

The Inspiration and Authority of Scripture

I am immensely grateful for my grounding in Scripture, undergirded by a high view of its authority and inspiration, from my earliest childhood. I have been reading the Bible for over 60 years.

By contrast I am deeply concerned at the lack of Bible teaching and Bible knowledge in many areas today. All too many clergy lack serious and extensive Bible teaching in their training. There is also far less emphasis on daily private reading of Scripture. However I am grateful for the emphasis on the reading of Scripture in church.

Much as I thank God for and greatly benefit from my background, it was a fundamentalist context. I was brought up on that bastion of American fundamentalism, the Scofield Reference Bible. I remember years ago reading James Barr's *Escape from Fundamentalism* and being rather offended when he said that fundamentalism is characterised by fear. But I have to say he is right. For example, fundamentalism says that if any detail in Scripture is thought to be inaccurate the whole authority and inspiration of Scripture is undermined. That is a tradition of fear. We must not be afraid to tackle the problems of Scripture honestly.

Let's start at the beginning with looking at God himself.

The nature of God

God is love. That is fundamental. Because God is love he communicates. God is a God of revelation. He reveals himself through creation (Rom 1:20) and ultimately through Jesus (Heb 1:1-3). So it is to be expected that he would provide an authoritative, permanent written account of what he wishes to reveal.

The claims of Scripture

1. 2 Tim 3:16 states: "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness."

(Some argue that since Scripture is God-breathed and God does not err, so the text is both inspired and inerrant).

2. Jesus and the apostles are quite clear that prophetic Scripture must be fulfilled (Matt 26:54; Mark 14:49; Luke 4:21; John 2:22; 7:38, 42; 10:35; 13:18; 17:12; 19:24, 28, 36-37; Acts 1:16; Jas 2:23).
3. 2 Peter 1:19-21 states: "We also have the prophetic message as something completely reliable, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation of things. For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit."

The context is one of prophetic prediction.

4. 2 Peter 3:16 states: "[Paul's] letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction."

Here Paul's writings are explicitly put on the level of Scripture.

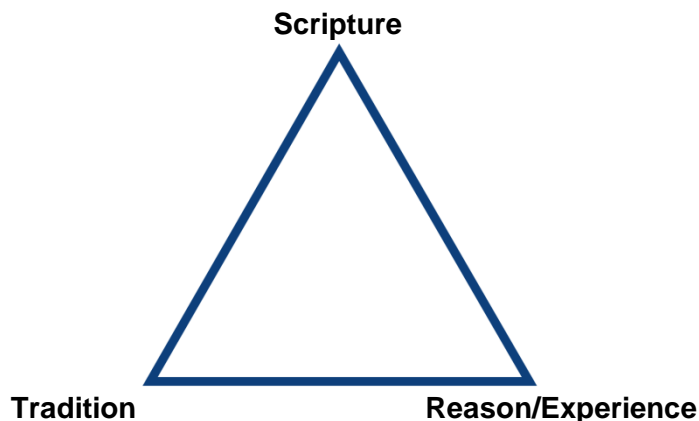
In summary, Scripture claims that it is divinely-inspired (God-breathed) and that its prophecies and promises must be fulfilled.

However Scripture cannot be seen in isolation. It is very much related to the believing community.

The importance of the believing community

1. Anglican triangle

The authority, under God, for what we believe in the Church of England can be described in the form of a triangle:



Scripture has a normative role as God's Word. It is the written revelation of the Living Word, Jesus, who reveals God to us. Tradition and experience should be governed by Scripture.

However, the believing community had an important role in recognising which books had authority as well as deciding on some key disputes in the early centuries of the church. The historic creeds are a vital aspect of the authority for what we believe. The Church of England's position on Scripture – from the 39 Articles and the Canons - is in the next section.

The church also plays an important role in understanding and interpreting Scripture – Bible scholars, Bible teachers, writers of commentaries and exercising the God-given gift of teaching within the local or wider church.

The individual has an important role too. Spiritual experience should be governed by Scripture but also illuminates Scripture. We do not regard Scripture as authoritative merely because it claims to be or because the church says so. We know through experience that it rings true and makes sense.

2. Anglican formularies

Article VI. Of the Sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures for Salvation.

Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation: so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man, that it should be believed as an article of the Faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation. In the name of the Holy Scripture we do understand those canonical Books of the Old and New Testament, of whose authority was never any doubt in the Church.

Article XX. Of the Authority of the Church.

The Church hath power to decree Rites or Ceremonies, and authority in Controversies of Faith: and yet it is not lawful for the Church to ordain any thing that is contrary to God's Word written, neither may it so expound one place of Scripture, that it be repugnant to another. Wherefore, although the Church be a witness and a keeper of Holy Writ, yet, as it ought not to decree any thing against the same, so besides the same ought it not to enforce any thing to be believed for necessity of Salvation.

Canon A 5 Of the doctrine of the Church of England

The doctrine of the Church of England is grounded in the Holy Scriptures, and in such teachings of the ancient Fathers and Councils of the Church as are agreeable to the said Scriptures. In particular such doctrine is to be found in the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion, *The Book of Common Prayer*, and the Ordinal.

3. Formation of the Canon

The New Testament Canon was not decided by some synod or council. From the earliest times the church recognised that certain books had authority. The main criteria were:

1. Apostolic authorship (or authorship by a close colleague of an apostle).
2. Consistency with other accepted books
3. Acceptance by the vast majority of the church.

Athanasius produced the oldest list of the NT as we have it in 365AD. However Hebrews, James, 2 & 3 John, Jude and Revelation were disputed for a time.

It is the same with the Old Testament canon. It was not decided by a synod or council although the synod of rabbis at Jamnia (Javneh) in AD90 did confirm the canon which was already accepted.

However, it is one thing to say that Scripture is inspired and authoritative and another to say that we understand it correctly.

The importance of Hermeneutics

Fundamentalists and some conservatives imply that the interpretation of Scripture is straightforward. "The Bible says it; I believe it; that settles it." However are we sure the Bible says it?

It is clear that each passage must be interpreted carefully in the light of:

- a. Its literary genre: is it literal, allegorical, poetic, figure of speech, etc?
- b. Its grammar: careful attention to the meaning, and perhaps range of meanings, of words in the time of the author, literary style etc.
- c. Its literary context: the surrounding passage and Scripture as a whole.
- d. Its historical context: background, culture, occasion and purpose

We have to remember that Scripture may not always mean what it appears to mean. This can answer some of the apparent problems and questions about its authority. For example "*You shall not kill*" appears to require total pacifism and a ban on all killing. In which case, it contradicts much of the OT. However, if we examine the context in which the commandment was given we see it is to do with how Israelites should treat one another in the family and the community. It is not referring to warfare or capital punishment. In fact it means "You shall not murder."

Another example is concerning *slavery*. Does the NT support modern slavery as appears to be the case? At one time many conservative Christians thought it did. Or were the NT writers seeking to avoid encouraging rebellion over slavery with resultant social turmoil and bloodshed, which could easily have undermined the main purpose of the church, namely, spreading the gospel? Were they trusting rather that the Christian message would eventually undermine slavery in a more peaceful and less disruptive way (which, sadly, took many centuries)? (It is important to understand that slavery in ancient Israel was very different from the sort of slavery seen, for example, in the United States. Slaves were similar to paid employees and could gain their freedom. Professor John Goldingay writes that "there is nothing inherently lowly or undignified about being an *ebed* [slave]").

If the whole of Scripture is taken literally, this raises various problems. We must avoid a glib conclusion that a passage is not literal. For example, we may not yet have enough knowledge to decide a particular question. However, if a passage seems to conflict with reality or reliable knowledge, one possible explanation is that it is not literal. If *Genesis 1-3* is taken literally it conflicts with modern science. If it is a beautiful, theologically-rich, allegory, it does not conflict but rather gives an inspirational description about creation from which we can learn vital truths.

The most fundamental issue in hermeneutics is that all Scripture should be interpreted in the light of the person and teaching of Christ. Everything should be judged by this criterion. Our approach to the OT must be included in this. It will raise some important and difficult questions to which we shall return.

The issue of inerrancy

Evangelical theologian Richard J Colman wrote: “There have been long periods in the history of the church when biblical inerrancy has not been a critical question. It has in fact been noted that only in the last two centuries can we legitimately speak of a formal doctrine of inerrancy.”¹ He adds elsewhere that “the consensus seems to be [that] the Scriptures do not explicitly or formally teach their own inerrancy, and inerrancy is only ‘logically entailed’ in the doctrinal verses, then the sole question left is whether this is the only logical deduction. The other equally logical and viable conclusion is that Scripture is inspired throughout but inerrancy is limited to those matters necessary for our salvation.”²

So there are different definitions of inerrancy amongst Evangelical Christians:

1. Unlimited inerrancy

This affirms that Scripture contains no errors whatsoever.

There is a fundamentalist version of this which doesn’t really face up to the problems and simply dogmatically believes Scripture is inerrant. As I said earlier, we need to be aware of the influence of fear in fundamentalism and some conservatism. Also it cannot be good to refuse to ask questions and face up to challenges.

On the other hand experience teaches that there is some truth in the “slippery slope” argument that once a person discards some fundamentalist or conservative tenets, there is a danger of throwing the baby out with the bathwater.

Obviously, if we allow that Scripture can contain errors, we need to treat Scripture as innocent until proved guilty. Some problems might be solved when we have more knowledge (see the appendix *A possible harmony of the resurrection accounts*). If we believe Scripture contains no errors whatsoever, how do we deal with what many see as errors in Scripture? They included the following examples:

The Ten Commandments: the commandments were written by the “finger of God” but when they are repeated in Deut 5:12-15 there are variations in the text.

Old Testament History: There are many differences between the Books of Kings and Chronicles when describing the same events.

The genealogy of Jesus: Matthew says there were fourteen generations in all from Abraham to David, fourteen from David to the exile to Babylon, and fourteen from the exile to the Messiah but this is not true of the genealogy he gives there.

The temptations of Jesus: Matthew and Luke record the three temptations of Jesus in a different order.

The healing of the centurion’s servant: In Matthew the centurion comes to Jesus himself. In Luke he sends friends. Some say he sent friends first then came himself. This would mean that the conversation is repeated almost verbatim. It also means that the centurion said he was unworthy to approach Jesus himself so he sent friends and then immediately came to Jesus himself.

The blind man/men outside Jericho: Matthew says there was only one blind man. Mark and Luke say there were two.

The cleansing of the Temple: In Matthew it happens immediately Jesus enters the city. In Mark it is the next day. But in John it happens at the beginning of Jesus’ ministry. Many feel it is unlikely that Jesus cleansed the Temple twice because it is unlikely he would want to make such a clear messianic claim at the beginning of his ministry.

The robe of Jesus: According to Matthew 27:28-29 it was scarlet whereas in John 19:2-3 it was purple.

The chronology of John's gospel is totally different from that of the synoptic gospels.

The resurrection narratives: Matthew and Mark say there is one angel in the tomb. Luke says there are two. John doesn't refer to any angels being present. (However see Appendix 1 *A possible harmony of the resurrection accounts*. See also the *Differences between the Synoptic Gospels and John's Gospel* table in Appendix 2).

It has to be said that none of these points (or others in the New Testament) are anything remotely like fundamental doctrinal issues but they do have to be addressed by those who claim there are no errors whatsoever.

It really isn't adequate to claim that these difficulties could be satisfactorily explained if we had more detailed information, although that may apply to some of them.

Nor is it adequate to say that it was only the original manuscripts which were inerrant because we do have a great deal of material today which helps us to reach a high level of accuracy in modern texts. On the other hand if God is using errant copies of the Bible to speak to people today, why could he not have done that in the first place?

There is, however, a less Conservative view of Unlimited Inerrancy and the best known statement of this is the *Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy* published in 1978 and signed by 300 noted evangelical scholars such as Carl F. H. Henry, J.I. Packer, Francis Schaeffer, and John Wenham. It states:

"Being wholly and verbally God-given, Scripture is without error or fault in all its teaching, no less in what it states about God's acts in creation, about the events of world history, and about its own literary origins under God, than in its witness to God's saving grace in individual lives."

"The authority of Scripture is inescapably impaired if this total divine inerrancy is in any way limited or disregarded, or made relative to a view of truth contrary to the Bible's own; and such lapses bring serious loss to both the individual and the Church."

That sounds very conservative but it is important to note that there are very important qualifications in the Unlimited Inerrancy view as expounded by the Chicago Statement.

QUALIFICATIONS IN THIS VIEW

It states: "We deny that it is proper to evaluate Scripture according to standards of truth and error that are alien to its usage or purpose. We further deny that inerrancy is negated by Biblical phenomena such as a lack of modern technical precision, irregularities of grammar or spelling, observational descriptions of nature, the reporting of falsehoods, the use of hyperbole and round numbers, the topical arrangement of material, variant selections of material in parallel accounts, or the use of free citations" (Article XIII).

It is very interesting that the statement says it is not proper "to evaluate Scripture according to standards of truth and error that are alien to its ... purpose." Although conservatives take the Chicago Statement as an example of "Unlimited Inerrancy" this sounds like the second main view of Inerrancy we shall examine below "Limited Inerrancy (or Inerrancy of Purpose)." It certainly seems open to this interpretation.

Basically, this statement is saying that, if evaluated by modern criteria, the Bible does contain errors, although they would not have been regarded as errors in the ancient world, as they were accepted conventions. It speaks of "a lack of modern technical precision." It then refers to "topical arrangement of material" which means that ancient writers didn't always bother with what we would see as accurate chronology. This could explain John putting the Cleansing of the Temple at the beginning of Jesus' ministry because it served his theological purpose. By "variant selections of material in parallel accounts" it is referring to the inconsistencies we see in some of the above biblical examples. The phrase "the use of free citations" refers to what we would see as inaccurate quotations of one biblical passage in another part of

Scripture. Today the convention is to quote people verbatim. In the ancient world the convention was to give an accurate account of what a person said, not necessarily a verbatim quotation.

The Chicago Statement adds (Exposition Section C):

“We affirm that canonical Scripture should always be interpreted on the basis that it is infallible and inerrant. However, in determining what the God-taught writer is asserting in each passage, we must pay the most careful attention to its claims and character as a human production. *In inspiration, God utilized the culture and conventions of his penman's milieu*, a milieu that God controls in His sovereign providence; it is misinterpretation to imagine otherwise.

“So history must be treated as history, poetry as poetry, hyperbole and metaphor as hyperbole and metaphor, generalization and approximation as what they are, and so forth. *Differences between literary conventions in Bible times and in ours must also be observed: Since, for instance, nonchronological narration and imprecise citation were conventional and acceptable and violated no expectations in those days, we must not regard these things as faults when we find them in Bible writers. When total precision of a particular kind was not expected nor aimed at, it is no error not to have achieved it. Scripture is inerrant, not in the sense of being absolutely precise by modern standards, but in the sense of making good its claims and achieving that measure of focused truth at which its authors aimed.*

“*The truthfulness of Scripture is not negated by the appearance in it of irregularities of grammar or spelling, phenomenal descriptions of nature, reports of false statements (for example, the lies of Satan), or seeming discrepancies between one passage and another. It is not right to set the so-called "phenomena" of Scripture against the teaching of Scripture about itself.*” These phenomena are defined in the following quotation:

“We further deny that inerrancy is negated by Biblical phenomena such as a lack of modern technical precision, irregularities of grammar or spelling, observational descriptions of nature, the reporting of falsehoods, the use of hyperbole and round numbers, the topical arrangement of material, variant selections of material in parallel accounts, or the use of free citations.” (Article XIII)

The statement then goes on to make a statement of faith which many Christians might feel is at least to some extent unjustified:

“Apparent inconsistencies should not be ignored. Solution of them, where this can be convincingly achieved, will encourage our faith, and where for the present no convincing solution is at hand we shall significantly honor God by trusting His assurance that His Word is true, despite these appearances, and by maintaining our confidence that one day they will be seen to have been illusions.

“... Although Holy Scripture is nowhere culture-bound in the sense that its teaching lacks universal validity, it is sometimes culturally conditioned by the customs and conventional views of a particular period, so that the application of its principles today calls for a different sort of action.” (Emphases mine).

Richard Coleman writes that supporters of Unlimited Inerrancy “are in the difficult position of demonstrating how the Biblical writers, who were limited by the development of language and human conceptualization at their particular time, could so perfectly express God's truths that no later development or refinement is possible. To argue that the gift of inspiration permitted the writers to transcend their own cultural milieu in thought and expression must be supported by evidence that their vocabulary, grammar, literary forms, and conceptualization betray an advanced era.”³

In addition to the fundamentalist and less conservative versions of Unlimited Inerrancy there is another definition of biblical inerrancy.

2. Limited inerrancy (or Inerrancy of Intention).

This affirms that what God intends to convey through Scripture (salvation history) contains no error but incidental, scientific, geographical, or historical content may contain errors.

Richard Coleman defines this view: “Scripture is inerrant in whatever it intends to teach as essential for our salvation; whether it includes historical, scientific, biographical, and theological materials. Undoubtedly not everything in Scripture is necessary for our salvation, and those which are cannot be determined by assumption or *a priori*, but by their *context* and by the author's *principal* purpose The gift of inspiration was granted not to insure the infallibility of every word and thought, though it did accomplish this in particular instances, but to secure a written Word that would forever be the singular instrument by which man learns and is confronted by God's will.”⁴ More succinctly “the Scriptures are true and without error in what they intend to teach.”⁵

This view emphasises that the purpose of Scripture is to teach about the nature of God and salvation. It is about what God has done, is doing and will do in Christ. It is not general history. This is emphasised in such passages as the following:

- Luke 24:27 “Beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself” cf. vv 32, 45
- John 5:39 “You study the Scriptures diligently because you think that in them you have eternal life. These are the very Scriptures that testify about me.”
- 2 Tim 3:15 “From infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.”

Those who hold this view point out that:

1. There are inconsistencies and contradictions between New Testament writers, some of which have been outlined above, but they are all matters of detail. However it is not important for all the historical details to be correct because they are irrelevant to the Bible's purpose. It doesn't matter whether there two blind men outside Jericho or one, or two angels in the tomb of Jesus or one. In fact such differences are always present in eyewitness accounts of the same event and are a testimony in themselves to these accounts being from eyewitnesses. It doesn't matter if the gospel writers made errors in chronology, e.g. the order of Jesus' temptations, the timing of the cleansing of the Temple. They don't make any difference to salvation history. (There will, of course, be some historical facts which *are* important to the Bible's purpose such as the virgin birth or empty tomb).
2. The New Testament quotes the Old Testament quite loosely and even attributes quotations to the wrong prophet (Matthew 27:9-10 attributes a quotation from Zechariah 11:12-13 to Jeremiah. Modern attempts to relate it to Jer. 18:2; 19:2-11 seem to be special pleading).
3. Scripture quotes from non-biblical (therefore not inerrant) sources, e.g. Jude quotes the Book of Enoch and the Assumption of Moses, with reference to the imprisonment of the fallen angels awaiting punishment. 1 Peter 3:19-20 also relies on the Book of Enoch. Paul quotes pagan poets Menander, Aratus and Epimenides (1 Cor. 15:33; Acts 17:28; Tit. 1:12). Hence, it is argued, inerrancy is not absolutely required in the New Testament. Colman writes: “Even Warfield and Hodge conceded that the biblical writers were at times ‘dependent for their information upon sources and methods in themselves fallible, their personal knowledge and judgment were in many matters hesitating and defective or even wrong.’ They also recognized that ‘inspiration does not suppose that the words and phrases written under its influence are the best possible to express the truth, but only that they are an adequate expression of the truth. Other words and phrases might furnish a clearer, more exact, and therefore better expression....’ These two concessions in themselves permit an unexpected latitude in the kind and number of errors possibly found in Scripture.”⁶
4. What matters is the ancient writer's intention. As noted under the Chicago Statement, it was quite acceptable for this intention to overrule correct chronology or historical details. Hence John places the cleansing of the Temple at the beginning of Jesus' ministry because he has the theological intention to

stress Jesus' claim to messiahship. Also the difference between Matthew and Luke over the centurion who approached Jesus is because Matthew wants to emphasise his faith (so he described the man coming to Jesus and expressing his faith) whereas Luke wanted to stress his humility, despite being a Roman centurion, and so describes the man as hesitant to approach Jesus himself. Scholars tell us that this would be perfectly acceptable practice in the ancient world and would not be regarded as error. **However, if the ancient biblical writers were not troubled about strict, literal accuracy in details, chronology etc., surely this means we don't need to be either.**

Those who hold to the Limited Inerrancy (or Inerrancy of Intention) view believe that "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness" (2 Tim 3:16) and that "No prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation of things. For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit" (2 Peter 1:19-21). They believe that Scripture is inerrant (infallible) in what it is seeking to convey – the message of salvation. That is a firmly-held statement of faith. But they do not believe that this is adversely affected by any errors in incidental, scientific, geographical, or secondary historical content.

Richard Coleman, who accepts limited inerrancy, comments on an important point: "The perennial difficulty with limited inerrancy is that it requires a hermeneutical principle to distinguish between what is necessary for salvation and what is incidental. Notwithstanding the tangled history of Church division over just this question, we must trust that we are able to make precisely this distinction. For if we cannot determine which doctrines and affirmations are necessary for salvation, then we are left sadly bewildered about what we should teach our children and what we say to the dying person, what we preach to our congregations and how to charge our missionaries."⁷

THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD

Those who accept limited inerrancy draw an instructive parallel between how God works out his purposes in the world and how he inspired Scripture. In fact, the inspiration of Scripture is part of God exercising his sovereignty in the world. God is constantly and intimately involved with the world, though not in the sense of constant or regular miraculous intervention. Paul said: "he is not far from any one of us. 'For in him we live and move and have our being.'" (Acts 17:27-28). Hebrews 1:3 states; "The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word."

It seems clear that God works out his purposes through "the changes and chances of this life." He worked out his creative purposes through Natural Selection, survival of the fittest, nature red in tooth and claw, etc. There were useless developments, dead ends, extinctions and natural disasters. Yet it was not an insecure, chancy business. The end result is a staggeringly beautiful, richly-varied, inter-dependent world. God worked out his wonderful purposes.

Still God works the same way. Human beings make many free decisions, a good deal of them unhelpful or wrong. There is disease, accident, violence and natural disaster. But God works out his sovereign loving purpose through it all, providing his grace, particularly to those who pray. This too is not an insecure, chancy business. He works out his purposes through the mistakes, misunderstandings and even wrong doing of human beings as well as through all the positive events.

Similarly, God worked out his purposes of salvation through the changes, chances, successes, mistakes and wrong doings of Israel.

Supporters of the Limited Inerrancy view ask: Is it therefore inappropriate to expect that he will work in a similar way with respect to the inspiration of Scripture? Total inerrancy requires constant miraculous intervention. But God can work out his purpose of revealing his Word through the mistakes and misunderstandings of human beings, as well as through their genuine insights and correct understanding of God's truth.

They believe we still have the Word of the Lord and can confidently affirm: "This is the Word of the Lord." God revealed himself perfectly through Christ.

They ask: Does it totally undermine Scripture if we accept that there are errors in the Bible? We must remember that acceptance of the inspiration and authority of Scripture is a matter of faith. We *believe* the Bible is the Word of God. We believe some books closely associated with Scripture historically e.g. The Apocrypha are not the Word of God. So we believe some historical material is the Word of God and some isn't. The latter does not undermine the former. Why should it therefore undermine Scripture's main purpose – conveying the message of salvation through Christ – if we believe some secondary points in Scripture are not inerrant? It is all a matter of faith. The canon of Scripture was settled by faith and the church can also underline that content which is necessary for salvation.

Let me introduce you to Og Theology. Deut 3:11 states “Og king of Bashan was the last of the Rephaites. His bed was decorated with iron and was more than nine cubits long and four cubits wide. It is still in Rabbah of the Ammonites.” Are we really to believe that if Og's bed was actually only eight cubits long or three cubits wide this undermines the Faith? Surely not! This is Og Theology! There has to be a great deal of material, particularly in the OT which has no importance with respect to the message of salvation. Surely it doesn't matter if some of such material is inaccurate.

So there are two credible views of inerrancy amongst evangelicals and readers must make up their own mind about which one they find acceptable.

I have deliberately majored on the New Testament so far because the Old Testament raises significant additional issues concerning the inspiration and authority of Scripture.

The questions about the Old Testament

Questions about the OT teaching on the nature of God and morality have been a particular issue for me and I have given a great deal of thought to it. The material I use here is based on my longer, more detailed paper *The nature of God in the Old Testament*.

Firstly, in approaching the Old Testament, we must remember what God is like.

The nature of God

a. The kindness of God in the OT

Immediately after Moses was given the Ten Commandments “Then the LORD came down in the cloud and stood there with him and proclaimed his name, the LORD. And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, ‘The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin’” (Ex 34:5-7). This is a foundational statement about the nature of God revealed in the OT.

There is a similar statement in Deut 7:7-9: “The LORD did not set his affection on you and choose you because you were more numerous than other peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples. But it was because the LORD loved you keeping his covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love him and keep his commandments.”

Jeremiah writes that “The LORD appeared to us in the past, saying: ‘I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with unfailing kindness’” (Jer 31:3).

There are many other references to the love of God in the OT.

b. God is a God of justice who hates injustice

Scripture teaches that God is a God of justice; he loves justice. The kingdom of God, established ultimately through Christ, is a kingdom of love, faithfulness, justice and righteousness. He will bring justice to the

nations and particularly to the poor. He defends, sustains and secures justice for the fatherless, widows, alien, oppressed, weak, needy and poor.⁸

God hates injustice, oppression, extortion, dispossession, dishonest business, bribery and commands us to avoid them.⁹ He commands us to defend the rights of the weak, needy, fatherless, poor and oppressed; to rescue the oppressed and administer justice.¹⁰ Under Old Testament law the poor are to be provided with food, not to be charged interest or sold food at a profit. Their debts may be cancelled.¹¹

God watches over foreigners (or people from another tribe, race, social or religious background) and condemns those who ill-treat or withhold justice from them. All human beings are equal in God's sight (Gen 1.26-27; Gal 3.28). He commands us to love foreigners as ourselves, to treat them as our native-born and help them where necessary (Lev 19.33f). Even the offender is to have humane punishment and is not to be degraded (Deut 25.2f).

c. God does not change and cannot be untrue to himself

God does not change. He is “the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows” (James 1:17). He says “I the LORD do not change” (Mal 3:6 cf. Psa 55:19). This is the classical doctrine of the immutability of God.

“If we are faithless, he remains faithful, for he cannot disown himself” (2 Tim 2:13). Another translation is that God “cannot be untrue to himself.”

Secondly, we must note the high view which the New Testament has of the Old Testament.

The claims of Scripture

It must be remembered that the New Testament references to the inspiration and authority of Scripture almost entirely refer to the Old Testament.

Old Testament Scripture is “God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness” (2 Tim 3:16).

No *Old Testament* “prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet’s own interpretation of things. For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit” (2 Peter 1:19-21).

Old Testament Scripture must be fulfilled ((Matt 26:54; Mark 14:49; Luke 4:21; John 2:22; 7:38, 42; 10:35; 13:18; 17:12; 19:24, 28, 36-37; Acts 1:16; Jas 2:23).

Jesus himself said of the *Old Testament*: “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfil them. For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished” (Matt 5:17-18).

However, although Jesus affirmed the OT he didn’t hesitate to reject its teaching on divorce (Mark 10:4-9) and violence (Matt 5:38-44). He also didn’t require the OT death penalty for adultery in the case of the woman taken in adultery (John 8:1-11).

We must not put the Bible above God, i.e. we must not defend the Bible in a way which impugns the unchanging character of God. Fundamentalists and some conservatives can be in danger of this in their zeal to uphold the authority of Scripture. This surely is bibliolatry – raising Scripture almost to the level of a god. We have noted above that God is a God of justice who hates injustice. He therefore hates such things as oppression, cruelty, punishing the innocent and genocide. This, of course, raises various questions with respect to the Old Testament. At the same time we must treat Scripture with great respect and always seek to solve problems with biblical content positively, as far as we are able.

Thirdly, we should note what the church has said about Scripture.

The witness of the church

Article 6, 20 and Canon A5 of the Anglican formularies, quoted above, clearly apply to the Old Testament. More specifically Article 7 states: “Although the Law given from God by Moses, as touching Ceremonies and Rites, do not bind Christian men, nor the Civil precepts thereof ought of necessity to be received in any commonwealth; yet notwithstanding, no Christian man whatsoever is free from the obedience of the Commandments which are called Moral.”

Most of those who regard Scripture as inerrant readily accept this three-fold distinction and in accordance with NT teaching consign to history the ceremonial law with its regulations about circumcision, food laws, Sabbath observance etc, and the civil law with its ban on charging interest and its death penalty for adultery or Sabbath breaking as relevant only to the Israelite people. Obviously they also regard the sacrificial laws as fulfilled in Jesus.

So, clearly some of the teaching of the OT is generally seen as not applying to us in the NT era. Then, of course, there is a good deal of symbolism and apocalyptic used, particularly in the Prophets which is not always easy to interpret. Furthermore the OT describes the words and actions of people who were children of their age. Some of these words and actions conflict with the teaching of the NT but this is not a big issue since it is not claimed that their words and actions were inspired or commanded by God.

The problem arises when words and actions which conflict with the teaching of the NT are claimed to have been inspired or commanded by God. This is a question of major importance vis a vis the inspiration and authority of Scripture.

The challenge of Morality

There are numerous questions.

d. The problem stated

- i. Does God really flare up in anger?**
- ii. Did God approve of genocide amongst the Canaanites?**

Did God approve of the killing of women and children?

Num 31:15-18 Moses orders the killing of women and boys whom the army had spared. “Have you allowed all the women to live?” he asked them. “They were the ones who followed Balaam’s advice and enticed the Israelites to be unfaithful to the LORD in the Peor incident, so that a plague struck the LORD’s people. *Now kill all the boys. And kill every woman who has slept with a man*, but save for yourselves every girl who has never slept with a man.” See also Deut 2:34; 3:6

The OT teaches the Lord destroyed the Canaanites (Josh 24:11-12). In fact, he hardened the hearts of the Canaanites so could destroy them: “For it was the LORD himself who hardened their hearts to wage war against Israel, so that he might destroy them totally, exterminating them without mercy, as the LORD had commanded Moses” (Josh 11:20).

How do we answer these questions in a way which is consistent with the full revelation of God in Christ? God is love and Jesus teaches we should love our enemies. For example, he rebuked James and John for asking: “Lord, do you want us to call fire down from heaven to destroy them [the Samaritans]?” (Luke 9:54). He orders Peter to put away his sword in the Garden of Gethsemane.

First we need to note that there is a balance in God's character in both the OT and the NT.

e. The kindness and sternness of God in the NT

Paul writes of "the kindness and sternness of God" In Romans 11:22. This balance is shown in Jesus himself. The passages on the love of God are too numerous to mention but we must note that:

a. Jesus had a message which was quite stern at times

He rebuked hypocrisy publicly calling the clergy (Pharisees) a "brood of vipers" who were "evil" and therefore couldn't say anything good (Matt. 12:34). He publicly called them "hypocrites" (Matt, 22:18) "sons of Hell", "blind guides", "blind fools", "whitewashed tombs" (Matt. 23: 13-17, 19? 23-32). He said, "You snakes! You brood of vipers! How will you escape being condemned to hell?" (Matt. 23:33). He was angry at their hardness of heart (Mark 3:1-6).

Then there was the famous occasion when in love he drove the moneychangers out of the temple courts, scattering their coins (John 2:14-16).

b. Jesus speaks explicitly of hell/eternal punishment which needs to be avoided

He urged people to "be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell" (Matt 10:28 cf. 5:22, 30; 18:8-9). He warned of "eternal punishment" (Matt 25:41-46 cf. Mark 9:43-48; Luke 16:19-31).

He speaks of people not being forgiven in the next age (Matt 12:32 cf. Mark 3:28; Luke 12:8-10; 13:28-30).

c. The NT speaks of the "wrath of God"

Paul writes that "the wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people" (Rom 1:18). He writes about the Second Coming of Christ: "when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might on the day he comes to be glorified in his holy people and to be marvelled at among all those who have believed. This includes you, because you believed our testimony to you" (2 Thess 1:6-10) cf. Heb 10:26-31.

Revelation speaks of eternal torment (Rev 14:9-11; 20:10, 14, 15; 21:7-8).

f. Progressive revelation

It is generally accepted that revelation in Scripture is progressive. Truths are first hinted at or briefly alluded to and later are expanded. So the bud of the OT blossoms in the NT. The ultimate revelation is, of course in Christ. God didn't try to change his ancient people too quickly.

However, this does not answer the basic moral questions we are asking. We are not speaking of truths which develop but genocide and other crimes against humanity said to be commanded by God or said to be approved by God.

g. Some answers

We need to look again at the moral questions raised earlier about the Old Testament:

a. Does God really flare up in anger?

Divine Impassibility is a mainstream doctrine. It is not the same as impassivity. God is impassible, not impassive. The latter means without emotions. God does experience love, joy, compassion, mercy and

wrath but his emotions are not reactive. We cannot change his mood. If we could it would mean that he was not sovereign.

Jim Packer writes: “This means, not that God is impassive and unfeeling (a frequent misunderstanding), but that no created beings can inflict pain, suffering and distress on him at their own will. In so far as God enters into suffering and grief (which Scripture's many anthropomorphisms, plus the fact of the cross, show that he does), it is by his own deliberate decision; he is never his creatures' hapless victim. The Christian mainstream has construed impassibility as meaning not that God is a stranger to joy and delight, but rather that his joy is permanent, clouded by no involuntary pain.”¹²

The response to this question therefore is to say that whenever the Old Testament speaks of the “fierce, burning anger” of the Lord in response to some misdemeanour of human beings, it is using anthropomorphic language for the settled chosen attitude of the Holy One to human sin.

b. Did God approve of genocide amongst the Canaanites?

Here are some possible responses.

1. God says it, that settles it!

Some say that, whatever we think, if God told Israel to commit genocide on the Canaanites that settles the moral issue. John Calvin states: “Indiscriminate and promiscuous slaughter [of the Canaanites], making no distinction of age or sex, but including alike women and children, the aged and decrepit, might seem an inhuman massacre, had it not been executed by the command of God. But as he, in whose hands are life and death, had justly doomed those nations to destruction, this puts an end to all discussion.”¹³

William Lane Craig, an apologist I respect, writes on his Reasonable Faith website about children being slaughtered by saying: “God knew that if these Canaanite children were allowed to live, they would spell the undoing of Israel.” I want to ask how this could be with young children. Were the Israelites incapable of retraining youngsters?

He then adds: “Moreover, if we believe, as I do, that God’s grace is extended to those who die in infancy or as small children, the death of these children was actually their salvation Therefore, God does these children no wrong in taking their lives.” Lane concludes that God therefore didn’t wrong the children because they were transported to heaven. This seems to me like special pleading which seems abhorrent to many of us.

On the other hand, John Wesley wrote that to say God commanded the genocide is to say he is “more false, more cruel, and more unjust than the devil. . . . God hath taken [Satan's] work out of [his] hands. . . . God is the destroyer of souls.”¹⁴

More important, genocide seems totally alien to the revelation of God as love in Jesus and his teaching on non-violence and loving one’s enemies. It is totally inadequate simply to say that God ordered the genocide so it must be right. We have to think about how it relates to the full revelation of God in Christ.

2. The Last Judgment will be an even worse genocide, so don’t balk at the Canaanite genocide

Those who hold this view point out that Jesus is described as a warrior in Revelation 19:13-15 “He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God. The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean. Coming out of his mouth is a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. “He will rule them with an iron sceptre.” He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty.”

2 Peter 3:7-13 foretells that “the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly

Daniel Gard, Associate Professor of Exegetical Theology at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana, calls this “Divinely executed genocide.”¹⁵

Tremper Longman III writes: “It must be said that those who have moral difficulties with the genocide in the conquest of Canaan should have even more serious difficulties with the final judgment. In the latter, all those who do not follow Christ—men, women, and children—will be thrown into the lake of fire.”¹⁶

However:

- Revelation speaks of wrath falling on those who refuse to repent. Are we to believe that adults with inadequate understanding through no fault of their own will be eternally damned just as they would be exterminated in genocide?
- Revelation does not refer to the fate of children, which is a very relevant issue to this discussion. Are we to believe that young children who do not have sufficient understanding will be eternally damned just as they would be exterminated in genocide?

3. Israel had to destroy the Canaanites because they were so wicked and would be a spiritual and moral snare

In Deut 9:4-6 the Israelites are told: “After the LORD your God has driven them out before you, do not say to yourself, ‘The LORD has brought me here to take possession of this land because of my righteousness.’ No, it is on account of the wickedness of these nations that the LORD is going to drive them out before you. It is not because of your righteousness or your integrity that you are going in to take possession of their land; but on account of the wickedness of these nations, the LORD your God will drive them out before you, to accomplish what he swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.”

Lev 18:27-30 lists incest, adultery, homosexuality, bestiality, sacrifice of children to Molech and makes it clear the Canaanites were involved in all these practices. The Lord says: “this is how the nations that I am going to drive out before you became defiled. Even the land was defiled; so I punished it for its sin, and the land vomited out its inhabitants.”

The fact that Israel only fully embraced ethical monotheism after the exile indicates how important it was for her to be protected against the idolatrous depravity of the Canaanites. In the event, Israel was so disobedient that God eventually allowed some of the Canaanites to remain in the land in order to test the Israelites (Judges 2:10-3:6).

Canaanite religion was very debased as Albright confirms. The behaviour of its gods included violent multiple rape, incest, massacre and wallowing in blood and cannibalism

Four hundred years before the entry into Canaan, God had told Abraham that his descendants would return and possess the promised land later because the sin of the Amorites had not yet reached its full measure (Gen. 15:13-16). This means the Amorites had 400 years in which to change their ways, but they didn't.

But why were the Israelites told to kill the women and children? It is perhaps not difficult to see that the Canaanite women could be as much into debased idolatry as the men. Also they could seduce, in more senses than one, the Israelites to join them in their behaviour.

It is, to say the least, much more difficult to see why the children had to be killed. Maybe it was thought that the children would inevitably grow up to follow the ways of their parents, and maybe some older children were already involved. Some people have thought that the children, having been abused in a depraved society, were carriers of sexually transmitted diseases.

The big question is: did God really tell them to kill all the men, women and children (except virgins)?

4. *The Canaanite genocide was a Yahweh War – a holy war*

Some of those who defend the genocide of the Canaanites call it an example of Yahweh War. This was divinely ordained war against idolatry, against other gods. Christopher Wright says it is about Yahweh's supremacy over all other gods.¹⁷

The Hebrew word '*herem*' means 'destruction' and it is used of what the Israelites are to do with the Canaanites. Tremper Longman comments: "Indeed, it is not too strong to say that herem warfare is worship. The battlefield is sacred space. To be involved in warfare is a holy activity analogous to going to the temple Prayer, religious song, and celebration all accompanied the waging of war in ancient Israel. Why? Because herem warfare was worship."¹⁸

C S Cowles responds: "If the indiscriminate slaughter of human beings for any reason can be called a 'good' and 'righteous' act, and if the sanctity of human life established in creation, reaffirmed after the Flood, reinforced in the seventh commandment, reiterated by all the prophets, and incarnate in Jesus—if this can be set aside by a supposed divine 'authorization of genocide'—then all moral and ethical absolutes are destroyed, all distinctions between good and evil are rendered meaningless, and all claims about God's love and compassion become cruel deceptions. It represents the ultimate corruption of human language and makes meaningful theological discourse virtually impossible."¹⁹

This is a strong statement but I have to say that Cowles is making a hugely important response.

5. *'Herem' doesn't necessarily mean genocide*

Some people try to make out that, since '*herem*' does not always mean killing, Israel was never involved in genocide but only in driving the Canaanites out. They point out that in Deut 7:2-4 Moses orders Israel to destroy the Canaanites totally ('*herem*') and then adds that they mustn't make a treaty or intermarry with them, which, it is claimed, shows that there are at least some survivors. However this passage could be read differently as "Do not make a treaty or intermarry with them, destroy them."

The above passages may speak about the Lord but they do not quote him. However in a few passages the Lord tells Israel to take vengeance, conquer or dispossess the Canaanites and Israel took that to mean genocide (Num 31:1-2, 15-17; Deut 2:30-34; Josh 6:2-5). These passages do not say that the Lord intended genocide. However it is interesting that the Lord was angry with Israel in Josh 6 because, contrary to his command, Achan had taken spoil. But he does not express any disapproval of the genocide (Josh 7). However, it is one thing to say that God didn't rebuke Israel for being a child of its age and carrying out genocide. It is quite another to say that God called them to do it or approved of it.

Incidentally, it is instructive to remember that the OT teaches that God wiped out virtually the whole of human kind in the Flood and, on a smaller scale, he wiped out the whole of Sodom and Gomorrah and all the firstborn of Egypt. However, *the Flood* was a natural disaster through which God brought judgment, not a deliberate act of genocide

6. *Israel mistook what God was saying about the Canaanites*

Another view is that Israel wrongly thought God's intention to oust the Canaanites meant that they should wage war on them and exterminate them. In Exodus 23:20-33 the Lord said he would send his angel ahead of the Israelites to wipe out the Canaanites. He would throw them into confusion and make all their enemies "turn their backs and run." He would do this gradually so they must not make a treaty with them or share in their worship. So, it is argued, God intended to remove the Canaanites himself but Israel tried to do it for him.

7. *Israel did not always hear God accurately*

It is clear that Moses actually heard God's voice at times, especially when receiving the Ten Commandments (Ex 34 vv 1, 4, 27-28; Num 7:89; 12:6-8; Deut 5:4ff). Israel as a whole heard God's

voice at Horeb (Deut 4:12, 15, 33; 5:22-26). He also prophesied to the people (Num 11:16-17, 24-29; 12:2). The Lord's word was given through him (Num 36:13; Deut 4:2).

In Numbers 12:6-8 the Lord rebukes Miriam and Aaron, saying: "When there is a prophet among you, I, the LORD, reveal myself to them in visions, I speak to them in dreams. But this is not true of my servant Moses; he is faithful in all my house. With him I speak face to face, clearly and not in riddles; he sees the form of the LORD. Why then were you not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?" The cloud or pillar of fire guided Israel in the wilderness (Num 9:15-23).

However, more regularly the Lord's guidance was sought through the Urim and Thummim, a form of casting lots (Num 27:21 cf. 1 Sam 14:18-19; 41-42; 28:6; 30:7-8). Casting lots to discern God's will was still used in the NT (Acts 1:23-26). God also spoke through dreams and prophets (1 Sam 28:6, 15). To enquire of God was to consult a "seer" or prophet (1 Sam 9:9; 2 Sam 16:23). On one occasion Jonathan sought guidance through whatever the Philistines said to him (1 Sam 14:8-10). All of these means of communication were fallible. Some prophets prophesied out of their own imagination (Ezek 13).

Is it possible that, using these means of guidance, the Israelites sometimes misunderstood what God was saying to them? Again, this sort of question worries many conservative Christians. They subscribe to the idea that if we accept that any historical detail of Scripture is inaccurate that undermines the whole of Scripture, including what it teaches on matters of salvation.

It is, of course, much more important if we are dealing with a description of God. If the description is simply someone's opinion which may or may not be correct that is of no great significance to our study. The Bible records the wrong actions and words of individuals, and that does not undermine any idea of inerrancy. In other words, the Bible can inerrantly describe the errant opinions of individuals!

It is important to remember:

a. The three-fold basis of our faith

Some people feel that if the OT is ever wrong on theological, spiritual or moral issues this undermines everything – its infallibility and ultimately the Gospel. How can we trust the Bible even over the Gospel? Surely we must examine what our faith is based on. We looked earlier at the triangle of Scripture, Tradition and Reason/Experience. In my own case, my faith is based as much on a deep conversion experience and subsequent experience of God as upon Scripture. It is also based upon the witness of the believing community. I should add that rational considerations are important too – examining the evidence for the truth of Christianity, which means a great deal to me. Surely all this is true (whatever the secondary differences in experience) of all of us. Our faith is not solely based upon an inerrant Bible.

b. The accurate recording of fallible opinions

If the OT contains any incorrect views on theological, spiritual or moral issues, it would be recording the opinions of fallible individuals whose views can be checked by the teaching of the NT. However we would need to be sure that the teaching is genuinely incorrect and not a matter of culture.

c. The neglect of secondary causes

It is well known that the OT culture often tends to ignore secondary causes and to ascribe directly to God actions which we would see as human, perhaps initiated by God or overruled by him. So the Israelites spoke of God fighting battles which were actually battles fought by humans (2 Chr. 14:12; 18:31; 20:22; 21:16; Jer. 25:9-14). On one occasion it says God sent lions to attack the syncretistic Samaritans (2 Kings 17:24-28).

"To the Hebrew mind what we call secondary causes scarcely exist, at least in the sphere of religion. That which, in given circumstances, is the inevitable result of God's providential dispensations is viewed absolutely as a distinct divine purpose" (J Skinner, Isaiah, Cambridge Bible, p. 47). It would be

possible to argue, therefore, that if genocide were a result of God's command to Israel to drive out the Canaanites, we could expect the Hebrew mind to understand this as God's intention.

Israel also spoke of God making them sin. Isaiah asked the Lord why he made the people wander from his ways and harden their hearts not to revere him (Isa 63:17). Jeremiah says "The LORD has made Zion forget her appointed festivals and her Sabbaths" (Lam 2:6).

Are we really to believe that God makes people sin? Surely James addresses this: "When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; but each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed" (1:13-14).

We note that whereas 2 Sam 24:1-17 says God enticed David to take the census, 1 Chronicles 21:1 says it was Satan. So God simply allowed it to happen at Satan's instigation then meted out punishment for it. This is much more in line with NT thinking. Compare Job 1-2.

However, an argument against the idea that Israel mistook what God was saying about the Canaanites was stated above, namely that the Lord was angry with Israel in Josh 6 because, contrary to his command, Achan had taken spoil. But he does not express any disapproval of the genocide. If God did not want Israel to undertake its violent actions why did he not rebuke them? After all, Moses and Joshua claimed God had told them to take its violent actions.

d. The importance of a Christological approach

We need to approach the OT through the NT and particularly through Christ. In addressing this matter of what many call genocide we approach it through Christ who spoke of God as love and of loving one's enemies. But we must not forget the other side of the coin – the wrath of God expressed in the NT against those who refuse to repent.

e. God's sovereignty being worked out through the changes and chances of this life

God sometimes gives way to what people want. For example, he allowed Israel to have a king (1 Sam. 8-10) which was not his ideal will. He also allowed divorce, polygamy and concubines because of human weakness. He allowed slavery but prescribed humane treatment. He used the aggression of pagan nations to discipline and defeat Israel when she was disobedient. Even the Roman Empire is God's servant for good and to punish wrongdoing (Rom 13:1-7). The ultimate example is "God made him who had no sin to be sin [or sin offering] for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Cor 5:21). God even became the sinbearer.

However, it is one thing to say God compromised over divorce and even slavery (of the sort found in biblical times). It is another to say he compromised over genocide.

So some people argue that, although God doesn't approve of war and genocide, he used Israel, as a child of its age, genocide and all, to achieve his purposes. It is instructive to remember that God called Abraham to offer Isaac as a human sacrifice. God clearly didn't intend the sacrifice to happen, but rather to teach Abraham about substitutionary sacrifice, but that doesn't alter the fact that he called Abraham to do something which was acceptable in his culture but which is condemned in Scripture (Lev 18:21; 20:2-5; Deut 12:31; 18:10). He was relating to Abraham as a child of his age.

It is obvious that the ancient nation of Israel (as with the modern state) could not be established without military action (unless God had chosen to perform a major miracle, which is not his normal way of working. Rather he works through human activity, natural processes etc).

However, is it really acceptable to say that God made a concession to killing children? If he did, would he also make a concession to rape which very often accompanies warfare? Can we really say this is compatible with the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who says: "I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven" (Matt 5:44-45)?

f. God allowing violence and legalism to show their futility

Another view is that God was involved with the violent military activity of Israel in order to show ultimately that such activity does not succeed. The Israelites themselves were defeated militarily by the Babylonians and later by the Romans. God actually used the Assyrians, whom he called the rod of his anger and club of his wrath, to judge Israel (Isa 10:5-19). The same is true of the Babylonians, and Nebuchadnezzar whom he called his servant (Jer 25:8-14; 27:6-7).

God initiated and enforced the Law in the OT ultimately to show that salvation does not come through keeping the Law, but through faith in Christ. The new covenant is required. God promoted salvation by works, which contradicts the Gospel, in order to show ultimately that salvation was not by works. Is God doing a similar thing by using war in the OT to show that ultimately it will not bring in his Kingdom? In fact, that Kingdom is not one of violence and military action.

The problem with this view is that the Law is good whereas warfare in general, and genocide in particular, is evil. Those holding this view argue that that is the point. God wanted us to be revolted by the violence of the OT and to see how futile it was, and so to embrace the Kingdom as taught by Jesus.

g. The OT uses Ancient Near Eastern Exaggeration Rhetoric

Professor Paul Copan maintains that Israel followed the ways of Ancient Near Eastern peoples of making exaggerated claims about the destruction of enemies. This was not seen as lying but as an accepted convention. We sometimes do the same thing. We might say that a football team “annihilated” the opposing side. We are fully aware this is not literal. Although this might sound like special pleading it is a historical fact that Ancient Near Eastern peoples did that about warfare.

So Joshua is said to have “totally destroyed all [of the Canaanites] who breathed.” Yet Judges shows that after Joshua’s death Israel was still fighting many Canaanite groups. The same is said of the Amalekites in 1 Samuel. It appears that towns such as Jericho or Ai were military garrisons. There is no archaeological evidence of civilian settlements. Nor is there evidence of widespread destruction of cities. Only Jericho, Ai, and Hazor were burned.

Another scholar, Peter Enns, has written about how the OT shows God, on the analogy of the incarnation, communicated with Israel where they were as Ancient Near Eastern people. God spoke used the concepts and terminology of the pagan, violent culture in which they lived culture (as part of Progressive Revelation). This would include Ancient Near Eastern Exaggeration Rhetoric, which we are not to take literally. (For more on this see my paper “The nature of God in the Old Testament” (which contains much more information).

Conclusion on OT morality

If we believe genocide actually took place, the fundamental question is: why couldn’t the Canaanites merely have been expelled from the territory? Yes, that would have meant people being killed in battle but it would not have been genocide. Some might say that means they would have spread their evil idolatry elsewhere. But it was already in the surrounding people groups, whom Israel was forbidden to exterminate. And why should the Canaanites have been singled out for immediate judgment if they were no longer in the Promised Land?

Some will be convinced that genocide did not take place but rather a driving out of the Canaanites in line with the main meaning of the word *herem*. There is substantial evidence for the survival of Canaanites despite the commands to kill them.

Some will be convinced that the Canaanites were such a debased society and such a threat to God’s purposes for Israel and plans for worldwide salvation that this warranted genocide. It is not difficult to see that the danger was posed by women as well as men, but why were the children killed? Is there really enough threat even from older children and even if many of the children had sexually transmitted diseases is that justification for killing them? But again, why were the virgins not seen as a threat in Num 31:15-18?

Some will be satisfied with the thought that God works out his sovereign purposes through human activity, natural processes etc. Just as he works through nature red in tooth and claw, so he works through human violence and sin. He worked through pagan empires such as Assyria and Babylon. He also appears sometimes to compromise with human weakness, allowing activities which are contrary to his perfect will. However, ultimately God showed that the way of violence does not bring about his kingdom on earth.

Some will conclude that the passages about God approving of genocide including amongst children are mistaken theology stemming from an earlier stage in progressive revelation, because they are contradicted by Jesus and the NT. Is it possible they “misheard” God in their reliance on Urim and Thummim, dreams and prophets? I have argued above that such a view does not undermine the Bible’s teaching on salvation through Christ.

Others will be convinced that the OT uses Ancient Near Eastern Exaggeration Rhetoric and makes exaggerated claims about the destruction of enemies, which was not seen as lying but as an accepted convention. There is substantial biblical and archaeological evidence that many Canaanites were not exterminated. These people will accept that, on the principle of the incarnation, God communicated with the Israelites as Ancient Near Eastern people using the concepts and terminology of their culture (as part of Progressive Revelation).

MY VIEW

Whatever questions might remain with this latter view, it seems the most acceptable to me, i.e. that the OT uses Ancient Near Eastern Exaggeration Rhetoric. (Some conservatives worry that emphasising progressive revelation and understanding the cultural conditioning of Scripture will lead to accepting, for example, that homosexual practice is now morally acceptable - just as it has been accepted that slavery is wrong and the ministry of women is acceptable. I deal with this in Appendix 4).

Conclusion

I firmly believe that Scripture (OT and NT) is divinely- inspired (God-breathed) and that its prophecies and promises are being and will be fulfilled. It is the authoritative Word of God which is normative over tradition and individual reason and experience, although it must be interpreted correctly. I believe that Scripture also shows remarkable consistency and reliability over matters of general history and that some of the remaining difficulties may well be solved, given further information. I accept that what the Chicago Statement says about some of the conventions current among ancient writers which were acceptable in those days but not in ours, namely “lack of modern technical precision, irregularities of grammar or spelling, observational descriptions of nature, the reporting of falsehoods, the use of hyperbole and round numbers, the topical arrangement of material, variant selections of material in parallel accounts, or the use of free citations.”²⁰

However, it seems clear to me that basically, this statement is saying that, if evaluated by modern criteria, the Bible does contain errors, although they would not have been regarded as errors in the ancient world, as they were accepted conventions. It speaks of “a lack of modern technical precision.” It then refers to “topical arrangement of material” which means that ancient writers didn’t always bother with what we would see as accurate chronology. This could explain John putting the Cleansing of the Temple at the beginning of Jesus’ ministry because it served his theological purpose. By “variant selections of material in parallel accounts” it is referring to the inconsistencies we see in some of the above biblical examples. The phrase “the use of free citations” refers to what we would see as inaccurate quotations of one biblical passage in another part of Scripture. Today the convention is to quote people verbatim. In the ancient world the convention was to give an accurate account of what a person said, not necessarily a verbatim quotation.

We have noted a number of problems in Scripture, including questions of morality in the OT. However, they are not in matters to do with salvation. To say that allowing any, even small, error in Scripture undermines all of Scripture is, in my view, what I have called Og Theology!

What Scripture says of itself is: “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness” (2 Tim 3:16), i.e. it is inspired to teach about salvation. It is inerrant in all matters necessary to our salvation.

I finish with a positive quotation from Millard Erickson, Research Professor of Theology at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary: “The Bible, when correctly interpreted in light of the level to which culture and the means of communication had developed at the time of writing, in view of the purposes for which it was given, is fully truthful in all that it affirms.”²¹

Tony Higton

Appendix 1: A possible harmony of the resurrection accounts

It is common practice to criticise the accounts of the resurrection and the post-resurrection appearances of Jesus. Matthew records that Mary Magdalene with the other Mary went to the tomb. There was an earthquake and the angel rolled the stone away and sat on it. He tells the women about the resurrection and they hurry to tell the disciples meeting Jesus on the way.

Mark records that Mary Magdalene with the other Mary and Salome went to the tomb and found the stone already rolled away with a 'young man dressed in a white robe' sitting inside the tomb who tells them of the resurrection. They are fearful and flee, telling no one. Then Jesus appears to Mary Magdalene.

Luke's version is that 'the women' went to the tomb, found the stone removed and saw 'two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning'. Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary and others all reported back to the disciples who would not believe them. Peter went to the tomb.

Finally John describes how Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and found the stone had been removed. She ran to tell Peter and John, who ran to the tomb. They left but Mary Magdalene remained and saw 'two angels in white' who asked why she was weeping. Then Jesus appeared to her, after which she went to tell the disciples the news.

We have seen the importance of presuppositions, and in facing apparent contradictions like the post-resurrection narratives a lot depends on our attitude to scripture. If we are prepared to accept that it is God's nature to reveal himself and that, as part of this revelation, he would provide for us a reliable written account of absolute truth in matters of faith and morals, we shall look for a possible harmony of the supposed contradictions. The fact that we may not be able to achieve this will not cause us to believe such a harmony is impossible. Rather it will indicate that we do not have enough information.

It is a favourite attitude among liberals to stress the 'contradictions' of the resurrection narratives. After all, it bolsters up the presupposition that the tomb was not empty. I get the impression that these people are not really interested in the possibility of a harmony between the accounts. They assume that is impossible, for this suits their prejudices.

Now any such harmony is bound to be speculative. Therefore dogmatism is out of place. Equally if *a* satisfactory harmony is theoretically possible then New Testament critics cannot logically be dogmatic that the accounts are contradictory. There may be various possible harmonies: we mention just one which has been current for many years. It seems to harmonise the accounts, each of which, given the emotional turmoil of the resurrection morning, is understandably incomplete:

Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome start out for the tomb followed somewhat later by other women carrying spices (Mark 16:1; Luke 23:55-24:1).

The three named women arrive first at the tomb (the earthquake, the rolling away of the stone and the angel's appearance [Matt. 28:2-4] had happened before they arrived). Mary Magdalene, seeing the stone rolled away, immediately leaves to tell the disciples (John 20:1-2).

The other Mary and Salome see the angel then go to meet the other women who are following with spices.

Meanwhile Peter and John, alerted by Mary Magdalene, run to the tomb, look in it and leave (John 20:3-10).

Mary Magdalene, having returned to the tomb, remains there weeping. She sees two angels. Then she sees Jesus (John 20:11-17) and goes, as he tells her, to tell the disciples (John 20:18).

Meanwhile the other Mary has met the other women who were bringing spices and returns with them to see two angels (Luke 24:4-5; Mark 16:5). They also receive a message from the angels and, whilst going to report to the disciples, are met by Jesus (Matt. 28:8-10).

It is important to note that all the accounts are incomplete. So a reference to the two Marys does not exclude the possibility of others being with them. A reference to one angel speaking outside the tomb does not exclude the possibility of another inside the tomb. Nor is it reasonable to maintain that the angels did not change their posture (sitting or standing) or position (inside or outside the tomb). So the angel who sat on the stone may have moved inside the tomb before the women arrived. The accounts are also conflated. For example, Luke 24:10 says that the two Marys, Joanna and others reported back to the disciples - but this did not necessarily happen all at the same time. The fact that Mark 16:8 describes the women as so fearful that they told no one, seems to conflict with Matthew and Luke. Clearly, however, this would be only a temporary silence. Maybe the women could not immediately bring themselves to tell the depressed, unbelieving disciples. Or it may be that Matthew and Mark refer to different groups of women.

Another version of this harmony differs in suggesting all the women arrived together at the tomb. Mary Magdalene left before the rest of them saw two angels, the one who sat on the stone having entered the tomb before they arrived. Similar apparent contradictions arise in the resurrection appearances of Jesus. Matthew describes the eleven going to a mountain in Galilee where he commissions them to evangelise the world. Some claim this conflicts with Mark and Luke who only refer to post-resurrection events in the Jerusalem area, although John describes certain events in Galilee. It is not necessary to assume Matthew knew nothing of post-resurrection appearances in Jerusalem but, rather, implied that the ascension took place on the mountain in Galilee. It seems that on the day of the resurrection the Lord appeared to Mary Magdalene (John 20:11-17), then the other women (Matt. 28:8-10); to Peter (Luke 24:34); to the disciples on the Emmaus Road (Luke 24:13-32) and to the apostles, in Thomas' absence (Luke 24:36-43; John 20:19-24). Eight days later he appeared the second time to the company of disciples including Thomas (John 20:24-29). Then he met them the third time (John 21:14) by the sea one morning. Perhaps the 500 witnesses (1 Cor. 15:6) were present on the Galilean mountains. After this Jesus appeared to James (1 Cor. 15:7), probably back in Jerusalem. Finally he met the disciples in Bethany (Luke 24:50-51; Acts 1:6-10).

It is not possible to be dogmatic about harmonies of the resurrection accounts and they may not completely answer every question. But the problems are at least reduced to a minimum and the harmonies are feasible. It is certainly not at all necessary to conclude that the accounts contain inaccuracies. It is fair and reasonable to say that the incompleteness and conflation of each story accounts for the apparent problems between them.

Appendix 2: Differences between the Synoptic Gospels and John's Gospel

Item	Synoptics	John	Comment
Starting point	Birth of Jesus (Baptism in Mark)	Creation of the world	John's Gospel later and more reflective
Pre-existence of Jesus/ Logos	Not mentioned	Included	John's Gospel later and more reflective
Virgin Birth	Mentioned in Matt, Luke (not in Mark)	Not mentioned	Legitimate in view of the above
Nature of Jesus	Stress on humanity	Stress on divinity	John's Gospel later and more reflective
Baptism	Included	Not mentioned	Legitimate difference
Temptations	Included	Not mentioned	Legitimate difference
Turning water into wine	Not mentioned	Included	Legitimate difference
Nicodemus	Not mentioned	Included	Legitimate difference
Samaritan Woman	Not mentioned	Included	Legitimate difference
Official's son healed	Not mentioned	Included	Legitimate difference
Teaching of Jesus	Short sayings and parables	Extended dialogues/discourses	Jesus probably spoke at length often
Exorcism	Emphasised	Omitted	Legitimate difference
Parables	Many	None	Jesus uses metaphors in John
Emphasis of Jesus' teaching:	Kingdom of God	Eternal life	John's Gospel later and more reflective
Sermon on the Mount	Included	Not mentioned	This was probably a teaching summary
Lord's prayer	Included	Not mentioned	Legitimate
Bread of life teaching	Not mentioned	Included	John's Gospel later and more reflective
Dualism: light/dark; Truth/Falsehood etc	Not mentioned	Included	John's Gospel later and more reflective
Seven 'I am' sayings	Not mentioned	Included	John's Gospel later and more reflective
Involvement with the poor and suffering	Emphasised	Rare	John more concerned with deity of Jesus
Contact with scribes	Many	None mentioned	Legitimate difference
Miracles	Many nature miracles and healings,	A few nature miracles	Legitimate difference
Jesus teaching about himself	Rare	Emphasised e.g. "I am sayings"	John's Gospel later and more reflective
Length of ministry	One Passover (one trip to Galilee)	3 Passovers (back & forth the Galilee)	Synoptics may have abbreviated
Location of ministry	Mainly Galilee	Mainly Judea, near Jerusalem	Synoptics may have abbreviated
Transfiguration	Included	Not mentioned	Legitimate in view of emphasis on deity
Raising of Lazarus	Not mentioned	Included	Legitimate difference
Cleansing of Temple	In the final week	Beginning of his ministry	Poss. John's emphasis Christ's Person
Timing of the Last Supper	Passover eve	Night before Passover eve	Attempts at harmony seem possible
Institution of Communion	Included	Not mentioned	But John 6 relates to Communion
Teaching at Last Supper	Not mentioned	Included	Likely that Jesus spoke at length
The cross-bearer	Simon	Jesus	Probably Simon took over from Jesus
Disciples at the empty tomb	Mary M. + other women (+ Peter in Luke)	Mary Magdalene then Peter	Attempts at harmony seem possible
Angels in the tomb?	One angel/"man" (two in Luke)	Mary sees two angels after Peter left	Selective memory/reporting of witnesses
Burial cloth	Single cloth (also strips in Luke)	Strips plus a separate cloth around head	Attempts at harmony seem possible
First resurrection appearance to disciples	Galilee (Mt & Mk) Jerusalem (Lk)	Jerusalem then Galilee	Probably Jerusalem then Galilee
Thomas' confession	Not mentioned	Included	Poss. John's emphasis Christ's Person

Whether or not these comments are conclusive there are no really serious differences here, given ancient attitudes to chronology and selection different according to different theological emphases.

Appendix 3: Passages about driving out and destroying the Canaanites

Num 21:1-3: Israel makes a vow that they would “totally destroy their cities” if God enabled them. It adds: “They completely destroyed them and their towns.” The Hebrew term “*herem*” meaning “destruction” is not always used of killing, so it may not be referring to genocide.

Deut 7:1-2, 22-23: Moses says they “must destroy them totally. Make no treaty with them, and show them no mercy.” However in v. 22-23 he adds: “The LORD your God will drive out those nations before you, little by little. You will not be allowed to eliminate them all at once, or the wild animals will multiply around you. But the LORD your God will deliver them over to you, throwing them into great confusion until they are destroyed.”

Deut 9:3-6: Moses says the Lord is a devouring fire who will destroy and subdue the Canaanites. He adds: “And you will drive them out and annihilate them quickly, as the LORD has promised you.” The emphasis of the whole passage seems to be on driving them out

Deut 11:22-23 Moses speaks of the Lord driving out and dispossessing the Canaanites.

Deut 12:29-30: Moses speaks of invasion, dispossession, driving out but also destroying them.

Deut 20:4: Moses says the Lord fights with Israel. He talks about seeking peace with distant peoples but adds: “However, in the cities of the nations the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance, do not leave alive anything that breathes. Completely destroy[a] them—the Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites—as the LORD your God has commanded you” (vv16-17). This explicit statement about genocide is by Moses.

Deut 25:19: Moses says they are to “blot out the name of Amalek from under heaven.”

Deut 31:3-5 Moses says God will destroy the nations.

Deut 33:27: Moses says God will drive them out.

Josh 3:9-10: Joshua says the Lord will drive them out.

Josh 21:43-45: The writer says God gave all Israel’s enemies into their hands.

Josh 23:3, 5, 9-10: The Lord is said to have pushed/driven them out. He fought for Israel.

Judg 3:1-6: The Lord is said to have left various Canaanite groups in the land to test the loyalty of the Israelites.

Num 31:1-2: “The LORD said to Moses, “Take vengeance on the Midianites for the Israelites.” After the army had only killed the men Moses was angry. “Have you allowed all the women to live?” he asked them. “They were the ones who followed Balaam’s advice and enticed the Israelites to be unfaithful to the LORD in the Peor incident, so that a plague struck the LORD’s people. Now kill all the boys. And kill every woman who has slept with a man, but save for yourselves every girl who has never slept with a man” (vv. 15-17). The passage does not say that the Lord intended genocide.

Num 33:50-53: the Lord tells Israel to drive out the Canaanites.

Deut 2:30-34: The Lord is said to have hardened the heart of Sihon, king of Heshbon so that he could give him into Israel’s hands. The Lord told Israel to conquer and dispossess Sihon’s land. Israel took this to mean they should commit genocide. “At that time we took all his towns and completely destroyed them—men, women and children. We left no survivors.”

Deut 3:1-2 The Lord tells Israel to do to Og king of Bashan what they did to Sihon.

Josh 6:2-5: The Lord gives Jericho into Israel’s hands and Israel took that to mean genocide. “They devoted the city to the LORD and destroyed with the sword every living thing in it—men and women, young and old, cattle, sheep and donkeys” (v. 21). The Lord tells Joshua to do the same to Ai and its king, except they could take spoil. They destroyed all who lived in Ai and did the same in Makkedah, Libna, Lachish, Hebron and Debir (Josh 8). The chapter ends: “So Joshua subdued the whole region, including the hill country, the Negev, the western foothills and the mountain slopes, together with all their kings. He left no survivors. He totally destroyed all who breathed, just as the LORD, the God of Israel, had commanded. the LORD, the God of Israel, fought for Israel” (v. 40).

Josh 11:1-20: When Israel was attacked by a coalition of kings Joshua attacked Hazor, Madon, Shimron, Akshaph, etc. The writer comments: “Everyone in it they put to the sword. They totally destroyed them, not sparing anyone that breathed all the people they put to the sword until they completely destroyed them, not sparing anyone that breathed” (vv. 11, 14).

Josh 24:8, 11-12, 18: The Lord gave the Amorites into Israel’s hands and destroyed them. He drove out the Perizzites, Canaanites, Hittites, Girgashites, Hivites and Jebusites cf. Judges 1:1-2.

Appendix 4: Interpreting the Bible on homosexual practice

Would the method of interpreting Scripture, including progressive revelation, used above justify the church approving homosexual practice (cf. the liberation of slaves and women)?

This cannot be the case for the following five main reasons:

- a. Human beings were created male and female – this could only be physiologically for heterosexual relationships. Other forms of intercourse are potentially harmful. See the National Health Service documents.²²
- b. Procreation is the fundamental purpose of sexuality (as the production of sperm indicates) and is for the preservation of humanity.²³
- c. The family, parented by a heterosexual couple, is therefore fundamental to human society.
- d. Marriage is always seen in Scripture as heterosexual.
- e. Homosexual practice is consistently disapproved of in the NT as well as the OT.
- f. It is homosexual behaviour which is the issue (nowhere in Scripture are people with homosexual orientation condemned, but only the practice). Scripture frequently lists types of behaviour which are unacceptable to God and none of these are now regarded as right.

But if the liberation of slaves and women is right despite the restrictions on both groups in Scripture, does this not imply the liberation of homosexuals to be involved in homosexual practice is also right? This is not the case as the following table makes clear.

The table below speaks of human equality. It is very important to remember that the homosexual issue is one of *behaviour*, not human equality. The issue of slavery and the status of women is one of the equality of all *people*. People with homosexual inclinations are, of course, equal to all other human beings and should be treated as such. We are to love our homosexual neighbours as we do other people. But the fact that all human beings are equal does not mean that all human behaviour is equal.

Homosexual Practice	Slavery	Women’s Ministry
1. The focus group consists of people involved in behaviour the Bible disapproves of.	The focus group consists of people who are slaves, not those involved in behaviour the Bible disapproves of.	The focus group consists of people who are women, not those involved in behaviour the Bible disapproves of.
2. Scripture teaches the behaviour of the focus group is subject to divine disapproval (Lev 20:13; Rom 1:26-27; 1 Cor 6:9)	The behaviour of the focus group, as such, is subject to no divine disapproval	The behaviour of the focus group, as such, is subject to no divine disapproval
3. There are no exceptions in Scripture to the behaviour of the focus group being disapproved of.	There are numerous indications of slaves being treated with respect in a way which implies the ultimate abolition of slavery.	There are numerous indications of women being treated with respect in a way which implies the ultimate liberation of women.
4. Practising Homosexuals are not included in the groups the NT teaches are equal in Christ.	Slaves are included in the groups the NT teaches are equal in Christ. (Gal 3:28)	Women are included in the groups the NT teaches are equal in Christ. (Gal 3:28)

<p>5. There is no hint or suggestion in the NT that homosexual practice will be accepted.</p>	<p>Paul's treatment of Onesimus implicitly undermines slavery.</p>	<p>Jesus' and Paul's treatment of women implicitly undermine their second class status.</p>
<p>6. Homosexual practice is contrary to the pre-Fall creation narratives which state that humans are created physiologically and emotionally for heterosexual relationships.</p>	<p>The liberation of slaves is in harmony with pre-Fall creation narratives in that all humans are created equal.</p>	<p>The liberation of women is in harmony with pre-Fall creation narratives in that all humans are created equal. Male domination is introduced as a result of the Fall.</p>
<p>7. The NT disapproval of homosexual practice is counter-cultural in the Gentile Greek world which accepted homosexual relationships, including pederasty.</p>	<p>The NT teaching favouring slavery was culturally-conditioned. In the purposes of God the Holy Spirit allowed this, probably because of the danger that a liberation movement would draw attention away from the gospel and lead to a blood bath.</p>	<p>The NT teaching favouring the second class status of women was culturally-conditioned. In the purposes of God the Holy Spirit allowed this, probably because any liberation movement would draw attention away from the gospel and lead to social chaos and accusations levelled against Christianity in its infancy.</p>

¹ Richard Coleman, *Theology Today* 1975 31: 295

² Richard Coleman, *Reconsidering "Limited Inerrancy"* *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 17:4; Fall 1974 p. 210f.

³ *Ibid* p. 212f

⁴ *Ibid* p. 213.

⁵ *Ibid* p. 210

⁶ Richard Coleman, *Theology Today* (1975 31: 295).

⁷ Richard Coleman, *Reconsidering "Limited Inerrancy"* *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 17:4; Fall 1974 p. 209

⁸ See Isa 30.18; Ps 11.7; 33.5; 61.8; Isa 9.7; 11.4; 16.5; 33.5; 42.1,4

⁹ Deut 27.19; Prov. 20.10, 23; Isa 10.1-2; Amos 8.4-7

¹⁰ Lev 19.33-34; Ps 82.1-4; Isa 56.1; Jer 22.3; Mic 6.8

¹¹ Lev 25.35-38; Deut 24.6, 17, 19-21; 15.3

¹² J. I. Packer, "God," in Sinclair Ferguson and David Wright, eds., *New Dictionary of Theology* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1998), 277.

¹³ John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Book of Joshua*, Calvin Translation Society, Edinburgh 1855, p. 97

¹⁴ John Wesley, 'Free Grace', *Works of John Wesley* Wesleyan Conference Office, London 1872.

¹⁵ Daniel Gard, *The Case for Eschatological Continuity* in *Show them no mercy – 4 views on God and Canaanite Genocide*, ed. S N Gundry, Zondervan, Grand Rapids Michigan, 2003, p. 136.

¹⁶ Tremper Longman, *The Case for Spiritual Continuity* in *Show them no mercy – 4 views on God and Canaanite Genocide*, ed. S N Gundry, Zondervan, Grand Rapids Michigan, 2003, p. 185.

¹⁷ Christopher Wright, *New International Biblical Commentary on Deuteronomy*, Hendrickson, Peabody, Mass. 1996, p.231.

¹⁸ Tremper Longman, *The Case for Spiritual Continuity* in *Show them no mercy – 4 views on God and Canaanite Genocide*, ed. S N Gundry, Zondervan, Grand Rapids Michigan, 2003, p. 164, 169.

¹⁹ C S Coles, *op. cit.* p. 100

²⁰ *Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy*, Article XIII.

²¹ Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology*, Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1983, 1998, pp. 259.

²² [Does anal sex have any health risks? - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](http://www.nhs.uk); [What is oral sex? - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](http://www.nhs.uk)

²³ An evolutionary view: "It is a puzzle because homosexuality poses a biological conundrum. There is no obvious evolutionary advantage to same-sex relationships. So why are some people attracted to others of the same sex? Sexual attraction provides the drive to reproduction – sex is a means to an end not, in Darwinian terms, an end in itself. From an evolutionary perspective, same-sex relationships should be selected out." *Jeremy Laurance, Health Editor of The Independent and winner of the British Medical Association's Medical Journalist of the Year award 1997.*