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For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare [are] not fleshly but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ. And they will be ready to punish all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled.

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Copyright 2003 John W. Robbins Post Office Box 68, Unicoi, Tennessee 37692

Email: Jrob1517@aol.com

Website: www.trinityfoundation.org

Telephone: 423.743.0199

Fax: 423.743.2005

Raymond Dillard's View of Scripture

John W. Robbins

On April 15, 1987, Raymond Dillard, professor of Old Testament at Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia, sent an essay entitled *Harmonization—A Help and a Hindrance* to the Trustees of the Seminary. In his introductory letter, Mr. Dillard indicated that the essay would be included in a forthcoming volume on Scripture edited by his colleague, Professor Harvie Conn. Other faculty members at Westminster would also be contributing to the volume. In his essay Mr. Dillard expressed views that, in the opinion of this writer, are incompatible with the doctrine of inerrancy and a high view of Scripture. I am, therefore, calling those views to the attention of our readers both to warn them and to correct Mr. Dillard publicly.

The bulk of his paper is occupied by a discussion of various difficulties in the Bible. After concluding that harmonization of apparently conflicting passages is of questionable value, Mr. Dillard begins to offer some of his own solutions to the difficulties. He offers two: textual criticism and literary or form criticism. Herschel P. Smith has discussed form criticism in the previous article. Let us turn our attention to Mr. Dillard's version of textual criticism. He writes:

Galatians 3:17 presents a similar case in its allusion to *Exodus* 12:40, though the stakes appear to be bit higher. Compare the text of *Exodus* 12:40 to the MT [Masoretic Text], LXX [The Septuagint], and Samaritan Pentateuch (SP):

MT: The length of time the children of Israel lived in Egypt was 430 years.

LXX: The length of time the children of Israel lived in Egypt *and Canaan* was 430 years.

SP: The length of time the children of Israel *and their fathers* lived in Egypt *and Canaan* was 430 years.

In *Galatians* 3:17 Paul appears to be saying that the Law came 430 years after Abraham. Paul probably derived this information from a text of *Exodus* that agreed with either the LXX or the SP. Even if we were certain that the MT represented the correct text of the verse, Paul has not been false; he has simply followed the Bible that he had before him. Inerrancy does not require that we solve the text critical question in favor of the LXX or the SP.

Mr. Dillard's discussion of *Galatians* is supposed to be typical of other passages in the Bible. In a few moments we will get to some of those other passages. At this point in the argument it is necessary to say that inerrancy is not compatible with the notion, even if the notion is suggested merely as an hypothesis, that Paul simply followed the copy of the Bible he had before him, regardless of whether that text was accurate or not. It is a peculiar view of Scripture and inerrancy that holds

that Paul could have written error, based upon an erroneous copy of the Old Testament before him, and his writings still be regarded as inerrant.

Please note, I hasten to add, that Mr. Dillard does not say that Paul actually wrote error in *Galatians* 3:17. He simply maintains that if Paul had followed a text other than the "correct text," his writings would not have been "false." It is that contention that I challenge; it is that contention that is false.

While *Galatians* 3:17 is a hypothetical case, it establishes the principle that Mr. Dillard needs to make his alleged instances of Biblical authors making "modifications" and "changes" in history appear plausible. Mr. Dillard is constructing his argument carefully and deliberately. If he can get his readers to agree to his initial hypothesis—namely, that Paul, in writing *Galatians* 3:17, could have followed a text, "the Bible that he had before him," even though this text was not the "correct text," and still not be "false"—then it ought to be quite easy for Mr. Dillard to convince his readers that this is what actually happened in other cases.

Let me continue to quote his paper:

Following in the same vein, one other illustration may heighten the difficulty a bit more. Ever since the Qumran discoveries it has become clear that the Chronicler was following a version of *Samuel* that had numerous differences with the MT of that book. The MT and LXX of *2 Samuel* 5:21 report that after a battle the Philistines "abandoned their gods there, and David and his men took them." The Lucianic recension of *2 Samuel* 5:21 reports that the Philistines left the idols, but that David "gave orders to burn them in fire." When the Chronicler reports this incident (*1 Chronicles* 14:12), he says that the Philistines abandoned their gods and that David "gave orders and they burned them in fire." David's actions conform to *Deuteronomy* 7:25 in the Lucianic edition of *Samuel* and the *Chronicles* MT, but his actions are out of accord with that law in the *Samuel* MT

and the LXX. Assuming for the sake of the argument that the *Samuel* MT represents an earlier text, it appears that the Lucianic revision and the Chronicler both worked from a text of *Samuel* in which a scribe had conformed David's actions to the law. If this be so, the Chronicler too was simply using the Bible he had at hand, but the historical character of the account has been radically affected by transmission history. Similar illustrations could be drawn from many other passages, e.g., *2 Samuel* 8:4 and the parallel in *1 Chronicles* 18:4, or *2 Samuel* 24:16-17 and its parallel in *1 Chronicles* 21:15-17.

Here we have left the realm of hypothesis and entered the kingdom of fact: "Ever since the Qumran discoveries it has become clear that the Chronicler was following a version of *Samuel* that had numerous differences with the MT of that book." Mr. Dillard's next step in the argument is to combine what he regards as fact with unsupported speculation. How does he account for these differences appearing in *Chronicles*? First he assumes, for the sake of argument, that the Masoretic Text represents an earlier text (that is speculation). From that he argues that the author of the *Chronicles* "worked from a text of *Samuel* in which a scribe had conformed David's actions to the law" (that also is unsupported speculation). He concludes, "if this be so, the Chronicler too [like Paul writing *Galatians*] was simply using the Bible he had at hand, but the historical character of the account has been radically affected by transmission history."

Now Mr. Dillard is not merely discussing hypotheses suggested by others and then refuting them. He is offering these speculations as his own alternatives to harmonization. He asserts that these examples of documents whose historical character has been "radically affected" are not the only examples that could be cited: "Similar illustrations could be drawn from many other passages...."

At this point it must be said that the orthodox doctrine of Scripture does not preclude the Biblical authors from using established texts. What it does

preclude is the inscripturation of errors derived from any such sources that might have been used by the Biblical authors. But rather than teaching that the Holy Spirit prevented the Biblical authors from following erroneous texts, Dillard's view attributes some of the difficulties in Scripture to the fact that the inspired authors did follow texts whose "historical character" had been "radically affected" by "transmission history."

The question then becomes, Is inspiration compatible with the inscripturation of error? Dillard's answer seems to be yes, although he does not discuss inspiration. But if he has any view of inspiration at all, it must be compatible with rewriting history, as he suggests the Chronicler or his source has done. And if even one of the passages he cites has the history Dillard attributes to it, then the Biblical doctrines of inspiration and inerrancy are false.

On page 16 of this paper Dillard states another reason why there may be difficulties in the Bible:

A later biblical author may introduce modifications in order to portray an individual or event in a particular light. Matthew's placing Jesus' sermon on a mountain may reflect his portraying Jesus as a second Moses, a second lawgiver on a mountain. When the Chronicler assigns Hiram-abi's ancestry to the tribe of Dan, he is carefully molding Hiram-abi as a kind of second Oholiab; it is just one of a number of changes he has made to perfect a parallel between the building of the temple and Israel's original sanctuary, the tabernacle. The consistency with which the Chronicler portrays divine blessing through God's giving righteous kings large armies speaks to basic themes he wants the reader to understand. Read in this way these "difficulties" are not so much problems as they are opportunities, open windows to the big picture.

Make no mistake about it. Mr. Dillard is suggesting that Matthew placed Jesus on a mountain, not because that is where Jesus was, but "in order to

portray an individual or event in a particular light." This same sort of "modification" of the truth Dillard attributes to the Chronicler, who makes several "changes" in history in order to perfect a parallel. Later Biblical authors, according to Mr. Dillard, may introduce "modifications" in order to make the points they wish to make. Mr. Dillard finds that this approach to the difficulties of Scripture eliminates their problematic character. One can understand how it would. If one believes, as Mr. Dillard obviously does, that the men who wrote Scripture made changes and modifications in their histories in order to make a point, and at other times copied errors from texts that were not correct, then it makes no sense to worry about discrepancies in the Bible. But if the Bible is breathed out by God in the whole and in the part, so that even the jots and the tittles came from God (even verbal inspiration does not carry the Bible's own claims far enough), then Mr. Dillard's views are unscriptural and false.

In the first part of his paper, one of Mr. Dillard's criticisms of harmonization is that it is too speculative. When we discover an apparent conflict in Scripture, it is usually quite easy to offer two or three explanations that remove the conflict. But it is difficult to determine which of these explanations is the correct one. He finds this procedure too speculative. But at least the method of harmonization retains the Biblical doctrine of inerrancy. Dillard's explanation of the difficulties is no less speculative, and it has the added disadvantage of denying inerrancy. That being the case, one can only conclude that it is not speculation that Dillard finds unacceptable, but inerrancy.

Mr. Dillard asserts that his speculations about some of the passages in the Bible eliminate problems and open windows of the "big picture." But if the big picture is composed of details that may be modifications of the truth, then the big picture may be false as well.

As I see it, the big picture is this: Mr. Dillard holds views that are not compatible with the doctrine of inerrancy of Scripture. His theory of textual criticism states that the authors of Scripture, specifically Matthew and the Chronicler, made "modifications" and "changes" because they may

have relied on incorrect texts and may have had points to make and parallels to draw.

But Mr. Dillard insists that he does believe in inerrancy. This is what he writes: "God is true and cannot lie, and the Scriptures share in this attribute. The incarnational analogy is fundamental: just as the living Word was divine and without error, so also the written Word." Several pages later he adds these words, much more ambiguous: "We believe that the Scriptures are all that God wants them to be without any compromise of his own glory and veracity." This latter statement, of course, is so ambiguous that it could have come from the pens of Emil Brunner, Jack Rogers, or the Auburn Affirmationists. But the earlier statement is not ambiguous. Dillard then adds two sentences that make his affirmation of belief more ambiguous: "But the nature of Scripture is not established alone from the prooftexts so often cited [not by Dillard though] in reference to that doctrine, but also from the phenomena we observe there. The doctrine of Scripture, like all other doctrines, must be derived from Scripture itself and not subjected to some other more ultimate standard derived from modern philosophy." Of course, the last sentence is true. But it would have been more relevant to his essay if Dillard had said, "The doctrine of Scripture must be derived from Scripture itself and not subjected to some other more ultimate standard derived from modern textual criticism." Why he mentions modern philosophy is a mystery; there had been no previous mention of it in the paper. But his failure to mention textual criticism is no mystery. Despite the ambiguity, Mr. Dillard ends his paper with a restatement of his doctrine of Scripture: "The Scriptures and the Scriptures alone are the ultimate canon for truth and must not be subjected to some other standard."

A few years ago another "evangelical" scholar who also insisted that he believed in inerrancy was booted out of the Evangelical Theological Society for proposing views similar to those Dillard proposed in this essay. The Society correctly perceived that his view of Scripture—he also dealt with Matthew—was incompatible with inerrancy. The scholar went so far as to maintain that the Holy Spirit inspired Matthew to write accounts of events

that never happened. But whether one teaches that Matthew fabricated whole narratives, or simply made modifications here and there, the result is the same: the Bible is not wholly true.

The Trustees of Westminster Seminary have had Mr. Dillard's paper for months. His views, I am told, have been part of his teaching at the Seminary for years. His colleagues are or ought to be aware of his opinions about Scripture. All of this raises several important questions:

First, why have the Trustees of the Seminary and the elected elders of the two churches involved, the Orthodox Presbyterian Church and the Presbyterian Church in America, failed to correct this problem? Why is it necessary for two laymen to raise these objections?

Second, why have the only public objections to Mr. Dillard's views arisen outside of the Seminary community? Is the leadership of the Seminary so obtuse that they cannot see the implications of what Mr. Dillard has written? Have they so thoroughly rejected logic that the meaning and implications of his arguments are lost in a mystical fog? Or is the progress of unbelief so advanced among the Seminary leadership that it refuses to take any corrective action?

Third, why should Christians continue to support men and an institution that have failed to maintain the truth once delivered to the saints? It is time for some explanations. Don't keep the Church waiting, gentlemen.