

## Licona's Denial of Inerrancy: The List Grows

By Norman L. Geisler (12/22/2011)

### Licona's Denial of the Historicity of New Testament Texts

Previous articles on my web site ([www.normangeisler.net](http://www.normangeisler.net)) have listed the many ways Mike Licona has denied the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy (ICBI) view of unlimited inerrancy. They include:

1. A denial of the physical resurrection of the saints in Matthew 27:51-54 (*The Resurrection of Jesus* [RJ], 548-553).
2. The denial of the historicity of the mob falling backward at Jesus claim "I am he" in John 18:4-6 (RJ, 306, note 114).
3. A denial of the historicity of the angels at the tomb recorded in all four Gospels (Mt. 28:2-7; Mk. 16:5-7; Lk. 24:4-7; Jn. 20:11-14) (RJ, 185-186).
4. The claim that the Gospel genre is Greco-Roman biography which he says is a "flexible genre" in which "it is often difficult to determine where history ends and legend begins" (RJ, 34).
5. Now it has come to our attention that in a debate with Bart Erhman at Southern Evangelical Seminary in the Spring of 2009 that Licona asserted concerning the day Jesus was crucified that: "I think that John probably altered the day in order for a theological—to make a theological point there. But that does not mean that Jesus wasn't crucified." However, it does mean that the Licona believes that text is in error! **This is a flat denial of the inerrancy of Scripture!**

In short, the issue is not a single text or event. It involves a denial of the historicity and inerrancy of a series of events in all four Gospels and the acceptance of a method of interpretation that casts doubt on other events in the Gospels. And the denial of at least one event (Mt. 27) occurred in direct connection to the resurrection of Christ and as a result of it. So, in the process of offering a noble attempt to defend the resurrection, Licona not only denies the inerrancy of the NT test but he cast doubt on the historicity of many events in it.

### A Response by Licona

In response to Licona's denial of the historicity of parts of the New Testament, we offered "Ten Reasons" why the Matthew 27 text should be taken as historical. To date, Licona has not responded to most of these arguments. Instead, his Evangelical Philosophical Society (EPS) paper speaks of someone "bullying" him around, of my having "a cow" over his view, of engaging in a "circus" on the internet, and of "targeting" him and "taking actions against me [Licona]." He speaks of his critics as "going on a rampage against a brother or sister in Christ." He adds, "no wild beasts are such dangerous enemies to man as Christians are to one another." This is unfortunate language in any context, let alone in a so-called "scholarly" one as the EPS. Such statements may engender pity, but they do not further the cause of orthodoxy. And they have the effect of impugning the character of those who sincerely critique what they believe to be unorthodox views. If we have come to the point where one cannot critique a position

that he believes is contrary to the historic orthodox view without being considered a “bully,” then we have already given up our commitment to orthodoxy in principle.

First, in spite of the fact that Licona condemned the use of the internet for these kinds of discussions, he and his son-in-law and friends have flooded the internet with their attacks of our defense of the ICBI view on inerrancy. This includes web sites, blogs, and even YouTube cartoon videos. It is clearly inconsistent to make a massive use of the internet to defend his view when those who use it to put serious scholarly articles on their web site are condemned for doing so.

Second, Licona did give one “scholarly” presentation in defense of his view and that was at the Evangelical Philosophical Society (EPS) in November 2011. But even it was riddled with ridicule on his critics, using ad hominem attacks, saying, that he has been “bullied” or undergone “hermeneutical water boarding,” along with making misleading statements about J. I. Packer’s view and about his dismissal from the Southern Evangelical Seminary Faculty.

Third, while Licona condemns the use of the internet to present scholarly critiques of his view as a “circus,” he refused to condemn an offensive YouTube cartoon produced by his son-in-law and friend who falsely caricaturing scholarly critiques of his view and wrongly claiming that we said Licona had “sinned.” No such statement was ever made. Further, producing cartoon caricatures may reflect creativity, but they are no substitute for orthodoxy. Even Southern Evangelical Seminary, where Licona was once a faculty member, condemned this approach in a letter from “the office of the president,” saying, “We believe this video was totally unnecessary and is in extremely poor taste” (12/9/2011). One influential alumnus wrote the school, saying, “It was immature, inappropriate and distasteful” and recommended that “whoever made this video needs to pull it down and apologize for doing it” (12/21/2011).

What is needed by Licona and followers is not iPod interviews and insulting videos but a reasoned reply to all the critiques that have been made of his view. Furthermore, in a recent online interview Licona admitted his failure even to read these critiques which is both unscholarly and insulting. The real need is for a retractions of his dehistoricizing the Gospel record. That would solve Licona current deviation from the traditional view of inerrancy which has been clearly set forth in the statements of the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy [ICBI] to which we now turn.

### **Licona’s View is Inconsistent with the ICBI Statements on Inerrancy**

We have also shown in articles posted on our web site ([www.normangeisler.net](http://www.normangeisler.net)) that Licona’s view, which includes “legend” in the Gospel narrative, is inconsistent with the statements on inerrancy by ICBI which Licona claims to accept and which was accepted by the Evangelical Theological Society [ETS] as a guide for the meaning of inerrancy. We listed the following ICBI statements to show that ICBI condemns Licona’s views: ARTICLE 13: “We affirm the propriety of using inerrancy as a theological term with reference **to the complete truthfulness of Scripture**” (emphasis added in all these citations). ARTICLE 9: “We affirm that inspiration, though not conferring omniscience, **guaranteed true and trustworthy utterance on all matters of which the Biblical authors were moved to speak and write.** We deny that the finitude or fallenness of these writers, by necessity or otherwise, **introduced distortion or falsehood into God’s Word.**” ARTICLE 12: “**We affirm that Scripture in its entirety is inerrant, being free from all falsehood, fraud, or deceit.** We deny that Biblical infallibility and inerrancy are limited to spiritual, religious, or redemptive themes, exclusive of assertions in **the fields of history and science.**” ARTICLE 18: “We affirm that the text of Scripture is to **be interpreted by grammatico-historical exegesis**, taking account of its literary forms and devices, and **that Scripture is to interpret**

**Scripture.** We deny the legitimacy of any treatment of the text **or quest for sources lying behind it** that leads to relativizing, **dehistoricizing**, or discounting its teaching, or rejecting its claims to authorship.”

In addition, selections from the official ICBI commentary titled *Explaining Inerrancy* were added: Article 12: “Though the Bible is indeed *redemptive* history, **it is also redemptive history**, and this means that the acts of salvation wrought by God **actually occurred in the space-time world**. When we say that the truthfulness of Scripture ought to be evaluated according to its own standards that means that **... all the claims of the Bible must correspond with reality, whether that reality is historical, factual or spiritual. By biblical standards truth and error is meant the view used both in the Bible and in everyday life, viz., a correspondence view of truth.**” Article 18: “When the quest for sources produces a **dehistoricizing** of the Bible...it has trespassed beyond its proper limits. By biblical standards of truth and error is meant the view used both in the Bible and in everyday life, viz., **a correspondence view of truth**. This part of the article is directed toward those who would redefine truth to relate merely to redemptive intent, the purely personal, or the like, rather than to mean that **which corresponds with reality.**”

To this were added the ICBI official statements in *Explaining Hermeneutics* (EH). EH Article 6: **“We further affirm that a statement is true if it represents matters as they actually are, but is an error if it misrepresents the facts.”** The commentary adds, “The denial makes it evident that views which redefine error to mean what ‘misleads,’ rather than **what is a mistake**, must be rejected.” EH Article 13: **“We deny that generic categories which negate historicity may rightly be imposed on biblical narratives which present themselves as factual. Some, for instance, take Adam to be a myth, whereas in Scripture he is presented as a real person. Others take Jonah to be an allegory when he is presented as a historical person and [is] so referred to by Christ.”** This makes it unmistakable clear that myths, legends, and embellishments, such as Licona allows in the Gospels, cannot be part of an inerrant (wholly truthful) book such as the Bible.

### **It is not Just a Matter of Hermeneutics**

Licona insists that his view is only a matter of interpretation but not a matter of inerrancy. Thus, he believes that one can allegedly hold different interpretations of a text without denying its inerrancy. However, this is a false disjunction of interpretation from inerrancy for several reasons.

First, there is only a formal *distinction* between interpretation and inerrancy, not an actual *disjunction*. Otherwise, biblical inerrancy is an empty vacuous claim that the whole Bible is truth without making a claim that anything in it is actually true. It amounts to saying, **“If** there are any truth claims in the Bible, then what they claim is true, is true.” They add quickly, however, that inerrancy does not make a claim that anything in the Bible is actually true. But if this is so, then it would leave an inerrant (wholly true) Bible wholly without anything that is true in it. But on the contrary, biblical inerrancy claims that everything the Bible affirms (and it affirms hundreds of things) is wholly true, that is, it corresponds with reality.

Second, Licona’s bifurcation of interpretation and inerrancy would mean that even a totally allegorical method which spiritualizes away every literal truth of the Bible (including the death and resurrection of Christ) could be held without denying inerrancy. This means that if Mary Baker Eddy or her Christian Science followers claimed to hold the complete inerrancy of whatever the Bible teaches and yet, as they do, deny the literal truth of the death and resurrection of Christ, then she could not be rightly charged with denying the inerrancy of the Bible. Clearly, such a total separation of interpretation from inspiration is not an evangelical view of inerrancy.

Third, such a disjunction of interpretation from inerrancy as Licona makes is contrary to the nature of truth itself. For truth is what corresponds to reality. ICBI clearly defines truth as “what corresponds to reality,” affirming that “all the claims of the Bible must correspond with reality, whether that reality is historical, factual or spiritual” (R. C. Sproul, *Explaining Inerrancy*, 41). But, if Licona’s claim is valid, then there is no reality to which the claim that “the Bible is completely true” actually corresponds. Clearly, the inerrantist is not saying, “The Bible is completely true in everything it affirms, but the Bible is not actually affirming anything is true.” For to claim “The Bible is completely true” implies that there are actual truths affirmed in the Bible. So, a formal distinction between interpretation and inerrancy does not mean there is an actual separation of the two.

Fourth, even granting the obvious claim that the Bible must be interpreted in order to understand its meaning, this does not imply, as Licona claims, that hermeneutical methods are inerrancy-neutral. For there are hermeneutical presuppositions that are contrary to an evangelical view of inerrancy. For example, a total allegorical method like that of Christian Science is not compatible with an evangelical view of what is meant when one claims the Bible is completely true. This is why the famous ICBI “Chicago Statement” on biblical inerrancy includes Article 18: “We affirm that the text of **Scripture is to be interpreted by grammatical-historical exegesis....**” In short, any method of interpreting Scripture that does not use the literal, historical-grammatical (H-G) method is inconsistent with inerrancy. This means that any other method, like an allegorical method, is incompatible with an evangelical view of inerrancy.

Fifth, the H-G method does not approach the Bible with a historically neutral stance. After all, it is not called the “literal” method for nothing. It assumes there is a *sensus literalis* (literal sense) to Scripture. In short, it assumes that a text should be taken literally unless there are good grounds in the text and/or in the context to take it otherwise. As a matter of fact, we cannot even know a non-literal (e.g., allegorical or poetic) sense unless we know what is literally true. So, when Jesus said, “I am the vine” this should not be taken literally because we know what a literal vine is, and we know that Jesus is not one. Further, the literal H-G method does not reject the use of figures of speech or even symbolic language. It only insists that the symbols have a literal referent. For example, John speaks of literal angels as “stars” (Rev. 1:20) and a literal Satan as a “red dragon” (Rev. 12:3). However, the literal H-G method does not allow one to take a literal historical persons (like Adam) or events (like a resurrection) as not literal history.

Sixth, the ICBI inerrancy statement against “dehistoricizing” a biblical narrative presupposes its historicity. Contrary to Licona, biblical inerrantists do not approach a biblical narrative with a history-neutral presupposition (Article 18). Indeed, neither do common persons reading road signs or news papers approach them in a literal-free manner. We approach almost everything in life with the presumption that it is literally true, unless there is good reason in the text or context to do otherwise. Indeed, often our survival depends on it. This is true whether the information is about the present or the past. Hence, when confronted with a narrative that purports to be about the past, we assume it is literal history unless there is evidence to the contrary. Of course, if the text says it is “allegorically speaking” (Gal. 4:24), or “Hear then the parable” (Mt. 13:18), or the like, then we know immediately it is not literal history. Other linguistic clues can serve the same purpose. But without some hermeneutical clue in the text, we must presume it is speaking literally. And when it is giving a narrative about the past, we must assume it means it literally.

However, in the Gospel narrative where other things are clearly literal (like the death and resurrection of Christ), there is clearly no reason whatsoever in the text or context to take it as non-historical. But this is precisely what Licona does with the crowd falling backward (Jn. 18:4-6), the angels at the tomb Gospels (Mt. 28:2-7; Mk. 16:5-7; Lk. 24:4-7; Jn. 20:11-14), [RJ], 548-

553), and the resurrection of the saints after Jesus' resurrection (in Mt. 27: 51-54). Were it not for this presumption of history, the ICBI framers would not have spoken against "dehistoricizing" the Gospel record. For one cannot de-historicize something that is not already presumed to be history. So, ICBI affirmed: "We deny the legitimacy of any treatment of the text or quest for sources lying behind it that leads to relativizing, **dehistoricizing**, or discounting its teaching...." (emphasis added). And for the same reason it add, "**We deny that generic categories which negate historicity may rightfully be imposed on biblical narratives which present themselves as factual**" (Article 13, emphasis added). Clearly, the resurrection of the saints in the wake of Jesus' resurrection presents itself as history (see our article, "Ten Reasons for the Historicity of the Resurrection of the Saints in Matthew 27" at [www.normangeisler.net](http://www.normangeisler.net)). Hence, Licona's attempt to dehistoricize this story is condemned by the ICBI statement.

As ICBI framer R. C. Sproul put it, "Though the Bible is indeed *redemptive* history, **it is also redemptive history**, and this means that the acts of salvation wrought by God **actually occurred in the space-time world**" (*Explaining Inerrancy* [EI], Article 12). EH Article 13 says: "**We deny that generic categories which negate historicity may rightly be imposed on biblical narratives which present themselves as factual.**" But this is precisely what Licona does with his "Greco-Roman" genre category. EH Article 14 proclaims: "**We deny that any event, discourse or saying reported in Scripture was invented by the biblical writers or by the traditions they incorporated**" As a member of the ICBI framing committee, I can say with certainty that it was views like Licona's that we had in mind when we wrote these statements.

Thus, Licona's point is invalidated when he wrote: "I hope that it has become clear in this paper that my intent was not to dehistoricize a text Matthew intended as historical. If I had, that would be to deny the inerrancy of the text. Instead, **what I have done is to question whether Matthew intended for the raised saints to be understood historically**" (emphasis added). But this presumption is contrary to the historical-grammatical hermeneutic and begs the question in favor of Licona's "new historiographical approach." For presuming a historical narrative is non-historical until proven historical is a radical presupposition that is contrary to everyday life and to the literal historical-grammatical interpretation of Scripture which an ICBI view of inerrancy demands.

Seventh, what is more, Licona's "new" approach rejects another venerable hermeneutical principle expressed by ICBI when it insists that "**Scripture is to interpret Scripture**" (Article 18, emphasis added). For Licona insists that extra-biblical data (e.g., Greco-Roman legends) can be used to interpret Scripture. He wrote, "There is somewhat of a consensus among contemporary scholars that the Gospels belong to the genre of Greco-Roman biography" which, he adds, "often included legend" that is a "flexible genre" in which "it is often difficult to determine where history ends and legend begins" (RJ, 34). But the Greco-Roman use of legend mixed with history is not a suitable model for interpreting a biblical narrative. It is in fact, a violation of this H-G approach which demands that Biblical text be used to interpret biblical text, not extra-biblical text being used to determine the meaning of a biblical text. And whereas one can find figures or speech and symbols used in the NT to represent literal events, there are no examples where legend replaces historical events. Indeed, the ICBI statements categorically reject just such a view, declaring: "**We deny that generic categories which negate historicity may rightly be imposed on biblical narratives which present themselves as factual. Some, for instance, take Adam to be a myth, whereas in Scripture he is presented as a real person. Others take Jonah to be an allegory when he is**

**presented as a historical person and [is] so referred to by Christ.” (EH, Article XIII).** The same applies to claiming there are legends in the NT narratives, as Licona does.

One ICBI framer summarized the issue well: “Inspiration without inerrancy is an empty term. Inerrancy without inspiration is unthinkable. The two are inseparably related. They may be *distinguished* but not separated. So it is with hermeneutics. We can easily **distinguish** between the inspiration and interpretation of the Bible, but we cannot **separate** them. Anyone can confess a high view of the nature of Scripture but the ultimate test of one’s view of Scripture is found in his method of interpreting it. A person’s hermeneutic reveals his view of Scripture more clearly than does an exposition of his view” (R. C. Sproul, “Biblical Interpretation And The Analogy of Faith” in *Inerrancy and Common Sense*, ed. by Roger R. Nicole, 134, emphasis added). Indeed, ICBI insisted that the historical-grammatical method of interpreting Scripture was part of its understanding of biblical inerrancy.

### Counting Heads on the Inerrancy Issue

Since Licona has paraded before the cameras a handful of scholars who approve of his view and challenged anyone to produce even one scholar who disagrees with his view, the subject of numbers of supporters should be put into proper perspective.

First of all, if one limits the survey to only those who are recognized contemporary scholars who adopt critical methods of determining the historicity of the Gospels, then the deck is already stacked. That is like asking the self-appointed radical Jesus Seminar to vote on the deity of Christ! We know what the outcome will be in advance. Or, it is like trying to get a group of liberal Senators to vote to cut their “pork” out of the national budget. Of course, Licona can always find many contemporary NT scholars on his side. However, most of them cannot knowingly conscientiously sign the ICBI inerrancy statement as meant by the framers.

Second, if the circle of scholars is rightfully broadened to include academically credentialed evangelical scholars, then the vote has already been taken, and it is not favorable to Licona. For after two years of discussion and scholarly interchange and at a regularly scheduled annual meeting of The Evangelical Theological Society (ETS), the largest group of evangelical scholars in the world, voted in 1983 with an overwhelming 70% majority to ask Robert Gundry to resign from ETS for “dehistoricizing” parts of the Gospel record, as Licona has done.

Third, the formation of the ICBI statement on inerrancy is the only time in modern history where a large group of nearly evangelical scholars (300 of them) from diverse denominational backgrounds voted to support a detailed statement on inerrancy. These scholars included notables like Gleason Archer, Harold O. J. Brown, Ed Clowney, John Feinberg, John Frame, Frank Gaebelin, Wayne Grudem, Laird Harris, Harold Hoehner, Walt Kaiser, George Knight, Allan MacRae, Roger Nicole, J. I. Packer, Paige Patterson, Vern Poythress, Robert Preus, Earl Radmacher, Charles Ryrie, R. C. Sproul, Robert Thomas, David Wells, John Wenham, John Witcomb, John Woodbridge, Ron Youngblood, and many more (see our *Defending Inerrancy*, 346-348 for the whole list).

Fourth, in 2003 the ETS approved by an overwhelming 80% majority vote the acceptance of the ICBI statement as a means of interpreting what is meant by inerrancy in their doctrinal position. But, as we have seen above, Licona’s views are directly contradictory to the ICBI view. Hence, a super-majority of the largest evangelical scholarly society has already condemned Licona’s view in principle.

Finally, in an anonymous survey that was recently sent out to a cross-section thousands of evangelicals across the country, including scholars, pastors, Christian leaders, and laypersons, they were asked to vote: “We affirm that the view expressed in the above citations from *The Resurrection of Jesus*...is inconsistent with the doctrine of inerrancy as expressed by the framers of the ICBI annual

meeting in their above statements on inerrancy (Yes or No).” It should be noted first, in contrast to critics, that the survey was made up simply of quotations from Licona’s book and the ICBI statements without any comments on them. Nor was there any name or identifying address on the survey to identify the source. Yet an overwhelming 76% percent of respondents said “Yes”—Licona’s view is inconsistent with the ICBI view on inerrancy.

In addition to all this, the leaders of one whole scholarly organization, The International Society of Christian Apologetics ([www.ISCA-Apologetics.org](http://www.ISCA-Apologetics.org)), went on record condemning views like Licona’s that deny the historicity of parts of the Gospel text. Further, the faculties of whole schools have voted to reject Licona’s view, including the faculty where he previously taught, Southern Evangelical Seminary. Other schools have done the same thing. Some seminaries have even adopted the ICBI statement and require their faculty to sign it.

Furthermore, there is a latent but serious flaw in the contention that only a specialized group of scholars are capable of determining what is meant by inerrancy. It is in fact a kind of scholarly elitism which denies the rest of the body of Christ have a valuable role to play in formulation what they are asked to confess. Or, to put it another way, it is a replacement of the Teaching Magisterium of the Roman Church with a Teaching Magisterium of biblical Scholars. This violates the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers and excludes the very people for whom the confessions or statements of Faith are made. **And the history of doctrinal declension has proven that it begins in the pulpit, not the pews. It is generated in the seminaries, not in the sanctuaries.**

What is more, the basic question is not how many scholars or others line up behind this or that view. For, as we all know, truth is not determined by majority vote. **Hence, our critique of Licona’s view has always been only one thing: his view is not in accord with the understanding of inerrancy expressed by the ICBI framers which was also adopted by the Evangelical Theological Society.** Of course admittedly ICBI confessed that its statement was not “infallible” (ICBI Preamble). The Pope notwithstanding, nobody’s is. Nonetheless, the ICBI statement has been widely acknowledged to be a very good statement, and it has been accepted by the ETS, the largest group of evangelical scholars in the world, and many other groups. And Licona’s view is clearly contrary to the above ICBI statements, as confirmed by the three living framers of the ICBI statements (J.I. Packer, R.C. Sproul, and myself)—all of whom agree that Licona-like views were precisely what we had in mind when the ICBI statements condemned “dehistoricizing” the Gospel record.

### **Why Some Scholars Endorse Licona’s View**

Of course, some scholars can be found that expressed their support for Licona view, but this is not the point. For they either (a) deny the ICBI view of inerrancy themselves, or (b) they personally hold to inerrancy but are inconsistent with the ICBI statements, or (c) they are ignorant of or misinterpreting the ICBI statements contrary to the meaning of the framers. However, as shown above, Licona’s view is clearly inconsistent with the ICBI framers understanding of inerrancy. Hence, those who approve of Licona’s view have placed themselves outside the ICBI framers view of unlimited inerrancy which has been the historic orthodox view down through the centuries (see John Hannah, *Inerrancy and the Church*, Moody, 1984). No attempt to minimize these legitimate votes of these individuals, groups, or entire societies can negate the overwhelming support for the ICBI view on inerrancy, nor can it justify Licona’s declension from it.

To be sure, there were 30 % of ETS members who opposed this ICBI view in 1983 and probably more reflected in the vote on Pinnock (in 2003), and their numbers are probably growing. One of the reasons for this is that ETS had not properly monitored its membership by insisting that new members

agree with the meaning of the framers of their inerrancy statement. Indeed, in 1976 the ETS Executive Committee confessed that "Some of the members of the Society have expressed the feeling that a measure of **intellectual dishonesty prevails among members who do not take the signing of the doctrinal statement seriously**" (1976 Minutes of the ETS Executive Committee, emphasis added). However, allowing members to sign a statement not in good conscience lacks integrity and is the reason that I resigned from the ETS (see my web site article on "Why I Resigned from ETS"). Indeed, it may ultimately lead to the demise of ETS stand on this crucial doctrine.

But this prospect notwithstanding, one thing is certain: we cannot undo history. Facts are facts, and the facts are that the ICBI view on inerrancy is in accord with the view of the great Fathers and teachers of the Christian Church down through the centuries and as manifest in the framers of the ETS and ICBI. And Licona's view does not accord with this position.

### **An Alleged Lack of Criticism of Other Evangelical Scholars**

As we have noted above, Licona is not the only scholar who has deviated from the full inerrancy of Scripture. We have produced a whole volume (*Defending Inerrancy*) treating many of the more noted scholars who have written extensively on the topic. These include Clark Pinnock, Peter Enns, Kenton Sparks, Kevin Vanhoozer, Andrew McGowan, Stanley Grenz and Brian McClaren (see *Defending Inerrancy*, chapters 5-10). We have also criticized some who confess the ICBI view on inerrancy but whose methodology can undermine it, such as, Darrell Bock and Robert Weber (see Chapter 11). If we were aware of any other noted influential evangelicals who have written books denying or undermining inerrancy, we would have mentioned them. So, the claim that Licona is being unfairly targeted is untrue and has the effect of promoting pity that he is being picked on. When, in fact, the reason his view is being criticized is that, contrary to ICBI and the Southern Baptist Convention's stand on inerrancy, one of their own scholars who headed up the SBC group on apologetics (in their NAMB division) wrote a major book on the Gospel (*The Resurrection of Jesus*) that denied the historicity of sections of the Gospel narratives. If this was left standing, it could open the door for a reversal of many of the gains for inerrancy that had been won in hard-fought battles for the last thirty years.

### **Attacking the Person vs. Critiquing the Position**

As can be verified by our scholarly articles on the topic (listed on our web site), we have avoided engaging in personal attacks since this kind of thing adds only heat, not light, to the discussion. Unfortunately, not everyone defending Licona's view, including himself, has avoided using ad hominem responses. Licona's favorite one is that he has been "bullied," or that he has undergone "hermeneutical water boarding." Others close to him claim that we called him a "sinner." These claims are all excessive and false. No evidence has been provided for these outlandish accusation. To the contrary, I have stated and repeated that "**I like Mike as a person and love him as a brother in Christ**, and it would be a shame to see him fall permanently from the ranks of consistent biblical inerrantists" (see my web article titled, "A Second Open Letter to Mike Licona," August 21, 2011, emphasis added). I have offered to meet with him person-to-person as the Bible instructs (Mt. 18), but he has not yet accepted my offer. I hope that he will.

### **Where Does the Issue Go From Here?**

The best solution to this whole problem is for Licona to retract his views. He has expressed some doubt about one of his views, but to date he has refused to retract any of them. Having had to retract my

previous view (from 1971) which approved some abortions, I know how difficult this can be. But the fact is that I was wrong about an important issue and I needed to admit it. In fact, I rewrote and republished my ethics book retracting this errant view. Even some who are close to Licona have expressed their hope that he will change his position. I am also praying to that end. Mike is a likeable guy and a good brother in Christ. As we have said before, he had made a scholarly defense of the resurrection of Jesus. However, unfortunately, in so doing, as president Al Mohler noted, “Licona has handed the enemies of the resurrection of Jesus Christ a powerful weapon” by denying or undermining the historicity of other sections of the Gospels. Let us hope that he retracts this.

There are other possible but not so good outcomes to this issue, such as, Licona digging in and dividing evangelicals on the issue. Even before the Licona issue had surfaced, we had written a manuscript for Baker Books titled, *Defending Inerrancy* (which is now in circulation). In it we survey many contemporary scholars whose views either deny or undermine inerrancy in some way. This book reveals that Licona’s views are only the tip of the iceberg. J. I. Packer wrote the Foreward, declaring that “In the following pages Norman Geisler, who contributed as much as anyone to International Council on Biblical Inerrancy’s [ICBI] original legacy, and William Roach interact with evangelical hypotheses that have the effect of confusing that legacy. They are masterly gatekeepers, and I count it an honor to commend this work to the Christian world.” Al Mohler added, “*Defending Inerrancy* is a much-needed work and one that will start an important and timely conversation. This is a book that cannot, must not, and will not be ignored.” Paige Patterson, who led the charge to restore the Southern Baptists to affirm inerrancy, commented: “In this superb volume, Geisler and [Bill] Roach have demonstrated once again that the attack [on the Bible], though and old one, must and can be answered. Anyone engaging the culture needs to read this book.” John MacArthur has said, “The very same issues are under debate as before, and all the same tired, already-answered arguments have been hauled out once more against Scripture. It is time for genuine believers to awaken to this issue again and speak up with a clear, united voice of confidence and conviction. We owe a debt to Norm Geisler and Bill Roach for their willingness to stand at the front line in this renewed battle for the Bible.”

We urge every reader to get a copy of this book titled *Defending Inerrancy* and to see for themselves the widely documented fact that there is a growing erosion of inerrancy among evangelicals, and as the subtitle of our book indicates, we are convinced of the pressing need of affirming the inerrancy of Scripture “for a new generation.” For as the psalmist declared, “If the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do” (Psa. 11:3).