

A REJOINDER TO NORMAN L. GEISLER

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First, some points of agreement. Norman Geisler is right concerning my overall argument as "fallacious" if the argument is the syllogism he has presented. Actually, I would choose to express the syllogism as follows:

1. Geisler bases Christianity on theism—viz., theistic arguments of his own.
2. Geisler's theistic arguments are fallacious.
3. Geisler bases Christianity on fallacies.

Now I admit that this conclusion can hardly be called "Geisler's own admission"—as I said—and herein lies my error. I doubt that Geisler admits point 3, and in fact he has denied what I have presented as examples of fallacious reasoning.

I also agree with Geisler that "if the arguments by a given theist fail, it certainly does not follow that theism . . . has failed." But the question is not whether theism fails but whether the arguments for theism fail and, immediately, whether Geisler's arguments fail.

As for the additional readings, I must admit unfamiliarity with all but the two articles on John Dahms, which I read only recently. I would gladly have familiarized myself with these writings if they had been accessible to me. Nevertheless, what little I did read did not seem to advance Geisler's arguments beyond the content of his major writings, which I believe I have studied thoroughly.

Besides, I have tended toward the opinion that when an individual contradicts himself it really does not matter how much he has written. All the printed matter in the world will not erase contradictory propositions that have come from the same mind.

Of course this is begging the question in the matters before us, but I know that even Geisler would agree with me formally.

Now, Professor Geisler, I would like to address you directly. Do you really expect me to go to your additional writings and refute my own arguments? How will I know whether I have done a good job? By what objective criteria will I decide whether I have treated your writings fairly? After all, I did not just "raise questions"; I believe I raised a few contradictions. Personally, I do not believe I can express these alleged contradictions any more clearly than I did in my previous article. So, if I list them here, would you answer them one by one?

1. "Anything that changes must be composed of actuality and potentiality for change. Change is a passing from potentiality to actuality; from what can be to

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what actually becomes. But *since existence as such has no potentiality, it follows that it cannot change*" (*Philosophy of Religion* [hereafter *PR*] 216, italics mine).

A self-caused being "would have to be simultaneously in a state of actuality and potentiality with regard to being, which is impossible" (*Christian Apologetics* [hereafter *CA*] 243).

Contradictory propositions:

"What is but could possibly not be is only a *potential existence*" (*CA* 242, italics mine).

"If change is real, it is either a real change *of* being (by annihilation and recreation) or else a change *in* the very being of the thing changing" (*PR* 193; cf. "changing being" *in loc.* 194, 2., l. 1 ff.).

The contradictions:

- (a) "Existence . . . has no potentiality," but there is such a thing as a "potential existence."
- (b) "Existence . . . cannot change," yet there is both a change *of* and a change *in* being.
- (c) Simultaneity of actuality and potentiality of being is impossible, yet there is something that both "is" and "could not be," a "potential existence" that, to me, is a "potential-actuality."

2. "It is logically possible that nothing ever existed, including myself, the world, and God. . . . Nonexistence of everything is a conceivable state of affairs" (*CA* 137).

The contradictions:

- (a) "It is logically possible that nothing ever existed." But "nothing exists" is a contradiction.
- (b) It is logically possible that the world never existed. Not if the world exists, for then existence and nonexistence would both be predicates (*if* they are predicates contra Kant) attached to "world."

3. "What is not contradictory could possibly be true" (*CA* 42).

Here by "true" Geisler means existent as evidenced in the context that centaurs are logically but not ontologically possible.

The contradiction lies in attaching truth to a concept rather than a proposition. Concepts are not true or false.

"Centaur" is not true or false.

"The centaur is brown" is either true or false.

4. "Logic can only demonstrate what is *possibly real* but not what is *actually real*" (*CA* 45).

The contradiction:

- (1) "Actually real" and "possibly real" are antitheses.
- (2) The antithesis of "actually real" is "unactually real" or "unreally real" or "real unreality," which are contradictions.
- (3) Then "possibly real" is equivalent to "unreally real" or "real unreality."

5. "I must exist in order to make the denial" (*CA* 143).

The fallacy: I deny, therefore I exist.
 I, therefore I exist.
 I, therefore I.

ASSERTION OF THE CONSEQUENT

6. "No one receives his whole being at once" (*PR* 222).

The contradiction:

- (1) "Receives" and "his" imply "having" being.
- (2) "To have" is not "to be."
- (3) But, "I *am* a changing being" (*CA* 241).

The subject already exists, yet receives being—i.e., more being—implying that being is quantifiable or subject to degrees. But what are "half beings" in contrast with "whole beings"?

7. "The . . . potential for being cannot actualize *itself*" (*CA* 243; italics mine).

The contradiction:

- (1) "Potential for being" is nothing.
- (2) "Potential for being" is a "self."
- (3) "Potential for being" is both nothing and something.

Here again we have simultaneity of actuality and potentiality with regard to being (see point 1).

8. "Potentialities do not exist independently, apart from the actuality which can and does actualize *them*" (*PR* 225 n. 2, italics mine).

The contradiction:

- (1) "Potentialities do not exist independently."
- (2) "Potentialities . . . exist (dependent upon) the actuality which . . . does actualize *them*."
- (3) Potentialities are both potentials (independently) and actualities (dependently).

9. "God must be charged with the responsibility of creating the possibility of all the evil that did actualize" (*PR* 317).

The contradiction:

- (1) To create is to create something—viz., an object.
- (2) Possibility is not something; a possible something is not an actuality or object.
- (3) God created nothing, if he created possibility.

10. "Freedom is the *possibility* of evil" (*PR* 329, italics mine).

Contradicts "freedom is the *cause* of evil" (*PR* 339, italics mine).

- (1) Freedom is nonnecessity.
- (2) Cause is necessity.
- (3) Freedom is *both* nonnecessity *and* necessity.

11. "Free will is the reason why evil natures exist" (*PR* 339).

The contradiction:

- (1) "Reason why" is cause.
- (2) Freedom is nonnecessity.
- (3) Cause is necessity.
- (4) A nonnecessitated will is the necessity of evil natures.

12. "God has determined that men be free" (*CA* 231).

The contradiction:

- (1) To determine is to determine something—viz., an object.
- (2) "That men be free" or just "freedom" are not objects.
- (3) God determined nothing, if he determined freedom.

or:

- (1) To determine is to necessitate.
- (2) Freedom is nonnecessity.
- (3) God necessitated nonnecessity.

13. God "controls the world by what he knows men will freely do" (*CA* 231).

The contradiction:

- (1) Control is necessity.
- (2) Freedom is nonnecessity.
- (3) God necessitates the world by his knowledge of nonnecessity.

The language here is not precise. For analysis, either of the following two statements would be preferable:

- (1) God "controls *men* by what he knows *men* will freely do."

or:

- (2) God "controls the *world* by what he knows the *world* will freely do."

14. "God may cause . . . free acts indirectly by way of his knowledge of what (men) will freely do" (*CA* 231).

The contradiction:

- (1) Cause is necessity.
- (2) Freedom is nonnecessity.
- (3) God necessitates nonnecessity by his knowledge of nonnecessity.

15. "Sin is unavoidable, not because it is necessitated by God . . . but because it is known by God" (*PR* 321).

The contradiction:

- (1) Inevitability—i.e., unavoidability—implies necessity.
- (2) "Not . . . necessitated . . . but known" implies that knowledge (i.e., God's) is nonnecessity.
- (3) Sin is both necessary and unnecessary, or necessitated and nonnecessitated.

16. "Sin is inevitable in general but . . . each sin is avoidable in particular" (PR 321).

The contradiction:

- (1) The general is a quality of the particular.
- (2) General sin is inevitable or necessary.
- (3) Particular sin is both inevitable and avoidable, necessary and unnecessary.

17. "Fallen man has the God-given ability (whether he has received it or not) to resist each particular sin he encounters" (PR 321).

The contradiction:

- (1) "Fallen man has . . . God-given ability."
- (2) It is possible that fallen man has not received the ability.
- (3) It is possible that fallen man both has and does not have God-given ability.

and:

- (1) To give is to give an object.
- (2) "Ability" is not an object.
- (3) God-given ability is God-given nothing.

Note: Ability to resist is at the same time ability to give in.

Certainty to resist is *not*, however, at the same time, certainty to give in.

What is needed is God-given certainty to resist.

18. "Evil is not a real entity but it is a reality" (PR 346).

Contradiction? A particular reality is not a real entity.

If evil is *not a real entity* it must be an *unreal entity*, which is contradictory.

Now for some concluding remarks. First, I apologize for not putting these allegations in precise syllogistic form; time prevented me from doing this. This article is no more than a summary of my original article; essentially, nothing has been changed. Second, I do not want to answer Geisler with Geisler (as he suggested) since, as I pointed out, my subjectivity might only derive straw-man arguments from his additional writings. I insist that these alleged contradictions remain no matter what he has written. In any case Geisler, I believe, is much more capable of answering for himself than I am. And so, thirdly, I request that Geisler put his answers to these alleged contradictions in print so that the reader is not burdened with having to research his additional writings (upon which he lays such great emphasis) to make a comparative study.