

## **BIBLICAL HERMENEUTICS**

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### **SECTION 1 – PREAMBLE**

It is one thing to identify the Word of God as the source of the Truth, but it is another thing to interpret what the Bible actually says.

Hermeneutics is a discipline concerned with how to approach, analyze, talk about, write about, and teach about what billions of people throughout the ages have recognized and treated as the Word of God. God is holy, and His Word is holy. Thus the title on its cover usually identifies it as the *Holy Bible*. Holy means consecrated, hallowed, sacred, sanctified, set apart, and venerated. Books can be divided into two categories: the Bible, which was written by our Creator, and all other books, which were written by his Creatures. The Bible is unique, unlike any other book ever written.

If we recognize that the Holy Bible is God’s book, how should we treat it? The answer is, REVERENTLY! Just as we revere God, so we should revere his book.

Among the ancient Hebrews, whom God used to write the Bible, irreverence for God or God’s Word, the Tanakh (Old Testament), was a capital offense. Now, in this age of disgraceful degeneracy and disrespect for authority, the Bible is attacked viciously with obscenity, profanity, vehemence, and often hatred.

Unfortunately, this attitude receives a measure of encouragement from some Evangelicals, who exhibit a lack of the awe that, in my opinion, we should feel toward the Lord God Almighty. When Moses found himself in His presence, he hid in the cleft of a rock. When Job, Isaiah and John found themselves in His presence, they fell on their faces in the dust. For instance, take Alan Jackson’s song, *What a friend we have in Jesus*. I have sung it with enthusiasm many times, but each time I have been a bit uncomfortable calling Jesus “a friend.” He is not only the Lord God Almighty, but my Maker and my Master as well. In the Marine Corps, I always addressed my superior officers as “Sir.” Even in Heaven, I expect to address Jesus with an honorific even more deferential. He is the One to whom I can “...carry everything...in prayer.”

KJV John 1:1 states, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.” Here, John conflates the Word of God Incarnate (God-the-Son) and the Word of God Written (the Holy Bible). The link between the two is a mystery, but it is also a reality. Thus, as I try to explain my hermeneutics, I recognize that I am trying to explain how I deal with Ultimate Authority, and I pray that I get it right.

## **SECTION 2 - BASIS OF MY HERMENEUTICS**

The basis of my hermeneutics consists of presuppositions<sup>1</sup> which cannot be proved or disproved. They must be accepted or rejected on the basis of belief or disbelief. I cannot give all my reasons for believing them here, because doing so would take up too much space. I refer you to the rest of my writings.

### **Subsection 2A - My Orthodox Presuppositions**

#### **2A-1 - God exists.**

This presupposition is foundational to the Christian faith, and *all creedal formulations of the faith include it*. Moreover they identify God as the Creator of Universe. Incidentally, God regards his existence as self-evident and obvious to Mankind. Regarding those who refuse to acknowledge his existence, Paul wrote, “...the invisible things of [God] from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse” (KJV Romans 1:20).

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<sup>1</sup> Assumptions, axioms or postulates.

## 2A-2 - God is triune.

By triune, I mean that the Godhead consists of three persons, who are identified in the Bible as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Although the Bible does not clearly refer to God as a trinity or otherwise specify that God is triune, evidence for such is extensive and persuasive throughout Scripture, starting with the use of the plural form of God's name <sup>2</sup> in Genesis 1:1 by its Hebrew author. This presupposition is foundational to the Christian faith, and *all creedal formulations of the faith include it.*

## Subsection 2B - My Unorthodox Presuppositions

My first two unorthodox presuppositions are shared by a minority of Christians. The last three may be unique to me.

### 2B-1 - The Bible is inerrant <sup>3</sup>

By inerrant, I meant that the Bible's original manuscripts, which were written by Hebrews in Hebrew, Koine Judeo-Greek, <sup>4</sup> and Aramaic, are free from error and therefore infallible. This presupposition is shared by a minority of Christians, and we regard it as foundational to the Christian faith. Please note, however, *creedal formulations of the faith do not include it. Nonetheless, it affects how we interpret the Bible.*

Probably the verse in Scripture that speaks most directly to this issue is 2 Timothy 3:16-17, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly equipped for all good works" (KJ21).

### **2B-1A - The Nature of Inspiration**

First, what is the nature of inspiration. The two best sources for the explanation of what words mean are a dictionary and a synonym finder. See the table below.

#### MEANING OF INSPIRATION

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<sup>2</sup> Elohim.

<sup>3</sup> Exempt or free from error, completely accurate and trustworthy in all respects.

<sup>4</sup> **Koine Judeo-Greek** - Dr. Eli Lizonkin Eyzenberg describes this Greek as "Koine Judeo-Greek." Koine refers to "...the common, multi-regional form of Greek spoken and written during Hellenistic and Roman antiquity." Judeo refers to the "...specialized form of Greek used by Jews to communicate. This form of Greek retained many words, phrases, grammatical structures, and patterns of thought characteristic of the Hebrew language. We have similar examples in other languages: the well-known Judeo-German (Yiddish), Judeo-Spanish (Ladino), and the less familiar Judeo-Farsi, Judeo-Arabic, Judeo-Italian, and Judeo-Georgian languages." Eyzenberg rejects the idea that "...the New Testament was first written in Hebrew and then later translated into Greek." (See <https://israelbiblecenter.com/the-original-language-of-new-testament/?via=cd5eb07> of February 21, 2018.)

**My dictionary**<sup>5</sup> defines *inspiration* as follows: “1 a: a divine influence or action on a person believed to qualify him to receive and communicate sacred revelation b: the action or power of moving the intellect or emotions c: the act of influencing or suggesting opinion < the [inspiration] of this rumor was traced to a source near the governor> 2: the act of drawing in; *specif*: the drawing of air into the lungs 3 a: the quality or state of being inspired b: something that is inspired <a scheme that that was pure [inspiration]> 4: an inspiring agent or influence.”

**My synonym finder**<sup>6</sup> identifies the following words as synonyms for *inspiration*: “1. stimulus, fillip, stimulation, arousal, provocation, revelation, Muse, afflatus, influence, encouragement, exhortation, prompting, goad, spur; whet, kindling, inflaming, igniting, *Inf.* Sparkling, incitement, instigation, rousing, stirring; awakening, rejuvenation, revitalization, revitalizing, revival, rally. 2. energy, spirit, elan, dash, ardor, passion, zeal, gusto, vigor; eagerness, animation, *Inf.* Ginger, invigoration, exhilaration, enthusiasm, sparkle, ebullience, excitement, ecstasy, thrill, *Inf.* rush, tingling, quickening. 3. brightness, warmth, encouragement, shot in the arm, perking up; assurance, reassurance, confirmation,; comfort, comforting, solace, quieting, calming; unburdening, relief, alleviation, assuagement,; salve, soothing, palliation, mitigation,; aid, assistance, support, sustenance, nourishment,; strength, strengthening, buttressing, bracing, reinforcement; fortification, building up, restoration. 4. revelation, communication, suggestion, explanation; divulging, divulgence, impartation, impartment, disclosure; illumination, enlightenment, awareness, disabusal, insightfulness; instruction, teaching, indoctrination, indoctrinization, education, guide. 5. inhalation, breathing, respiration, *Pathol.* eupnea; indraft, snuffle, snuffle, *Sl.* Snort, *Brit. Sl.* Toot.

Frankly, I do not find the above table helpful. It envelopes "inspiration" in a nearly impenetrable, verbal fog over which one could argue for hours. The suggested meaning that stands out above the rest, at least for me, is "Muse." In Volume 1 of my book, [A Biblical View of Nearly Everything](#), I identify the Holy Spirit as the Muse of the Bible. He inspired its human authors to write what they did, which conforms to the Father's Script. He would not do otherwise because he voluntarily defers to the Father and the Son. Moreover, whatever he did, he did it for "all Scripture," not just a passage here and a passage there. Finally, as I also explain in my book, God has left his fingerprints all over the Scriptures.

Biblical texts mean what they say. A day that starts in the evening and ends the next morning means, not thousands or millions or billions of years, but rather a normal, 24-hour day on Earth. A flood that covers all the mountains and drowns every person, animal, and creeping thing on Earth excepting the passengers of Noah's Ark was not some local inundation, but rather a devastating, global catastrophe. The sun standing still in the sky in Joshua's time is not a figure of speech, but was the result of a cosmic event that showered the battlefield with meteorites and probably shifted the terrestrial axis. The destructions of the Tower of Babel and the Assyrian army of Sennacherib were not due to poor construction or food-poisoning, but rather to blasts from the sky, The empty tomb of Joseph of Arimathea was not due to grave-robbers, but rather to the resurrection of the omnipotent Son of God. Praise His holy name.

Many Christians claim that (a) the Bible is 'authoritative' or (b) some passages contain God's truth, but others do not. If they think seriously about this matter, however, they will soon realize

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<sup>5</sup> Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary, Merriam-Webster Inc. Springfield MA, 1987.

<sup>6</sup> Rodale, Jerome Irving, [The Synonym Finder](#) (completely revised), Rodale Press Inc., Emmaus PA, 1978.

that there is no test which they can apply that will differentiate between the passages that are reliable and the ones that are not. They must make a choice by faith - by faith informed by reason, but nonetheless by faith. This requirement should not surprise us, for the Scriptures tell us that "...without faith, it is impossible to please [God]" (Hebrews 11:16). Of course, the faith that pleases God is faith in the reliability of his book, which is identified therein and throughout as "the "Word of God." <sup>7</sup>

### **2B-1B - The Purpose of Inspiration**

Second, what is the purpose of *inspiration*? The subject text indicates that it renders Scripture "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly equipped for all good works." It can be used to produce sound doctrine, which then needs to be spread through sermons, Bible-classes, and simple fellowship. It can be used to reprove the saints for engaging in sinful behavior and correct the saints who are spreading unsound doctrine. It can be used to instruct the saints in maintaining a right relationship with God and one another. All of the foregoing is directed at enabling the saints to do good works, such as (a) serving in the church's kitchen and dining hall, (b) teaching the Bible to children, new believers, and mature believers in our church, (c) serving in the church's administrative, financial, property-maintenance, and communication departments, (d) serving others both inside and outside our church in other ways, (e) evangelizing unbelievers in our community, our country, and foreign lands, and (f) supporting missions and missionaries wherever they go.

The foregoing is not exhaustive, but it enables me to ask, What is the essential ingredient here? In my opinion, it is getting a right understanding of the nature and content of Scripture - i.e. (a) its history, which not only corrects the badly distorted history of the past in secular text books, but explains how God is preparing a bride for his Son; (b) its biographical sketches, which illustrate the difference between Godly and ungodly behavior; (c) its divine covenants, which govern God's dealings with us; (d) its divine commandments, which convict us of our sinfulness and set a standard for us to try to meet in order to please God; (e) its instructions and warnings to individuals, families, churches, and nations regarding what God will bless and what God will curse, etc. If we do all these things, we will be a beacon and a blessing to everyone around us.

### **2B-2 - The Bible speaks authoritatively regarding all aspects of life.**

The Bible does not confine itself just to spiritual matters. Its many verses regarding history (biographic, genealogic, & historic) and its many verses with implications for science (abstract, natural, and social) are equally reliable, edifying, and enable us to understand what has happened in Universe since its creation - and how it works. This presupposition is shared by a minority of Christians, and we regard it as foundational to the Christian faith. Please note, however, *creedal formulations of the faith do not include it. Nonetheless, it affects how we interpret the Bible.*

### **2B-3 - The persons of the Trinity perform different tasks:**

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<sup>7</sup> Most obviously in John 1:1, but also elsewhere like 1 Samuel 9:27, Mark 7:13, and 2 Timothy 3:16.

When I describe the creation of something, I break it down into three parts: (a) its conception by a person with a mind, (b) its construction by one or more people with bodies, and (c) its vitalization by one or more people who can imbue it with energy and life. In the case of a building, I identify these three parts as (a) its design by an architect with the help of engineers specializing in many different areas,<sup>8</sup> (b) its construction by a builder with the help of subcontracts specializing in many different trades,<sup>9</sup> and (c) its energization by utilities.<sup>10</sup>

Thus, when I began to study the Bible's many descriptions of God, I immediately saw that (1) God-the-Father produced Universe's design and script; (2) God-the-Son (a) made Universe in conformance with the Father's design and (b) sustains, manages, redeems, and will judge Universe in conformance with the Father's script, and (3) God-the-Holy Spirit energized Universe initially and gives life to Universe's flora and fauna. Please note, ***this observation is mine, and creedal formulations of the faith do not include it. Nonetheless, it affects how I interpret the Bible.***

### **2B-4 - Universe is a cosmic drama.**

The drama is preceded by a description of the creation of the theater (Universe) and the stage (Earth) during Days 1-6 of Creation Week. The drama begins with a wedding on Day 6 of Creation Week; the marriage between Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. The drama ends with a wedding at some point in the future, the marriage between God's Son and the Bride of Messiah at the end of this world age, which is known only by God-the-Father.<sup>11</sup> Between these marital bookends is the drama of how God-the-Father is creating a bride for his Son. The cast of the drama consists of the following:

- The drama's protagonist is the Son of God, Jesus of Nazareth, the Jewish Messiah.
- The drama's antagonist is Satan, the Archangel Lucifer, who is the most powerful of created beings. He is a rebel against God, but he must still give a regular account of himself and his minions to the One who sits on the throne in God's throne room.<sup>12</sup>
- The drama's bit players are the billions of men, women, and children who ever lived, for whose allegiance the protagonist and antagonist are contending. The bit players are divided into two categories: (a) the Saved, the Bride of Messiah, consists of all those who accept God-the-Son as their Lord and Savior, and (b) the Lost, who consist of all those who reject God-the-Son as their Lord and Savior.

Please note, ***this observation is mine, and creedal formulations of the faith do not include it. Nonetheless, it affects how I interpret the Bible.***

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<sup>8</sup> Includes HVAC, electricity, elevators, plumbing, structure, telecommunications, etc.

<sup>9</sup> Includes cabinetry, carpentry, communications, earth-moving, excavation, electric-wiring, glazing, iron-work, landscaping, masonry, metal-work, painting, plumbing, roofing, security, etc.)

<sup>10</sup> Providers of electricity, gas, sewage-disposal, telecommunications, trash-disposal, water, etc.

<sup>11</sup> Matthew 24:36 and Mark 13:32.

<sup>12</sup> See Job 1:6-12 and 2:1-6.

## **2B-5 - God-the-Father has preordained everything.**

Since the Bible exists within Universe, it is part of God-the-Father's script for Universe. He must have determined every letter, word, phrase, sentence, paragraph, chapter, and book in the Bible. He also must have ensured that the manner of each author's expression reflected his personality, upbringing, education, vocabulary, profession, experience, class, etc. Second, since God-the-Son is managing Universe in accordance with God-the-Father script, everything that happens in Universe has been preordained by God-the-Father.<sup>13</sup> Some Christians have trouble accepting the concept that all our lives are scripted beforehand, and that God has predestined (a) some people (the Saved) to spend eternity with him and (b) other people (the Lost) to spend eternity exiled from him. If you find this concept unlikely, consider two questions:

- First, does not the playwright of a drama determine what the characters think, say, and do on stage? Of course he does. For example, in *Othello*, Shakespeare's script determines what Othello, Iago, Brabantio, Desdemona, and the rest of the characters in the play think, say, or do. This fact is quite clear to the playgoers (audience) *outside the play*, who are sitting and watching it, but it is not clear to the characters *inside the play*, who are being portrayed by actors and actresses as convincingly as they can.<sup>14</sup> The latter's reputations as professionals will be in proportion to their success in doing so, particularly if they can get the audience to forget that they are watching a play, not reality. I know that God controls my life, because he promises to do so, "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths."<sup>15</sup> Indeed, I take great comfort from the fact.
- Second, do you think that God would leave the composition of his Son's bride to be determined by the whims of bit players in God's cosmic drama? Would he allow them to decide for themselves whether or not they will accept or reject God's offer of salvation through faith in Jesus as their Lord and Savior? Of course not. God-the-Son will have to live with His bride for all eternity. She must be perfect. God-the-Father designed her specifically for Him - just as God designed Eve for Adam - before Universe was created,<sup>16</sup> Now she is being formed, educated, and trained to be a helpmate for her future spouse, to whom she is betrothed. When God-the-Father presents her to his Son, she will be complete and perfect. There will be no surprises.

Again, please note, ***this observation is mine, and creedal formulations of the faith do not include it. Nonetheless, it affects how I interpret the Bible.***

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<sup>13</sup> John 5:19, 5:30, and 12:49.

<sup>14</sup> The drama consists of a simple story. Othello, a moor, is the general of the Venetian army. (b) Iago, a Jew, is a soldier in the Venetian army. Brabantio is a member of the Venetian senate. Desdemona is the daughter of Brabantio and the secret wife of Othello, with whom she has eloped. Iago has been passed over for promotion, blames Othello, and sets out to destroy him by convincing him that his wife Desdemona has been unfaithful to him. Othello becomes convinced of Desdemona's unfaithfulness, kills her, and then kills himself.

<sup>15</sup> KJV Proverbs 3:5-6.

<sup>16</sup> Before the foundations of Universe were laid, God-the-Father wrote in the "Book of Life" the names of all those who would accept God-the-Son as their Savior and Lord (Revelation 17:8).

## **SECTION 3 - PRINCIPLES OF HERMENEUTICS**

The application of hermeneutics depends on adhering to two important principles.

### **Subsection 3A - All interpretations of the Bible are fallible.**

All of us make mistakes, and all of us are influenced by our own expectations and desires. Proverbs 24:6 observes that, "...in [a] multitude of counsellors, there is safety." Consulting several translations of and several commentaries on the passage is a good habit to follow before forming an opinion regarding it, particularly if it is complex or crucial. As straight forward as the passage may seem on first reading, and as accurate as a particular interpretation of the passage may seem to the majority of Biblical scholars, all analyses of the Bible must be treated with a measure of skepticism - my own work in particular, especially when I find myself in the minority, and most especially when I find myself alone.

### **Subsection 3B - Approach the text exegetically.**

*Exegesis* is directed at determining what a text actually says. It considers (a) the audience to which the text is addressed, (b) the genre in which the text was written (epistle, gospel, history, narrative, prophecy, poetry, or a combination thereof), (c) the context of the text (cultural, historical, literary, social, political, religious, or a combination thereof), (d) the language of the text, which I assume to be literal unless the use of a figure of speech like analogy, hyperbole, irony, metaphor, simile, etc. is obvious,<sup>17</sup> (e) the purpose of the text (its author's motivation, intentions, and reasons for writing the text), (f) the relationship of the text to other, contemporary texts that address the same subject, (g) the theological theme or issue in the text, and (h) the lesson in the text regarding God's nature and his way of dealing with his creatures.

*Eisegesis* (exegesis' opposite) is directed at finding in the text what is not there – an idea (usually the author's) to which the eisegete is committed. Much of traditional theology is eisegetical. Many theologians use human observations and theories to explain what the Bible has to say about God and his creation. That denies the Bible's most important aspect - i.e. it is "God-breathed."<sup>18</sup> As I mentioned above in paragraph 3D-1B-5, the Holy Spirit led the authors of its books to write what they wrote in the exact way in which they wrote it. The Biblical texts must be regarded as divine utterances and subject solely to interpretation by other divine utterances - not twisted to conform to secular science and scholarship.

Many sermons today are eisegetical. They pass judgment on a recent event, often without using any citations from the Bible. The primary job of the clergy is to open up the Scriptures to their flocks. Yet, members of their audience often leave the church with no better understanding of Scripture than they possessed when they entered the church.

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<sup>17</sup> Here, one has to exercise some common sense. When Jesus is referred to as a 'door,' the author does not expect us to interpret the description literally, like Jesus being a 3' x 7' oak portal with three hinges and a handle. On the other hand, when Genesis clearly states that God created Universe in a week of seven days, each of which is specified as beginning with evening and ending with morning, thereby describing the normal, 24-hour day with which we are familiar, the author does not allow us to claim that each 'day' represents an eon of time.

<sup>18</sup> NIV 2 Timothy 3:16.



## SECTION 4 - EXAMPLE OF APPLICATION OF HERMENEUTICS

To give you some idea of how I apply hermeneutical assumptions and principles to discern the meaning of a text, I will discuss the passage 2 Peter 3:8-9, which reads as follows:

...beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing: that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.<sup>19</sup> The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness, but is long suffering toward us, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. (KJ21)

I will start with some exegesis:

4A - Concerning the text's audience, this passage is directed at *believers* in some of the churches in Asia Minor.

4B - Concerning the text's genre, this passage is part of an epistle from Peter to *fellow-believers*, correcting them and instructing them.

4C - Concerning the text's context, this passage is part of a discussion of a religious problem in the churches. Some *believers* are complaining that the Lord has delayed overlong in returning to Earth as He promised to do.

4D - Concerning the text's language, this passage is partly a subtle reprimand and partly a patient teaching. Peter is telling these *believers* that they should not be finding fault with the Lord by suggesting that He is "slack" or delinquent in some way, and he is explaining that the Lord does not want anyone whose name is written in the Book of Life, including future *believers*, to perish without having the opportunity (a) to live, (b) to hear the Gospel, (c) to come to repentance, (d) to accept Jesus as their Lord and Savior, and (e) to join the community of the Saved (the Bride of Christ). which would happen if He returned before they received that opportunity. He is committed to following His Father's plan exactly.

4E - Concerning the text's purpose, clearly this passage was written to stop the grumbling in these churches which, if allowed to flourish, will result in disrespect for the Lord, disharmony among the brethren, and neglect of the duty of Christians to encourage and build up one another within the church and preach the Gospel to unbelievers outside the church, when among them are future *believers*.

4F - Concerning the text's relationship to other texts, I cannot cite all of them here, but included in them would be texts concerning the Lord's determination to manage Universe in precise conformance with His Father's script.

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<sup>19</sup> This phrase is not saying that the use of "day" in the Scriptures can be translated as "one thousand years." It is reminding us that God exists outside Universe, where "time" does not exist.

4G - Concerning the theological theme, this passage gives clear instruction concerning the nature of salvation. Sinful unbelievers who are predestined to be saved (a) hear the Gospel, (b) come to repentance, (c) thereafter regard Jesus as their Lord and Savior, and (e) join the ranks of the Saved (the Bride of Christ). To gather all the Lord's sheep will require thousands of years.

4H - Concerning the text's lesson about God and his ways, the passage indicates that God is never in a hurry and patiently waits while his people (the faithful remnant of Israel (Jewish believers) and the faithful Gentiles who are grafted into Israel), imperfectly preach the Gospel, imperfectly lead unbelievers to repentance and acceptance of the Messiah as their Lord and Savior, imperfectly disciple new believers, and imperfectly worship God together, all with the help of the Holy Spirit.

## **SECTION 5 - EXAMPLE OF MISINTERPRETATION OF SCRIPTURE**

Many Christians use this passage to claim the following: (a) God loves everyone. (b) God wants everyone to be saved. (c) God lets everyone choose to accept or reject his Son as his or her Lord and Savior. Is that what this verse is really saying? Given the evidence in the above application of hermeneutics, I do not believe so.

5A - First, regarding the claim that God loves everyone: The Bible does say that God is love<sup>20</sup> and that he loves the world,<sup>21</sup> his creation, but, to the best of my knowledge, it does not say that God loves everyone. In fact, it indicates that, because God is holy, he hates sin and he hates unrepentant sinners.<sup>22</sup> The mantra, "God hates the sin, but loves the sinner," which one often hears from Evangelicals, is sentimental nonsense. God even hated Esau while he was in Rebecca's womb.<sup>23</sup> He regards sin as so serious that he sentenced every man, woman, and child who was, has been or will be born to die because of their sinfulness, which they inherited from Adam and Eve. Then, God destroyed (a) the Antediluvians for their unrestrained evil-doing, (b) the ancients Babylonians and their tower for their arrogant attempt to reach unto heaven, (c) the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah for their inhabitants' unrestrained, sexual immorality, and (d) the ancient Egyptians for enslaving the Hebrews, his chosen people. Nonetheless, because he is merciful, he sent his divine Son to become a humble man, live a sinless life, and then die on a cross at Golgotha to atone for the sins of all repentant sinners who accept Him as their Savior and Lord.

5B - Second, regarding the claim that God wants everyone to be saved: If the claim is true, why would God (a) enter the names of the Saved in and (b) omit the names of the Lost from the Book of Life before he created Universe. Clearly, in the drama of Creation, he preordained that some people would repent of their sins and accept Jesus as their Lord and Savior, thereby joining the eternally Saved (the Bride of Messiah) and some people would not repent of their sins and reject Jesus as their Lord and Savior, thereby remaining eternally Lost. *Within the Cosmic Drama, however, we believe that we have free will and will be judged according to the choices we make.*

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<sup>20</sup> 1 John 4:8, 1 John 4:16.

<sup>21</sup> John 3:16.

<sup>22</sup> See Psalm 5:5, Psalm 7:11, Psalm 11:5, and Psalm 34:16.

<sup>23</sup> Romans 9:13, Malachi 1.

5C - Third, regarding the claim that God lets everyone choose his or her fate in eternity: Once again, I refer to Revelation 17:8, which clearly states that, before the foundations of the world were laid, God-the-Father wrote in the “Book of Life” the names of all those who would accept His only and beloved Son as their Lord and Savior. That is one reason why we believers must live a life of wonder and thanksgiving for what the Lord has done for us. Let us continually sing, “Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound, That saved a wretch like me! I once was lost, but now am found, Was blind but now I see.”<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> First stanza of John Newton’s hymn, *Amazing Grace*.