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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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Does the Bible Contain Paradox?
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According to Kenneth S. Kantzer, editor of *Christianity Today,* there are two sorts of paradoxes: rhetorical and logical. The former is "a figure used to shed light on a topic by challenging the reason of another and thus startling him"(*Evangelical Dictionary of Theology,* edited by Walter A. Elwell, 826, 827; Robert L. Reymond, *Preach The Word!* 31, 32). The Bible dearly contains rhetorical paradox (compare *Matthew* 10:29; *John* 11:25,26; *2 Corinthians* 6:9,10).

Logical paradoxes, however, are altogether different. Here we have a situation where an assertion (or two or three assertions) is self-contradictory, or at least seems to be so. One way or the other the assertion cannot possibly be reconciled before the bar of human reason. The hypostatic union of the divine and human natures in the one person of Jesus Christ, unconditional election and the free offer of the Gospel, and God's sovereignty and man s responsibility, are examples set forth by the advocates of biblical (logical) paradox.

For example, Edwin H. Palmer in *The Five Points of Calvinism* refers to the doctrine of God's sovereignty and man's responsibility as a "paradox" which the Calvinist affirms, "in the face of all logic" (85). Does God speak to us in such language? Is He the author of logical paradox? No, says the apostle Paul, "God is not the author of confusion" (*1 Corinthians* 14:33).

And yet, far too frequently such comments are heard within the camp of orthodox. J. I. Packer makes the statement that the Bible is full of such paradoxes (he refers to them as antinomies). Packer writes that these antinomies are "seemingly in compatible positions" that we must learn to live with. We are to "Refuse to regard the apparent inconsistency as real" *(Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God,* 18-21). Cornelius Van Til nods at this point as well. He goes so far as to say, "Now since God is not fully comprehensible to us we are bound to come into what seems to be contradictions in all our knowledge. Our knowledge is analogical [i.e., there is no univocal point at which God's knowledge is the same as man's knowledge] and therefore must be paradoxical" *(The Defense of the Faith,* 44). Further, says Van Til, "All the truths of the Christian religion have of necessity the appearance of being contradictory" *(Common Grace and the Gospel,* 165).

These are incredible statements coming from such eminent orthodox scholars as Drs. Palmer, Packer, and Van Til; and yet, sadly, they are not all that unusual. How should we view logical paradox, as it is (supposedly) found in Scripture? According to Gordon Clark, the issue of biblical paradox is totally subjective. What may be paradoxical to one may not be to another *(The Atonement,* 32).

For example, Dr. Palmer's paradox, noted above, regarding God's sovereignty and man's

responsibility, is no paradox at all to John Gerstner, who writes, "We do not see why it is impossible for God to predestinate an act to come to pass by means of the deliberate choice [i.e., human responsibility] of specific individuals" (*A Predestination Primer,* 26). Neither was it a paradox to the Westminster divines, who maintained that "God from all eternity did, by the most wise and holy counsel of His own will, freely and unchangeably ordain whatsoever comes to pass: yet so, as thereby neither is God the author of sin, nor is violence offered to the will of the creatures, nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes [i.e., man's responsibility] taken away, but rather established" (*WCF*, III, 1). This doctrine may be a "high mystery" (i.e., difficult to fully grasp), but it is in no way paradoxical (i.e., impossible to reconcile), says *Westminster* (III, 8). In fact, the doctrine is "to be handled with special prudence and care" by men as they seek "the will of God [as] revealed in His Word" (III, 8). This, of course, would not be possible with any doctrine that cannot be reconciled by the mind of man.

The present author agrees with Dr. Clark when he says that a Biblical paradox is nothing more than "a charley-horse between the ears that can be eliminated by rational massage." To insist on the existence of logical paradox in the Bible is to hold, at least implicitly, to a very low view of God's infallible Word. (This statement is in no way meant as a slur on Drs. Palmer, Packer, and Van Til, all of whom hold to a high view of biblical inspiration.) For, as Clark elsewhere says, "dependence on...paradox...destroys both revelation and theology and leaves us in complete ignorance (*The Philosophy of Gordon Clark,* edited by Ronald Nash, 78).

Interestingly, the affirmation of biblical paradox is a major tenet of neo-orthodoxy, a theology which so revels in the existence of such paradox that it is called "The Theology of Paradox" (Kantzer, *loc. cit.).* Karl Barth and Emil Brunner, for example, both aver the existence of contradictions within the Bible (in neo-orthodoxy the Bible is not "the Word of God"; rather, it contains the Word of God). Barth claims that the Bible is at every instance nothing more than the vulnerable words of men, who were fallible and erring in their writings *(Church*

Dogmatics, I: 2:507ff.). According to Barth, it is beneath the transcendent God to reveal Himself, in Christ, through lowly propositional statements. Thus, in the Bible we will encounter numerous paradoxical, contradictory statements.

Emil Brunner, another champion of neo-orthodoxy, concurs. Following Soren Kierkegaard, Brunner acknowledges that the Christian faith, the Bible, God's revelation to man, and so forth, must all be viewed as paradoxical. Such being the case, the Bible is never to be considered as the infallible Word of God. It contains numerous contradictions, i.e., paradoxes (Robert L. Reymond, *Brunner's Dialectical Encounter,* 88ff; Stewart Custer, *Does Inspiration Demand Inerrancy?* 76ff.). At this point, Brunner goes so far as to say that contradiction is the hallmark of religious truth (cited in John Gerstner, *Jonathan Edwards: A Mini-Theology,* 24). What kind of nonsense is this? Very scholarly nonsense.

Neo-orthodox theology, following on the heels of Immanuel Kant and the immanentistic theologians Friedrich Schleiermacher and Albrecht Ritschl, sought to erect a wall between a transcendent Deity and man (Ronald Nash, *The Word of God and the Mind of Man,* 17ff.) True knowledge of God is not possible; He is the "wholly other" (Barth). Moreover, maintains neo-orthodoxy, because propositional revelation is not possible, theological agnosticism results.

Understandably these teachings in the theological milieu led to a divorce between Christian truth (and faith) and reason. What we not all too frequently encounter is the result of what Nash calls "the religious revolt against logic" *(ibid.,* 918.). While Augustine claimed that logic was divinely ordained (even an attribute of God), and thus to be trusted and used by man as God's image bearer, neo-orthodoxy and much modern day evangelicalism deny that logic can be trusted.

Evangelical Donald Bloesch, for one, openly denies that there is a univocal point at which man's logic and knowledge are the same as God's. Due to this lack of a point of contact, paradox must exist in Scripture. Herman Dooyeweerd, and the majority of

the Amsterdam Philosophy school, for another, have erected a "Boundary" between God, as Lawgiver, and man, as recipient The laws of logic exist only on man's side of the Boundary. If this Dooyeweerdian Boundary truly existed, God could never reveal anything at all to His creatures, and man could never know anything about God, including the notion of the Boundary.

The truth of the matter is, however, that logic is an attribute of God himself. He is the God of truth (*Psalm* 31:5); Christ is truth (Wisdom, logic, reason, etc.) Incarnate (*John* 14:6; *1 Corinthians* 1:24; *Colossians* 2:3). God is not the author of confusion (*1Corinthians* 14:33); thus, He cannot speak to us in illogical, paradoxical statements. Because logic is one of God's attributes, the laws of logic are eternal principles. And because man is an image bearer of God, these laws are a part of man. There must be, then, a point of contact between God's logic (and knowledge) and man's.

Carl Henry writes, "The insistence on a logical gulf between human conceptions and God as the object of religious knowledge is erosive of knowledge and cannot escape a reduction to skepticism. Concepts that by definition are inadequate to the truth of God cannot be made to compensate for logical deficiency by appealing either to God's omnipotence or to His grace. Nor will it do to call for a restructuring of logic in the interest of knowledge of God. Whoever calls for a higher logic must preserve the existing laws of logic to escape pleading the cause of illogical nonsense" (*God, Revelation and Authority,* III, 229).

According to Henry, the question being raised in orthodox circles about the Bible containing logical paradox about the great divorce between God's logic and mere human logic, and so forth, is-the result of the dialectical epistemology of neo-orthodoxy *(op. cit.,* 214ff.). Ronald Nash confirms what has already been noted above, "If there is absolutely no point of contact between the divine logic and so-called human logic, then what passes as human 'preaching' can never be valid." In other words, without this point of contact, man could never truly know anything at all *(op. cit.,* 96).

The laws of logic, then, are essential for man to have knowledge. Apart from the law of contradiction, not both A and non-A, for example, *Genesis* 1:1 would be a meaningless proposition. "In the beginning God created the Heavens and the Earth" cannot at one and the same time mean, "In the beginning God did not create the Heavens and the Earth." Eliminate the law of contradiction as axiomatic, and one has eliminated the meaning of all Scripture.

Appeals to biblical passages such as *Isaiah* 55:3, 9, God's thoughts and ways are above those of mankind, in order to contradict the position taken in this article, are specious. No orthodox Christian questions the quantitative difference in God's knowledge, thoughts, ways, etc., and man's. What is questioned is the qualitative difference. That is, the difference between God's thoughts and man's thoughts is one of degree, not of kind. Any exegesis of this passage that concludes that God's thoughts are wholly other than man's thoughts stumbles on the command for the wicked to forsake his thoughts and think as God does.

Writing on this subject, Gordon Clark says, "Of course, the Scripture says God's thoughts are not our thoughts and His ways are not our ways. But is it good exegesis to say that this means His logic, His arithmetic, His truth are not ours? If this were so, what would the consequences be? It would mean not only that our additions and subtractions are all wrong, but also that all our thoughts, in history as well as in arithmetic, are all wrong." Not so, says Clark, "we must insist that truth is the same for God and man" *(The Philosophy of Gordon Clark,* 76).

What, then, are we to conclude about the alleged inclusion of logical paradox in the Bible? Enough has been said to show the serious problems raised with such a concept. But more needs to be said. Robert Reymond poses three insuperable obstacles that those averring such an errant view must deal with *(Preach the Word,* 30-31):

(1) As noted above, the issue of what is and what is not a paradox is totally subjective. To universally claim that such and such a teaching is a paradox would thus require omniscience. How could any

one know that this teaching had not been reconciled before the bar of someone's human reason?

2) Even when one claims that the seeming contradiction is merely "apparent," there are serious problems. "[I]f actually non-contradictory truths can appear as contradictories and if no amount of study or reflection can remove the contradiction, there is no available means to distinguish between this 'apparent' contradiction and a real contradiction" *(ibid.).* How then would man know whether he is embracing an actual contradiction (which if found in the Bible [an impossibility; *1 Corinthians* 14:33], would reduce the Scriptures to the same level as the contradictory Koran of Islam) or a seeming contradiction?

3) Once one asserts (with Barth and Brunner) that truth may come in the form of irreconcilable contradictions, then, "he has given up all possibility of ever detecting a real falsehood. Every time he rejects a proposition as false because it 'contradicts' the teaching of Scripture or because it is in some other way illogical, the proposition's sponsor only needs to contend that it only *appears* to contradict Scripture or to be illogical, and that his proposition is one of the terms...of one more of those paradoxes which we have acknowledged have a legitimate place in our 'little systems'" *(ibid.).* This being the case, Christianity's uniqueness as the only true revealed religion will die the death of a thousand qualifications.

What is our conclusion? Simply this: The Bible does not contain logical paradox. Clark is correct; any so-called logical paradoxes found in Holy Scripture are little more than charley-horses between the ears that can be removed by rational massage; they are the result of faulty exegesis, not God's Word. Any stumbling in this area will lead to (at least) a fall into neo-orthodox nonsense.