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**Review: The Word of Truth: A Summary of Christian Doctrine  
Based on Biblical Revelation**

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# BOOK REPORT

## The Word of Truth

by Dale Moody

Eerdmans, 1981, 628 pp.,  
\$24.95

Reviewed by Daniel R. Mitchell,  
associate professor of Theological  
Studies at Liberty Baptist College,  
Lynchburg, Virginia.

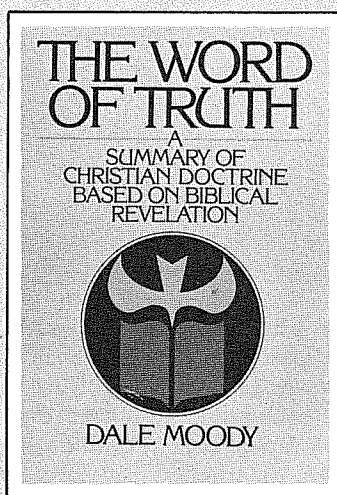
Years ago people were either creationist *or* evolutionist, socialistic *or* democratic, conservative *or* liberal. Today we have evolutionary creationism, socialistic democracy, and now, in Dale Moody, "critical conservatism." His book promises to be an example of how to hold firmly to the authority and inspiration of the Bible while casting it into the mold of modern science and biblical criticism.

As a Bible scholar, Dr. Moody has unquestionable credentials. With a Ph.D. from Oxford, he has served for many years as Professor of Christian Theology at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Ky. The present volume is an excellent summary of both the depth and breadth of his scholarship. It is also a comprehensive statement of the so-called New Evangelical stance.

"A Christian theology," says Moody, "is an effort to think coherently about the basic beliefs that create a community of faith around the person of Jesus Christ" (p.1). To accomplish this task he aims for the center, which is the Bible. However, in order to think "coherently" about the Bible, it is necessary to aim for *its* center. "As the mighty acts of God associated with the Exodus from Egypt

became the central core of the Old Testament, so the Easter event, the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, became the heart of the New Testament" (p.5). Thus, the truth of Scripture, as extrapolated in theology, is to be determined and understood according to the degree to which the data cohere with the central themes — namely, the Exodus and the resurrection.

The specific value of biblical texts may vary according to the degree to which they contribute to these themes. As Moody puts it: "No one really believes 1, 2 Chronicles stand on the level with 1, 2 Corinthians. Esther hardly holds the place of Ephesians in Christian faith. Not even the Old Testament as a whole can be put on the level with the New" (p.3). Presumably, the "historical portions" are less consequential to the essential message of the Bible than the more "spiritual portions."



In this context it is not really important for Moody to adopt any particular theory of inspiration. He points out that "A biblical view of inspiration must be broad enough

to include the truth in all the theories and adequate for a constructive theology in dialogue with the sacred writings of other world religions, ... philosophy, and ... modern science" (p. 47).

Against all this, the biblicist might well ask such mundane questions as: Who then was Adam? The answer? Well, that all depends on whether you are talking about "(1) the Individual Adam in the J source of Genesis 4, (2) Representative Adam in the JE source of Genesis 2:4b-3:24; ... or (3) Collective Adam in the P source of Genesis 1:1-2:4a" (p.200). Suppose we limit the question to his "Individual Adam." He would then reply: "The first member of this Adam family, J Adam, is clearly a man... with a wife named Eve" (*ibid*). However, this "does not remove the fact that Adam is a man among many" (p.201). Moody comes to this conclusion because he can't otherwise figure out how Cain got his wife!

What about Eden? Moody tells us that Eden is the symbol of "the state of unbroken fellowship between God and man" (p.187). It is a projection of the eschatological state of man. We need not bother ourselves with questions of time and place. Eden is only a metaphor for heaven.

Then again, Moody has already told us that what really matters is what contributes to the central themes of Exodus and Easter. Perhaps it will be more helpful if we ask about more "spiritual" matters pertaining to faith. How about the incarnation of Christ (cf. 1 John 4:1,2)? Moody follows the process theologian Norman Pittenger, when he asserts that "he will have no part in the argument that the presence of God in Jesus was of a different kind from the incarnation

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of God in creation, the church, and the Christian. The difference is one of degree rather than kind" (p.425). God is "the great cosmic Lover who lured Jesus on to do his will in every word and deed so that Jesus can be called the incarnation of God in a man" (*ibid*).

What about the substitutionary atonement? Moody asserts that "propitiation...has no place in any New Testament interpretation. It is clearly a pagan idea" (p.377). What is the significance of Calvary? Christ died to show us God's love, and accordingly, compel us to obedience and faith. Moody complains that the only people who subscribed to his views have been heretics (such as Socinus). He goes on to applaud the more positive strides of modern theology in reviving it.

What about eternal security? As a Baptist, one would surely expect Moody to affirm this. Instead, he follows the Anglican scholar I. Howard Marshall, and his much-maligned Baptist friend, Robert Shank, to assert a conditional salvation. What he does to muster support for this from Baptist and Calvinistic sources can only be construed a misrepresentation of the evidence.

Moody's book is to be faulted at the core. Truth is not merely that which is coherent (and therefore subject to the observer). Truth is that which corresponds to the reality of God and His creation and is, therefore, objective in nature). In Moody's view God's revelation is dialogue. With this, we emphatically disagree. Revelation is God speaking to man. As it pertains to Scripture, it is absolutely unique and partakes of inerrancy in all of its parts.

Since Moody is led to distrust the factual data of the Bible (because he cannot square it with the modern mind), he is also led astray in his understanding of the spiritual matters. Jesus asked Nicodemus, "If I have told you earthly things and ye believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell you heavenly things?" (John 3:12).

In his chapter on the Millen-

nium, Moody warns against confusing "dispensational premillennialism" with "historical premillennialism." I would like to warn the reader not to confuse this "critical conservative" Baptist theologian with "historical Baptist faith." The Word of Truth still stands, but do not always expect to find it in *The Word of Truth*.

### The Creator in the Courtroom

by Norman L. Geisler

Mott Media, 1982, 242 pp., \$5.95

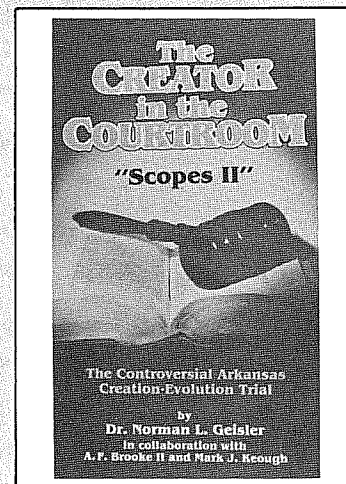
Reviewed by Ralph D. Mawdsley, professor of Christian Day School Administration at Liberty Baptist College, Lynchburg, Virginia.

Dr. Geisler has furnished a valuable research instrument for the vast majority of the American public who were not able to view the Arkansas Creation-Evolution trial firsthand, and whose only information about the trial was through biased media. The book contains copies of a number of original documents, especially the Balanced Treatment Act of Arkansas (Chapter One), the Louisiana Creation-Evolution Act (Appendix Nine), and Judge Overton's opinion (Chapter Eight), that should be of assistance to those who would normally not have access to a law library. In addition, the book contains copies of items from newspapers, magazines, and news releases interspersed throughout Chapters Four through Seven and most of the eleven appendices to the book, that serve to reinforce the author's conclusions regarding media bias and appalling Christian ignorance of, and indifference to, the trial proceedings. The author's incisive analysis of the errors, factors, and implications of the trial in the second half of Chapter Two is worth the purchase of the book.

Apart from the above content, the book is largely a summary of the author's impressions of key

parties to the litigation, at the beginning of Chapter Two, and a summary of the testimony of each witness in Chapters Four through Seven. The eleven appendices are valuable sources of original information regarding key problems surrounding the trial; viz, defense attorneys' handling of the trial (Appendices 1,2,6,7), media bias and/or Christian media indifference (Appendices 3,4,5,11), and general topics concerning the evolution-creation models (Appendices 8,9,10).

The author appeared to have three overriding concerns. First, he emphasizes that the defense attorneys on behalf of the State of Arkansas "executed their duties well" (p. 22), in comparison with the much-publicized criticisms of their defense from certain sources mentioned in the book. However, since the author is a legal layman, it would seem that his conclusion would have been significantly strengthened had he used quotations on a number of occasions from the question-answer format of the trial transcript to illustrate defense-attorney effectiveness.



A second significant point developed throughout the book is the general bias of most of the press. More distressing, the author notes, was not only the absence of Christian media at the entire trial but the almost total reliance by the Christian media upon the accounts of the antagonistic secular media.