

On the following pages is the article published in the March 2012 issue of "The Mennonite".

The article starting on the following page is written by Steve Carpenter. Steve Carpenter was our Virginia Conference Administrator from 2003 through 2011. He certainly has a voice that we recognize as representing the Virginia Conference. Steve now has taken the position of Development Director of MennoMedia. The type that is in black ink has been copied from his article. The copy that is in red ink and bracketed, is the response that was received from "The Berean Call". The Berean Call is an organization that is calling Christians to "search the scriptures daily to see whether those things were so". Its theme scripture is Acts 17:11. Below we have copied from their website their mission statement. It is to...

- Alert believers in Christ to unbiblical teachings and practices impacting the church.
- Exhort believers to give greater heed to Biblical discernment and truth regarding teachings and practices being currently promoted in the church.
- Supply believers with teaching, information, and materials which will encourage the love of God's truth, and assist in the development of Biblical discernment.
- Mobilize believers in Christ to action in obedience to the Scriptural command to "earnestly contend for the faith" (Jude 3).
- Impact the church of Jesus Christ with the necessity of trusting the Scriptures as the only rule of faith, practice, and a life pleasing to God.

The "Pastors" that Steve Carpenter is referring to in the first paragraph that are "urging their area conference to embrace the doctrine of biblical inerrancy" are obviously, Pastor Brett Perrett / Stuarts Draft Mennonite, and Pastor Earl Monroe / Mountain View Mennonite. They are supported by their associate pastors Allen Swarey / SDMC, Stan Kaufman / MVMC, and Mark Hodge / MVMC. They have equally been supported by their church councils and the members in the pews.

Biblical inerrancy is just one of the subjects that we have confronted the Virginia Mennonite Conference with. Please pray and ask God to help us discern God's truth concerning the infallible and inerrant Word of God.

Pastor Brett Perrett and Pastor Earl Monroe

On biblical inerrancy by Steve Carpenter

Contrary to what some teach, the Bible need not be inerrant to be a fully trustworthy and reliable source for Christian faith, doctrine and living. Some pastors are urging their area conference to embrace the doctrine of biblical inerrancy which asserts the Bible is not only God's word, but is without error. This doctrine says the Bible, in its original texts (sometimes called autographs), is true in every fact and detail. This concept was not held by early church leaders but has become popular in the last two centuries.

[This statement cannot be supported. In truth, this "doctrine" is not something that became popular in the last two centuries. It is also instructive that the "last two centuries" claim is also made of Bible prophecy teachings. It has rightly been said that anyone who tries to argue that inerrancy is a newer or fairly recent doctrine has little knowledge of history or historical theology. Inerrancy was the position of every branch of the Christian church until the middle of the last century. It was Dr. Carl F. Henry who stated in an interview in Eternity magazine, saying, "It was Jesus view, and that of the apostles, and of the church fathers, and of the Roman Catholic Church down to Vatican II. The recent effort to detach the Reformers from that view, and to place them on the side of scriptural errancy is unpersuasive."

Another commentator notes, "The witness of history shows that those who deny inerrancy have introduced a novel doctrine. Inerrancy was assumed in each period of the church's history. The early church fathers believed in an errant Bible. Clement of Rome (died 102) said 'Look carefully into the Scriptures which are the true utterances of the Holy Spirit.' He believed the Scriptures to be the inspired word of God and free from error. St. Augustine (354-430) did not only believe in an inerrant Bible, he also argued that a departure from this belief will lead to a flood tide of unbelief. In one of his letters to Jerome, he said, 'For it seems to me that most disastrous consequences must follow upon our believing that anything false is found in the sacred books.' The two great Reformers, Luther and Calvin, believed the Bible was true in all its parts. Luther testified, 'But everyone, indeed, knows that at times

they (the fathers) have erred as men will; therefore I am ready to trust them only when they prove their opinions from Scripture, which has never erred.' What can be said of Luther can also be said of Calvin. At various places in his writings, he refers to Scripture as 'the inerring standard, the pure word of God.' And he says, 'We owe to the Scripture the same reverence, which we owe to God, because it has proceeded from Him alone' " (Johan D. Tangelder, "The Inerrancy of Scripture," Reformed Reflections, January, 1993).]

Harold Lindsell, in his 1978 book *The Battle for the Bible*, forcefully made the case for biblical inerrancy calling it a “watershed” doctrine, meaning if the Church abandons inerrancy the waters of uncertainty and Christian liberalism will burst through the floodgates and overwhelm the Church. This argument is made, not from reason but from fear.

[The author of this article himself began arguing not from reason, as we have already demonstrated. Consequently, it is not surprising to see the appeal to tactics more suitable to political campaign than the issues impacting the Church. "Not from reason, but from fear." To the contrary, we would aver it is from reason and the objective analysis of history. Even secular commentators note from demographics that mainline denominations are losing many members at the same time the Bible is being marginalized. In short, it is not recognized as inerrant and there are observable consequences which follow.]

I have a deep love and high regard for scripture. I have read through the Bible many times in my personal devotions, diligently followed the lectionary scriptures in corporate worship, and memorized many Bible passages. The Bible is central to my faith and a constant source of comfort, guidance and inspiration. Yet, I do not insist on its inerrancy mainly because the Bible makes no such claim for itself. The closest the Bible comes to such a claim is in the Apostle Paul's letter to his young protégé Timothy. II Timothy 2:16 says, “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness (KJV).” It is important to remember the Apostle Paul was not referring to the Bible as we have it today, but to the Jewish scriptures as they existed in the first

century. I agree fully with Paul's assertion and so does the Mennonite Church USA. The Church's current 1995 Confession of Faith in a Mennonite Perspective, Article 4, Scripture says, "We believe that all scripture is inspired by God through the Holy Spirit for instruction in salvation and training in righteousness. We accept the Scriptures as the Word of God and as the fully reliable and trustworthy standard for Christian faith and life." Article 2, Divine Revelation, of the Mennonite Church's 1963 confession uses essentially the same language as the 1995 confession except it employs the term "infallible Guide to lead men to faith..." rather than "fully reliable and trustworthy standard." You have to go back 90 years, during the height of the Fundamentalist movement in America, to find a Mennonite Confession which uses the term "inerrant." The 1921 Mennonite Church confession included A Statement of Church Fundamentals which contains Article 1, Of the Word of God, which asserts a form of inerrancy but infallibility only with regard to faith and practice. It states "We believe in the plenary and verbal inspiration of the Bible as the Word of God, that it is authentic in its matter, authoritative in its counsels, inerrant in the original writings, and the only infallible rule of faith and practice."

[Here is another example of a shallow examination of issues. Consider just one example to the contrary: L. Gaussen's *Theopneustia, The Plenary Inspiration of The Holy Scriptures deduced from Internal Evidence, and the Testimonies of Nature, History and Science*. It has been noted that Gaussen points to the many passages in the Old Testament that assert that the words of the prophets were the word of God (Ex.4:30; Deut.18:21,22). He refers to such affirmations as "The Lord has spoken", "The mouth of the Lord has spoken," "The word of the Lord came to --saying" (Josh.24:2; Isa. 8:11; Jer.7:1; 11:1; 21:1; 26:1; 27:1; 30:1,4; 50:1; 51:12; Amos 3:1). The Gospel writers recognized the authority of the prophets. They often wrote, "All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the Prophet" (Matt.1:22; cf.2:5, 15, 23:13:35, 21:4; 27:9). All of Scripture is called "the Word of God" (Isaiah 1:2). The apostle Paul does not hesitate to speak of the Old Testament writings as the "Oracles of God" (Rom.3:2). Gaussen remarks about the latter, "Was there a word that could more absolutely express a verbal and complete inspiration?" An

oft quoted passage for proof of inerrancy is 2 Tim.3:16."All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness." The phrase God-breathed, which literally means God-"spirited", affirms that the living God of Truth is the author of Scripture. This statement by Paul admits no exception. The apostle Peter also clearly establishes the full inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture. "Prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit" (2 Pet. 1:21). Every word of Scripture comes from God. The apostles even place each other's writing in the same rank with the Old Testament prophets (2 Pet.3:15,16). Our Lord clearly assumed the inerrancy of the Old Testament, even in the realms of history and science. He said that God Himself had spoken the words of Genesis 2:24, with reference to the literal, historical Adam and Eve. He accepted the story of Jonah as literal fact (Matth.12:40). Our Lord regarded the Old Testament Scriptures as completely reliable and trustworthy.

One of the problems "inerrancists" have is the account of Creation in Genesis for its "obvious" inferiority to the revelations (which constantly change) of "modern science." Nevertheless, in Exodus 20:11, the giving of the Law is from the mouth of the Lord and the Lord proclaims, " For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it."

Gausson noted that the Lord regarded the Old Testament Scriptures as completely reliable and trustworthy, pointing out that man's failure to read and believe the Holy Scriptures was responsible for declension in faith and obedience to God. Jesus rebuked the Pharisees, " For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me" (John 5:46). For the Lord Jesus Christ, that's the bottom line. Consequently, much of what follows in the article must be judged with the Lord's judgment in mind.]

However, even that statement would not satisfy Lindsell and others. According to Davis, to claim Biblical inerrancy is "to claim that the Bible contains no errors at all—none in history, geography, botany, astronomy, sociology, psychiatry, economics, geology, logic,

mathematics, or any area whatsoever.” Neither the passage in Timothy, nor these two recent confessions claim inerrancy. Such a claim is as unmerited as the Catholic Church’s doctrine of papal infallibility. Neither doctrine can be factually supported.

Much of what follows appears in Stephen T. Davis’s book *The Debate About the Bible*, published in part to push evangelical leaders, including Lindsell and Francis Schaeffer, toward greater transparency in how they define and use the term “inerrancy.”

[Stephen T. Davis is a dubious source on many fronts and we include a general critique of his work below. Further, the author (as well as Davis) are confused. They admit inerrancy is a reference to the original documents. They then disingenuously go on to find problems with the "translation," though immediately below he says "these mistakes are justly excluded from the debate."]

Lindsell and Schaeffer readily admit the Bible contains grammatical errors and other mistakes made in its laborious hand transcription from earlier documents. These mistakes are justly excluded from the debate. However, there are hundreds of other inconsistencies in the Bible. Some can be reasonably explained away, others are more problematic. I cite several examples here, not to discredit the veracity of the Holy Scriptures but to expose the doctrine of Biblical inerrancy as untrue. First, what color was the robe placed on Jesus at Golgotha? Was it scarlet, as described by Matthew 27:28, or was it purple as two other gospel writers, Mark and John, claim (Mark 15:17 and John 19:2)? Perhaps it was a combination of both scarlet and purple which explains the difference. Or perhaps Matthew wanted to emphasize Jesus’ humanity by indicating the shame being heaped upon him, since red is a color associated with infamy, while Mark and John want to emphasize Christ’s divinity indicative of a royal purple robe. Either way, my faith does not depend on the accuracy of the gospel writer’s recall of this detail. Second, how did Judas die? Did he hang himself, as Matthew 27:5 says or did he fall “headlong, his body burst open and all his intestines spill out” as Luke claims in Acts 1:18? A reasonable, straight forward reading of scripture, which is a

traditional Anabaptist approach to biblical interpretation, says they can't both be true.

[Many of the "discrepancies" (not "contradictions") perceived can be easily reconciled with a little research, something to many seem to have scant time for. The author admits that his faith doesn't depend upon the accuracy of the Gospel writer's recall. He's only half right. The other half requires more work, in order to discover that the Gospel's writer's "inspiration" (no "recall") is absolutely accurate. As Peter noted in 2 Peter 1:20-21, "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." In reality, his argument is not against Peter, but the one who inspired him.

Therefore, the issue regarding the color of Christ's robe, the author makes some legitimate remarks as to the "emphasis," but fails to realize that his comments show he is on the right track, but he just can't stop there with insufficient information. The Lord tells us to "prove all things, hold fast that which is good" (1 Thessalonians 5:21). If the Lord tells us to prove "all things," He must be confident they will prove true. Consequently, consider the comments regarding the color.

In the Liddell and Scott Greek-English lexicon says the word porphureos means dark gleaming, dark, and is used to describe the color of heaving and surging of the sea, gushing blood, bright red or flushing human complexion, as well as the color purple.

(<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/cgi-bin/ptext?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.04.0057%3Aentry%3D%2385838>).

The word porphura is the word used by Mark to describe the color of the robe; this word describes the dye, as well as what was used to create the dye color.

(<http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/cgi-bin/ptext?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.04.0057%3Aentry%3D%2385833>).

Porphurous is the word used by John; this is simply an alternate of phorphureos.

To quote someone else, “In fact, the term does NOT refer, first of all to a precise COLOR, but rather to a rare DYE, made from the rare murex shells harvested off the coast of ancient Phoenicia. [Actually, the very name "Phoenicia" is a Greek invention MEANING "land of the purple dye"]. There were actually at least two distinct different types of shells, and different shades of dye produced from them. The color-S appear to have all been “blue-red” combinations, but NOT the nice even mixture of the two. That is, OUR definition of purple as “half-red and half-blue” does NOT describe the actual colors of the purple dye (and hence of the cloth named “purple” after the dye used for it). In some cases the balance was much more toward RED.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tyrian_purp...
(<http://answers.yahoo.com/question/index?qid=20071215040527AATBoaR>).]

Additionally, both scriptural accounts refer to a “Field of Blood.” But Matthew says the field was purchased by the chief priests, while Acts claims Judas bought the land just before his death. Can both accounts be right? Is it essential to our faith that these accounts are right in every detail?

[Yes, both accounts can be right, but they are "complementary" rather than "contradictory." Further, let's just think this through! Though the priest made the actual transaction, it was the money of Judas that purchased the field. Can't we figure that out? A similar solution is easily seen for how Judas met his end. Matthew tells us he hung himself. Acts "complementary" account furnishes the detail that at some point the body of Judas, at this point bloated after hanging who knows how long, was thrown into the grave at which point his body burst open. Can we reasonably surmise that the Acts account is speaking of Judas falling down into the field and his living body bursting open? Let's be reasonable.]

The following examples are cited by Davis. The so called “missing thousand” refers to a discrepancy between Numbers 25:9 and I Corinthians 10:8. The Old Testament account says 24,000 died in the Shittim plague, whereas Paul, while warning the Corinthians against sexual immorality, says 23,000 were killed. Both cannot be correct. Lindsell dismisses this discrepancy claiming the actual number may

have been 23,500 and both writers are speaking in generalities and rounding off.

[There are a number of accounts where "rounding off" is indeed done. What's the problem? Can we not reasonably consider this selective nit picking? We certainly can.]

In one of Jesus' parables, Matthew 13:31-32, he refers to a mustard seed saying "it is the smallest of all seeds" yet scientifically that is not true. There are many plant seeds smaller than a mustard seed including some orchid seeds. Lindsell argues it was not Jesus' intent to teach botany. He limits inerrancy to the intent of the biblical writer, thus this error does not invalidate his claim that the Bible is inerrant. So many caveats and conditions hedge the claim of inerrancy as to make it impossible to disprove since it is difficult to know the writer's intent and the original autographs no longer exist.

[The author forgets a number of things. When Jesus spoke of the size of the mustard seed He clearly knew that the people whom he desired to communicate to would be scratching their head if he spoke of seeds not indigenous to the "world" they inhabited. Further, what does this have to do with inerrancy? It's another nit picking statement with wobbly legs.]

The Bible can be faithful and true without being miraculously, supernaturally error free. But, not for those who insist on biblical inerrancy. They insist every word must be accurate and true. Even inconsequential facts must be consistent. If not, a scenario is developed which reconciles any apparent inconsistency, sometimes by changing the sequence of Biblical events. An extreme example concerns Christ's statement to Peter telling Peter he will deny Jesus three times. The discrepancy revolves around how many times the cock crows. Matthew, Luke and John all say the cock will crow once and attest that is what happened, whereas Mark 14:30 and 72 predict and affirm the cock crowed twice. Those who hold to inerrancy developed a scenario whereby Peter denies Christ six times, in two sets of three, with the cock crowing after each set of three denials. The problem with such a scheme is that it then brings into question

“Why didn’t the three other gospel writers say Peter would deny Jesus six times?”

[The issue is, why didn't the writer actually read the Gospel accounts and then "rightly divide" the word as we are exhorted to do? (2 Timothy 2:15). Many an apologist has carefully explained that the account speaks both of a single cock crowing and the general "cock crowing" (speaking of all the roosters crowing at once. Once again, as "complementary" accounts, the author doesn't take the time or effort needed to sort these things out.]

There are many examples of biblical inconsistencies but let me name just three more. Matthew, the gospel writer, in chapter 27:9-10 reportedly quotes the prophet Jeremiah but his citation does not appear anywhere in the book of Jeremiah. Zechariah 11:12-13 contains a phrase similar to Matthew’s quote but not precisely. The next example is a counting discrepancy which cannot be dismissed as a rounding error. According to II Samuel 24:9, when King David numbered Israel he found 800,000 warriors in Israel and 500,000 in Judah while I Chronicles 21:5 records the same event numbered more warriors in Israel, 1,100,000, and fewer in Judah, 450,000. Finally, there is the problem of the “staff or no staff.” In Matthew’s and Luke’s version of Jesus’ instructions to his disciples before sending them out to preach, Matthew 10:9-10 and Luke 9:3, he tells them not to take a staff. Whereas Mark 6:8 records the same three prohibitions named by Luke—money, bread and bag—but in Mark’s version Jesus allows them to take a staff. Are they recording the same events? If so, which is correct?

[We've already noted the number rounding problem. The issue of Jeremiah/Zechariah has been also handled reasonably by other commentators. One is left feeling the author for the sake of his argument doesn't want the discrepancies to go away. Finally, the gospels do contain separate accounts of different events that have similar details. As complementary accounts, again, they are all account. Now then, let's get busy obeying the command to rightly divide it.]

Those who adhere to inerrancy sometimes treat the Bible like a supernaturally perfect book which embodies God. But, the God who created the universe cannot be confined to the pages of a text. We do not worship Father, Son and Holy Scriptures but Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The debate about Biblical inerrancy distracts the church from its primary mission of proclaiming the gospel and being communities of healing and hope. Yes we need to revere the Bible but there is far more fruit in reading and obeying it rather than defending its inerrancy through convoluted mental gymnastics. The Christian faith does not depend on the Bible being accurate in every detail, i.e. the doctrine of biblical inerrancy. Rather, our faith depends on the resurrection of Jesus Christ. That is the important thing! The empty tomb, the risen Christ! Paul writes in I Corinthians 15:17 "if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins." But, thanks be to God our faith does not depend on the certainty of every detail recorded in the Bible but on the "fully reliable and trustworthy" record of first hand witnesses who testify to Christ's sacrificial death and glorious resurrection.

[The "debate about Biblical inerrancy distracts the church from its primary mission of proclaiming the gospel and being communities of healing and hope?" How so? What is our message based upon if it isn't based upon the Word of God? According to Romans 10:17, " So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Study the book of Acts and you will find reference after reference where the disciples turn to the word of God. Consider the case of Apollos (who was "mighty in the scriptures") in Acts 18. He was preaching the "things of the Lord," but he knew only the baptism of John (verse 25). He did not know that the messiah had come, lived, bled and died on the cross, been buried, and then raised again in power. Two disciples, Aquila and Priscilla, took him aside and "...expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly" (verse 26). At that point he did not begin teaching a tradition solely on the basis of something which had been orally communicated to him; rather, he continued to preach and exhort, "showing by the scriptures that Jesus was the Christ" (Acts 18:28). An inerrant Scripture is essential to proclaim the Gospel. Without it, how do we know we are proclaiming the right one?]

[Here is a critique of Stephen T. Davis' much flawed work, which does indeed show it to be a frail reed to lean upon.]

From *Encountering Evil: Live Options in Theodicy*, Stephen T. Davis, ed. Atlanta, John Knox Press, 1981. A revised edition was published in 2001. Professor Griffin's publications on the problem of evil include two books: *God, Power, and Evil: A Process Theodicy*, Philadelphia: Westminster, 1976; reprinted with a new preface, Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1991; and *Evil Revisited: Responses and Reconsiderations*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991.

A Critique of Stephen T. Davis' Theodicy
David Ray Griffin

Much of my response to Davis' essay was given in advance in the second section of my essay: he holds the positions I argue against in points 2, 3, 5, 7, 8 and in the conclusion.

Our most central difference is that Davis believes there to be explicit doctrines vouchsafed by "revelation," and that the task of the theodicy is to show that the revealed doctrines relevant to the problem of evil are not inconsistent with each other. Merely showing that they are not necessarily inconsistent completes the job; there is no need to present an account of the world that can be readily perceived by troubled minds to be more probable than other accounts of the world. Hence, Davis sets an easier task for himself than does Hick, who at least tries to make his view plausible.

Davis examines that the criterion of plausibility might mean and dismisses all the interpretations of it that occur to him. From this he concludes that the charge that orthodox Christian theism is implausible constitutes no difficulty for it. However, he does not consider what I would take to be the central meaning of the claim that the Christian view of reality should be plausible: it should be able to provide plausible answers to the various types of questions it arouses. When Davis does give answers, they have an ad hoc flavor. For example, after denying Hick's doctrine of universal salvation on the basis of the Bible's authority, he rejects the notion that hell is a place of suffering by saying that the biblical statements implying that are mere "metaphors." And he defends as highly probable the view that "any free human agent who must make a significant number of moral choices in a world like ours will eventually go wrong," but in the next paragraph he exempts Jesus from this universal claim. (Also, I am unclear why he thinks a "highly probably" judgment is possible on this issue, given what he said about probabilistic judgments earlier.)

But for the most part, Davis does not even attempt to give answers to the obvious questions raised by his position; he simply says, "I don't know," time and time again. For example, he feels no need to give even a hint as to why his God, who could have easily prevented the Nazi Holocaust, chose to allow it to occur.

Accordingly, although Davis begins his essay by saying that "people ought to believe what it is rational or them to believe," his notion of what is "rational" is much too limited for me. For him, being rational is consistent with simply trusting that God has all the answers and not even trying to discover them. If I had to choose, I would find Roth's attitude of protest much more compatible with the full use of our God-given powers to which I believe God calls us.

Davis thinks it is rational to wait until the end of history to see if there are answers to all the questions, and to assume in the meantime that there are. He considers the obvious objection, that we must formulate our beliefs on the basis of evidence that is presently available. But he argues that it would be “ultimately unfair to try to make . . . a correct judgment about the cost-effectiveness of God’s policy.” Unfair to whom – to God? This is to beg the question, which is whether Davis’ kind of God exists. Furthermore, if it is unfair to make a negative judgment, then is it not equally unfair to make a positive judgment? Rather than the trust which Davis advocates, the rational position would seem to be (by his argument) to withhold judgment altogether.

There is even a prior problem in Davis’ position. He begins by saying that he will not accept a theodicy that gives up (among other things) the claim that “evil exists.” Yet he seems to do just that, if we are talking about genuine evil (anything without which the universe would have been better, all things considered). In seemingly denying that it is necessary to say that this is the best of all possible worlds, he illustrates by suggesting that the world would have morally better with the Nazi Holocaust. But in the next paragraph and elsewhere he seems to say that the Holocaust was necessary for the world to have been better overall than it could have been without it. In other words, the moral evil was compensated for by the goodness (perhaps moral and non-moral) to which it contributed. But this is simply to say that the moral evil was not genuinely evil, once its instrumental value is taken into account. And in his seventh proposition Davis seems to affirm that this is at least one of the best possible worlds, since he says that “no other world which God could have created would have had a better balance of good over evil than the actual world will have. If “genuine evil” is that which prevents this from being one of the best possible worlds, then Davis is making his three propositions consistent by simply denying one of them. If he does not accept this definition of (genuine) evil, then he is surely giving some definition to the term that would make it puzzling why the “problem of evil” had ever arisen: no one would be disturbed by the doctrine that God is omnipotent and perfectly good if they believed that nothing ever happens that prevents the world from being as good overall as it could have been.

Furthermore, as I suggested in the fifth point in the second part of my essay, the notion that genuine evil occurs is one of the “common notions” which we all accept in practice. It is because we know that genuine evil occurs that the twin claims about God’s omnipotence and perfect goodness are troubling. Accordingly, from my point of view, Davis has “solved” the logical problem of evil by denying the one premise of the three that we all know to be true. This provides another sense in which I cannot accept his view as rational. And this for me also counts against its being fully Christian, since I believe the Christian God calls us to full rationality.

As a footnote, one can wonder whether Davis, by following Plantinga, has not denied God’s omnipotence, as defined by Davis. He says it would be a denial of omnipotence to say that God “is simply not able to prevent evil.” But in endorsing Plantinga’s notion of transworld depravity, he is saying in effect that, since every possible world contains moral evil in it, God simply cannot create an actual world devoid of moral evil. I wonder why a limitation placed on what God can do by other actualities (my position) is unacceptable to Davis, while a limitation placed on God by possibilities is not.