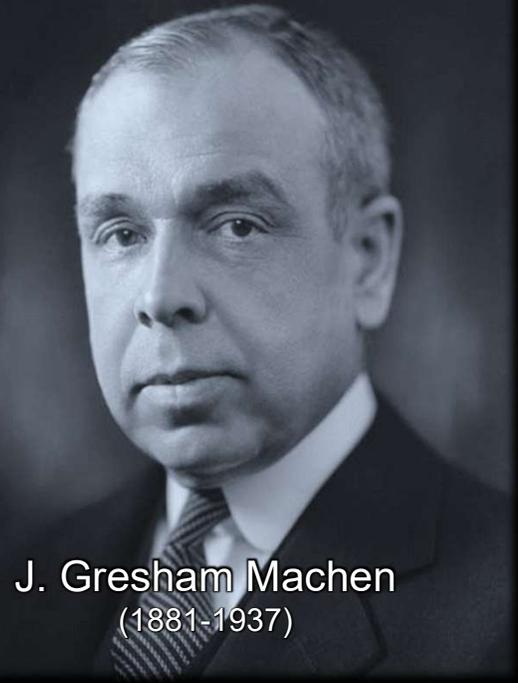
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Machen and Princeton Liberalism



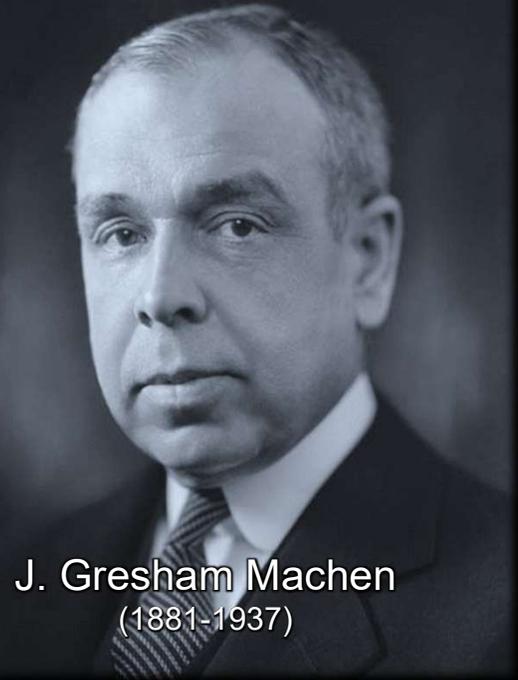
"The type of religion which rejoices in the pious sound of traditional phrases, regardless of their meanings, or shrinks from 'controversial' matters, will never stand amid the shocks of life. In the sphere of religion, as in other spheres, the things about which men are agreed are apt to be the things that are least worth holding; the really important things are the things about which men will fight."

[J. Gresham Machen, *Christianity and Liberalism* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1923), 1-2]



J. Gresham Machen
(1881-1937)

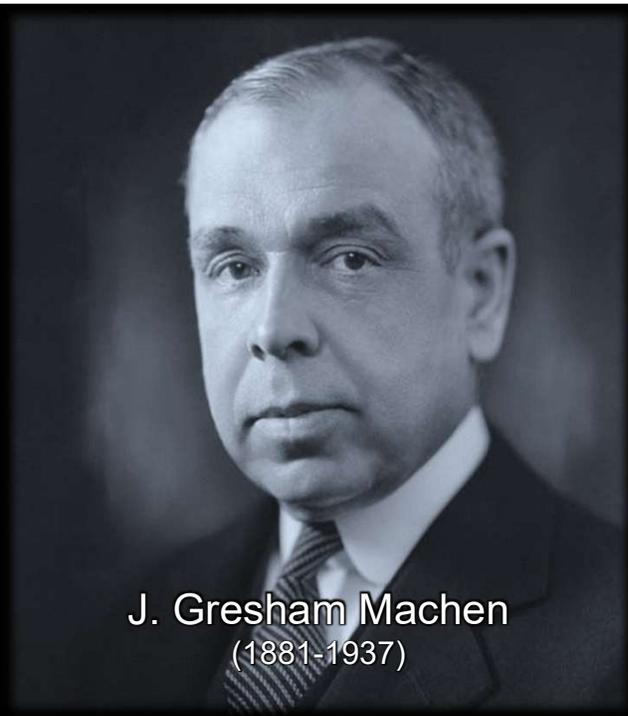
"The contents of the Bible, then, are unique. But another fact about the Bible is also important. The Bible might contain an account of a true revelation from God, and yet the account be full of error. Before the full authority of the Bible can be established, therefore, it is necessary to add to the Christian doctrine of revelation the Christian doctrine of inspiration."



J. Gresham Machen
(1881-1937)

"The latter doctrine means that the Bible not only is an account of important things, but that the account itself is true, the writers having be so preserved from error, despite a full maintenance of their habits or thought and expression, that the resulting Book is the 'infallible rule of faith and practice.' "

[J. Gresham Machen, *Christianity and Liberalism*
(Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1923), 72-73]



J. Gresham Machen
(1881-1937)



FOREWORD BY JOHN D. WOODBRIDGE

“Right Reason” and the Princeton Mind

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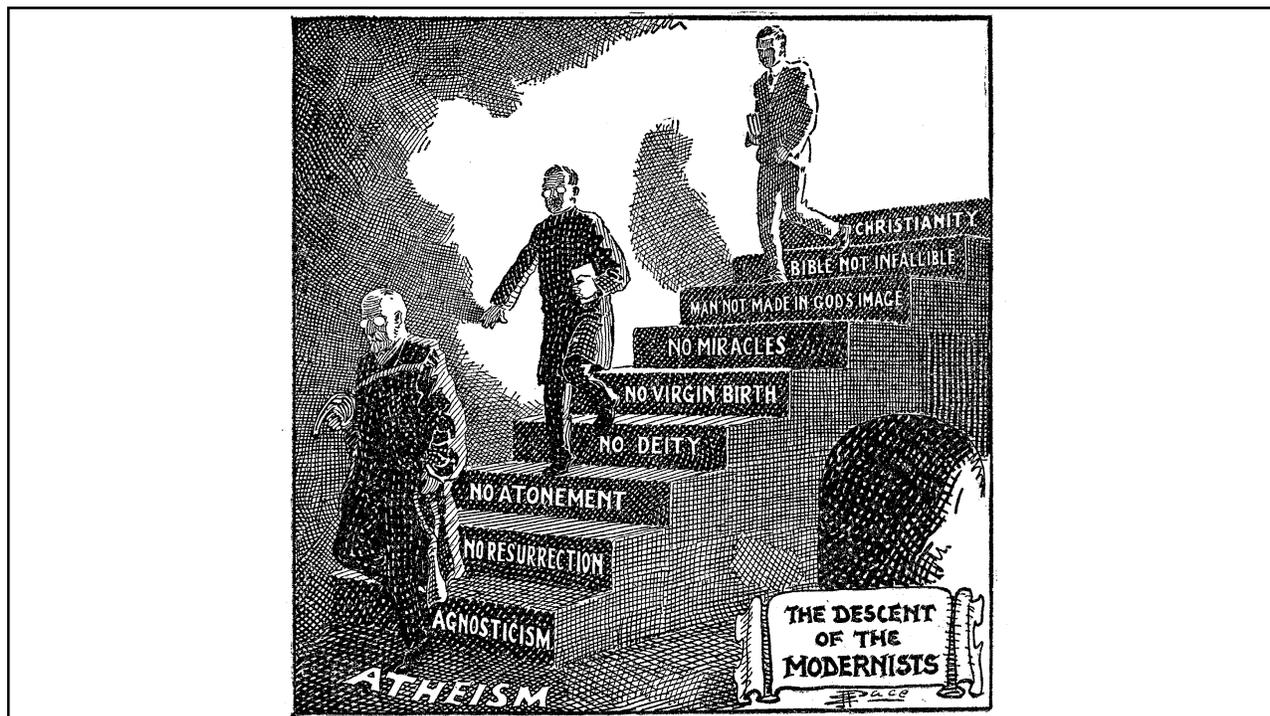
AN UNORTHODOX PROPOSAL



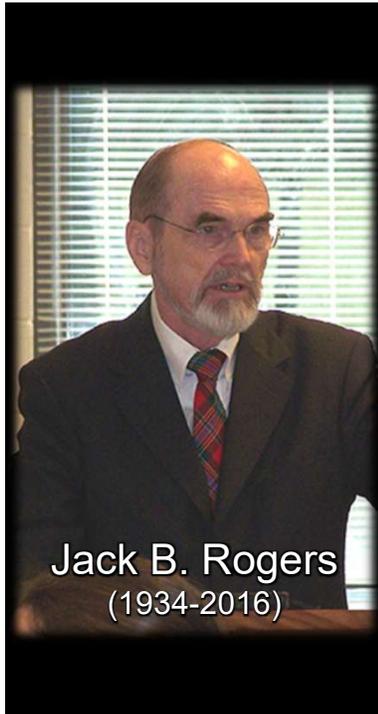
PAUL KJOSS HELSETH



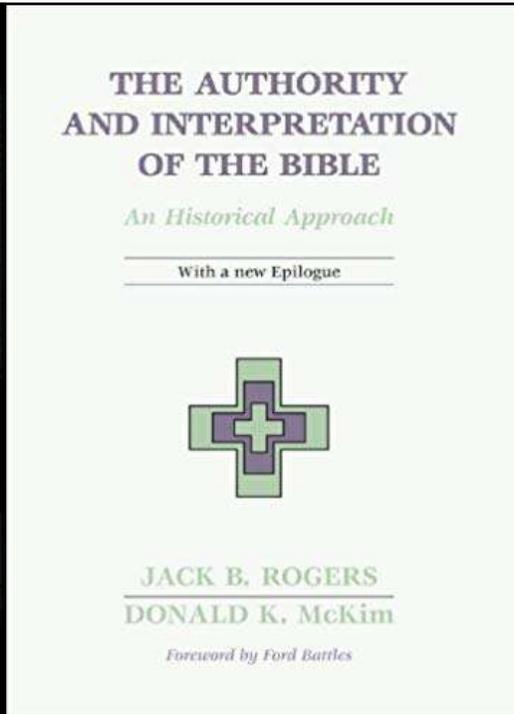
Paul Kjoss Helseth



Post WWII Evangelical Controversy



Jack B. Rogers
(1934-2016)



THE AUTHORITY
AND INTERPRETATION
OF THE BIBLE

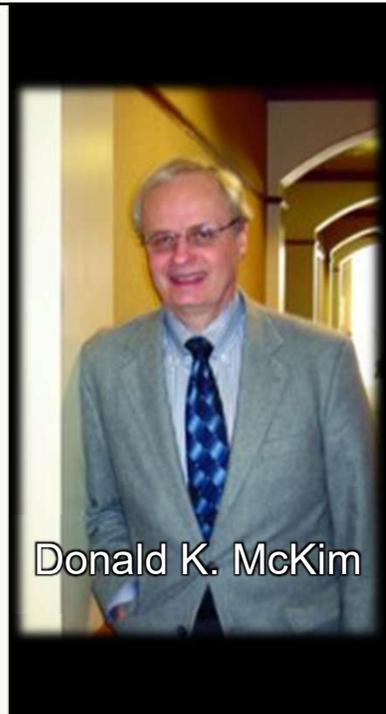
An Historical Approach

With a new Epilogue

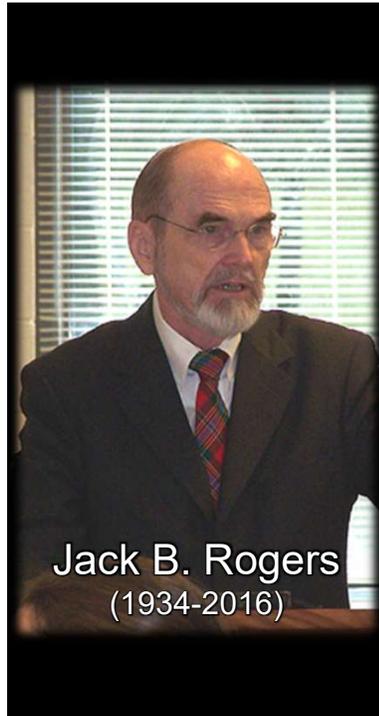


JACK B. ROGERS
DONALD K. McKim

Foreword by Ford Battles

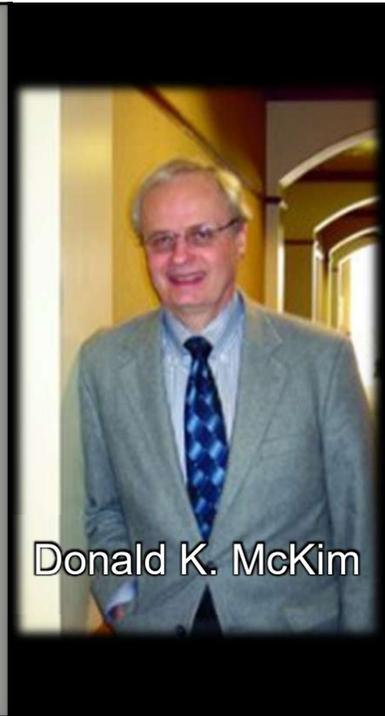


Donald K. McKim



"The foundation of the doctrine of Scripture in the early church needs to be recovered. For early Christian teachers, Scripture was wholly authoritative as a means of bringing people to salvation and guiding them in the life of faith. ... The interpretation of the Bible was influenced by the understanding of its saving purpose. Scripture was not used as a sourcebook for science. Early theologians accepted God's accommodated style of communication. God, like a good father or mother, adopted the thought and speech of children in order to relate to them."

[Jack B. Rogers and Donald K. McKim, *The Authority and Interpretation of the Bible: An Historical Approach* (New York: Harper & Row, 1979), 458-459]



Notice how Rogers and McKim describe the nature of biblical authority in functional terms.

For them, biblical authority resides in the Bible as a "means" and in terms of its "purpose."

They denigrate any characterization of biblical authority in terms of the Bible telling the truth as correspondence to reality.

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[Jack B. Rogers and Donald K. McKim, *The Authority and Interpretation of the Bible: An Historical Approach* (New York: Harper & Row, 1979), 458-459]

Notice also the strawman fallacy.

To say that the Bible is inerrant in all that it affirms, including statements it makes about nature, is not to say that the Bible is a sourcebook for science.

One should note also that their use of the expression 'accommodated style' includes the claim that some of God's "communication" includes factual errors.

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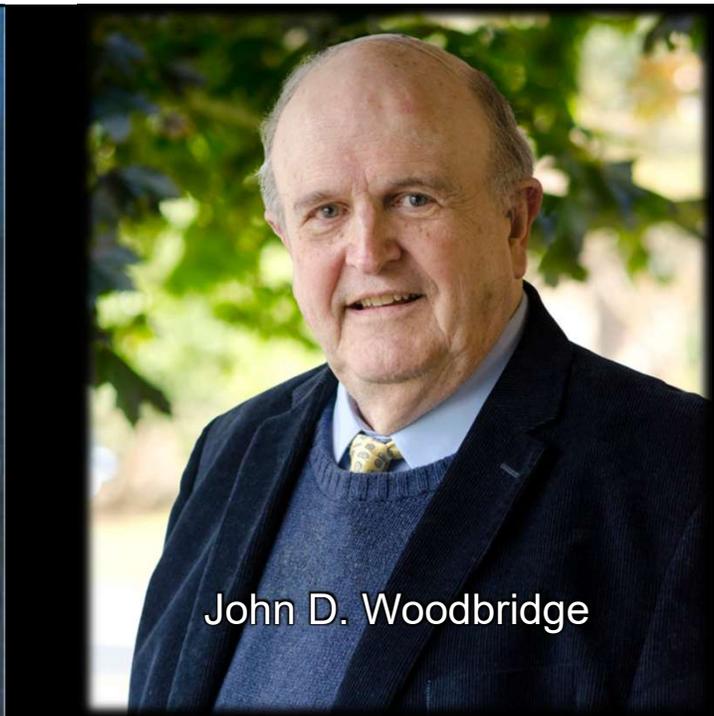
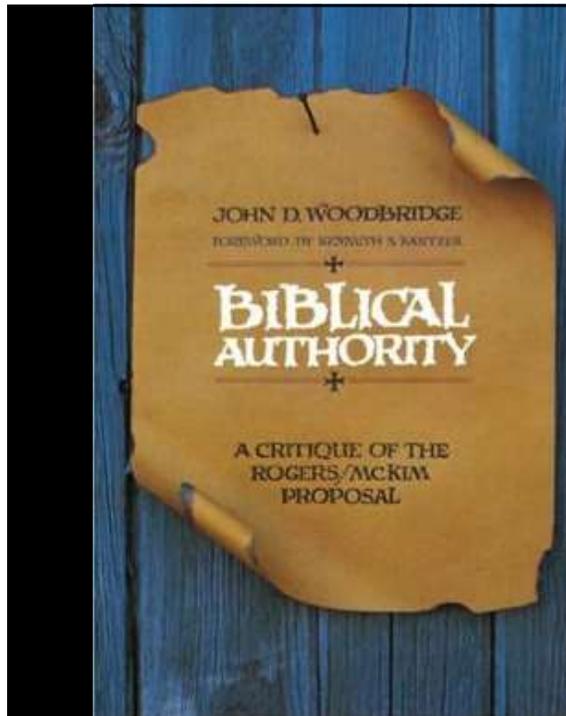
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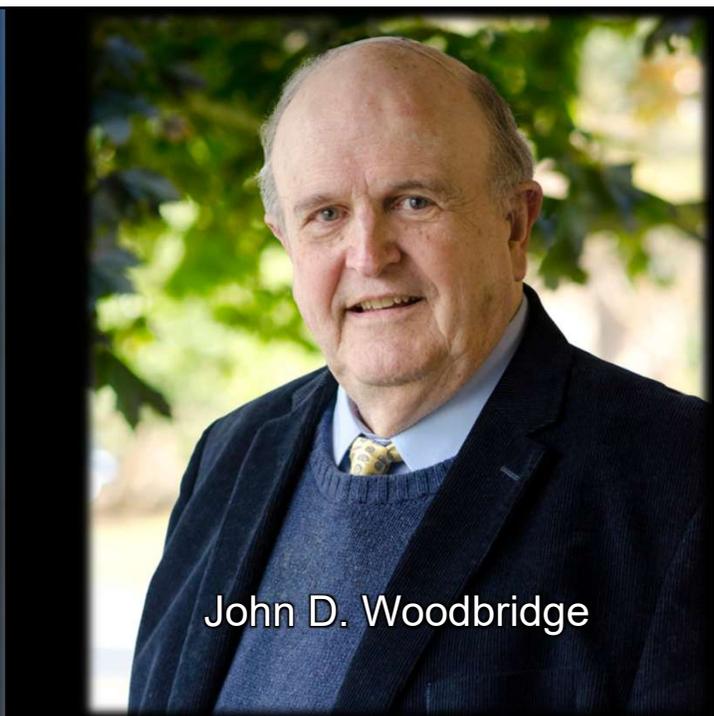
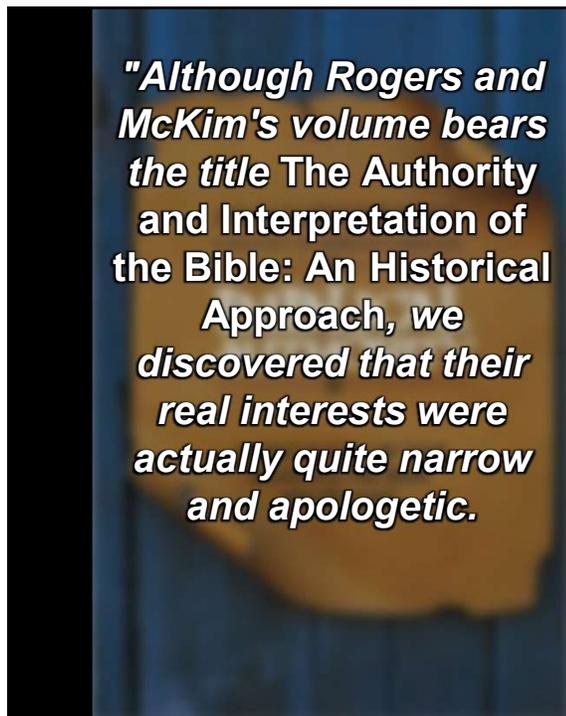
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Rogers and McKim fail to realize that a statement can correspond to reality in ways other than literally, including metaphorically, allegorically, and phenomenologically.

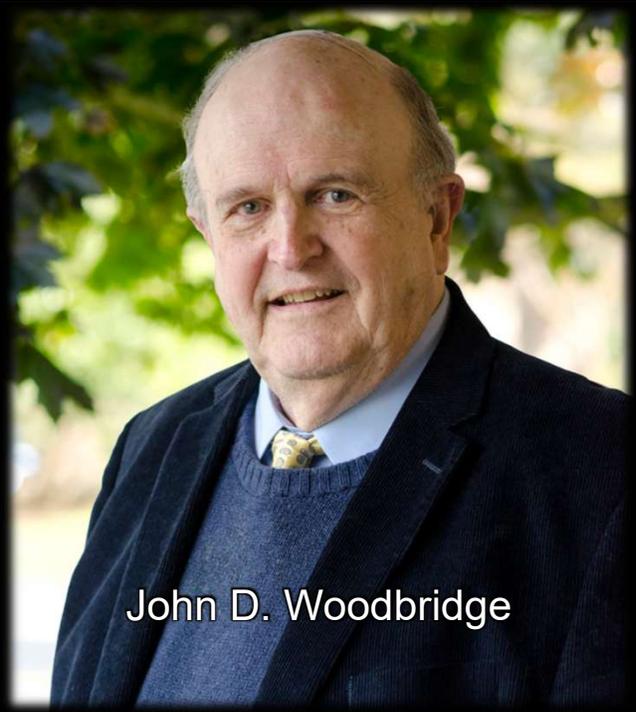


John D. Woodbridge



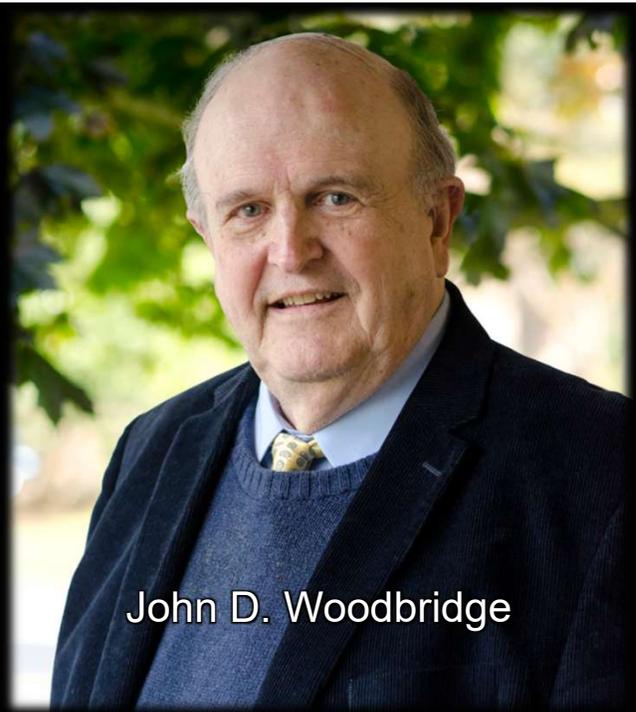
John D. Woodbridge

"They wanted to baptize as staunchly evangelical the hypothesis that the Bible is infallible for matters of faith and practice but subject to 'technical mistakes' in science, history, and the like. ...



John D. Woodbridge

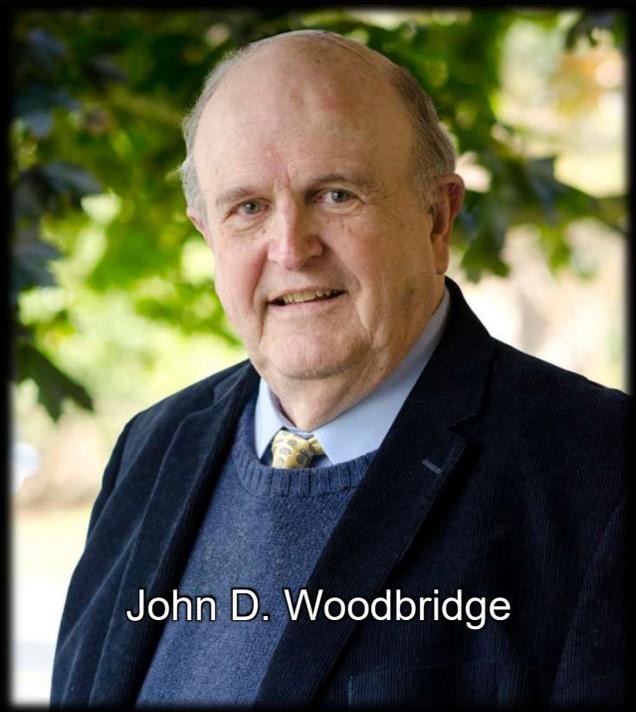
"The authors' description of the Bible creates for them the same kind of dilemma that neoorthodox scholars before them faced, namely, how to distinguish the infallible 'central saving message' from the errant 'difficult surrounding material.'



John D. Woodbridge

"This is a critical problem because Christianity is grounded in human history. Salvation truths are planted in the soil of the Bible's historical discourse about things that happened."

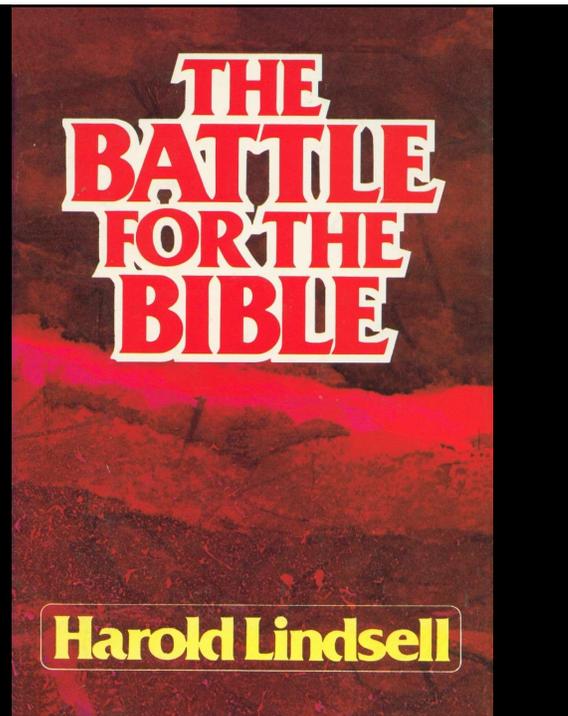
[John D. Woodbridge, *Biblical Authority: A Critique of the Rogers / McKim Proposal* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982), 153, 154]

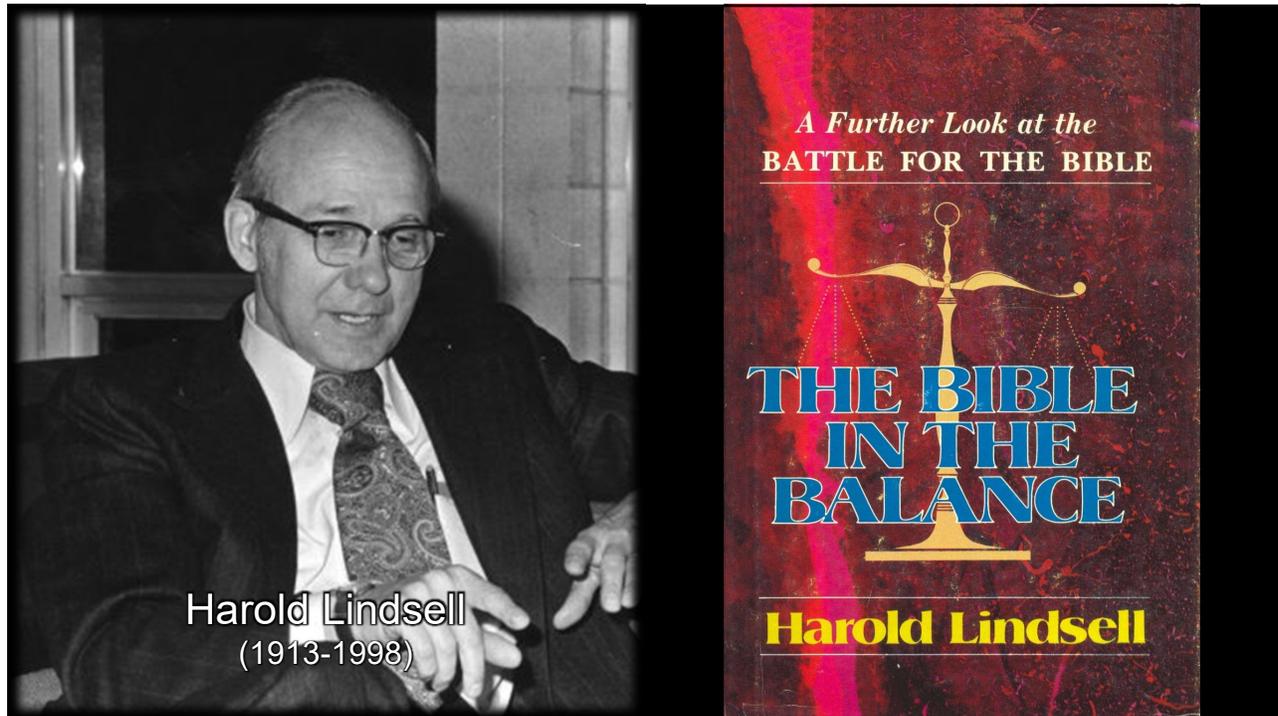


John D. Woodbridge

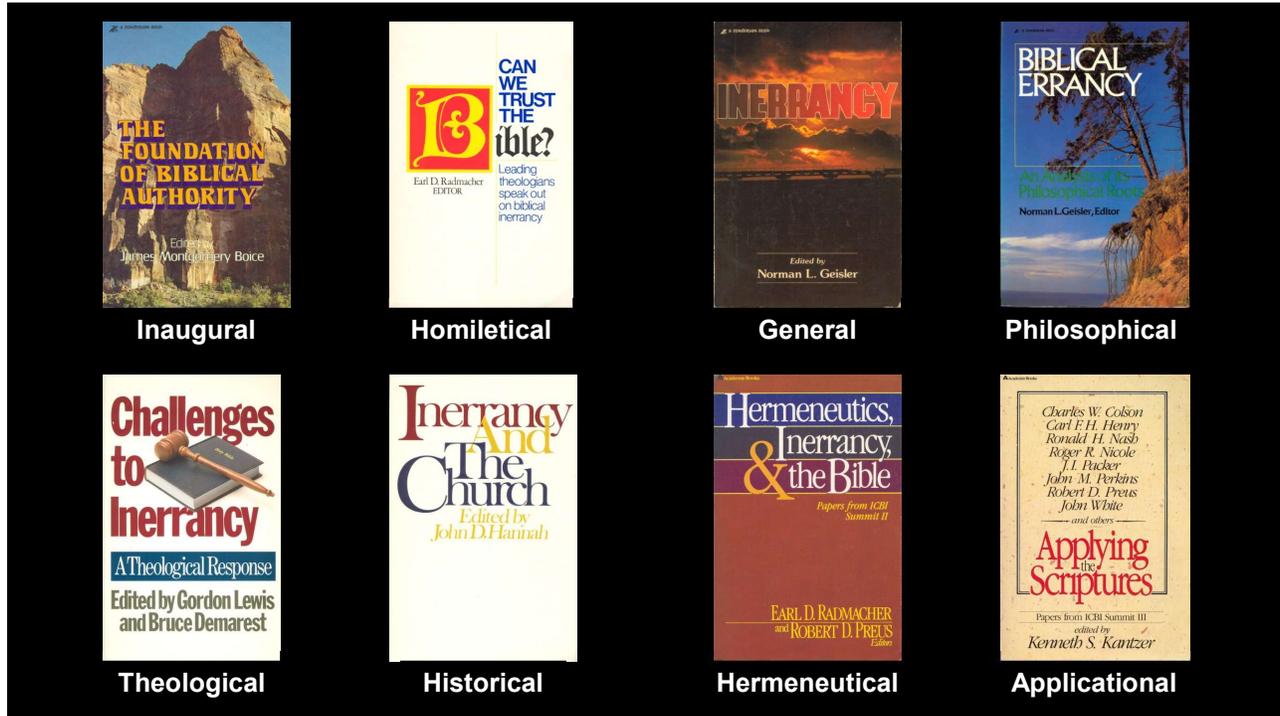


Harold Lindsell
(1913-1998)

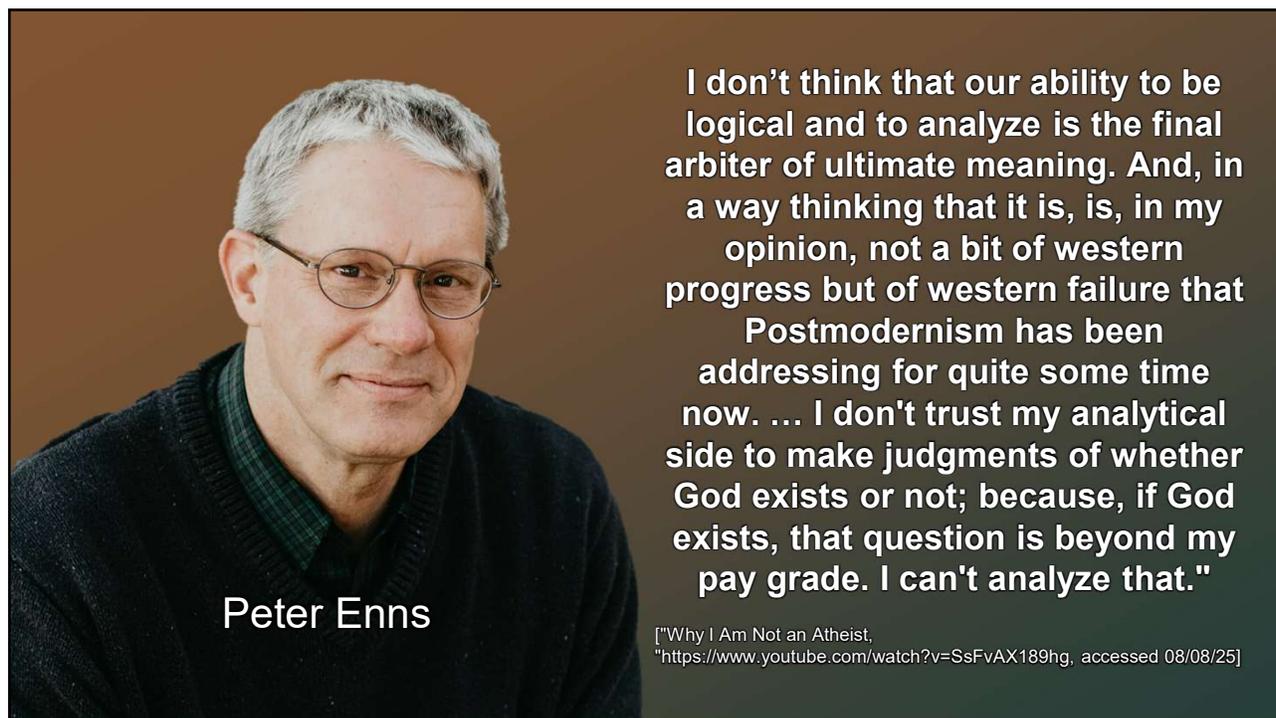
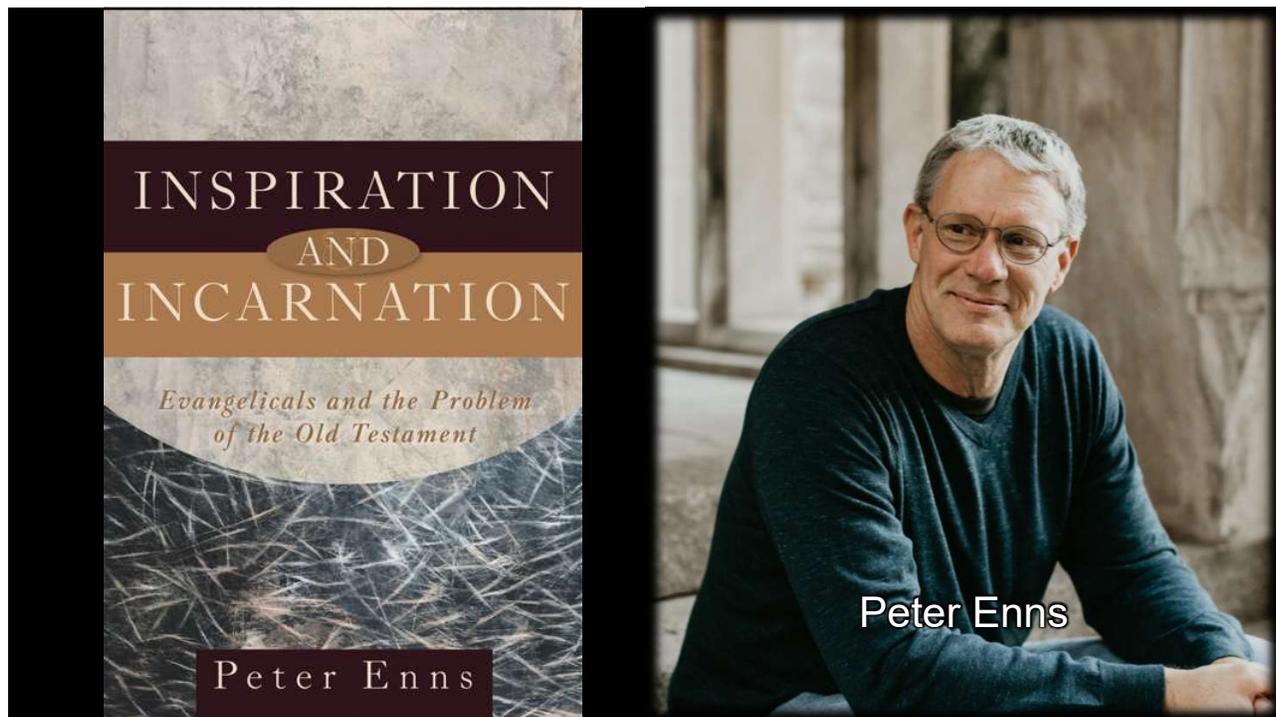




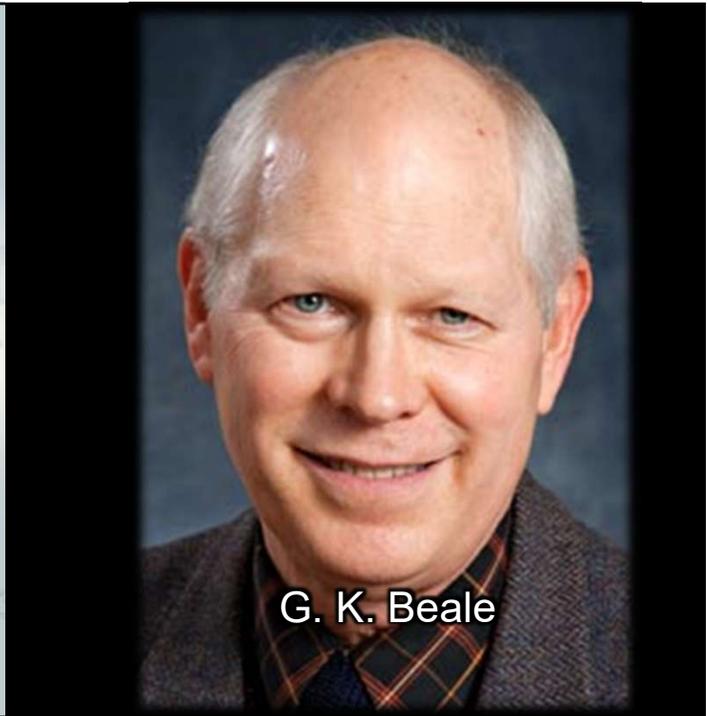
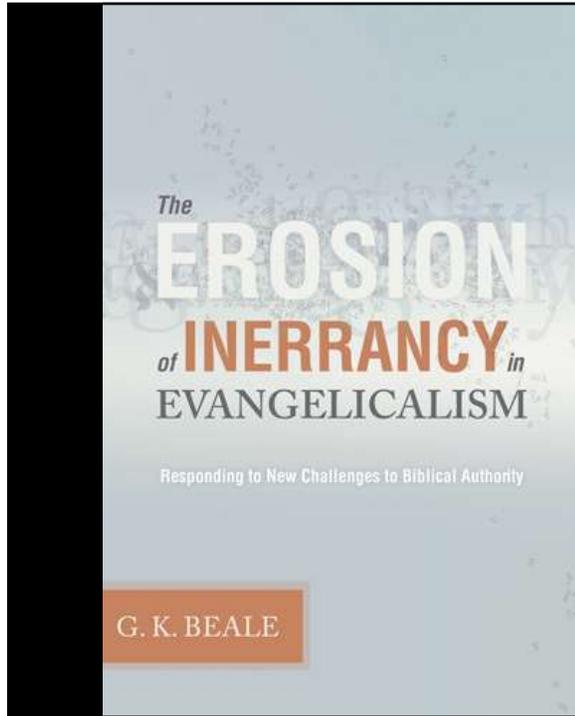
***Works published by
the International
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Inerrancy***



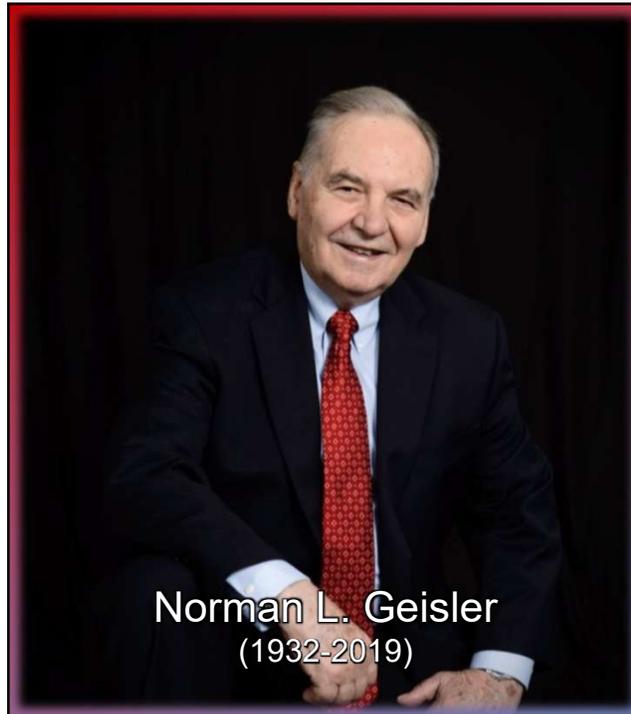
A Recent Evangelical Controversy



Peter Enns



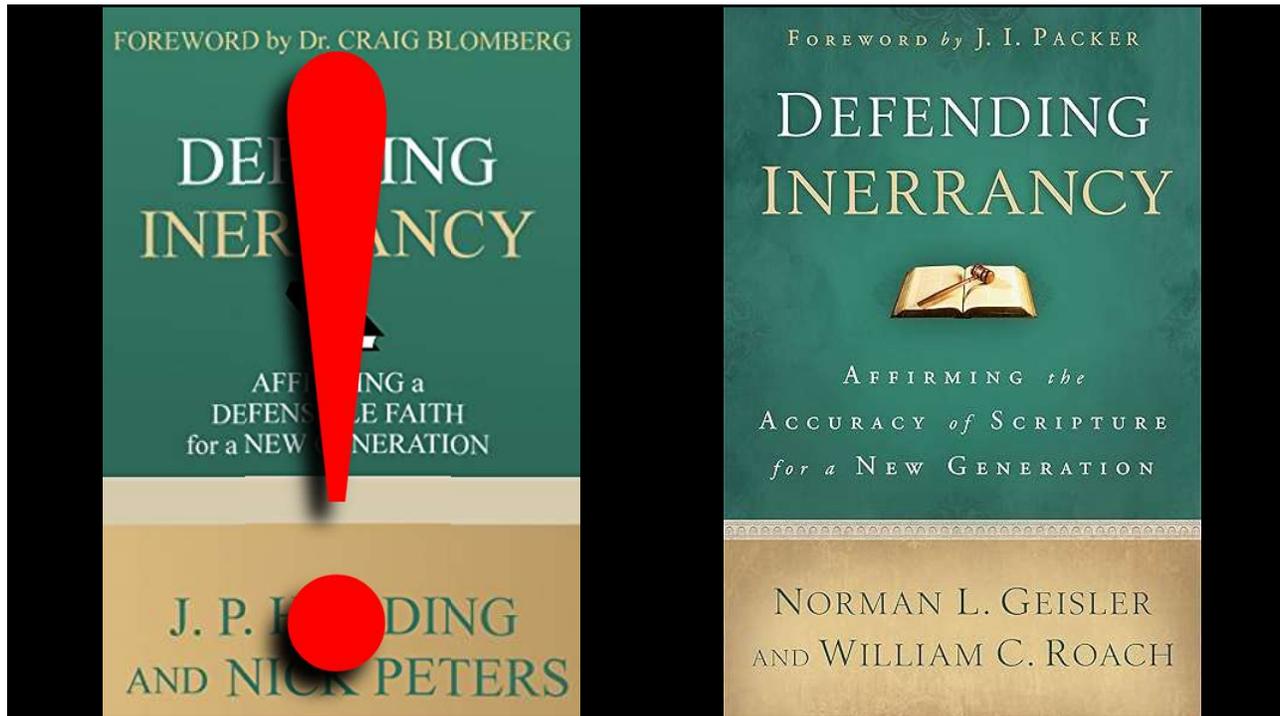
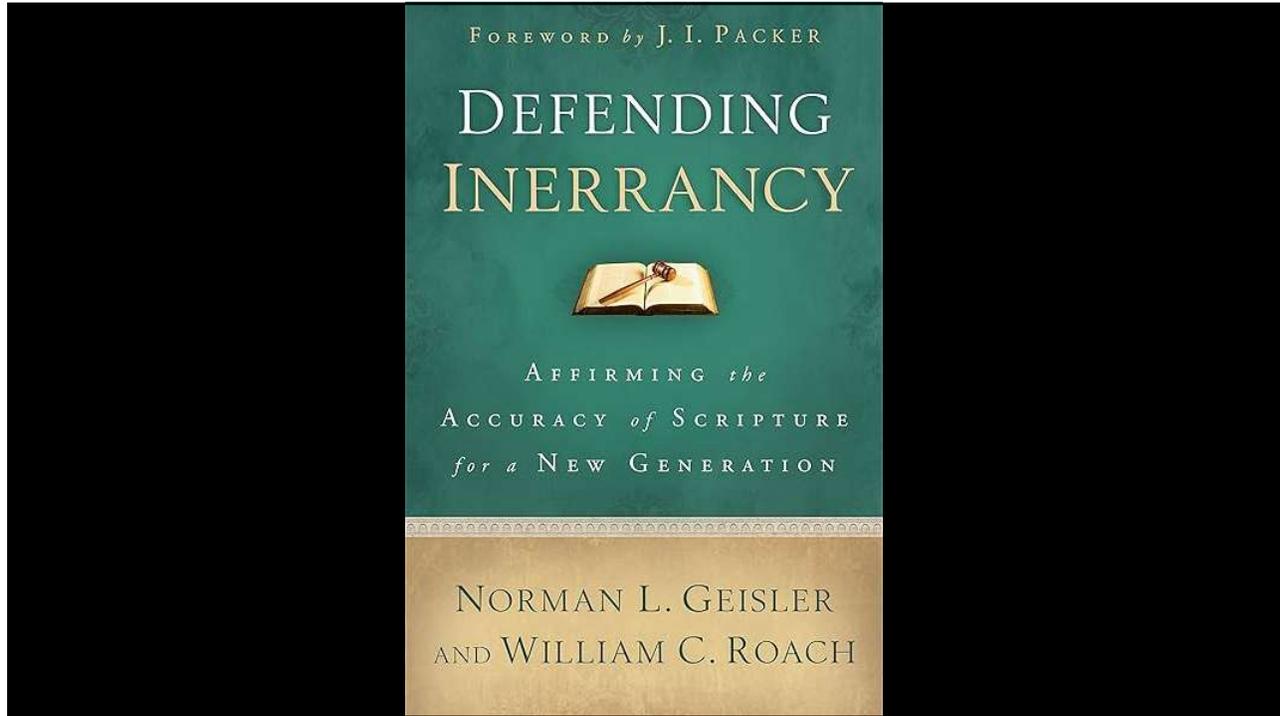
G. K. Beale



Norman L. Geisler
(1932-2019)



William C. Roach



The Current Evangelical Controversy

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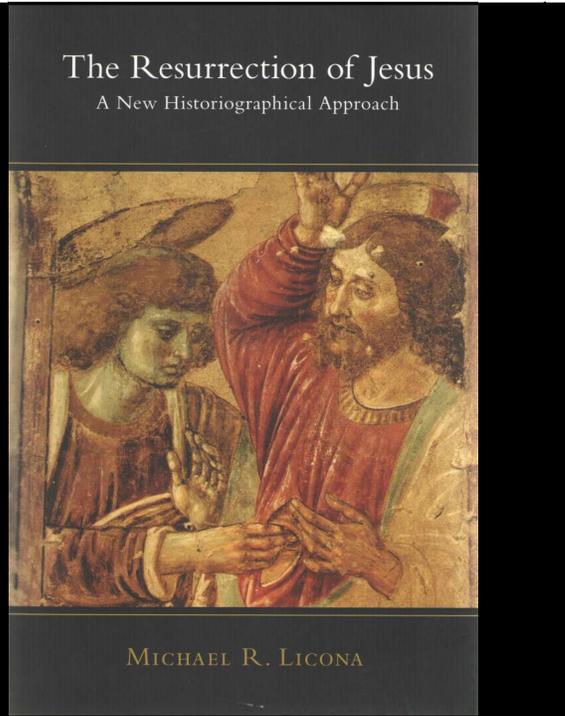
Including

DIALOG: What Does It Mean to Say the Bible is Inerrant?



Mike Licona

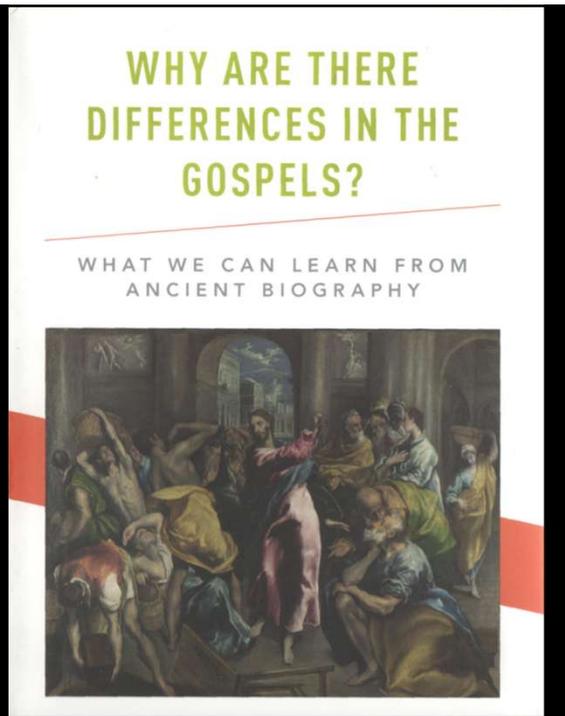


The Resurrection of Jesus
A New Historiographical Approach

MICHAEL R. LICONA

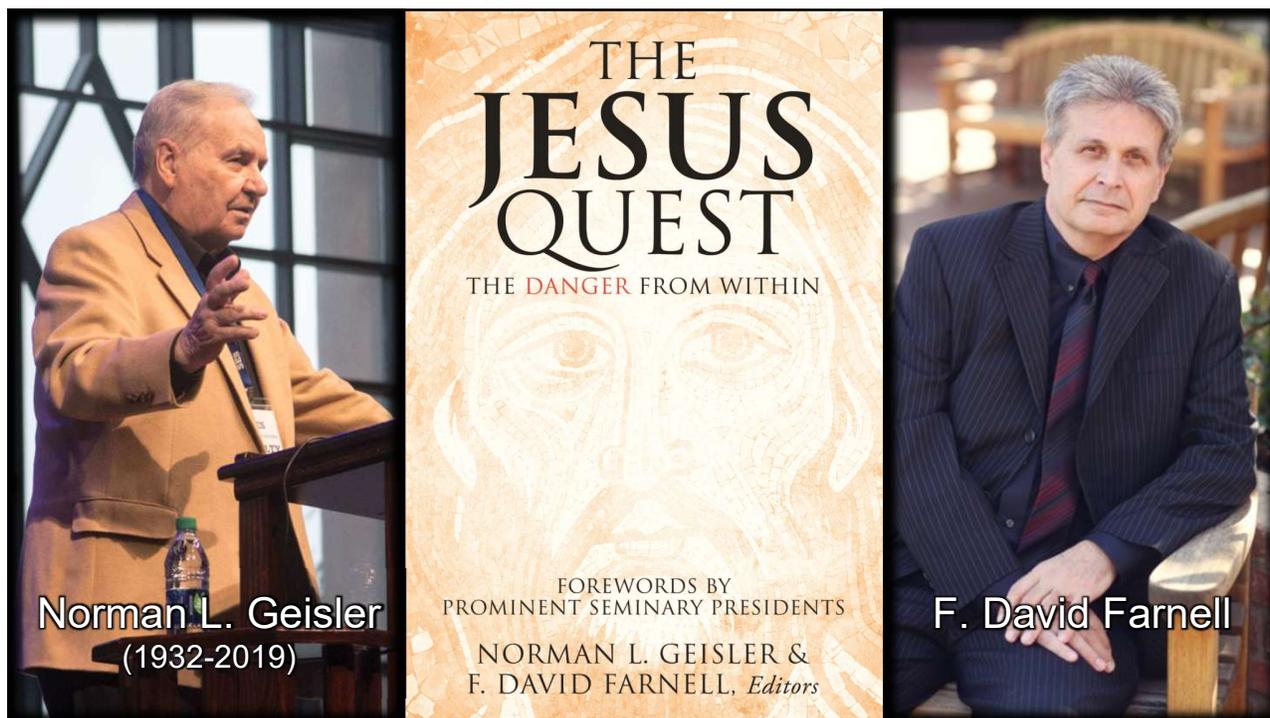
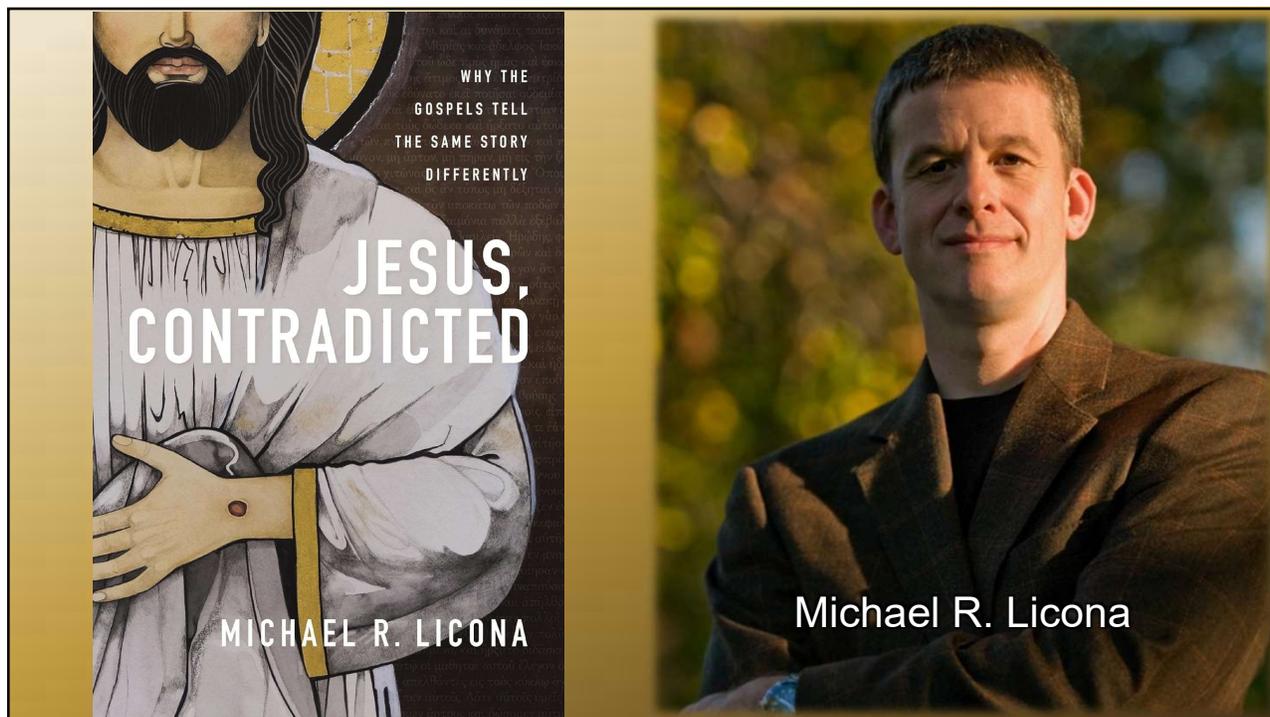


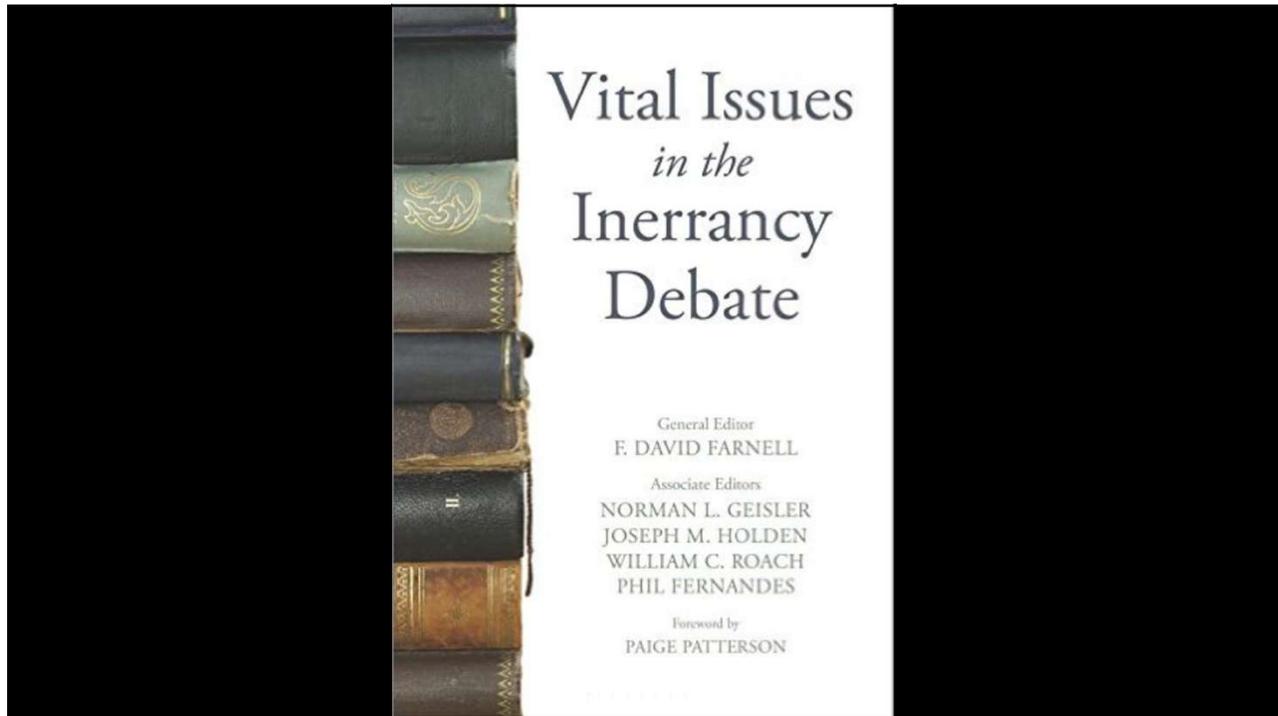
Mike Licona



WHY ARE THERE
DIFFERENCES IN THE
GOSPELS?

WHAT WE CAN LEARN FROM
ANCIENT BIOGRAPHY

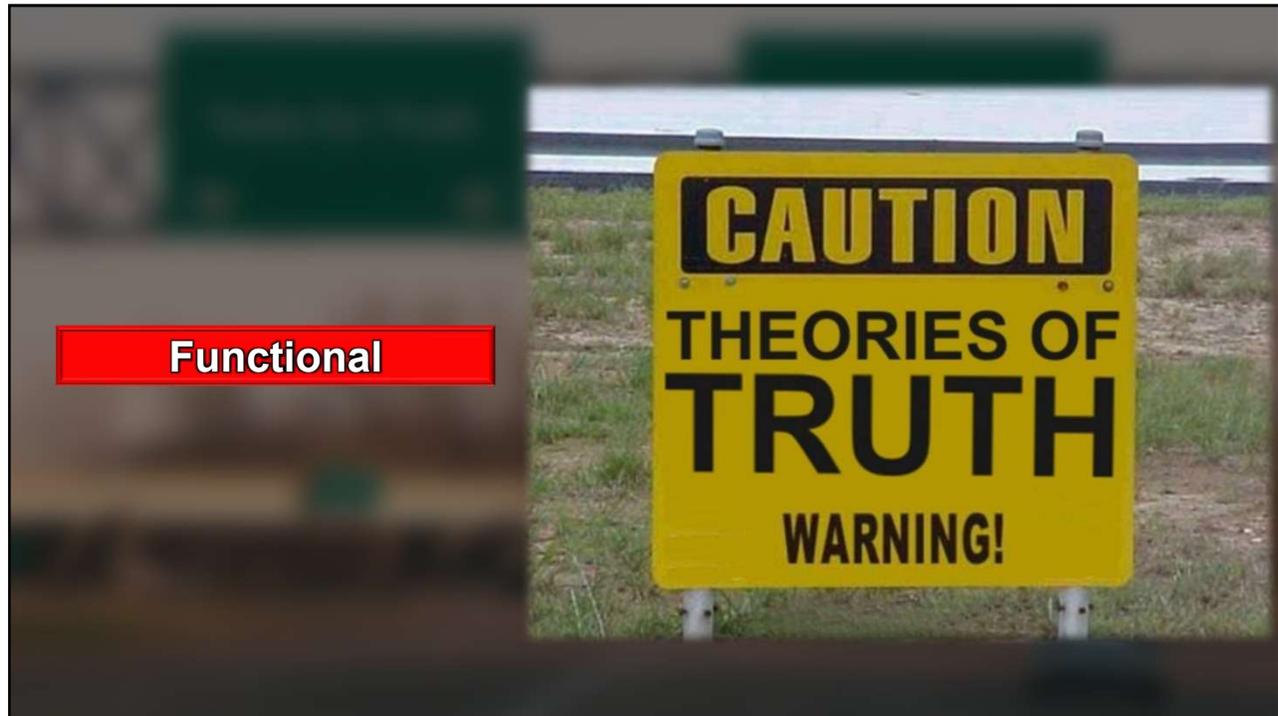




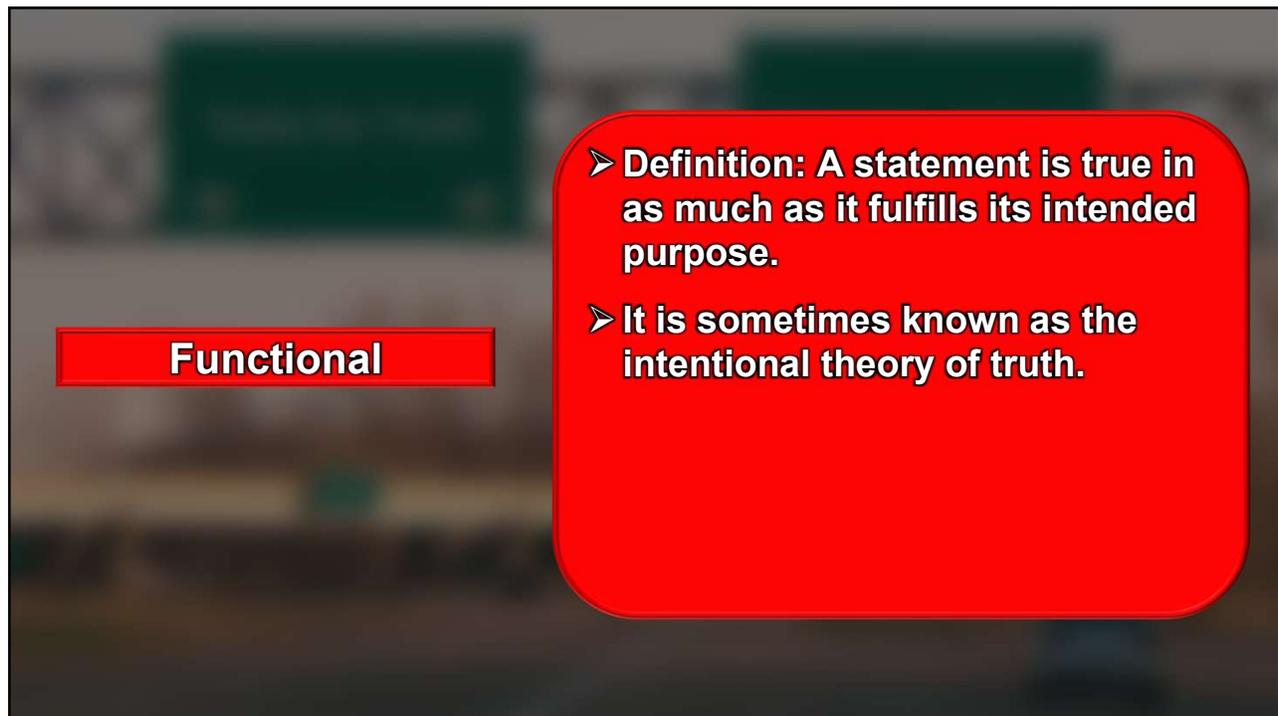
***Four things that
concern me in the
current controversies***

1. *The compromised theory of truth with which Geisler dealt in his 1980 article and which ICBI ("The Chicago Statement") examined thoroughly is still a problem today.*
2. *A newer compromised concept (theory) of truth has arisen from Postmodernism.*
3. *The theory that the Gospels are of the genre of Greco-Roman Biography allows Mike Licona—though he claims to hold to a correspondence theory of truth—to ascribe conflicting or contradictory statements to the Bible in as much as he overlooks various ways in which a proposition might correspond to reality.*
4. *Allowing for the possibility that there are conflicting or contradictory statements in the Bible is incompatible with Inspiration and Inerrancy.*

The compromised theory of truth with which Geisler dealt in his 1980 article and which ICBI ("The Chicago Statement") examined thoroughly is still a problem today.



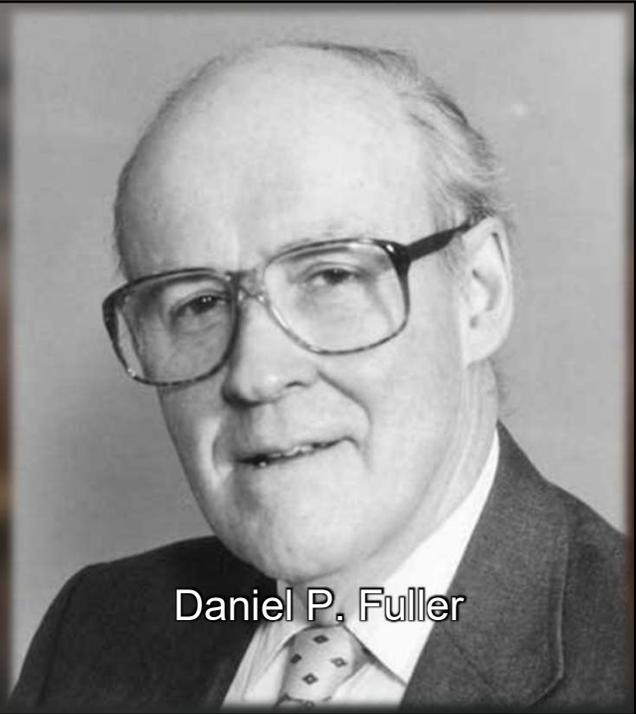
Functional



Functional

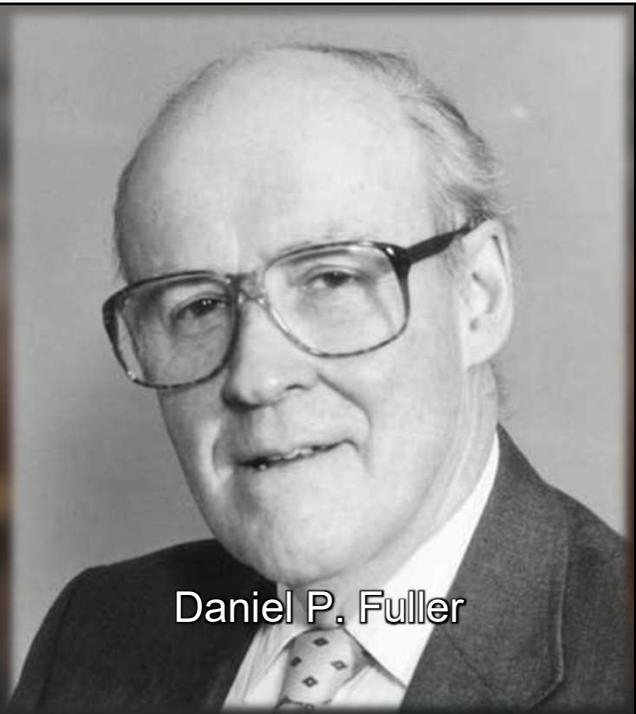
- **Definition: A statement is true in as much as it fulfills its intended purpose.**
- **It is sometimes known as the intentional theory of truth.**

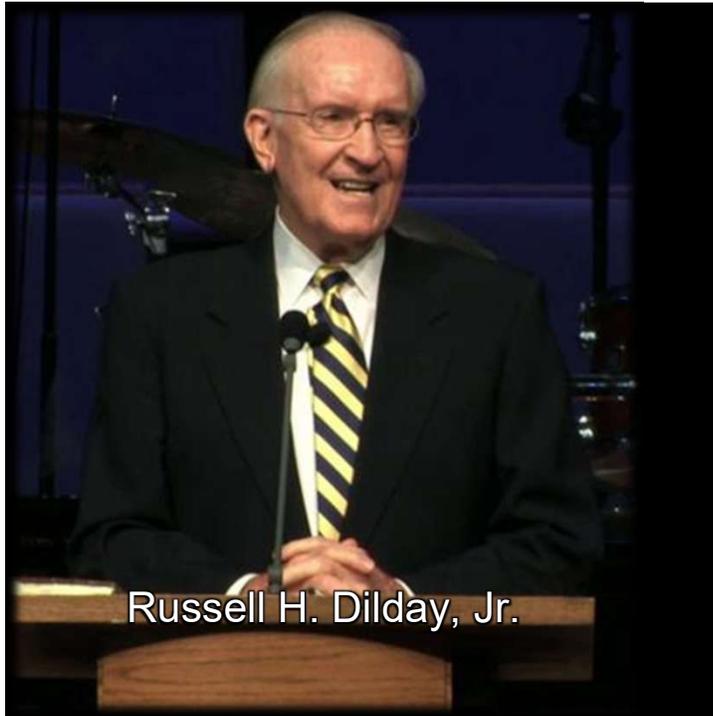
***"Although the mustard seed
(see Matt. 13:32) is not the
smallest of all seeds, yet
Jesus referred to it as such"
because . . .***



***"to have gone contrary to
their mind on what was the
smallest seed would have so
diverted their attention from
the knowledge that would
bring salvation to their souls
that they might well have
failed to hear these all-
important revelational
truths."***

Daniel P. Fuller, "Benjamin B. Warfield's View of Faith and History," *Bulletin of the Evangelical Theological Society* 11 (Spring 1968): 81-82, quoted in Norman L. Geisler, "The Concept of Truth in the Inerrancy Debate," *Bibliotheca Sacra* (October-December 1980): 336-337.

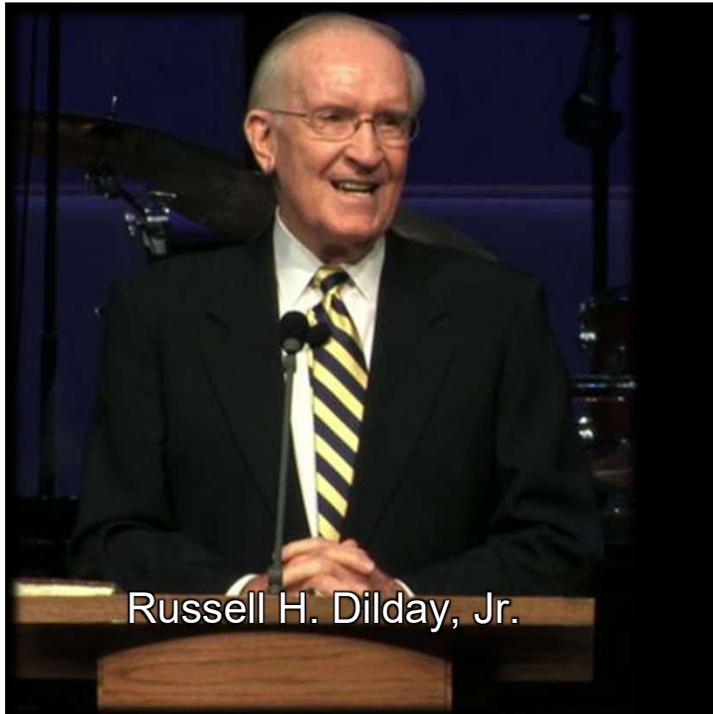




Russell H. Dilday, Jr.

The Doctrine of Biblical Authority

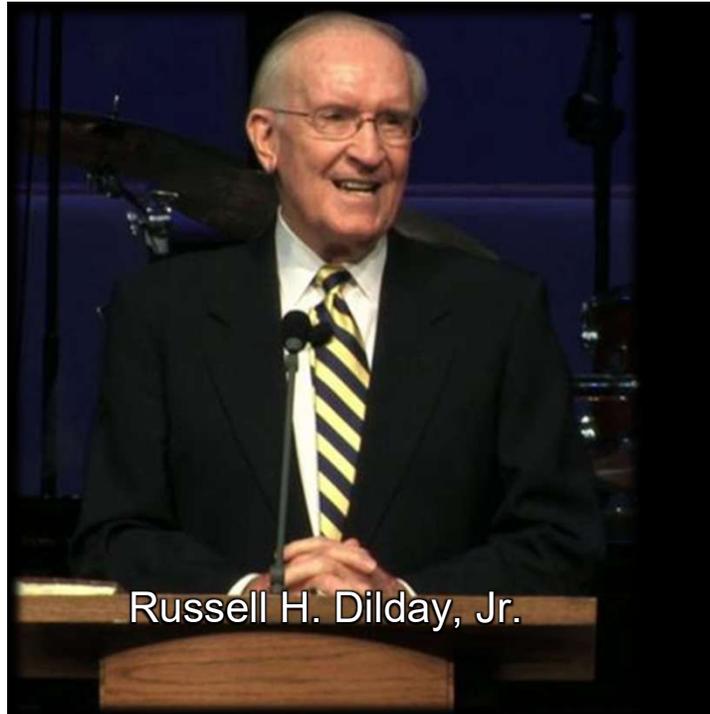
Russell H. Dilday, Jr.



Russell H. Dilday, Jr.

"Debates about the Bible may divert attention of Southern Baptists from winning the world and thereby become an effective tool of Satan."

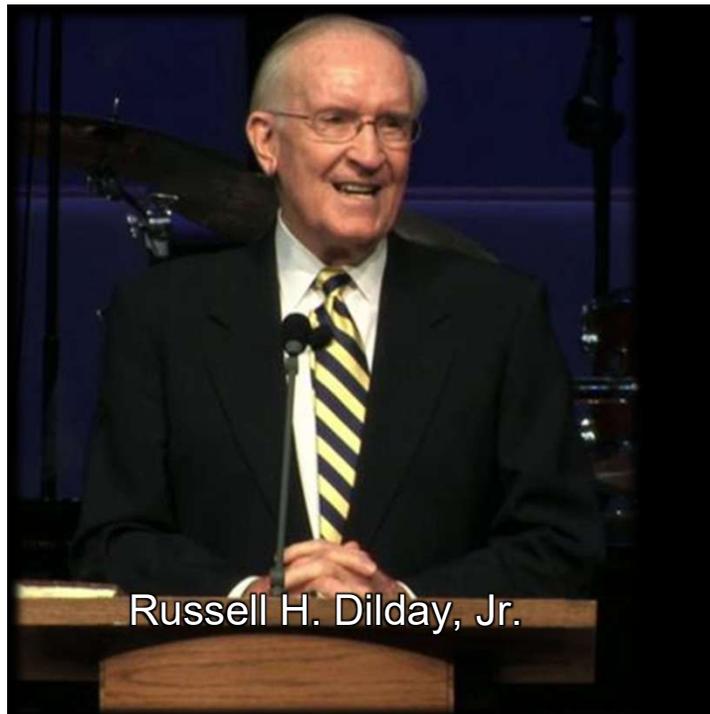
Russell H. Dilday, Jr., *The Doctrine of Biblical Authority* (Nashville: Convention Press, 1982), 16.



Russell H. Dilday, Jr.

"There are those who advocate a modified definition of inerrancy. If the term inerrant is to be used, it must be qualified to allow for certain problems in the Bible, such as unscientific statements about the universe, variations in the Gospel accounts, peculiarities in the genealogical lists, and the like."

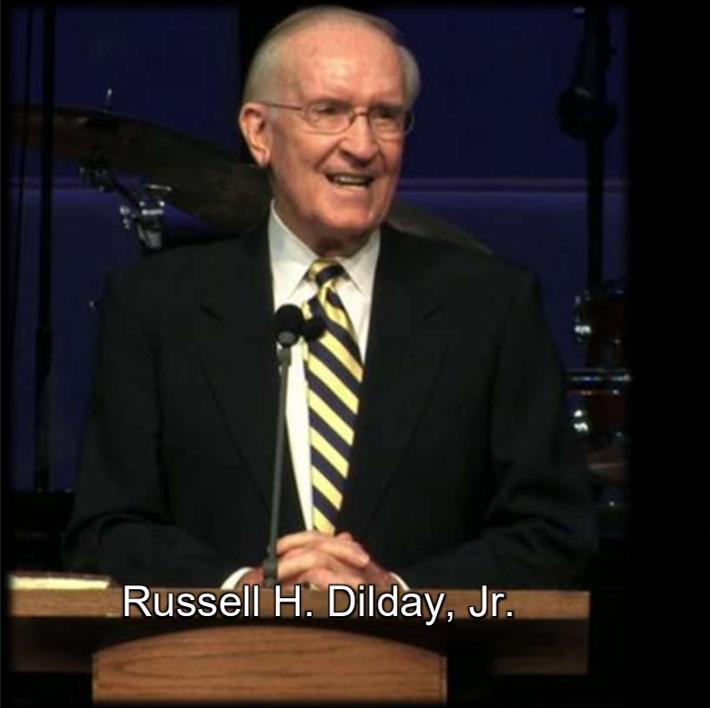
Dilday, *The Doctrine of Biblical Authority*, 96]



Russell H. Dilday, Jr.

"On the other hand, other Christians feel that the weaknesses of the word inerrant limit its use. ... It implies that one admitted insignificant error in the Bible would destroy one's confidence in the whole biblical revelation."

Dilday, *The Doctrine of Biblical Authority*, 99.



Russell H. Dilday, Jr.

"The authority of the Bible, however, is based not so much on the **perfection** and **reliability** of its text as it is on the **truth** which it declares."

Dilday, *The Doctrine of Biblical Authority*, 86.



Kevin Vanhoozer

"Does the author of Josh 9:13 [sic] intend his statement about the sun standing still to contradict a heliocentric world view? Was Melancthon right to attack Copernicus for suggesting that it is the earth, not the sun, that moves? Everything hinges on the notion of 'affirming' and 'addressing.'"



Kevin Vanhoozer

"Joshua mentions the sun standing still; but is this what the narrative affirms? Is not Joshua rather affirming, in a manner that his readers could understand, that God supernaturally intervened on behalf of Israel?"



Kevin Vanhoozer

"The point is that he is employing phenomenal language (e.g. everyday language about the everyday world) in order to communicate."



"To press Joshua 9 [sic] into the service of Ptolemaic science would be an odd use indeed of the passage. Why? Because the point of the passage lies elsewhere. To be precise: it is a theological and, yes, historical (but not astronomical) point."

[Kevin J. Vanhoozer "Lost in Interpretation? Truth, Scripture, and Hermeneutics" in the *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 48/1 (March 2005) 89–114 (p. 106)]

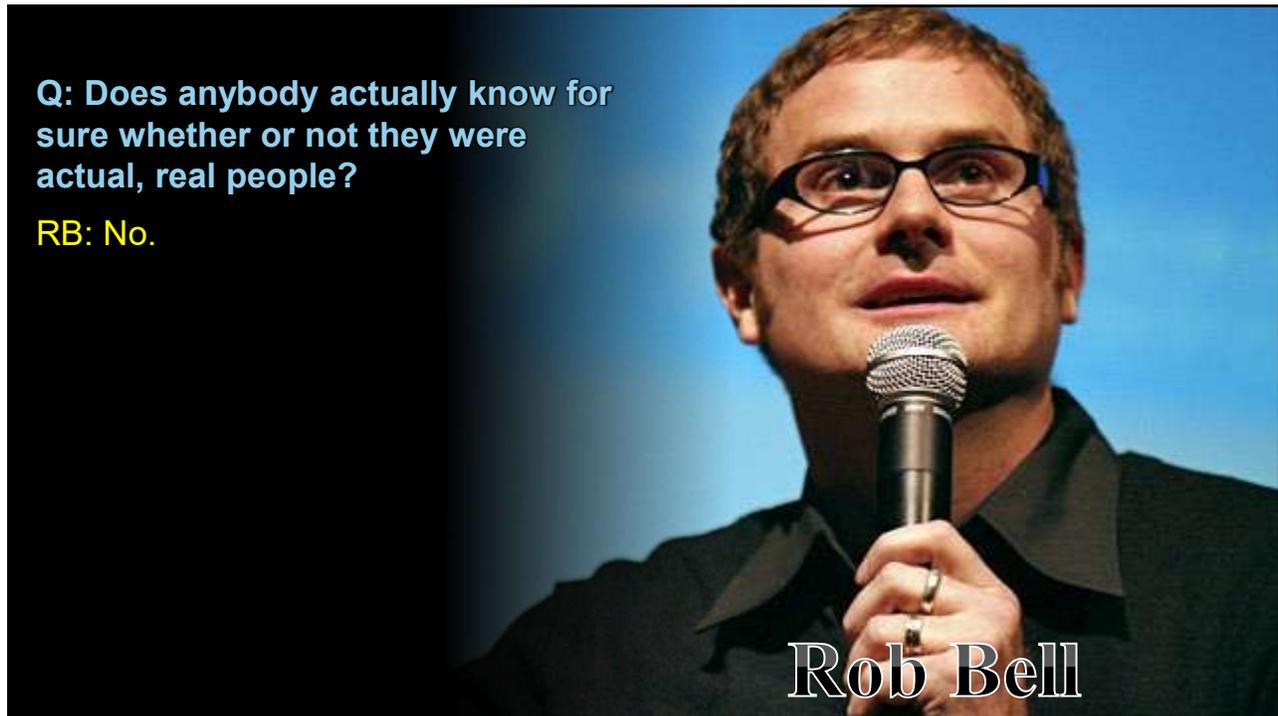
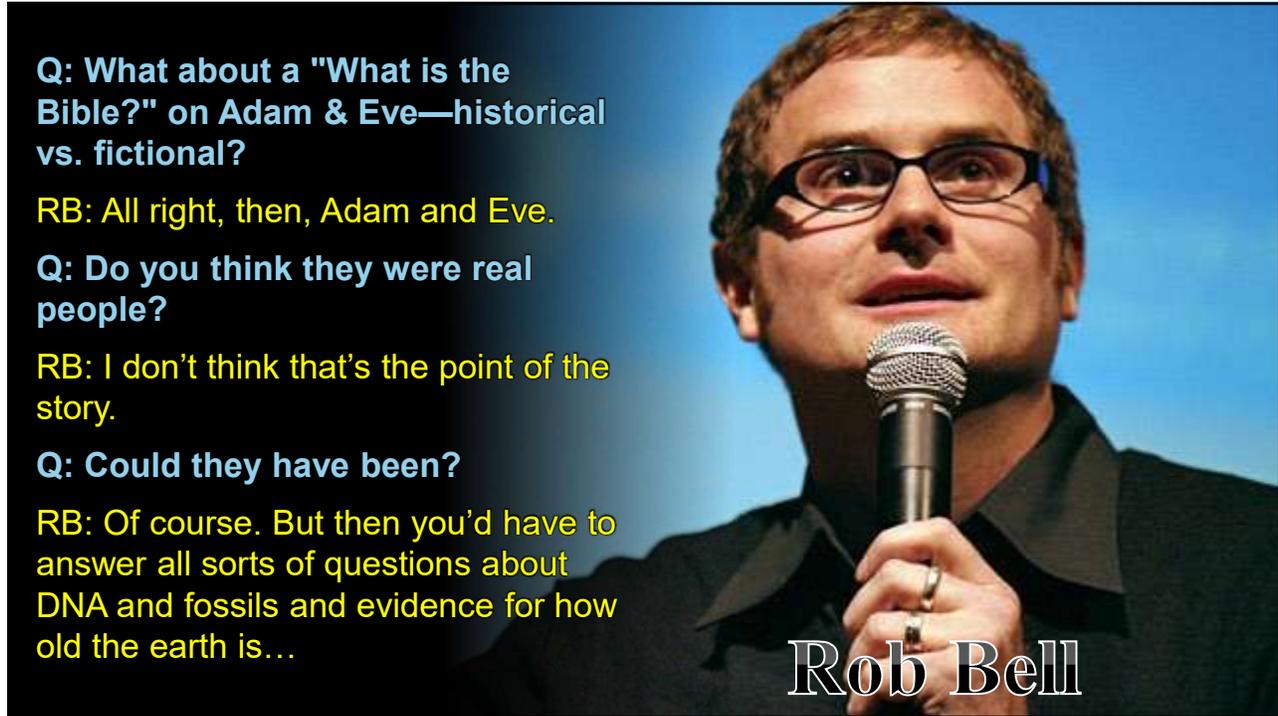
Kevin Vanhoozer



"The biblical authors did not intend every one of their sentences to be an assertive statement. To return to Joshua 9: [sic] the author's use of phenomenal language is merely background scenery for what really matters, the theodramatic assertion about the act of God in history."

[Vanhoozer "Lost in Interpretation?" p. 107]

Kevin Vanhoozer



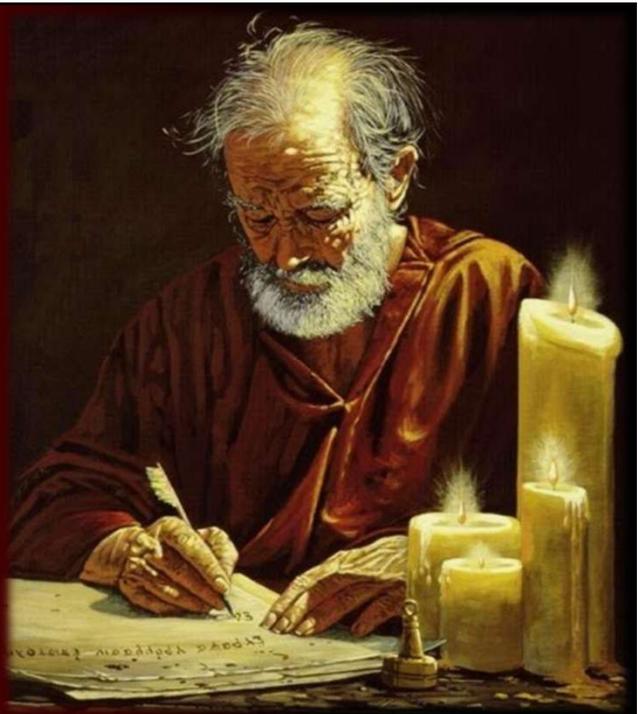
"Now Jesus Himself began His ministry at about thirty years of age, being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph, the son of Heli, ... {38} the son of Enosh, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God."

Luke 3:23, 38



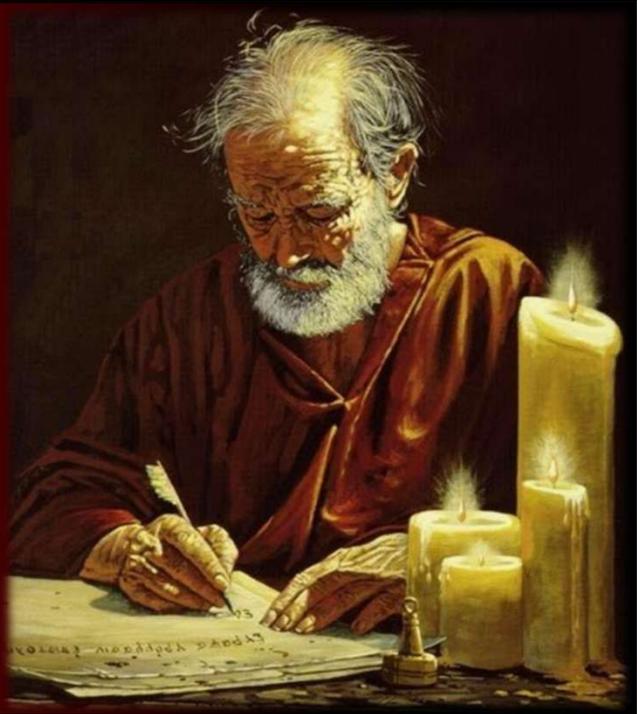
"Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned according to the likeness of the transgression of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come."

Romans 5:14



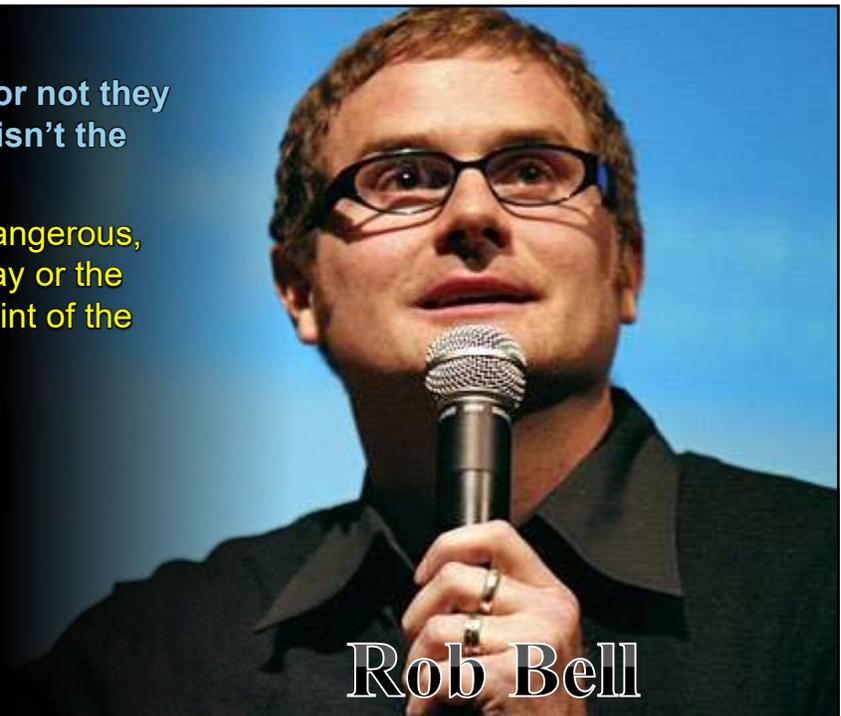
"For Adam was formed first, then Eve."

1Timothy 2:13



Q: So debating whether or not they were actual, real people isn't the point.

RB: Exactly. It's actually dangerous, because in arguing one way or the other you may miss the point of the story.

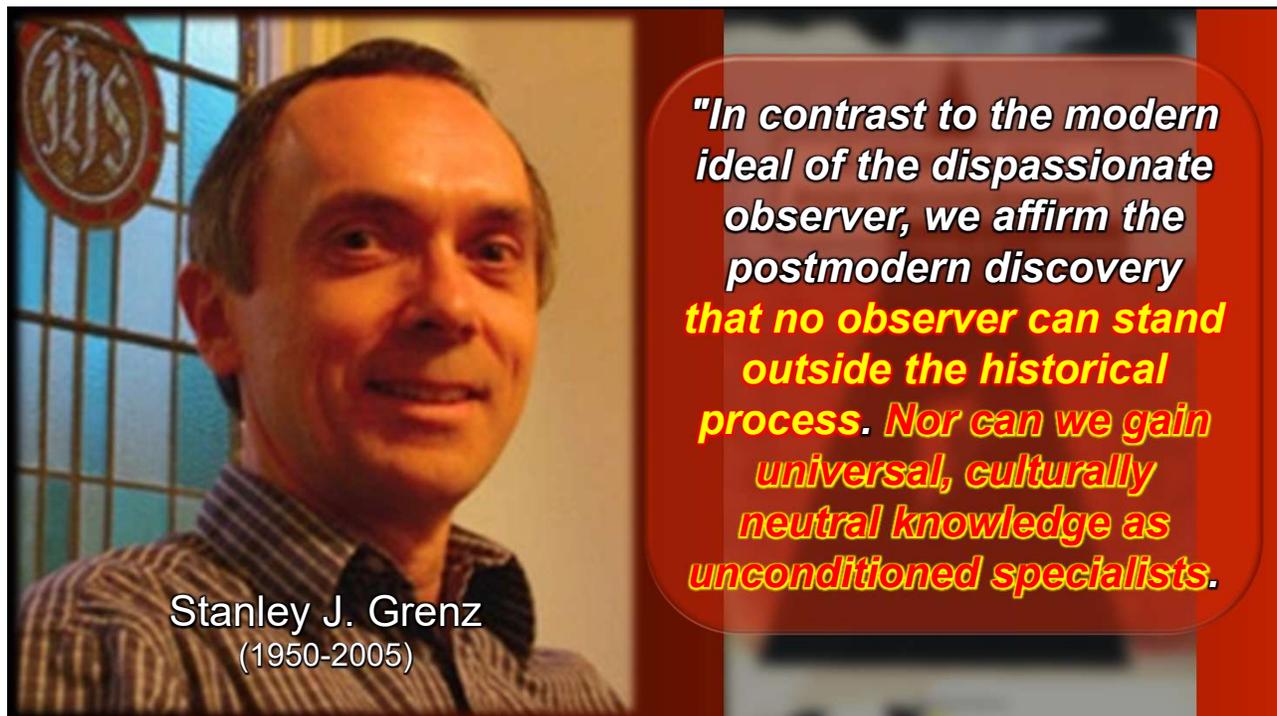
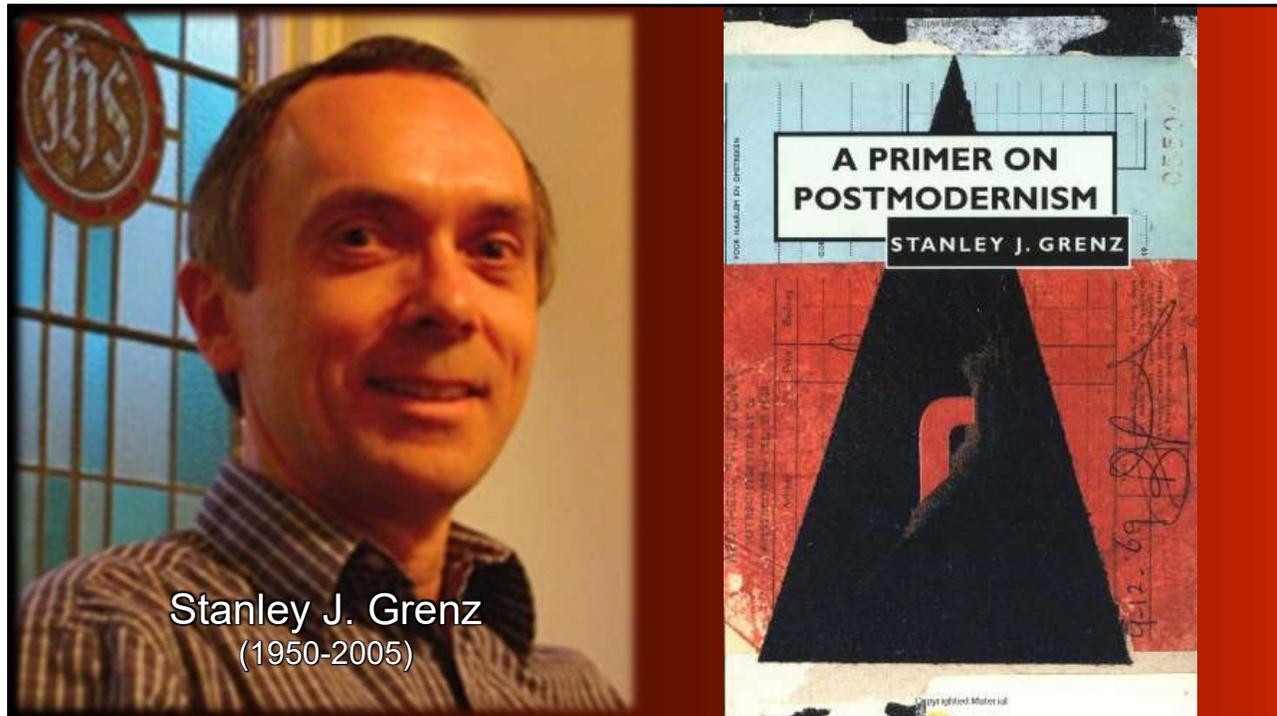


Rob Bell

Functional

- **Definition: A statement is true in as much as it fulfills its intended purpose.**
- **It is sometimes known as the intentional theory of truth.**
- **Truth cannot be merely function because it needs the correspondence theory to define itself.**

A newer compromised concept (theory) of truth has arisen from Postmodernism.



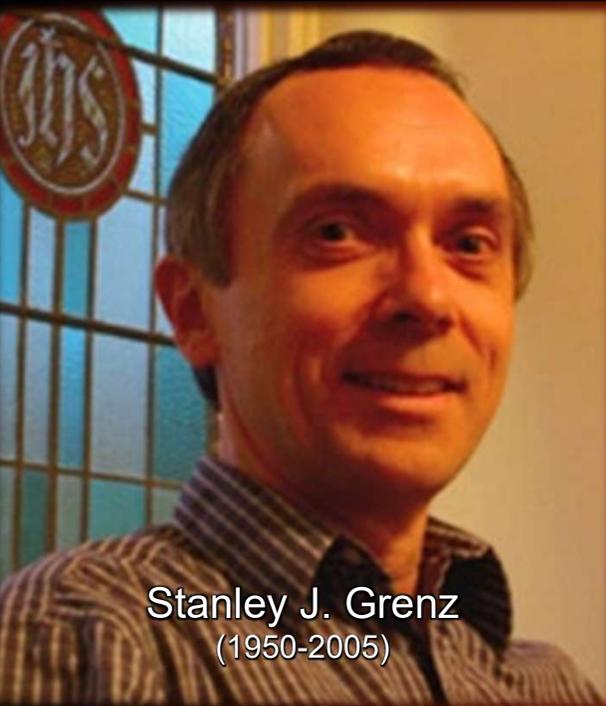


Stanley J. Grenz
(1950-2005)

"In contrast to the modern ideal of the dispassionate observer, we affirm the postmodern discovery that no observer can stand outside the historical process. Nor can we gain universal, culturally neutral knowledge as unconditioned specialists."

If what Grenz says is true, then his own statement itself does not come from an observer who stands "outside the historical process" and, thus, the statement is not itself "neutral knowledge" coming from an "unconditioned specialist."

Since this is the case, why should we believe that it is objectively true?



Stanley J. Grenz
(1950-2005)

"On the contrary, we are participants in our historical and cultural context, and all our intellectual endeavors are unavoidably conditioned by that participation."

[Stanley J. Grenz, *A Primer on Postmodernism* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1996), 166]



Stanley J. Grenz
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(Stanley J. Grenz, *A Primer on Postmodernism* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1996), 166)

If "all our intellectual endeavors" are "unavoidably conditioned" then Grenz's own statement is itself "unavoidably conditioned."

But if his statement is "unavoidably conditioned," then why should we take it as objectively true?



Dan McGee

Medium

Truth and Postmodernism

Dan M. · Follow
4 min read · Mar 29, 2017

31 2

I initially thought this was a parody of conservative thinking, but on second reading, I realized that it was a genuine (albeit likely willful) lack of understanding of postmodernist thinking. Thus, there are some critiques the discussants should consider.

First, postmodernism (and epistemology generally) distinguishes between subjective truths and objective truths. The former are statements about one's individual experience of the world, while the latter comprise propositions supported either inductively or deductively.

For example, the colour red contains both objective and subjective truths. Objectively, 'red' is the term given to light in the visible spectrum with wavelengths around 650 nm. However, seeing the colour is a subjective experience that happens within the brain of each observer. Thus, my experience of seeing red need not be identical to yours.

The discussants might still object to the existence of subjective truths, saying



"Postmodernism stresses the distinction between objectivity of facts, versus objectivity of knowledge or people. It accepts the possible existence of facts outside human context, but argues that **all knowledge is mediated by an individual and that the experiences, **biases**, beliefs, and identity of that individual **necessarily influence how they mediate any knowledge.**"**

[Dan McGee, "Truth and Postmodernism" downloaded from <https://medium.com/@danmcgee/truth-and-postmodernism-816ea9b3007a>, 05/09/22]

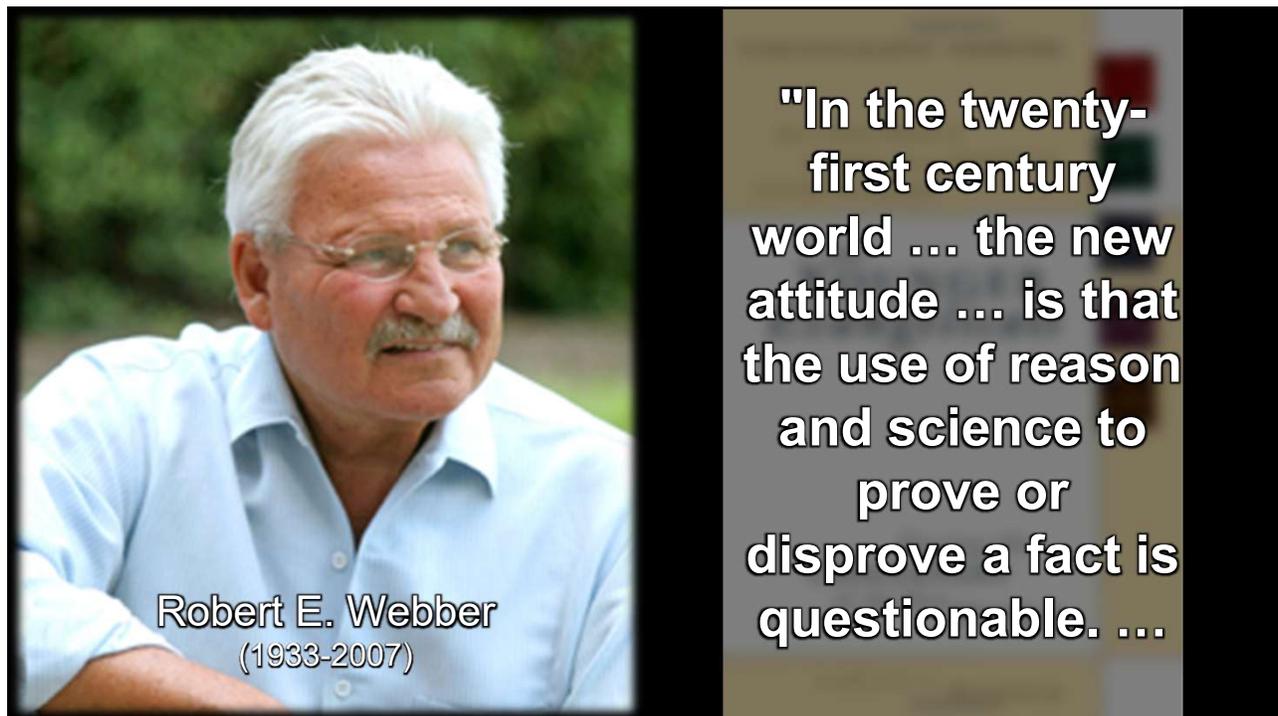
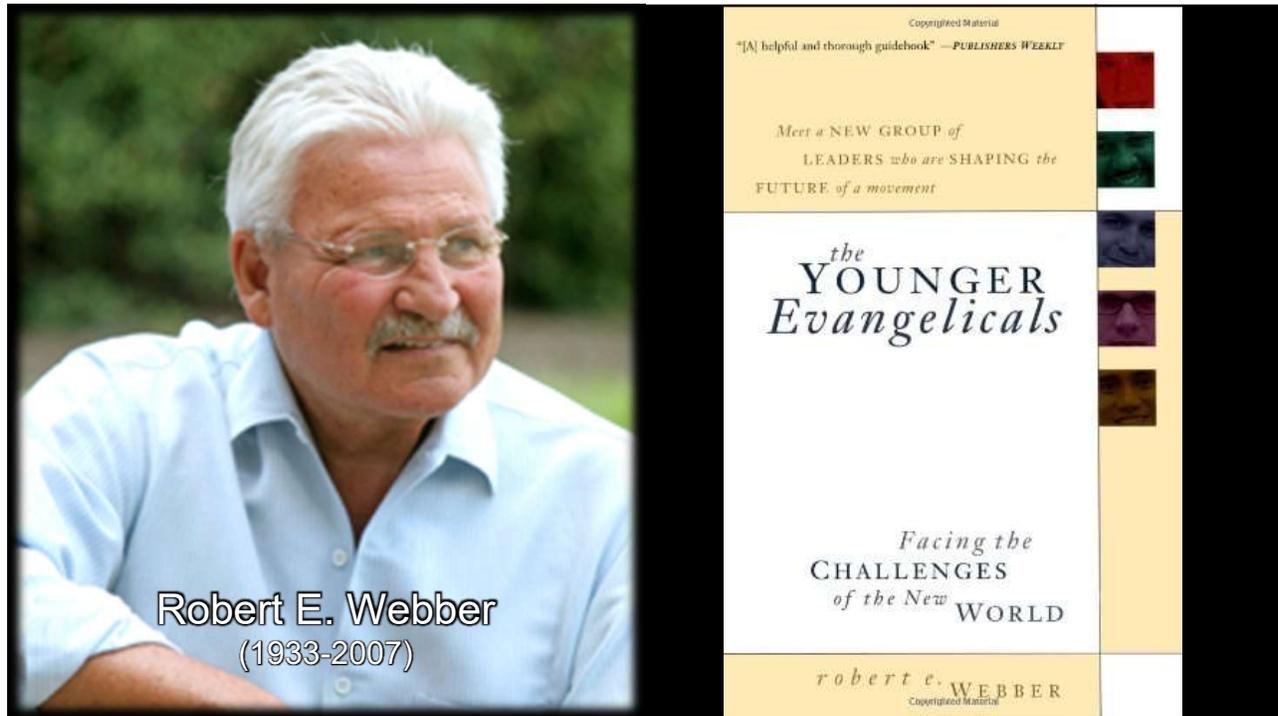


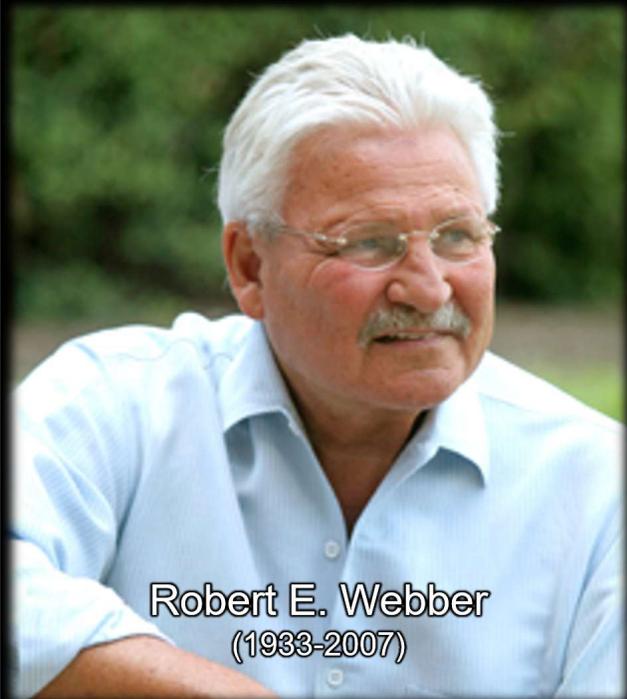
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[Dan McGee, "Truth and Postmodernism" downloaded from <https://medium.com/@danmcgee/truth-and-postmodernism-816ea9b3007a>, 05/09/22]

If "all knowledge is mediated" and the individual has "biases" that "necessarily influence how they mediate ANY knowledge" (emphasis added), then this would be true of Dan McGee and the knowledge claim he is making right here.

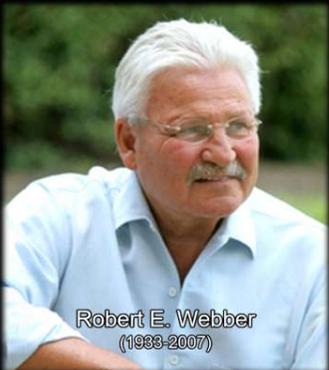
But if this is true of Dan McGee's claim here, why should we take his claim to be objectively true?





Robert E. Webber
(1933-2007)

"This ... points
... to the
postmodern
conclusion that
we deal with
'interpreted
facts.' ...



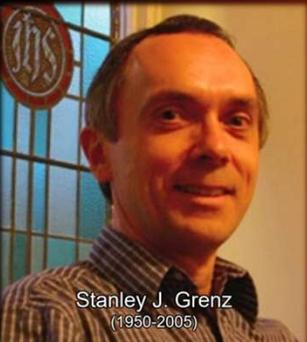
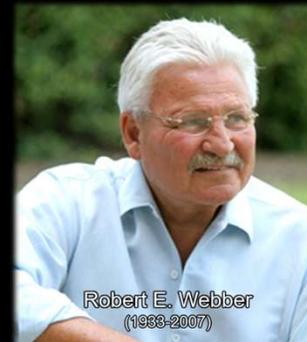
Robert E. Webber
(1933-2007)

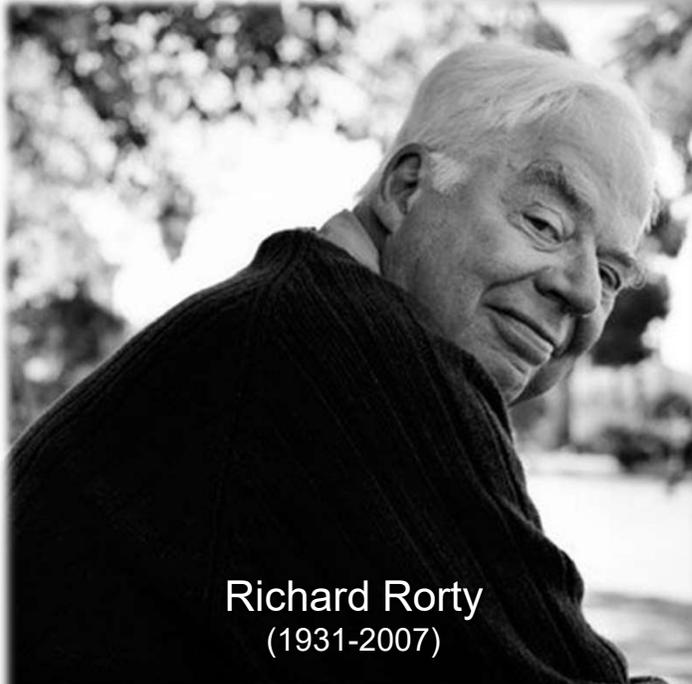
"This ... points
... to the
postmodern
conclusion that
we deal with
'interpreted
facts.' ...

***Again, if we deal with
"interpreted facts," then
what does that say about
Webber's statement
itself?***

***Is his claim here merely
an "interpreted fact?"***

***If so, they why should we
take it as objectively
true?***

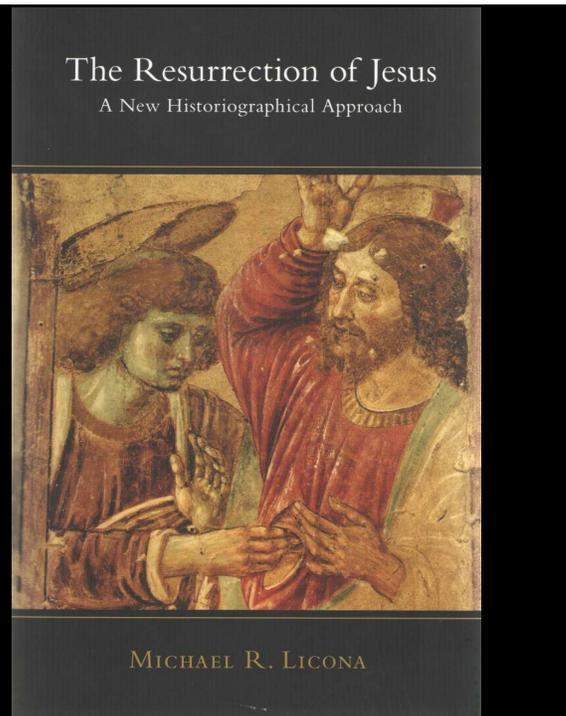
 <p>Carl A. Raschke</p>	<p>"Meaning is ultimately determined by how the intricate structures of communication work together in an overarching manner, and it is up to the interpreter to provide a new framework of discourse in which what was first written or spoken can be fleshed out. The 'truth' of a text can be discerned in its deployability within a particular set of life circumstances."</p> <p><small>[Carl A. Raschke, "Faith and Philosophy as Tension," in Steve Wilkins, ed., <i>Faith and Philosophy: Three Views</i> (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2014), 61, emphasis in original]</small></p>	 <p>Dan McGee</p> <p>"Postmodernism stresses the distinction between objectivity of facts, versus objectivity of knowledge or people. It accepts the possible existence of facts outside human context, but argues that all knowledge is mediated by an individual and that the experiences, biases, beliefs, and identity of that individual necessarily influence how they mediate any knowledge."</p> <p><small>[Dan McGee, "Truth and Postmodernism" downloaded from https://medium.com/@darmcgee/truth-and-postmodernism-816ea9b3007a, 05/09/22]</small></p>
 <p>Stanley J. Grenz (1950-2005)</p>	<p>"In contrast to the modern ideal of the dispassionate observer, we affirm the postmodern discovery that no observer can stand outside the historical process. Nor can we gain universal, culturally neutral knowledge as unconditioned specialists.</p>	 <p>Robert E. Webber (1933-2007)</p> <p>"This ... points ... to the postmodern conclusion that we deal with 'interpreted facts.' ..."</p>

 <p>Richard Rorty (1931-2007)</p>	<p>"Philosophy is 'edifying discourse' the purpose of which is 'finding new, better, more interesting, more fruitful ways of speaking' and 'to keep the conversation going rather than to find objective truth.'"</p> <p><small>[Richard Rorty, <i>Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature</i> (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), 360, 377, as cited in William F. Lawhead, <i>The Voyage of Discovery: An Historical Introduction to Philosophy</i>, 2nd ed., (Belmont, Wadsworth/Thomson Learning, 2002), 563]</small></p>
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The theory that the Gospels are of the genre of Greco-Roman Biography allows Mike Licona—though he claims to hold to a correspondence theory of truth—to ascribe conflicting or contradictory statements to the Bible in as much as he overlooks various ways in which a proposition might correspond to reality.



Mike Licona





Mike Licona

"Another challenge to the correspondence theory of truth is that historians are incapable of returning to the past in order to examine it in the light of their theories and thus can never verify in the strictest sense that their theories correspond to events in a truthful manner."

Mike Licona, *The Resurrection of Jesus: A New Historiographical Approach* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2010), p. 90



Mike Licona

"As with the challenges affiliated with perceptions, the inability of historians to verify their hypotheses most of the time only affects their ability to know truth. It does not affect the nature of truth itself."

Mike Licona, *Resurrection*, p. 90, emphasis in original



"In addition to defining truth in a correspondence sense, realist historians attempt to establish criteria for identifying what is true in a correspondence sense."



"Historians should not change their theory related to the nature of truth in order to accommodate the uncertainty of historical descriptions."

Mike Licona, *Resurrection*, p. 90, emphasis in original

***According to the
correspondence theory of
truth, if the statement does
not correspond to reality, it is
by definition false.***

***Does Mt. 27:52-53 have any
referent to (i.e., does it in any
way correspond to) reality?***

∞ Matthew 27:51-53 ∞

Then, behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth quaked, and the rocks were split, {52} and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; {53} and coming out of the graves after His resurrection, they went into the holy city and appeared to many.

Does the dragon in Revelation 12 pose a problem for my view of inerrancy?

∞ Revelation 12:3-4 ∞

*And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great, fiery red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems on his heads. {4} **His tail drew a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth.** And the dragon stood before the woman who was ready to give birth, to devour her Child as soon as it was born.*

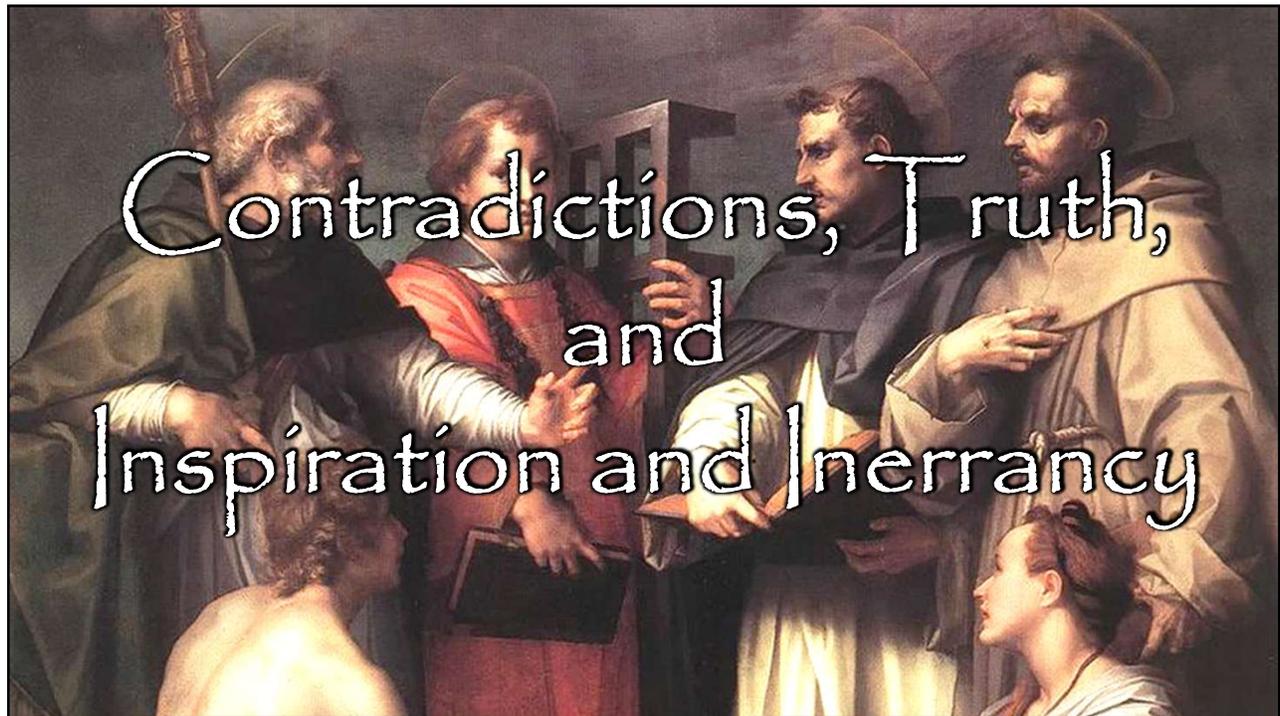


Mike didn't see how I could reconcile my interpretation of Luke 7:6 in light of Matt. 8:8 with a correspondence theory of truth.

Metonymy

"The centurion answered and said, 'Lord, **I am not worthy** that You should come under my roof. ...'"
Matt. 8:8

"... the centurion sent friends to Him, saying to Him, 'Lord, do not trouble Yourself, for **I am not worthy** that You should enter under my roof.'"
Luke 7:6

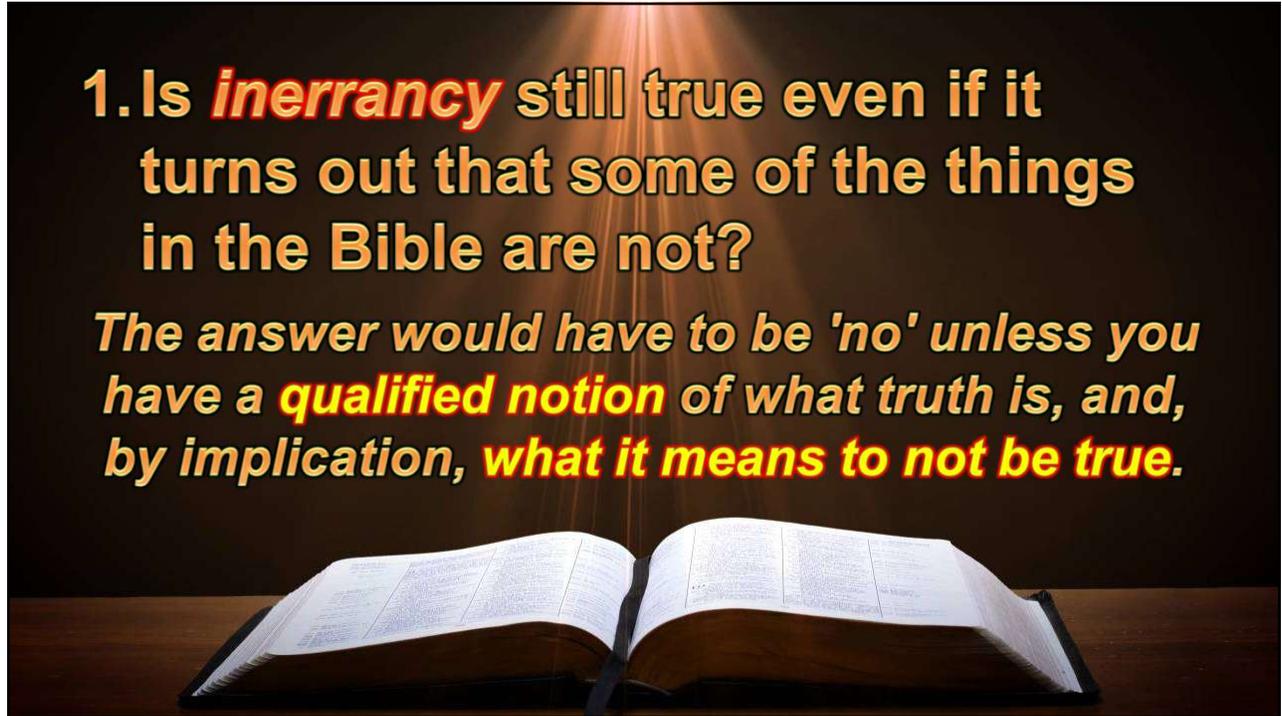


***Mike rightly says that if
Jesus rose from the dead,
then Christianity is still true
even if it turned out that
some things in the
Bible weren't.***

***But the question is not
whether Christianity is still
true even if some of the
things in the Bible are not.
Instead the questions are:***

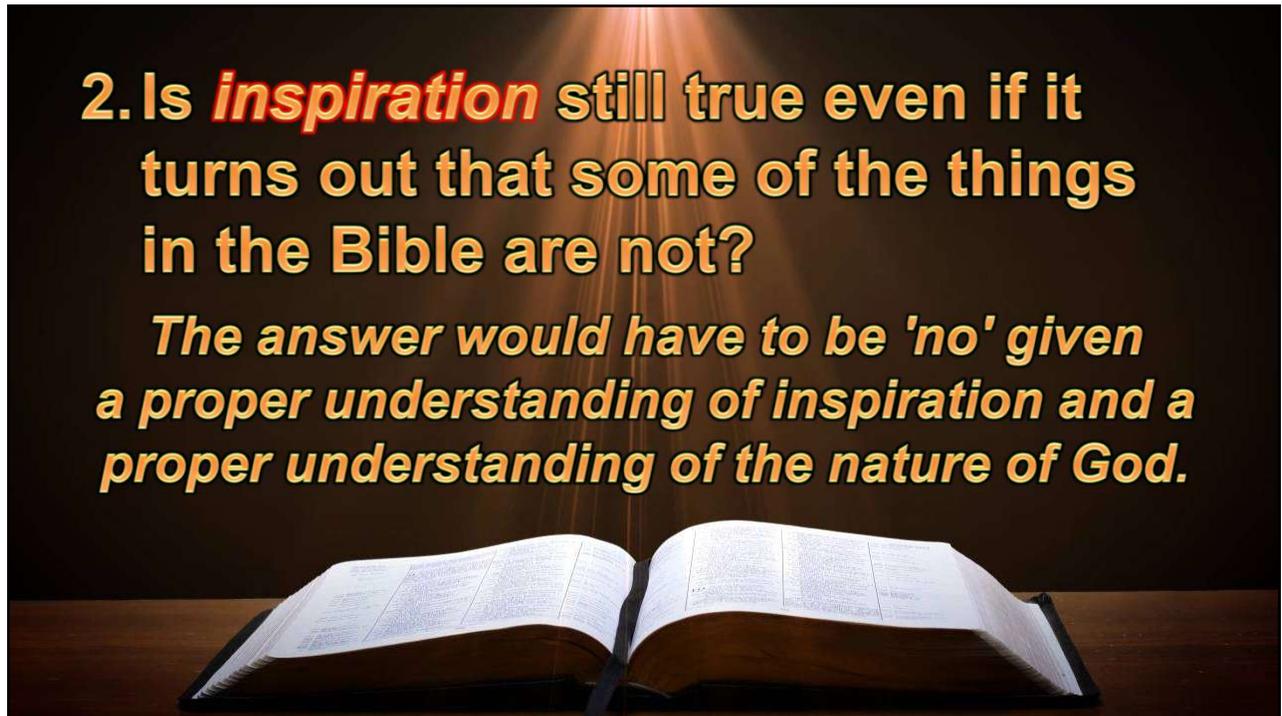
1. Is ***inerrancy*** still true even if it turns out that some of the things in the Bible are not?

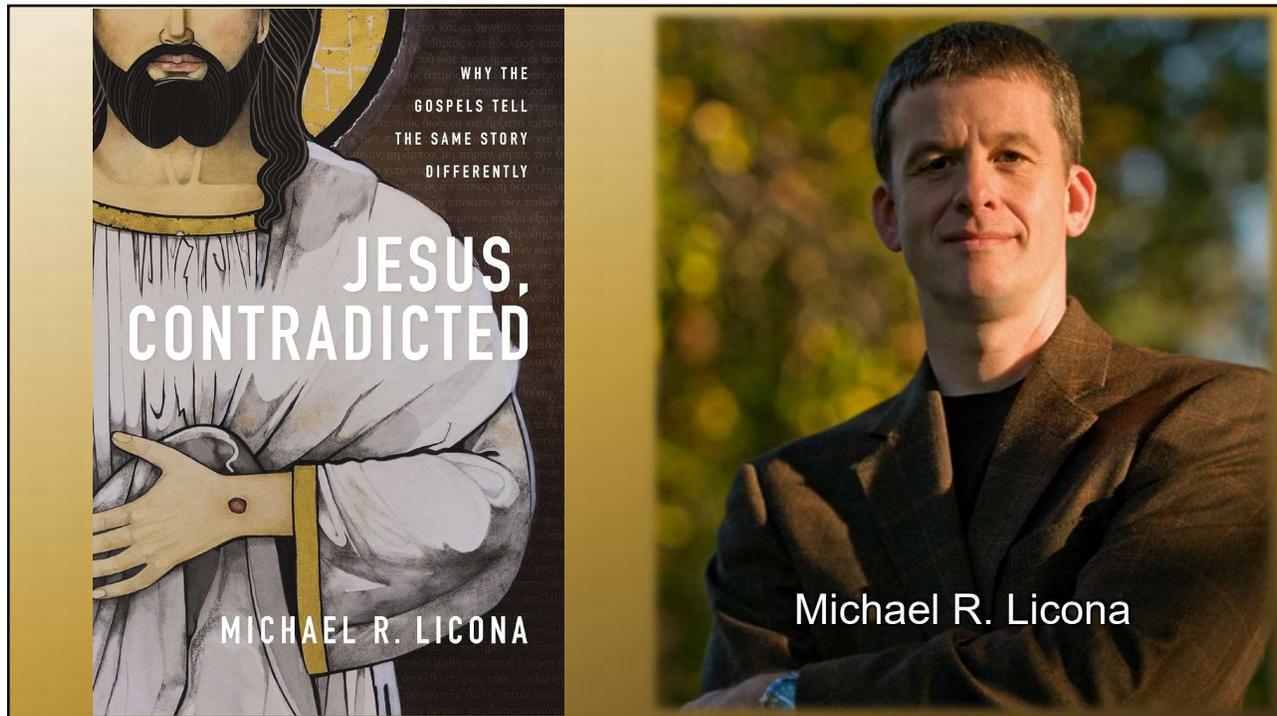
*The answer would have to be 'no' unless you have a **qualified notion** of what truth is, and, by implication, **what it means to not be true.***



2. Is ***inspiration*** still true even if it turns out that some of the things in the Bible are not?

The answer would have to be 'no' given a proper understanding of inspiration and a proper understanding of the nature of God.






WITH MIKE LICONA
Professor of New Testament Studies, Houston Christian University

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CHICAGO STATEMENT ON BIBLICAL INERRANCY NEEDS A FACELIFT

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CHICAGO STATEMENT ON BIBLICAL INERRANCY NEEDS A FACELIFT

By Posted May 1, 2024 In Blog

At the 2023 Annual Meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society, I read a paper titled *The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy Needs a Facelift*. The paper was well-attended and was followed by a period of thoughtful Q&A. I'm making my paper public, due to having received many requests for it.

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CHICAGO STATEMENT ON BIBLICAL INERRANCY NEEDS A FACELIFT

By [Posted May 1, 2024](#) in [Blog](#)

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At the 2023 Annual Meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society, I read a paper titled *The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy Needs a Facelift*. The paper was well-attended and was followed by a period of thoughtful Q&A. I'm making my paper public, due to having received many requests for it.

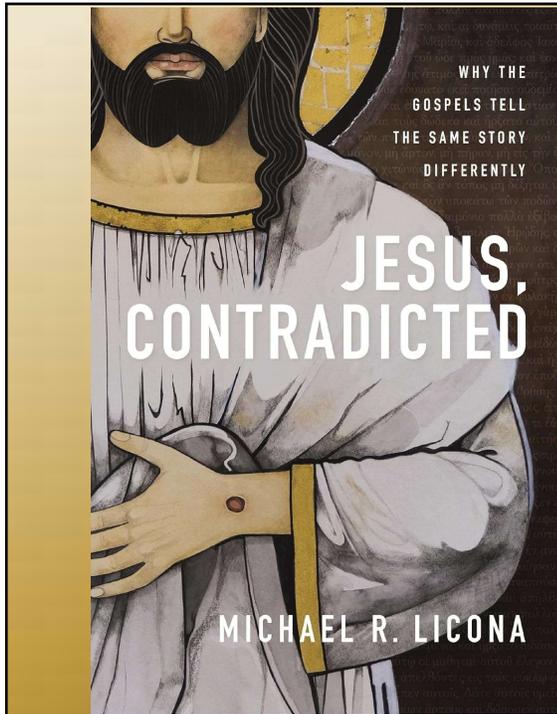
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TWITT



Michael R. Licona

At Mike's ETS paper, I had two questions but only had time for one.

I first needed to set the context of my question.

Some have argued that there is a parallel between the inspiration / inerrancy of the Bible and the two natures of Christ.



Michael R. Licona

The doctrine of the hypostatic union whereby Christ is two natures—human and divine—in one person further maintains that, despite the fact that all humans born in Adam are fallen in sin, Jesus, being born of a virgin (and thus, not a descendent of Adam) is the perfect man.

In other words, Jesus' human nature does not entail that Jesus is a sinner. As a human, the God/Man Jesus is unique.



Michael R. Licona

The "traditional" (as Mike Licona labels it) view of inspiration and inerrancy of the Bible argues that, though God used human beings to write His inspired word, their writings contain no errors. In other words, the Scriptures do not take on the fallenness of humans just because God used humans in the writing. As a book, the God/Human writings of the Scriptures is unique.

A portrait of Michael R. Licona, a man with short dark hair, wearing a brown blazer over a black shirt. He is standing outdoors with trees in the background, looking slightly to the right of the camera with a neutral expression.

Michael R. Licona

My question to Mike was this. If you allows for "errors" (in the traditional sense of the term underlying the ICBI Chicago Statement) like Matthew having one or more names wrong in his genealogy or John having a different day of the week than the synoptics, would you be comfortable allowing "errors" or mistakes in the life of Jesus.

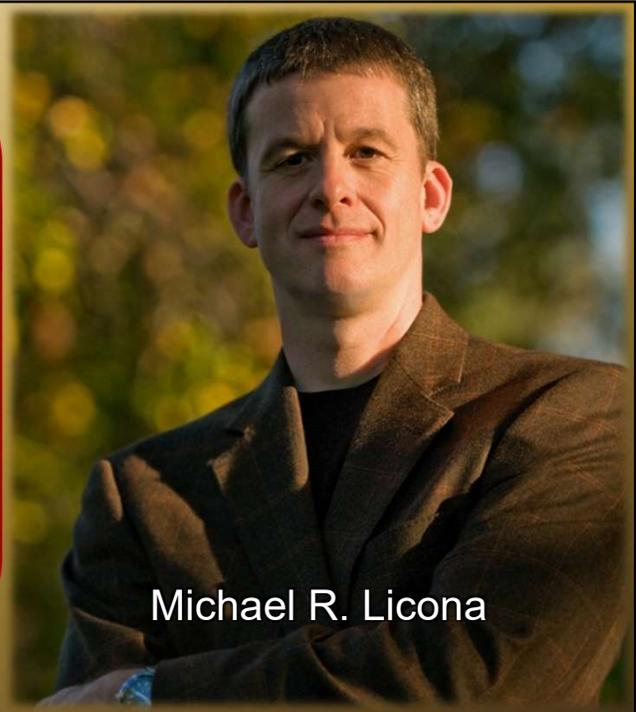
A portrait of Michael R. Licona, a man with short dark hair, wearing a brown blazer over a black shirt. He is standing outdoors with trees in the background, looking slightly to the right of the camera with a neutral expression.

Michael R. Licona

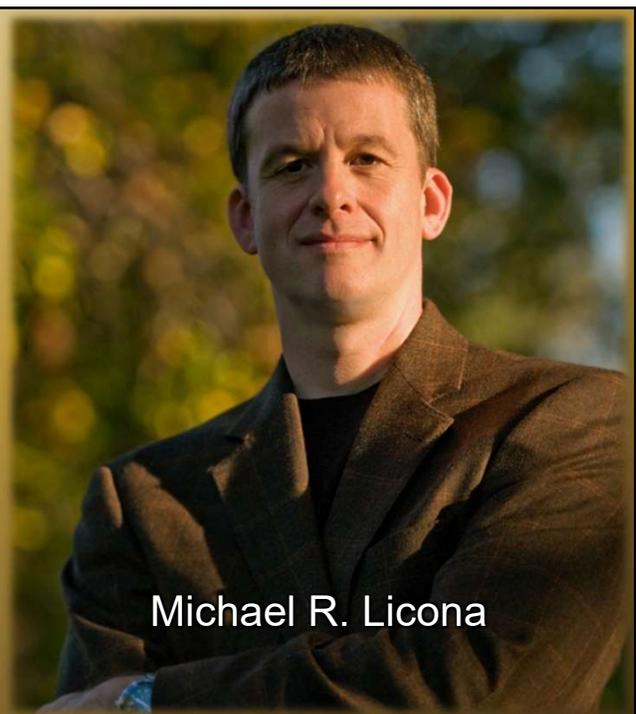
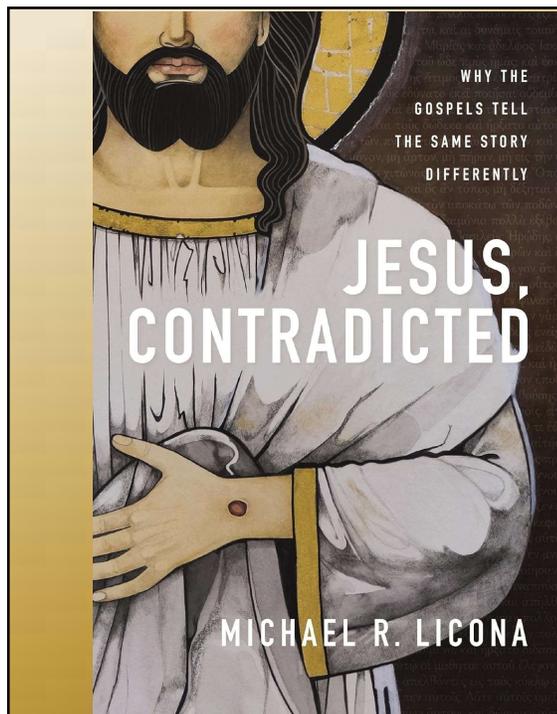
My second question which I did not have time to ask was this.

Your earlier works which employed the thesis that the Gospels were in the literary genre of Greco-Roman Biography allowed for a qualified definition of 'error' given the literary conventions of the genre.

Your latest work adds a qualified definition of 'inspiration'. Whereas the Greco-Roman Biography would apply only to the Gospels, what implications does your qualified definition of 'inspiration' have for the epistles?



Michael R. Licona



Michael R. Licona

"The Roman historian Tacitus is regarded as being a fairly accurate historian. ... After identifying the Gospels as either belonging to or having a close affinity to the genre of ancient biography, it cannot be merely assumed that each of the Evangelists had Tacitus's level of commitment to accurate reporting. ... Truth-telling in ancient historiography permitted the facts to be reported with some elasticity."

[Michael R. Licona, *Jesus Contradicted: Why the Gospels Tell the Same Story Differently* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2024), 65, 67]

Michael R. Licona

*"The Roman historian Tacitus is regarded as being a **fairly accurate** historian. ... After identifying the Gospels as either belonging to or having a close affinity to the genre of ancient biography, it cannot be merely assumed that each of the Evangelists had Tacitus's level of commitment to accurate reporting. ... **Truth-telling in ancient historiography permitted the facts to be reported with some elasticity.**"*

[Michael R. Licona, *Jesus Contradicted: Why the Gospels Tell the Same Story Differently* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2024), 65, 67]

If "truth-telling in ancient historiography permitted the facts to be reported with some elasticity" then what is one to make of the category 'fairly accurate'?

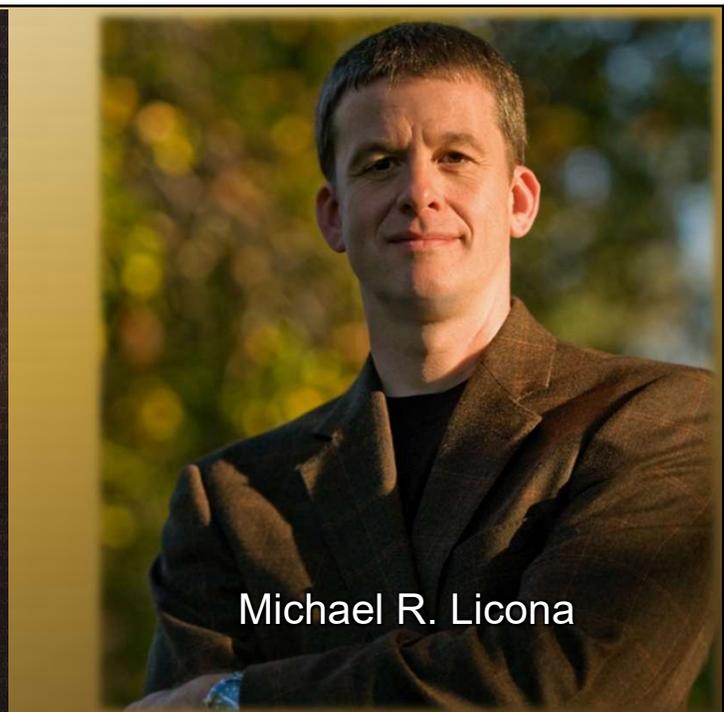
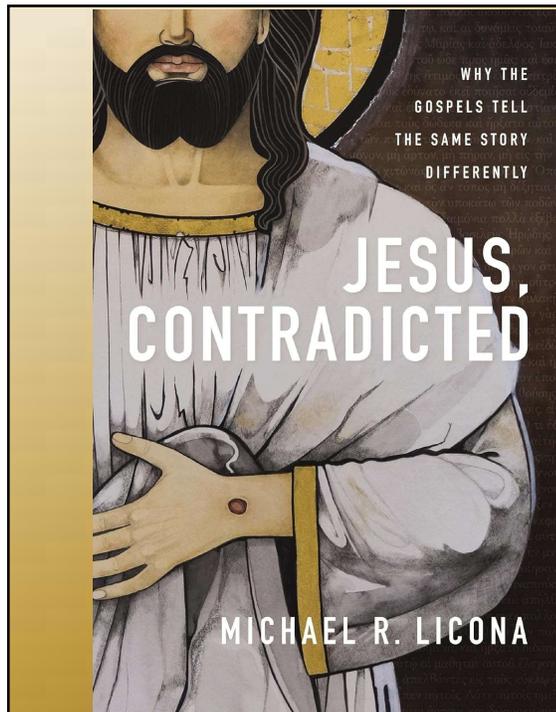
How can a statement be "fairly accurate" if truth-telling allows "some elasticity"?

"The Roman historian Tacitus is regarded as being a fairly accurate historian. ... After identifying the Gospels as either belonging to or having a close affinity to the genre of ancient biography, it cannot be merely assumed that each of the Evangelists had Tacitus's level of commitment to accurate reporting. ... Truth-telling in ancient historiography permitted the facts to be reported with some elasticity."

[Michael R. Licona, *Jesus Contradicted: Why the Gospels Tell the Same Story Differently* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2024), 65, 67]

Further, there is a difference between what a "genre" permits and what people may in fact actually say.

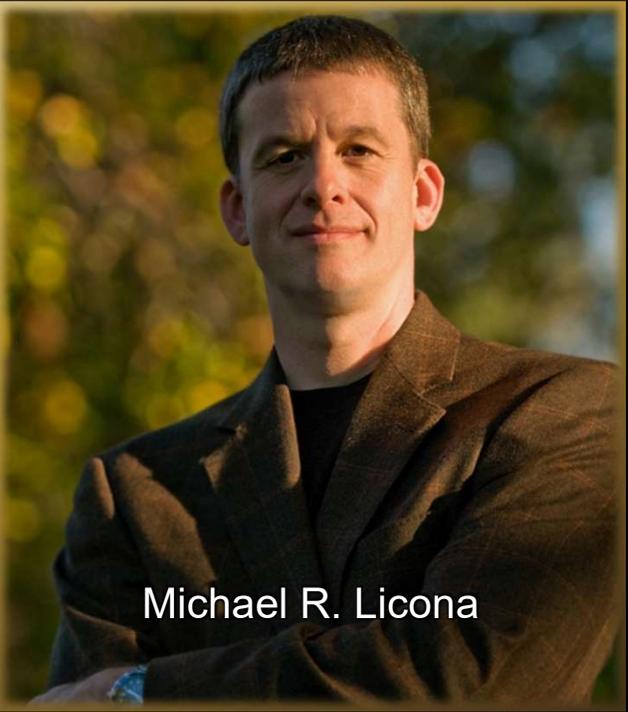
Court testimony does not "permit" misremembering or lying, but sometimes witnesses do misremember or lie.



Michael R. Licona

"In my view, this does not undermine the overall reliability of the literature in which they appear, as long as we have the understanding that what we are reading was most often intended to convey an accurate gist of the people and events described rather than preserving details with the precision of a legal transcript."

[Licona, *Jesus Contradicted*, 67]



Michael R. Licona

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[Licona, *Jesus Contradicted*, 67]

It seems to me that Licona has muddled the issue before us with a false dilemma fallacy.

No inerrantist with whom I am familiar says that unless the biblical text is inerrant, its overall reliability is undermined.

In fact, the point that the biblical text is overall reliable is the first premise in our case for Christianity (after theism has been established).

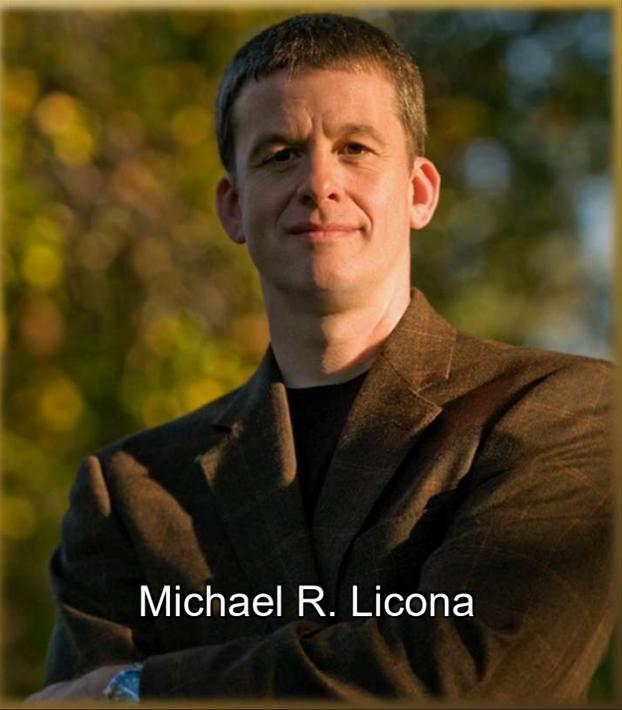
1. *The Bible is a basically reliable and trustworthy document of history.* **Historicity of the Bible**
2. *On the basis of this, we have sufficient evidence to believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.* **Who Is Jesus?**
3. *Jesus Christ teaches that the Bible is the Word of God.* **The Inspiration and Inerrancy of the Bible**
4. *Therefore, the Bible is the Word of God and Christianity is true.* **The Truth of Christianity**

WHY THE GOSPELS TELL THE SAME STORY DIFFERENTLY

JESUS, CONTRADICTED

MICHAEL R. LICONA

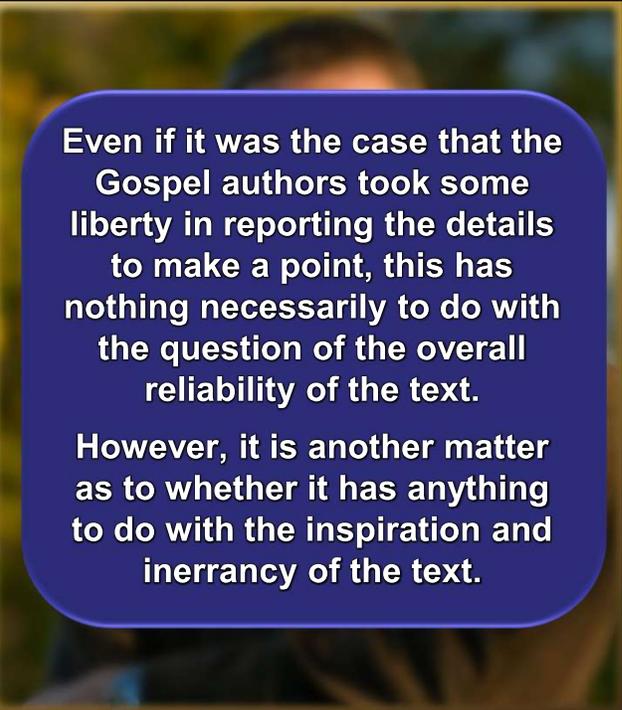
Michael R. Licona



"I want to draw attention to two occurrences in the Gospels where the author takes some liberty reporting details in order to make a point. In doing so, he sacrifices accuracy on the ground level of precise reporting while providing his readers with a high-level view of the person and mission of Jesus."

[Licona, *Jesus Contradicted*, 71]

Michael R. Licona

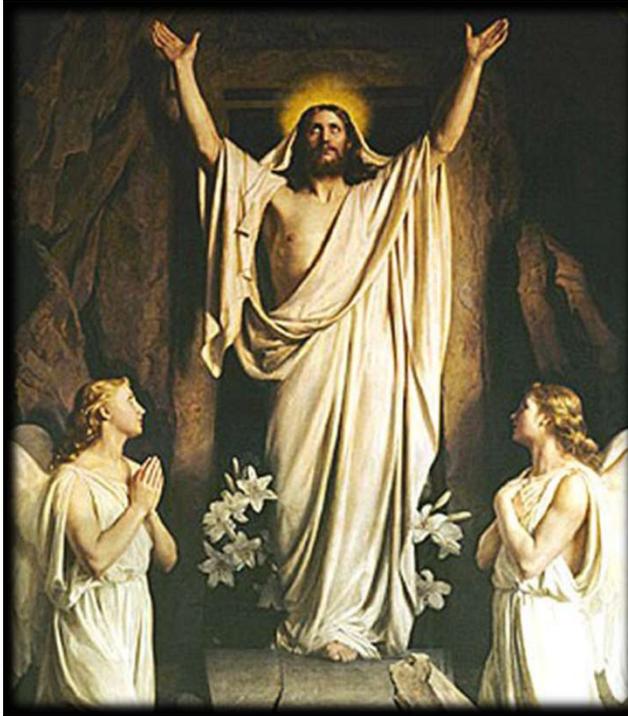


"I want to draw attention to two occurrences in the Gospels where the author takes some liberty reporting details in order to make a point. In doing so, he sacrifices accuracy on the ground level of precise reporting while providing his readers with a high-level view of the person and mission of Jesus."

[Licona, *Jesus Contradicted*, 71]

Even if it was the case that the Gospel authors took some liberty in reporting the details to make a point, this has nothing necessarily to do with the question of the overall reliability of the text.

However, it is another matter as to whether it has anything to do with the inspiration and inerrancy of the text.



Mike's point from the Titanic example is well taken.

Even if there were contradictions in the Gospel accounts, this does not prove that Jesus did not rise from the dead.

However . . .



While it is true that contradictory eyewitness accounts do not prove that the Titanic did not sink, it does prove that the eyewitnesses were not inerrant and, thus, their writings are not inspired by God.



While it is true that contradictory eyewitness accounts do not prove that the Titanic did not sink, it does prove that the eyewitnesses were not inerrant and, thus, their writings are not inspired by God.

Dr. Al Mohler
President, Southern
Baptist Theological
Seminary

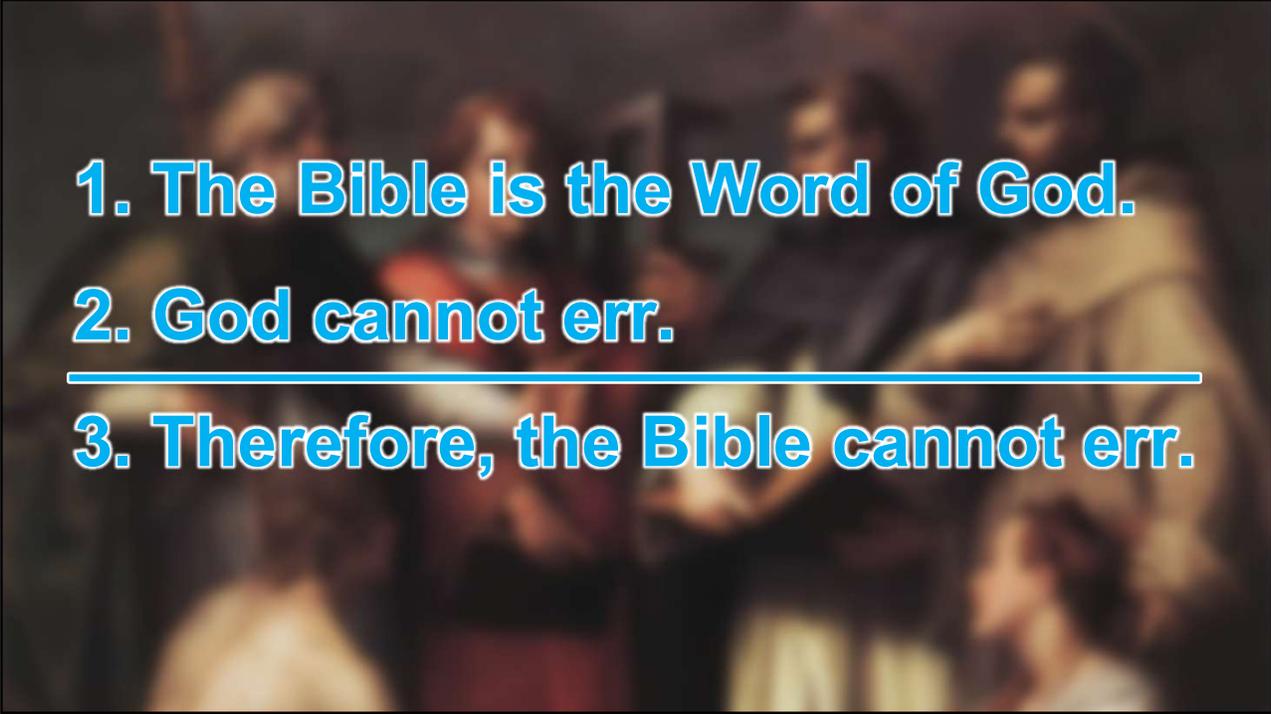
"It would be nonsense to affirm real contradictions in the Bible and then to affirm inerrancy."

A photograph of Dr. Al Mohler, President of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, speaking at a podium. He is wearing a dark suit, a light blue shirt, and a patterned tie. He is gesturing with his right hand, pointing upwards. The background is a dark blue curtain.

Dr. Al Mohler
President, Southern
Baptist Theological
Seminary

"Even Dr. Licona concedes that we 'may lose some form of biblical inerrancy if there are contradictions in the Gospels,' what you lose is inerrancy itself. ... An actual contradiction is an error."

[<http://www.bpnews.net/39699>, accessed 08/02/22]

A blurred background image showing a group of people, likely a church congregation, in a dimly lit setting. The text is overlaid on this background.

1. The Bible is the Word of God.

2. God cannot err.

3. Therefore, the Bible cannot err.

If the Bible errs, then either:

- ❖ *there is some sense in which it is not the Word of God, or*
- ❖ *there is some sense in which God can err.*

WTJ 73 (2011): 1-22

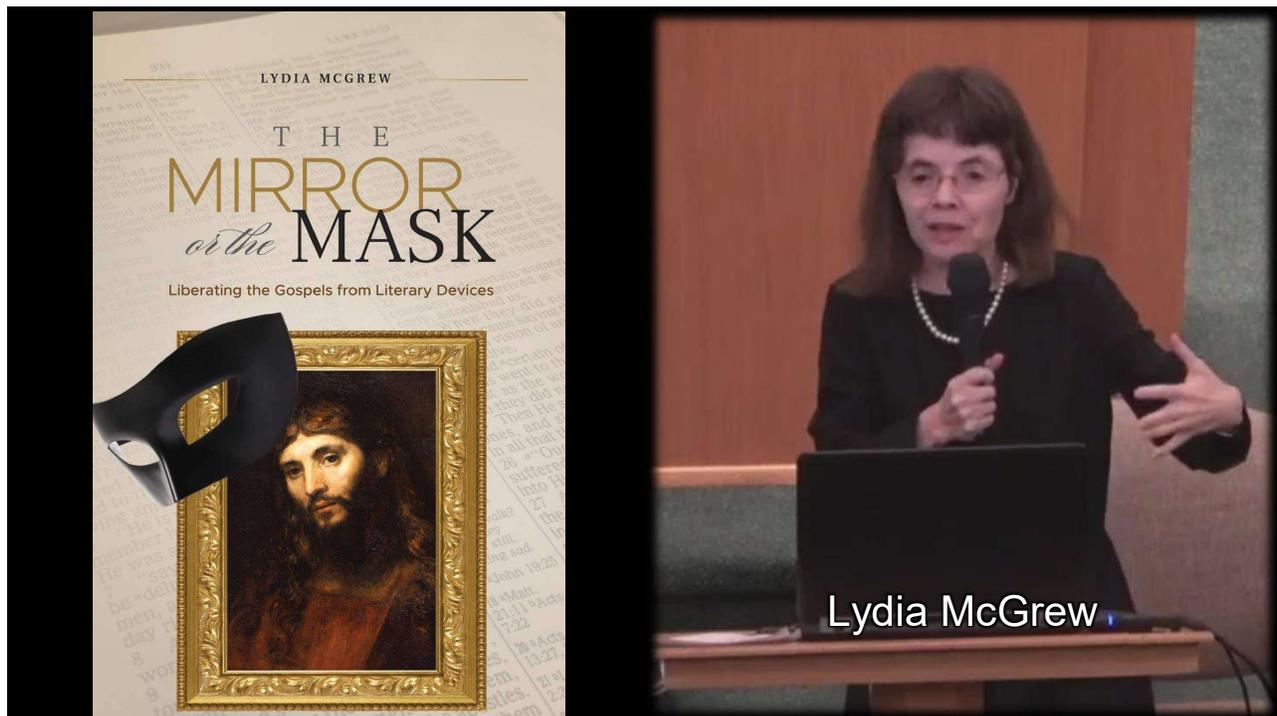
SPECIAL LECTURE

CAN THE BIBLE BE COMPLETELY INSPIRED BY GOD
AND YET STILL CONTAIN ERRORS?
A RESPONSE TO SOME RECENT "EVANGELICAL" PROPOSALS

G. K. BEALE

There has been much literature written over the past fifty years on the topic of the authority of the Bible, especially discussions within so-called "evangelicalism" concerning the nature of the notions of infallibility and inerrancy. Recent writers have especially questioned the traditional understanding of inerrancy. In particular, a central idea underlying inerrancy has been that since God is true and without error and, therefore, his oral word is true and without error, consequently, his word in Scripture is true and without error. This implication or theological inference that reasons from God's flawless character to flawless Scripture has been challenged, and it has been argued that it is a logi-

Allowing for the possibility that there are conflicting or contradictory statements in the Bible as Greco-Roman Biography allows is incompatible with Inspiration and Inerrancy.



"It would be difficult to exaggerate the acceptance that the claim 'The Gospels are Greco-Roman biographies' or even 'The Gospels are something very much like Greco-Roman biographies' enjoys in the current evangelical scholarly milieu."

[Lydia McGrew, *The Mirror or the Mask: Liberating the Gospels from Literary Devices* (Tampa: DeWard, 2019), 67]



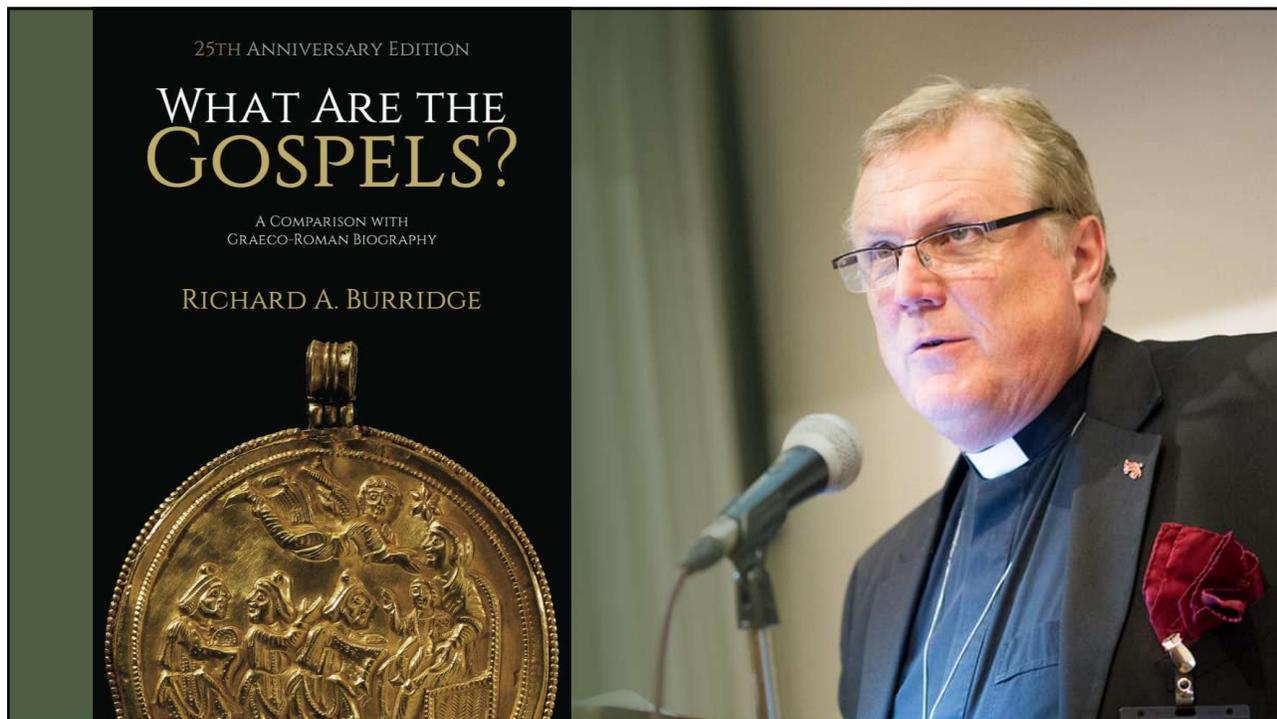
Lydia McGrew

"The popularity of this claim, based most of all upon the book *What Are the Gospels?* by the classicist Richard Burridge, has only grown since that book's first publication in 1994 and its release in a second edition in 2004."

[Lydia McGrew, *The Mirror or the Mask*, 67]



Lydia McGrew



"Burridge's work is also noteworthy for the extent to which he overlooks evidence for the traditional authorship of the Gospels. This is relevant to his thesis because traditional authorship would mean that at least three out of four Gospels—Matthew, Mark, and John—were written by Jews who were likely not educated in a Hellenistic fashion. ..."

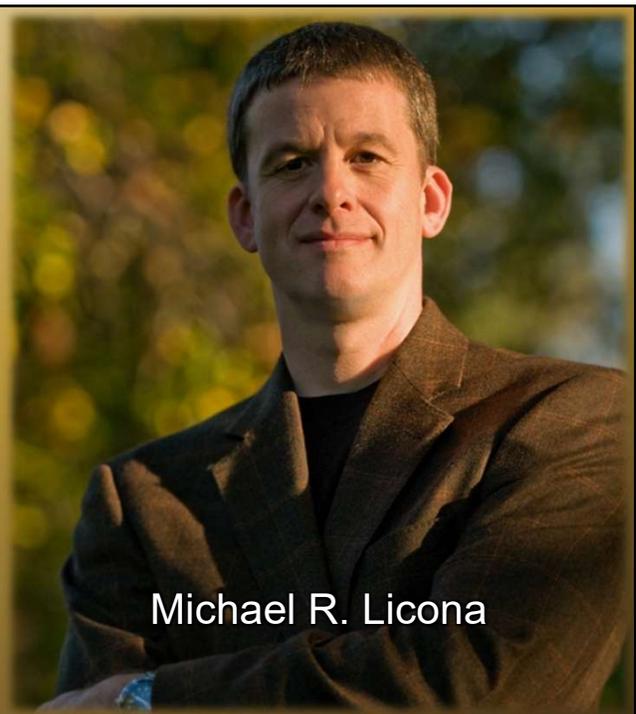
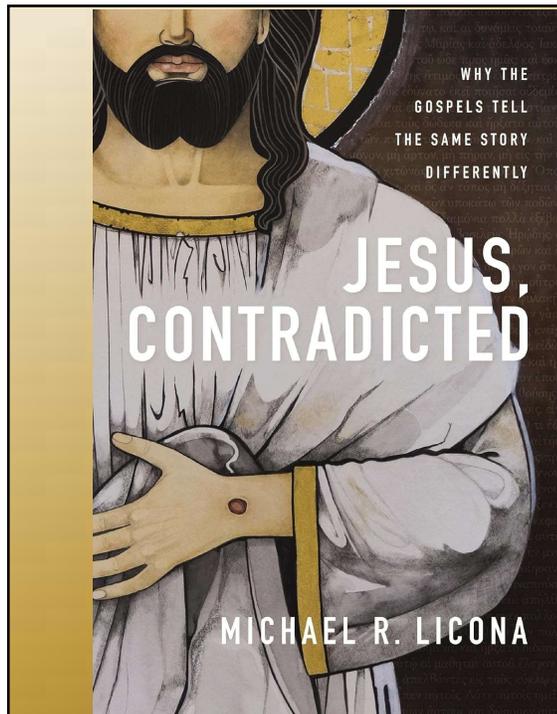


"How likely is it that Matthew the tax collector, John, Mark, Peter, or even John the son of Zebedee would have read or heard the earlier writers of biography discussed by Burridge such as Xenophon, Isocrates, Satyrus, and Nepos and that they would have desired to emulate a specific Greco-Roman genre?."

[Lydia McGrew, *The Mirror or the Mask*, 76]



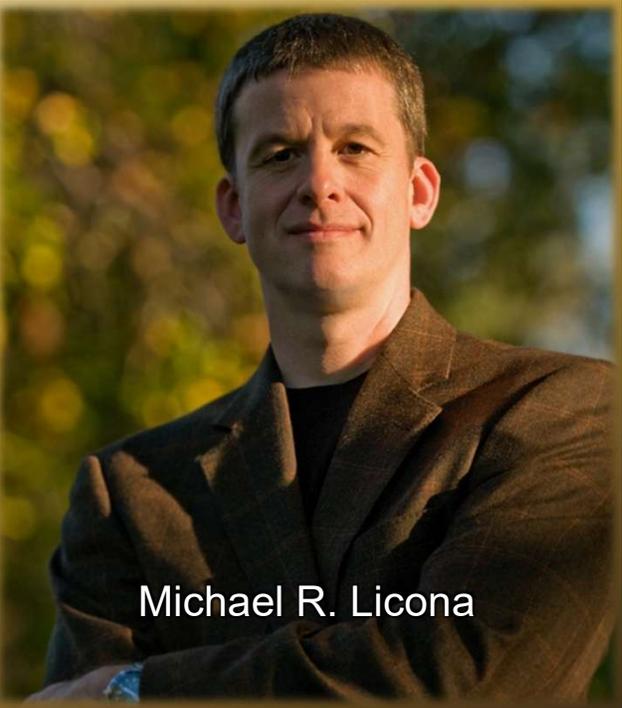
Lydia McGrew



Michael R. Licona

**"The bottom line:
Contradictions offer a
challenge to the historical
reliability of the Gospels **and**
to some versions of the
doctrine of biblical inerrancy.
however, they do not
necessarily call into question
the truth of the Christian
faith."**

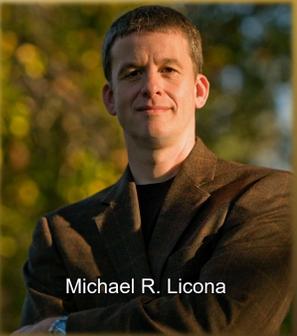
[Licona, *Jesus Contradicted*, 7]



Michael R. Licona

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[Licona, *Jesus Contradicted*, 7]



Michael R. Licona

In the chapter titled "Fine-Tuning Our Doctrine of Scripture: Inerrancy" Licona seeks to challenge what he calls the "Traditional View of Inerrancy" and argue for his "Flexible View of Inerrancy."

In his critique of the "traditional view" Licona rejects an understanding on the *Chicago Statement* that is undoubtedly the way the statement has been understood since it was written.

The question that needs to be answered is whether Licona's "flexible view" is consistent with the meaning of the *Chicago Statement*.

The reason this is important is because to be a member of the Evangelical Theological Society (ETS), one is required to affirm the inerrancy of Scripture.

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MEMBERSHIP REQUIREMENTS

July 10, 2009 by Abigail Matteson

DOCTRINAL BASIS:

All members must subscribe annually to the Doctrinal Basis of the Society. Initially, this is done by completing the application process and affirming the ETS Doctrinal Basis.

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). The case for biblical inerrancy rests on the absolute trustworthiness of God and Scripture's testimony to itself. A proper understanding of inerrancy takes into account the language, genres, and intent of Scripture. We reject approaches to Scripture that deny that biblical truth claims are grounded in reality.

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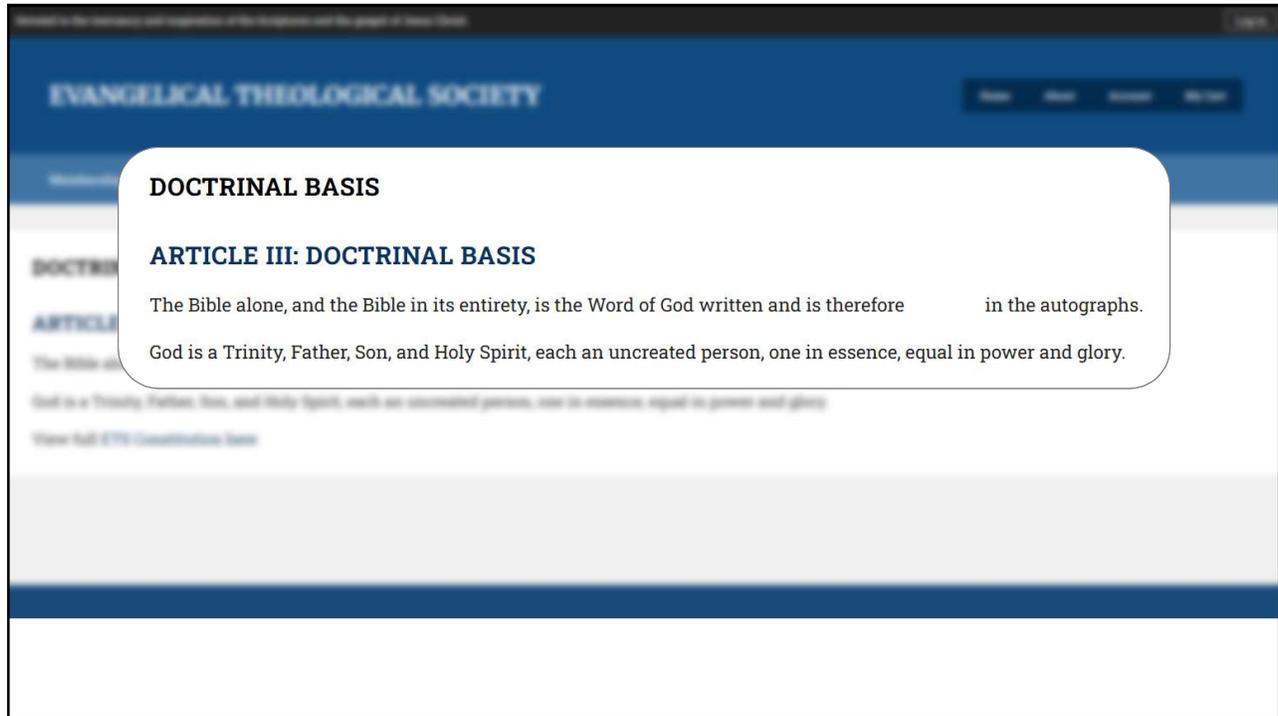
DOCTRINAL BASIS

ARTICLE III: DOCTRINAL BASIS

The Bible alone, and the Bible in its entirety, is the Word of God written and is therefore inerrant in the autographs.

God is a Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, each an uncreated person, one in essence, equal in power and glory.

[View full ETS Constitution here](#)

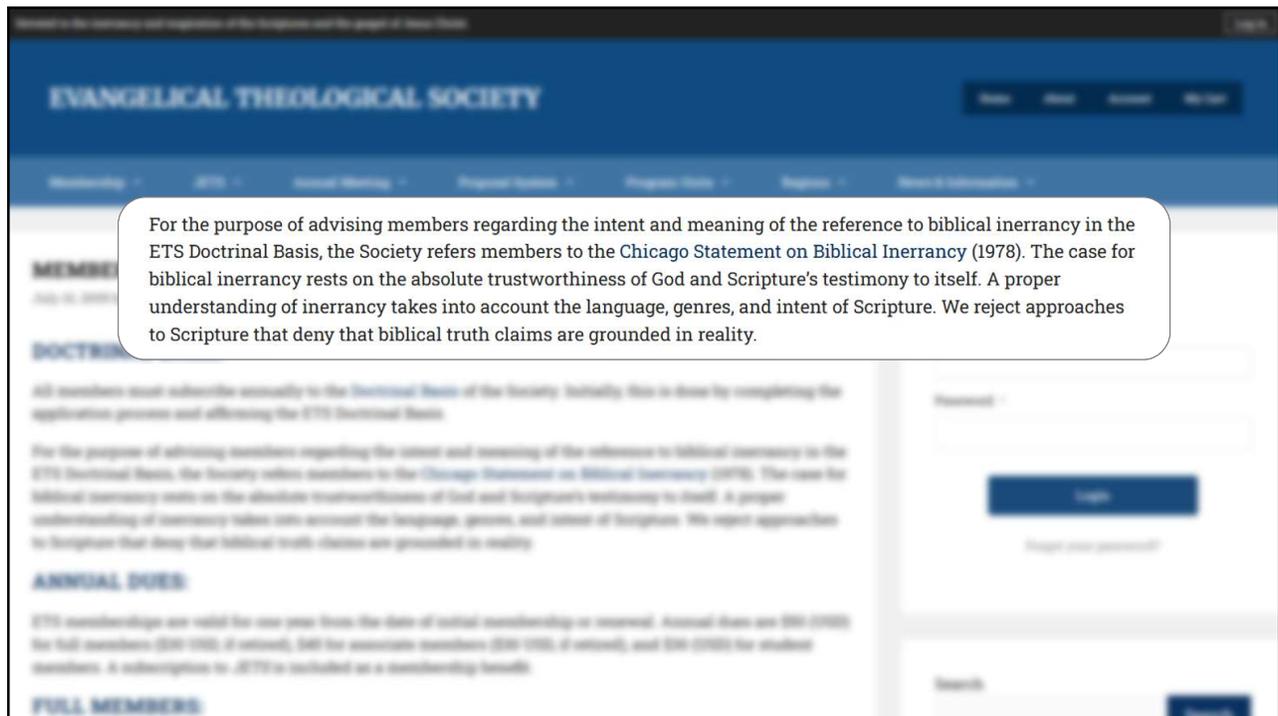


EVANGELICAL THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

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EVANGELICAL THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

MEMBERSHIP

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). The case for biblical inerrancy rests on the absolute trustworthiness of God and Scripture's testimony to itself. A proper understanding of inerrancy takes into account the language, genres, and intent of Scripture. We reject approaches to Scripture that deny that biblical truth claims are grounded in reality.

ANNUAL DUES:

ETS memberships are valid for one year from the date of initial membership or renewal. Annual dues are \$50 (\$100 for full members (\$50 US), if retired), \$40 for associate members (\$50 US), if retired, and \$20 (\$30) for student members. A subscription to JETS is included as a membership benefit.

FULL MEMBERS:

JETS 49:1 (March 2006) 205-9

REPORTS RELATING TO THE FIFTY-SEVENTH
ANNUAL MEETING OF THE SOCIETY

The 57th Annual Meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society had the third-highest attendance on record with 2,162 persons registered. The meetings were held at the Valley Forge Convention Center and in the adjoining Radisson and Scanticon Hotels. Participating publishers offered generous discounts on their books and other products from one hundred booths in a large carpeted hall. The program theme, "Christianity in the Early Centuries," was explored in four excellent plenary sessions, and by many of the nearly five hundred individual papers. Participants gathered from six continents and the islands of the seas to fellowship, exchange ideas, critique one another, and to keep abreast of the most recent scholarship in their disciplines. More than twenty study groups also met as part of the overall program.

President-Elect Edwin Yamauchi served as program chairman and put together a superb array of plenary speakers. On Wednesday afternoon, Christopher Hall, Chair of the Bible and Theology Department and Dean of Templeton College at Eastern University, addressed the society on "What Evangelicals and Liberals Can Learn from Early Christian Literature." Later that evening, author Nicholas Perrin, Assistant Professor of Biblical Studies at Wheaton College, posed the issue, "Thomas, the Fifth Gospel?" in which he reflected on the literary dependence and relationship of the Gospel of Thomas with Tatian's *Diatessaron*.

On Thursday morning attendees heard ETS member D. Jeffrey Bingham, Chair and Professor of Theological Studies at Dallas Theological Seminary, explore the "Development and Diversity in Early Christianity," demonstrating from the early Church fathers that there were competing voices in the early Church, but that what was orthodox, and what was not, was clearly evident to the writers themselves.

The fourth and final plenary was delivered by international scholar Paul Trebilco, Head of the Department of Theology and Professor of New Testament at the University of Otago, the oldest university in New Zealand. He spoke on "Ignatius and Others as Witnesses against Bauer," pointing out that what we would call heresy was neither early nor strong in Smyrna, Philadelphia, Ephesus, and other centers of Christianity in Asia Minor, a fatal blow to Walter Bauer's thesis and the corresponding *Da Vinci Code*.

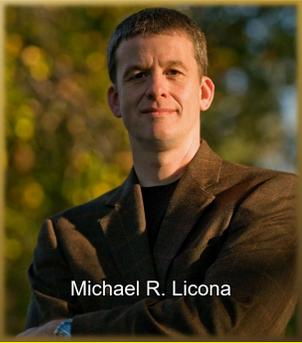
More than twenty parallel sessions ran concurrently on such disciplines as OT, NT, biblical, historical, and systematic theology, Church history, archaeology, philosophy, hermeneutics, evangelism and missions, pastoral ministry, and psychology and theology. Parallel programs were also conducted by the Evangelical Philosophical Society, the Near East Archaeological Society, and the Adventist Theological Society. Tables and a large

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[https://etsjets.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/06/files_JETS-PDFs_49_49-1_JETS_49-1_205-209_MeetingReport.pdf]

**"The bottom line:
Contradictions offer a
challenge to the historical
reliability of the Gospels and
to some versions of the
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however, they do not
necessarily call into question
the truth of the Christian
faith."**

[Licona, Jesus Contradicted, 7]



Michael R. Licona

In seeking to explore this question, Licona asks: "Precisely how much wiggle room does CSBI [Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy] allow?" (p.194)

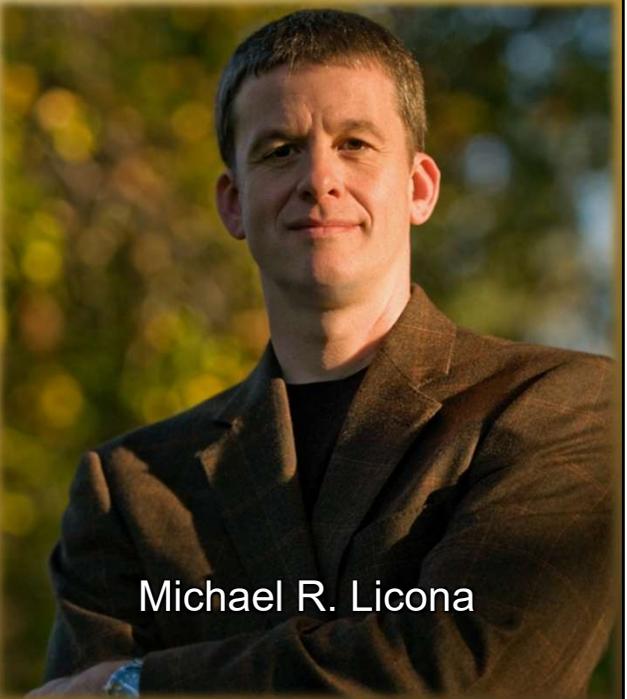
This is indeed a question that anyone who is interested in this conversation must ask.

However, one must be careful to avoid the informal "fallacy of the beard" which is the fallacy that says that if you cannot draw an exact line between extremes on a continuum, then you cannot legitimately affirm the differences between the extremes of the continuum.

I would argue that the extent to which Licona seeks to qualify the definition of 'inerrancy' and move it away from how ICBI and the "Chicago Statement" has understood the term, amounts to a denial of inerrancy.

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(Licona, Jesus Contradicted?)

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To repeat a point, the issue is not whether one view or another of inerrancy is compatible with the truth of Christianity.

Rather, the issue is whether one view or another of inerrancy is compatible with the doctrines of inspiration and inerrancy.

