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## **Question 14 - What are the positions of Neo-evangelicalism, Mysticism, and Neo-orthodoxy in regards to the Bible?**

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## 101 MOST ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE BIBLE

### 14. What are the positions of Neo-evangelicalism, Mysticism, and Neo-orthodoxy in regards to the Bible?

A. Neo-evangelicalism

Norm Geisler and Ronald Brooks have compared and contrasted Neo-evangelicalism with evangelicalism as follows:

Neo-evangelical	Evangelical
True in whole, but not all parts.	True in whole and in all parts.
True spiritually, but not always historically.	True spiritually and historically.
True morally, but not always scientifically.	True morally and scientifically.
True in intention, but not in all affirmations.	True in intention and all affirmations.
Bible is infallible, not inerrant.	Bible is infallible and inerrant.
Bible is God's instrument of revelation.	Bible is intrinsically a revelation.
Bible is God's record of revelation.	Bible is God's revelation.
God speaks through the words of the Bible.	God speaks in the words of the Bible.
Human language is inadequate to communicate God.	Human language is adequate but not exhaustive.
Much of higher criticism may be accepted.	None of higher criticism is accepted.
Faith is opposed to reason.	Faith is not opposed to reason.

(*When Skeptics Ask*, Victor Books, Division of Scripture Press, USA, Canada, England. 1990. p. 147)

B. The Position of Mysticism – Those holding this view lean heavily upon that divine “inner light” to reveal and guide them into all truth. Thus the personal experiences, feelings, etc. of an individual are looked upon as vital to discovering divine truth as the Word of God itself.

C. The Position of Neo-orthodoxy (popularized by Karl Barth in his *Epistle to the Romans*, first published in 1918) – This position holds that the Bible may well indeed contain the Word of God, but that, until it becomes such, it is as dead and uninspired as any other ancient or modern historical book might be. Thus the Bible is not to be viewed as objective, but subjective in nature. It is only the Word of God as it becomes the Word of God to me. Neo-orthodoxy would thus view the

first 11 chapters of Genesis as “religious myths.” This term is defined as a “conveyor of theological truth in a historical garb, but which theological truth is not dependent upon the historicity of the garb itself for its validity.”

Norm Geisler observes:

“To sum it up, the neo-orthodox view is that the Bible is a fallible human book. Nevertheless, it is the instrument of God’s revelation to us, for it is a record of God’s personal revelation in Christ. Revelation, however, is personal; the Bible is not a verbally inspired revelation from God. It is merely an errant human means through which one can encounter the personal revelation who is Christ. In itself it is not the Word of God: at best, the Bible only becomes the Word of God to the individual when he encounters Christ through it.” (*A General Introduction to the Bible*, p. 175)

Geisler then concludes:

There are three main views within Christendom in the contemporary scene regarding the Bible. These views may be summarized as follows:

The Bible *is* the Word of God – orthodox.

The Bible *contains* the Word of God – liberal.

The Bible *becomes* the Word of God – neo-orthodox.

However, there is a sense in which many who do not hold the orthodox belief in the identity between the Bible and the Word of God do, nonetheless, admit to some truth in the expression “The Bible is the Word of God.” Understood this way, the Bible is the Word of God in one of the following manners:

*essentially* (orthodox);

*partially* (liberals);

*instrumentally* (neo-orthodox, neo-evangelical).

Evangelical Christians, however, believe the *propositions* of the Bible are God’s infallible words. Neo-evangelicals believe only the *purpose* is infallible. Whereas liberals believe one can find God’s Word *here and there* in the Bible, evangelicals believe it is found *everywhere* in Scripture. Although neo-evangelicals hold that the Bible is God’s Word *confessionally* (that is, it is a confession to God’s Word), evangelicals hold that the Bible is God’s Word *essentially*.

The difference between the orthodox and neo-orthodox (and neo-evangelical) views is this:

Orthodox: the Bible *is* a revelation;

Neo-orthodox: the Bible is only a *record* of revelation.

For the orthodox revelation is *prepositional*. For the neo-orthodox revelation is *Personal*; the Bible is only a record of personal, existential encounters with God.

(ibid, p. 188)