

# **The Flourishing Blossom**

## **or The Modest Newsletter Doing Rather Well**

### **Metaphysical Realists and Inerrancy**

*by Eric White*

Proposition: A Christian Metaphysical Realist must hold to the Inerrancy of Scripture.

#### I. Definition of Terms

Metaphysical Realist - a metaphysical realist (m.r.) believes that Reality lies in the Transcendent, sometimes known as the universals. The Reality contains objective truth, truth unhindered by time or culture. To be a Christian m.r. means that Reality lies in the person of God who is true. Reality shows itself in reality, the particulars or the facts (which alone are not truth). The facts, or the particulars, demonstrate the universals, or objective truth like a window or icon. The mode by which the universals are displayed as particulars is often referred to as "Forms".

#### II. Exceptions to the Forms

There are only two exceptions to the idea of "Forms". They are the person of Jesus Christ and the Bible. Jesus is The Word while the Scriptures are the word. In these two instances in time, God gave direct revelation of himself, but he did not use the mode of Forms. Reality broke directly into reality with mind-boggling effects. Instead of dark windows or imperfect icons, he gave us special revelation. For example, Hebrews 1:1-4, the Son is "the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person." And John 1:1-3, "the Word was God."

#### III. Argument from Metaphysical Realism

Arguing with the presupposition of Metaphysical Realism, we must conclude the inerrancy of Scripture. I will argue falaciously from the Greater to the Lesser. (I am allowed since I am dealing with the Trinity which is not logical.) THE WORD is the express image of His glory; i.e. HE IS God. He is not a godly man, an icon through which we peer into the character of God. He is not a particular - just a man made in the image of God, he is a universal, he is transcendent. HE IS Perfect. He must be because HE IS God. So then, if the greater revelation is perfect, so then must the lesser be. For, the lesser is also a direct revelation from God. It also circumvents the Forms and allows men to see God directly. Just as Jesus was a man, though not an icon, so the Bible, though written word, is not a Form. It too is transcendent. Therefore, if truth and Reality exist in the transcendent, the Bible must be without error in any way - It must be innerrant.

#### **Thoughts on Tozer**

*by Some Controversial and Controvertible Contributors*

One of the most striking things about reading Tozer is that unlike most other Christian writers that you read, he has more than passing familiarity with the writings of devout Christians from all the history of the Church. Even the most serious today usually manage to get no further back than the Reformers and spend their strength in the Puritans. I do not mean to imply that it is

in any way unworthy of Christians to diligently read the Puritan writings, not at all. When I see people doing that, it strikes me as a sign of seriousness and we need to be serious. This seriousness is a mark of maturity, but I think that when it limits itself to a certain bit of Church History it is a lesser degree of maturity than the maturity required to appreciate a fuller scope of the writings of the devout. This more mature maturity is what I especially admire about Tozer.<sup>1</sup> Equally admirable is the fact that Tozer himself acknowledges the deficiency in other Christians' reading and goes about to correct it. Since most Christians do not read the writings of Augustine or Anselm, Tozer brings the ideas of Anselm and Augustine to them. As he says in his preface to *The Knowledge of the Holy*,

“Apparently not many Christians will wade through hundreds of pages of heavy religious matter requiring sustained concentration.....For that reason an effort such as this may be not without some beneficial effect. Since this book is neither esoteric nor technical, and since it is written in the language of worship with no pretension to elegant literary style, perhaps some persons may be drawn to read it” (viii).

Tozer has followed the style of the Bible in simplification so that even a child (and aren't most of us really still children in these matters?) may read and understand the deep, eternal truths that pass knowledge.

Another reason I admire Tozer is because he is a mystic. He has one essay on "Something Beyond Song" in which he argues that after prose and after song there is silence. I had seen a hint of this before in C. S. Lewis's *Screwtape Letters*. Wormwood makes passing reference to those who are advanced in God's service who practice the prayer of silence. I found it an intriguing idea in Lewis and wonder where he'd gotten it from. I still don't know where he got it from, but now I've found Tozer talking about it, it seems even more interesting. It doesn't seem at all incompatible with God's command for us to be still and know he is God in Psalm 46. Tozer is aware of how radical his statements seem. I am too and that's part of the reason I like them but I think there is more. Being a supernaturalist - as opposed to a naturalist - one must be committed to the idea that there are things above what is natural. I think many people end up being crypto-naturalists, essentially anti-supernaturalists. Tozer has none of that.<sup>2</sup> Mysticism entails supernaturalism and that's why it is strange to us. But then, supernatural things should be a little bit strange to us because, after all, they aren't natural. I have not experienced all that Tozer describes but I agree with his excellent statement:

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<sup>1</sup>Maybe he doesn't stick to the Puritans and Reformers because he's an Arminian. This is also a consideration and if that is the case, maybe there's even something good to be said for being Arminian! I would like to think that is not the reason though.

<sup>2</sup>Of course, the most memorable statement that I ever remember from Lewis is the one where he says he is committed to supernaturalism in all of its rigors. I have spent much time thinking about that one and I overindulge in quoting it. It has done much to shape my thinking in the past few years, especially alongside of the works of Charles Williams and George MacDonald. And Gabriel Garcia Marquez I guess, but he's a little bit different, but still good.

If this should all seem to mystical, too unreal, we offer no proof and make no effort to defend our position. This can be understood only by those who have experienced it. By the rank of file of present day Christians it will be rejected or shrugged off as preposterous.<sup>3</sup> So be it. Some will read and will recognize an accurate description of the sunlit peaks where they have been for at least brief periods and to which they long often to return. And such will need no proof.

*The Root of the Righteous*, 174

I have read somewhere or another some mystic or another saying that the vision comes only to those who believe.

Since “mysticism” is a word that Tozer confesses has been misunderstood and misapplied for centuries, it may be worth saying that the true mysticism in view here is not the unstable, theologically-unsound emotions of a fanatic. Tozer rejects the self-deceived fanatic because true mysticism, the knowledge of God, must of course flow quite naturally from an accurate knowledge of Scripture. One cannot experience deep communion with God if one has the wrong God or the wrong notions of what He is like. For this reason, Tozer does not simply say “Open your hearts”——to the Muses? the World Soul? the icon of the Virgin and Child?——but “Search the Scriptures.” True mysticism springs from Truth itself; and as long as its source is the Truth, it will not need opium or visions and raptures to sustain itself.<sup>4</sup> However, truth without the mystic and the mystic without the truth would cripple each other. The idea that truth and the longing for it are inseparable can be found clearly in *The Knowledge of the Holy*, in

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<sup>3</sup>My note: why would they dismiss it as preposterous? They are not committed to supernaturalism in all of its rigors, that’s why.

<sup>4</sup>Collaborator 1: I assume you have no use for the Beatific Vision? I would think the mystic would want to be transported out of this life like Enoch. An inspiring hint at the value of the vision and rapture is Josef Pieper's book on Thomas Aquinas, by the way.  
Collaborator 2: I think I was unclear on this point. I believe that visions and raptures are desirable things, when they are genuine, but I distrust them by themselves. The reason is that too many people in completely different religions have had what they record as powerful mystical experiences without necessarily desiring God Himself at all. (What about the Brahmins? Was the World Soul God, and did they really experience union with Him?) So, although I don’t object to visions & raptures *accompanying* Christian mysticism, I can’t believe such visions and raptures are the *essence* or the *goal*. Because of this I have strong reservations about *doing* anything to try to bring them on——I would regard it as trying to make Aslan take us away to Narnia ( “The Silver Chair” by C. S. Lewis, pp. 6-7). I agree with you that any mystic “would want to be transported out of this life like Enoch”——but I don’t think a temporary transport in the form of a vision is the only way to experience union with God. The longing for God may sometimes erupt in ecstasies, but I think it should always be present, even if only “just above” the surface of consciousness. It is this *permanent longing*——not just the explosions——that makes the mystic. I even find it conceivable that a mystic might never have any vision or rapture at all, yet still be a mystic as long as that fundamental longing is there.

which it is precisely the knowledge of God's attributes that produces a great longing in the believing soul, and a longing to long more. It is a skillful appeal to the kind of worship that takes place "in spirit and in truth" (John 4).

What you will find most characteristic about Tozer is that he is not wrongheadedly earnest, his appeals are made very skillfully. What I mean by being wrongheadedly earnest is this: when somebody is serious about something that they should be serious about but have not spent enough time thinking or have not enough breadth of learning to realize the best way to communicate how important what they are serious about is. There is nothing like a chapter from Tozer to awake in you a great desire for God himself. But one is also struck by the brevity of his chapters. How is it possible in such a short span for Tozer to communicate so powerfully? As I intimated before, I think it is because of his breadth of learning. It is obviously also due to the fact that Tozer has spend a lot of time thinking about these things, but it is the sort of thinking that is brought about by the breadth of his reading. In short, in the writings of Tozer you have a great element, that element is stability, and it seems to me that this stability, this un-fanatical but deeply fervent appeal that is made so precisely, is due to fact that Tozer has cultivated the ability to understand the ideas of God's people all throughout Church History. It has to do with the complexity of what makes human beings desire, because it has to do with the complexity of being human.<sup>5</sup> With his breadth of learning Tozer is beyond reduction, which is the heart of being wrongheadedly earnest - or at least at the heart of what I think of as wrongheaded earnestness. But it is a reductive idea that limits the person to his every-day experiences so that they are unable to even desire a greater scope of learning in the first place. I don't know which one comes first ultimately, but I do think this reduction is behind anti-supernaturalism as well and therefore also behind contempt for mysticism. But I do know that Tozer is able to convince us to leave such reductions behind. He shows us that we have more when we have less. He shows us that when we leave all things to search for God we find God and also find the proper enjoyment of all things. This quality which I have called stability and maturity and seriousness is perhaps best summed up in the biblical term "Wisdom". The wisdom of Tozer is that he goes to all the places where the things that matter are, rather than wasting his time in all the places where we who have not discerned the heart of the matter usually spend our time.

The whole Bible and all the great saints of the past join to tell us the same thing. "Take nothing for granted," they say to us. "Go back to the grass roots. Open your hearts and search the Scriptures. Bear your cross, follow your Lord and pay no heed to the passing religious vogue. The masses are always wrong. In every generation the number of the righteous is small. Be sure you are among them."

*The Root of the Righteous, 5*

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<sup>5</sup>This complexity, it seems to me, is what mystics understand and has to do with why they seek for what they seek. I guess another way I could say this is that we are all human, obviously, but mystics are more so, or perhaps I could say they are human to a greater degree. Or maybe I should say they achieve a level of humanity that is missing to most of us and we are lesser humans for not being mystics and we should long for that as for a whole body and a whole mind.

**Defunctive Music for Neil Postman**  
*by Todd Mitchell with Editorial Interlocutions*

Todd: Neil Postman is dead.

E. I.: So what?

Todd: 1.) When orally citing an author it is nice to know whether he is a living or a dead author.  
 2.) With his death comes a certain sense of the passing of a generation which still has the capacity to perceive what he did.  
 3.) His death means that he will not be writing any more books.  
 4.) The death of anyone I have met is of at least passing interest to me. And met him I have, as have you if you have read him.  
 5.) It is at least as interesting as answering a question about why anyone should give a hill of beans about the death of a human being.  
 6.) It is certainly more interesting than Arvo Pärt. :)

E.I.: So there.

**Doctrinal Fidelity**  
*Complaints are to be directed to Nathan Hitz*

Concerning the Scriptures,

We believe that the Holy Scriptures are God's Word, authoritative, true, God-breathed; infallible and inerrant in whatever topics they address. They are man's sufficient and necessary authority for faith and practice. They are complete and perfect, consisting in the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments.

Concerning God the Father,

We believe that God is a Spirit, revealed to us as He reveals Himself, existing perfectly, unchangeable, incomprehensibly, infinitely, and sovereignly. God is the self-existing Designer, Creator, and Sustainer of all things. God is all-wise, holy, true, righteous, good, loving, just, gracious, merciful, and patient. God is a triunity; one God in essence and being, yet three distinct and unique Persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God alone, being one, is worthy of man's worship.

Concerning God the Son,

We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ is very God and very man, eternally the Son of God. He was virgin born of Mary, lived a sinless life, died a substitutionary death upon the cross, was buried, rose again on the third day, was seen of many witnesses, and ascended into heaven--fulfilling Old Testament prophecies. He is now seated at the right hand of God the Father and awaits his bodily return to the earth as judge of the world.

Concerning God the Holy Spirit,

We believe that the Holy Spirit is deity, equally God with both God the Father and God the Son. As God, the Holy Spirit possesses all the qualities of God; therefore, He is all-wise, holy, true, righteous, good, loving, just, gracious, merciful, and patient. Though equal with God, the Holy

Spirit is a distinct and unique Person of the Trinity.

Concerning Mankind,

We believe that man was created as a physical (material) and spiritual (immaterial) person in God's image, in a state of sinlessness, for the purpose of bringing glory to God. Adam's rebellion plunged all of mankind into sin, distorting God's image in man. Mankind was and is, ever thereafter, a sinner in attitude, action, and nature.

Concerning Salvation,

We believe that man's salvation from sin and its penalties is only of God-God elects, calls, regenerates, grants faith and repentance, justifies, redeems, adopts, sanctifies and glorifies men according to His good pleasure. Only by means of Christ's atoning work in the cross can any man hope for salvation.

Concerning the Church,

We believe that the church is the bride of Christ, those bought by his blood for the purpose of worshiping God, edifying one another, and discipling the lost. The local manifestation of the church is to be led by men of unblameable character under the headship of Christ and composed of baptized believers. In submission to the Scriptures, baptism and the Lord's Supper are practiced as ordinances of the local church.

### **Some Directions**

The above is what we want to argue about at the bash, and it looks to me that Nathan has introduced and excluded some material that we may want to debate. Bring your marked-up copy.

### **A Quotation**

All other concerns of life ought to be entirely subordinate to this. – When a man is on a journey, all the steps he takes are subordinated to the aim of getting to his journey's end. And if he carries money or provisions with him, it is to supply him in his journey. so we ought wholly to subordinate all our other business and all our temporal enjoyments, to this affair of traveling toward heaven. When any thing we have becomes a clog and hindrance to us, we should quit it immediately. The use of our worldly enjoyments and possessions, should be with such a view, and in such a manner, as to further us in our way heavenward. thus we should eat, and drink, and clothe ourselves and improve the conversation and enjoyment of friends. And whatever business we are setting about, whatever design we are engaging in, we should inquire with ourselves, whether this business or undertaking will forward us in our way to heaven? And if not, we should quit our design.

Jonathan Edwards, "The Christian Pilgrim"