

JAMES FODOR'S CHRISTIAN THEORY OF TRUTH: IS IT CHRISTIAN?

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In his recent book *Christian Hermeneutics*, James Fodor observes that 'although Christians have from the very beginning been interested in living truthful, obedient lives ... they have not exhibited the same passion for developing their own distinctive *theory* of truth'.¹ Yet 'the task confronting contemporary theology ... is that of the rehabilitation or recovery of a distinctively Christian vision of truth'.² To his credit, Fodor has attempted to rectify this state of affairs: first, by critiquing some of the more prominent theories of truth from a Christian point of view, and secondly, by sketching some of the essential elements of a uniquely Christian understanding or conception of truth. In this article, I present a detailed analysis of Fodor's alethic musings, and argue that they are both logically and theologically unsound.

THE THEORY EXPLAINED

The Cartesian Gap

As Fodor sees things, modern philosophical thought has for some time now been under the grips of a 'most pernicious Cartesian dualism'.³ As a result,

a gap has opened up between the mind, which represents ... [mind independent reality] to consciousness, and the external world, which is said to exist independently of the mind.⁴

Now a theist might initially wonder why this is a *pernicious* state of affairs; she is, after all, already committed to an ontological dualism between the creator and his creation. As Richard Swinburne puts it, God is 'a person without a body (i.e., a spirit) who is ... the creator and sustainer of the universe'.⁵ A real distinction between mental and extra-mental reality is therefore not all that unexpected given theism. So

wherein lies the problem? The difficulty, according to Fodor, is to be found in the fact that

once a separation is posited between mind and physical reality, between consciousness and thing, some account must then be provided of how the mind makes connections or comes into contact with this external world.⁶

This strikes one as nothing but the sober truth; according to Fodor, however, this way of looking at things actually ‘poses all sorts of artificial problems’⁷ – in particular, the ‘spectre of scepticism’.⁸ The central problem here has to do with the mediating role of language in bridging this gap between the mind and the extramental world. The Cartesian believes that our linguistic utterances can (and sometimes do) bridge this gap by making successful reference to the world. Fodor, on the other hand, has his doubts about this, and proposes to ‘defeat the epistemological assumptions that created the so-called problem in the first place’.⁹ And how is this to be done? By operating with a different understanding of truth, according to which

It is simply *not* the case that linguistic assertions first of all occur in a mental domain which then require some sort of ontological confirmation to be admitted as true. Rather, [on Fodor’s understanding of truth] the self, language, and world coexist in relations of mutual implication. They can only be conceived together, the reality of one being contingent upon the reality of the other two.¹⁰

So the primary bearers of truth are concrete and linguistic in nature – perhaps sentence utterances or inscriptions. Furthermore, in some way or another, these linguistic objects do not ‘occur in a mental domain’, necessitating the existence of truth makers (say, facts or states of affairs) in the external world which function to make them true. Thus the Cartesian gap vanishes. At first glance, it seems to be nothing more than common sense to hold that, in assertively uttering the sentence ‘Toronto, Ontario is north of Springfield, Missouri’, what you have asserted is true because indeed Toronto *is* north of Springfield. (Your geography teacher probably thought so.) On Fodor’s view, however, you are making a fundamental mistake, since you are looking for an unneeded ontological confirmation for your sentential utterance.

But why think that? Why think that truth bearers don’t require truth makers? Because, we are told, the existence of language and the existence of the world are mutually entailing, each is dependent for its existence on the other; they stand, says Fodor, in a relation of ‘inescapable interdependence’.¹¹ It is not obvious what this is supposed to mean. Does Fodor mean to say that the claim *Language exists* entails and is entailed by the claim *The world exists*? Indeed he does. For Fodor endorses a Wittgensteinian view of religious language, according to which

Language, truth, and reality ... are inseparably conjoined in the very linguistic practices that constitute a faithful display of our relations to God, to one another, and to

the world ... words can only bear truth if they are not wrenched apart from particular language-games and forms of life which give them sense in the first place.¹²

But then it automatically follows that the existence of truth (and thus Christian truth) depends on our linguistic activities, so that if there were no language users, there would be no such thing as truth. The claim *Jesus rose from the dead* is (on this view) not a factual assertion at all; it is not true because – as a matter of historical fact – Jesus did rise from the dead; rather, it is a factually meaningless claim. For if it were factually significant, then it would be true or false wholly apart from our linguistic practices and behaviour. Thus although Fodor initially concedes that ‘it is hard ... to get away from the idea that our thinking must be judged by the extent to which it accords with something over against it’,¹³ in the end he unequivocally rejects the idea that our religious assertions are true by virtue of their corresponding to the way things really are.¹⁴ For Fodor, however, this poses no problem, because

Christian truth remains unique (because predicated on a faith which is inseparable from the distinct skills and practices, habits and rites, that are necessary for its embodiment) and to that extent not measurable against anything outside itself. In short, Christian truth refuses to submit unequivocally to external criteria.¹⁵

And the demand that a given theological claim *correspond to the facts* in order to be true is just one of the many externally imposed criteria to be ‘vigorously and consistently resisted’¹⁶ by the contemporary theologian.

Truth and transformation

The departure point for Fodor’s distinctively Christian vision of truth is his contention that ‘we can only say that we take a theological claim as true if by so taking it we allow ourselves, no matter how imperfectly, to be remade by it’.¹⁷ Now a prima-facie reading of this remark suggests the following: For any individual **S** and theological claim or proposition **p**,

(1) **S** believes that **p** only if **S** is transformed by **p**.

Thus Fodor asserts that we cannot measure or discover the truth of the proposition ‘Jesus was crucified under Pontius Pilate’ unless we also allow ourselves to be ‘transformed’ by it. Here we face two crucial questions: (1) What sorts of claims count as theological? and (2) What does the metaphor of transformation come to in the end? Take the first question first. Fodor nowhere tells us what a theological claim or proposition *is*. Do I make a theological claim, for example, if I assert that ‘The number from the tribe of Gad was 45,650’ (Num 1:24)? Probably not; but why not? Perhaps Fodor would say that this fails to be a theological proposition or claim because it does not mention God. Well then, consider the following:

At that time the Lord said to Joshua, ‘Make flint knives and circumcise the people of Israel again the second time’ (Josh 5:2).

Here is a claim that is at once biblical and God-referential. Does it count as theological? Fodor says nothing at all that would help us answer this question. And the question is an important one, since both of the aforementioned claims, if theological, are such that one could easily believe them without being 'transformed', in which case (1) is simply false.

This raises the question of the meaning of 'transformation'. Fodor does not cash out this metaphor, but he does provide us with a few synonymous expressions. You are 'transformed' by believing a theological claim if you are 'touched', 'altered', or 'remade' by it. One wonders, nevertheless, what it could possibly mean to be 'remade' by the proposition *Jesus was crucified under Pontius Pilate* – a proposition Fodor classifies as theological in nature. I believe this proposition, for example; but I am unable to discern whether in so doing I have been 'altered' in the appropriate way. Naturally, in coming to believe this proposition, I come to hold a belief I did not previously hold. In that sense, I suppose, we could say that I have been 'altered' by it. But if this is what Fodor has in mind, then (1) becomes wholly trivial, informing us merely that I can believe a proposition only if it is a part of my noetic structure – that is, only if I believe it. This is true but not altogether enlightening.

It might be objected, however, that to attribute (1) to Fodor is somewhat hasty. For how do we know that his expression 'take a theological claim as true' really means 'believe that a theological claim is true'? Perhaps Fodor is not thinking of propositional belief here at all. The problem with this interpretation is that there are textual reasons for thinking that this is *precisely* what Fodor has in mind. For example, he writes:

When the Christian *believer* recites the Creed ... *claiming* that Christ was 'crucified for us under Pontius Pilate' or that 'on the third day he rose from the dead', the *truth of these affirmations* cannot be measured apart from some consideration of the relation that obtains between those *claims* and the people who affirm them.¹⁸

So claims are affirmations of some kind, and a true claim is just a true affirmation. Theological claims – say, for example, that *Christ rose from the dead on the third day* – are then affirmations of a theological variety. And a Christian believer is someone who makes certain theological truth claims. But then the question arises: How is it possible for a believer to make a theological claim – that is, to claim that some theological proposition or another is true – if she does not even *believe* that it is true? (She is, after all, a Christian *believer*.) Surely this is not possible at all. Thus whatever else he might have to say about truth, there is (for Fodor) no getting around the fact that there is such a thing as propositional theological belief. (1) does seem to stick.

There is, of course, still this matter of the unclarities attending the notion of transformation employed in (1). Suppose we concede for the

moment that we have some slight grasp (even if an unsteady one) of this notion. It will also be true, I should think, that none of us could be ‘transformed’, ‘touched’, or ‘altered’ by a theological claim unless we first believed it. That is to say, we can rightly affirm

(2) **S** is transformed by **p** only if **S** believes that **p**.

For it is difficult at best to see how any of us could be transformed by a theological claim that we did not even believe. Suppose, for example, that I were to tell you that I had been transformed by the proposition *God created the universe ex nihilo*, but in fact I do not believe that God has done anything of the sort. (Perhaps I am a theist who, following Aristotle, believes that matter is eternal and uncaused.) Would this make even the slightest sense to you? At the very least, would I not have to believe that God existed and had brought the universe into being without a material cause? Surely this much is required, if only to set the stage for the transformation in question.

But now notice that from (1) and (2), we can validly infer

(3) **S** believes that **p** if and only if **S** is transformed by **p**.

And since Fodor makes heavy weather of the fact that there is an ‘intrinsic relation’,¹⁹ ‘inextricable connections’²⁰ and an ‘inseparable unity’²¹ between truth and truthfulness, which, he argues, goes hand-in-hand with being transformed, it seems that we are also justified in ascribing to him the following:

(4) **p** is true if and only if **S** is transformed by **p**.

And (3) and (4), of course, entail

(5) **p** is true if and only if **S** believes that **p**

which is just a bald statement of the *relativistic* conception of truth (specified to theological claims or propositions). Notice too that this conception of truth is not objective, since truth gets cashed out in terms of what some *subject* or individual believes. For Fodor, then, theological truth is neither objective nor absolute.

THE THEORY EXAMINED

The question arises: Is Fodor’s Christian or transformational conception of truth actually Christian? The answer, in short, is that it depends. It depends on what we take the *desiderata* of a Christian theory of truth to be. I think it is safe to assume that a theory of this sort would have to satisfy at least two conditions: (a) it would have to square with the biblical text, and (b) it would have to be logically sound.

Transformational troubles

Does Fodor’s theory meet these two conditions? As far as I can tell, it is not even close. To begin with, a crucial premise in his argument is

(1) **S** believes that **p** only if **S** is transformed by **p**.

What good reason is there for thinking that (1) is true? None that I can see. Indeed, there is an excellent biblical reason for thinking that it is false. As noted above, Fodor fails to tell his reader just what a theological claim is. I assume, however, that were I to claim that God exists, I would be making a theological claim or expressing a theological proposition. Now (1) will be false if someone can believe the proposition *God exists* without being transformed or remade by it. Is this possible? It certainly is. For according to James 2:19, 'even the demons believe' the proposition 'God exists' – 'and shudder'. Here, then, is a clear-cut biblical counterexample to (1). The devil and his angels believe the theological claim that God exists, but they are not transformed or remade in so doing. (I assume that 'shuddering' in response to a theological claim does not amount to being 'remade' or 'transformed' by it.) It is also worth pointing out that the falsity of (1), together with the fact that (1) is entailed by (3), implies that (3) is false as well.

There is also serious difficulty with (4). It is simply not true that being transformed by a theological claim is either a necessary or a sufficient condition for that claim's being true. Consider the proposition *God will ultimately save everyone*. Suppose I come to believe this proposition. Suppose further, that I am transformed in the appropriate way; I am 'altered' or 'moved', let us say, in my inmost being, responding to what I take to be God's gracious condescension towards all of human kind, myself included. Here it appears that I have undergone the requisite transformation; however, if biblical Christianity is true, this transformation has come at the expense of my believing something false: *that God will ultimately save everyone*. So transformation is not a sufficient condition for truth.

But neither is transformation a necessary condition for truth. For of course there are ever so many true theological propositions which have not transformed me, since I have not so much as considered them. Suppose, for example, that I am a neophyte at metaphysics and know nothing at all about abstract objects such as propositions, sets, possible worlds, and the like. Then the proposition *God is the ontological ground of abstract objects* will never have occurred to me; hence I will not have been transformed by it. Yet this proposition is both theological and true.²²

This raises a general concern. There is certainly nothing wrong with Fodor's insisting that if a proposition is true, then we ought to come to terms with that truth, that we ought to believe it, embrace it, and speak it. The problem comes with his insistence that we build *our response* to the truth into the very conception of truth itself. In effect, what this does is to transform truth from an objective notion into a subjective one. The existence of theological truth then becomes dependent on the subjective responses of human beings to particular theological claims. And this is profoundly mistaken from a Christian perspective. For example, it

would force Fodor into the absurd position of having to say that during the Jurassic period (when there were no human beings around), there was no such thing as theological truth, since there were no human beings about to believe or be transformed by that truth. Thus, on Fodor's view, it is not *true* that God existed during the Jurassic period.²³ 'truth, after all, is not simply *there*, waiting to be talked about or spoken of independent of who we are'.²⁴ But if so, then God simply did not exist during that period; unfortunately for God, we human beings were not around to bring about his existence by way of our linguistic activities! Indeed, as Alvin Plantinga has pointed out, things get even worse here; for according to this sort of anti-realism, we actually

take the place of God. What there is and what it is like is really up to us, and a result of our activity ... [But the view that] it is really we human beings who have made or structured the world, from a Christian perspective, is no more than a piece of silly foolishness, less heroically Promethean than laughably Quixotic.²⁵

Not a pretty picture.

Here we can imagine Fodor regrouping and claiming that God *did* exist during the Jurassic period, it is just that it wasn't *true* to say that he did. But surely this is unreasonable. If God exists, then the proposition *God exists* is true; if Jesus rose from the dead, then the proposition *Jesus rose from the dead* is true. This is perfectly obvious. Perhaps Fodor would say that the proposition *God exists* was true during the Jurassic period, not because of the noetic activity of human beings, but rather because God himself believed that he existed and was accordingly transformed or remade. It is difficult to take this suggestion seriously, however. Why would a being 'than which none greater can be conceived' need (or even have the potentiality) to be remade or transformed? At least according to classical theism, God is a perfect being and therefore lacks nothing by way of power or perfections.

In response to this point, one could, I suppose, drop the transformation requirement altogether and maintain that as long as God himself is a language user, there will be truth. Unfortunately, this avenue of escape is not open to Fodor; a good number of his discussions – for example, his rejection of correspondence theories of truth – require that truth bearers be concrete bits of language – say, sentential utterances or inscriptions. But then in order for there to be necessary truths (that is, propositions which could not possibly fail to exist or be true) there would have to be a whole host of necessarily existing, concrete objects distinct from God and on which he depended for a portion of his true beliefs. Of course this completely undercuts the doctrine of God's aseity. Moreover, it is no good to counter that these objects are *internal* to God's nature, for then they would have to be something like divine thoughts; and sentences and thoughts are vastly different sorts of things. In particular, sentences lack the intentional properties of thoughts; they

are not *of* or *about* things, which is why they cannot serve as bearers of truth, Fodor's protests to the contrary notwithstanding.²⁶

Relativistic and fideistic troubles

From a Christian perspective, a major obstacle to accepting Fodor's Christian vision of truth is that it is relativistic; it says that a theological proposition is true just in case someone believes it. But as we are all well aware, there is nothing like universal agreement on the truth value of theological propositions. Pope John Paul II believes that God exists, and Madelyn Murray O'Hair believes that he does not. If (5) is true, we are forced to say that they are both right; the proposition *There is a God* is true (because the Pope believes it), and the proposition *There is no God* is also true (being among Ms O'Hair's beliefs). And this is simply too much to put up with from a Christian perspective or any other perspective for that matter.

Someone might say that (4) and (5) are analyses or definitions of truth, but Fodor expressly distances himself from the project of constructing 'a satisfactory definition or understanding of truth, theological or otherwise',²⁷ indeed, he holds that the 'quest for the "essence" of truth is ... misguided'.²⁸ Hence, so the objection goes, Fodor himself would reject (4) and (5), so that any critique of his position based on these propositions misses the mark. Well, I certainly agree that Fodor's understanding of truth is not satisfactory; it is, in fact, multiply flawed. But he cannot sidestep these flaws by claiming that he was not attempting to tell us what truth *is*. After all, he spends a good deal of time trying to persuade his reader, first of all, that a proper theory of truth will *not* be a correspondence, coherence, or pragmatic theory (naturally enough, you have to know something of what truth is to know what it is not); and secondly, that truth and transformation are intrinsically related, inextricably connected, and inseparably united – in short, that the essence of truth is transformation.

At any rate, although Fodor asserts that his approach to understanding Christian truth is neither relativistic nor fideistic,²⁹ I think we can see that he is mistaken about this; furthermore, this can be done without any recourse to either (4) or (5). Fodor, you recall, endorses a language-game approach to religious language, one which implies that

Christian truth remains unique (because predicated on a faith which is inseparable from the distinct skills and practices, habits and rites, that are necessary for its embodiment) and to that extent not measurable against anything outside itself.³⁰

The basic idea is that the truths of the Christian faith are somehow dependent on the Christian language-game and way of life (rather than, say, historical facts to which they must correspond). To say that these truths are not 'measurable against' anything outside the Christian

language-game is just to say that these truths are determined wholly from within that language game and are therefore autonomous.

Of course no one doubts that there are *other* language-games and forms of life than the Christian one; there are Buddhist, Muslim, Mormon, and even atheist language-using communities, each with their own distinctive linguistic habits and rites. And it will be no less true for each of these faiths or worldview perspectives that *their* linguistic activities will be necessary for *their* embodiment. Hence they too will be unique, and so need not bow to Fodor's Christian vision of truth and the truth claims spawned by the Christian language-game and form of life. (To deny this, in the present context, would just be a fallacious case of special pleading.) The upshot is that what is true for the Christian community will not necessarily be true for other linguistic communities. Take, for example, the proposition *Jesus rose from the dead*. Won't there be language-games – say, the one played by Muslims – in which this proposition is wildly false? Indeed there will.³¹ Hence *Jesus rose from the dead* will be true for some language-games but not others; that is, its truth will be *relativized* to each of the plurality of religious, linguistic communities.

There are problems for Fodor here. For one thing, there is no basis (on the view just described) for criticizing other language games who do not believe that Jesus rose from the dead. To objectively criticize another linguistic community requires that there be some external criteria to which that community must submit. But if every linguistic community can lay claim to being autonomous, there are no such criteria; the only criteria to which a given linguistic community must attend are its own. And this cripples the entire apologetic enterprise. For consider 1 Peter 3:15 informs us that we are to give an *apologia* (verbal defence) to everyone who asks us for the *reason* for the hope within us. On the present view, this is quite impossible. Fodorian apologetics is a different sort of animal. It does not defend anything; rather it self-describes:

Theology (and Christian life as a whole) is ... better served by exploring the rich internal networkings of its own forms of life rather than by being preoccupied with how it might engage others who do not share those ways of life on some purported neutral territory ... It is content with the much more modest task of clarification and increased self-understanding.³²

Having presented her truth claims to a member of a different language using community, the Christian believer, if asked for a non-question-begging reason for why she believes what she does, is counselled to heroically beg the question and merely redescribe her original view in slightly more detail.

Secondly, suppose I decide to assert that Jesus in fact did *not* rise from the dead. What would be wrong with that? No doubt it would be a violation of the agreed upon linguistic behaviour of the Christian language-game; and as we all know, it is difficult to talk with someone

who refuses to pay attention to the established rules of language in one's linguistic community. But why would it be incorrect? Why would it be mistaken? I cannot see that it would unless what I said somehow *got things wrong*, that is, failed to correctly represent the way things were in the extralinguistic, extramental world. If as a matter of historical fact Jesus has risen from the dead, then my claiming otherwise is a mistake (even if the language I use in making this claim is consistent with the language-game I happen to be playing). Since Fodor rejects the correspondence theory of truth and its implied 'Cartesian gap', at best he can say that I am committing an error of language if, for example, while still a member of the Christian language using community, I start using anti-supernaturalist language of the likes of Richard Dawkins or Stephen J. Gould. But there is nothing factually mistaken about what I am saying.

Thirdly, consider Fodor's endorsement of Arthur Holmes's dictum: 'For the Christian all truth is, in the end, God's truth'.³³ In the present context, it is unclear what this statement is supposed to mean. Does Fodor mean to endorse

(6) All truth within *the Christian* language-game is God's truth
or

(7) All truth within *any* language-game is God's truth?

On the first reading – that is, (6) – Holmes's dictum turns out to be an empty tautology, telling us merely that all Christian truth is God's truth. This is certainly nothing to write home about, and is hardly what Holmes had in mind. On the other hand, if Fodor opts for (7), then God's truth turns out to be contradictory, since there will obviously be some theological claim or proposition **p** such that some language-games contain **p** while others contain the negation of **p**, namely, **not-p**. It seems to me, therefore, that Fodor is in the awkward position of being unable to meaningfully affirm that all truth is God's truth. And this is a strike, not against Holmes's dictum, but rather against Fodor's truth theory.

A further and deeper difficulty here concerns Fodor's attempt to eliminate the so-called 'pernicious' Cartesian gap – the gap between the mind and the extramental world.³⁴ Fodor's preferred solution, you recall, has 'the self, language, and world coexist[ing] in relations of mutual implication ... the reality of one being contingent upon the reality of the other two'.³⁵ As a pillar in a Christian perspective on truth, this is perplexing. For where is God supposed to fit in this picture? According to Fodor, 'God is not an object of *any* kind'.³⁶ He is therefore neither a material object nor an immaterial object, since he is not an object at all. But then in what sense can God be said to exist (extramentally) in the world? If Fodor is right, it is monumentally difficult to see how he *could* possess this sort of existence. It is equally difficult to envision God as somehow part of the self. If we know anything at all about the Christian concept of God, we know that it precludes a priori God's being any 'part' of us whatsoever.

So where *does* God fit into Fodor's picture of reality? The answer, at least at face value, is that God (and everything else) is a mere *façon de parler* – a linguistic construction on our part. Thus, says Fodor, 'Language, truth, and reality ... are inseparably conjoined in the very linguistic practices that constitute a faithful display of our relations to God, to one another, and to the world'.³⁷ But if so, then

(8) Reality depends on our linguistic practices.

Once again, however, there is ambiguity. For (8) might be taken as saying either

(8a) Reality *as it stands apart from our linguistic practices* depends on our linguistic practices

or

(8b) Reality *as constituted by our linguistic practices* depends on our linguistic practices.

According to (8a), our linguistic behaviour accounts for the way things are in and of themselves; in which case we find ourselves responsible not only for the existence and fundamental nature of the extralinguistic world but also that of God himself. Hence, in a bizarre case of role reversal, it turns out that it is not God who has created us; rather, it is we human language users who have created God. To make matters worse, it looks as though we have also created ourselves, if (as seems plausible) we possess extralinguistic existence. All of this, of course, is quite impossible. (8a) is thus mired down in theological and self-referential difficulties.

That leaves (8b). Is it true? Indeed it is, but only in a trivial sense. For what it tells us is that there is such a thing as a linguistically constructed world, which (obviously enough) depends for its existence on our having linguistically constructed it. Fair enough. What one wants to know, however, is whether there is also an *extralinguistic* world. If there is, then how are these two worlds related? Unless Fodor is simply going to lapse into a kind of linguistic solipsism here, it looks as though he is faced with a gap of his own – a Fodorian (and fideistic) gap between the linguistic and extralinguistic worlds – in which case a realist or correspondence theory of truth seems in order.³⁸

In conclusion, then, Fodor's theory of truth comes at a price; unfortunately, the price is not right. His notion of transformation scarcely seems relevant to the *nature* of truth; at best, transformation is something that comes into play with our *response* to the truth. Indeed, insisting on an inseparable union of truth and transformation leads to a concept of truth which is both subjective and relative, and not at all what one might expect or desire in a *Christian* approach to this matter. Fodor's rejection of realist or correspondence theories of truth in favour of a language-game approach to religious discourse is also deeply at odds with Christian theism. For it either issues in a kind of creative anti-realism, according to which the existence and basic structure of the

world is determined by *our* linguistic activities (thereby cutting God out of the creative picture), or it implies that although our language does not correspond to the world, we should go on making and believing our theological truth claims anyway. It seems to me, therefore, that James Fodor's Christian theory of truth, while having the distinct advantage of being highly interesting and inventive, is in most crucial respects not Christian at all.³⁹

Notes

- 1 James Fodor, *Christian Hermeneutics* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), p. 62.
- 2 *Ibid.*, p. 72.
- 3 *Ibid.*, p. 8.
- 4 *Ibid.*
- 5 Richard Swinburne, *The Coherence of Theism* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), p. 1.
- 6 *Christian Hermeneutics*, p. 8.
- 7 *Ibid.*
- 8 *Ibid.*, p. 10.
- 9 *Ibid.*, p. 11.
- 10 *Ibid.*
- 11 *Ibid.*, p. 5.
- 12 *Ibid.*, pp. 16, 88.
- 13 *Ibid.* This sentiment is also an essential feature of Richard Rorty's postmodernist thought: 'To say that truth is not out there is simply to say that where there are no sentences there is no truth, that sentences are elements of human languages, and that human languages are human creations. Truth cannot be out there – cannot exist independently of the human mind – because sentences cannot so exist, or be out there' (*Contingency, Irony and Solidarity* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989], p. 5). For a withering critique of Rorty's theory of truth, see Alvin Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 429–36.
- 14 Fodor does mention two independent reasons for rejecting correspondence theories of truth (see *Christian Hermeneutics*, p. 64). First, we do not know what correspondence consists in; and secondly, testing the truth of our linguistic claims would require a 'view from nowhere' vantage point distinct from both language and the world. But such a vantage point is not possible. It seems to me that neither of these complaints is very forceful. For one thing, from the fact that no philosopher has successfully elucidated the correspondence relation, it does not follow that truth is not correspondence. To deny this is to advance the wholly implausible claim that what truth *is* is dependent on the vagaries of professional philosophy. Secondly, Fodor's 'view from nowhere' objection fails if the bearers of truth are nonlinguistic. For detailed and powerful argument to the effect that truth bearers cannot be concrete, linguistic objects, see Alvin Plantinga, *Warrant and Proper Function* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 115–21. See also William P. Alston, *A Realist Conception of Truth* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), pp. 9–22. An argument for the claim that the biblical view of truth is correspondence can be found in Norman L. Geisler, 'The Concept of Truth in the Inerrancy Debate', *Bibliotheca Sacra* (October–December 1980), pp. 327–39.
- 15 *Christian Hermeneutics*, p. 71.
- 16 *Ibid.*, p. 72.
- 17 *Ibid.*, p. 69.
- 18 *Ibid.*, emphasis added.
- 19 *Ibid.*, p. 71.
- 20 *Ibid.*, p. 70.
- 21 *Ibid.*, p. 81.
- 22 See Richard Brian Davis, *The Metaphysics of Theism and Modality* (Peter Lang Publishing, forthcoming).
- 23 For an amusing exchange on this point, see Paul Copan (ed.), *Will the Real Jesus Please Stand Up? A Debate between William Lane Craig and John Dominic Crossan* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998), pp. 49–51.

24 *Christian Hermeneutics*, p. 70.

25 Alvin Plantinga, *The Twin Pillars of Christian Scholarship* (Grand Rapids: Calvin College, 1990), pp. 19–20. Plantinga suggests calling the view espoused by Fodor ‘Enlightenment Humanism’, ‘Enlightenment Subjectivism’, or ‘Creative Anti-Realism’.

26 For a detailed discussion of this point, see Alvin Plantinga, *Warrant and Proper Function*, pp. 115–17.

27 *Christian Hermeneutics*, p. 12.

28 *Ibid.*, p. 73.

29 See *ibid.*, p. 20.

30 *Ibid.*, p. 71.

31 See Surah 4:157–9.

32 *Christian Hermeneutics*, pp. 19–20.

33 *Ibid.*, p. 72. See also Arthur F. Holmes, *All Truth is God’s Truth* (Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press, 1977).

34 *Christian Hermeneutics*, p. 8.

35 *Ibid.*, p. 11.

36 *Ibid.*, p. 17.

37 *Ibid.*, p. 16.

38 Fodor’s casual dismissal of correspondence is even more troubling in light of the opening paragraph of his introduction where he indicates that Scripture (at least those verses he quotes) ‘purport to be about what obtains in the world ... to what is the case ...’ (*ibid.*, p. 1).

39 Special thanks to Sarah Lublink for her helpful comments on an earlier version of this article.