

The Necessary Foundational Primacy of the Law of Identity¹

By Jacques Futon, PhD

Dr. Garner has recently published an article in this month's *Sublimis Res*² in which he praises archeological research for the light that it sheds upon the historical narratives of the New Testament. In it he writes:

Hence, we can confidently assert that the scientific age has brought done away with the crudities of theologians of the past. Gone are the former days when men had only the naked text of Scripture and their own assumptions about what key Biblical terms such as righteousness, Law, mercy, reconciliation, and the like historically signified. We can now be certain of the meaning of terms in themselves, apart from the straining filter of the supposed unified narrative of the Bible and the biased presuppositions (whether explicit or implicit) of rabid fundamentalists. We can look at history with new eyes in order to understand the singular components of which Scripture is comprised and, upon that basis, reconstruct, with unquestionably high accuracy, what the text is saying. It is true, as Dr. Motley has so poignantly emphasized in his extraordinary lectures on the Hebraicisms of Christ,³ that we no longer have the comfortable underpinnings of dogmatical categorical filters of Biblicism. However, it is not facts that save men, but Christ who exists quite apart from the supposed "facts" of Scripture. We can know God without subscribing to the belief that all of the propositions of Scripture are necessary, true, or correct. All we need is faith.⁴

Garner's praise is not unexpected from one who has established a career for himself by deconstructing the narratives of the New Testament in light of modern linguistic studies, and who has been in the process of reconstructing them, in light of the archeological digs that have been the source of much controversy in the universities out West, over the past several years. He has admittedly not sought to establish the question of whether or not the Scriptures are in unison in doctrinal matters, immediately discarding systematic theology, calling the practice of systematization "the Platonic residue of Augustine, Luther, and Calvin that must be cast aside if Scripture is to speak for itself."⁵ What he seeks, rather, is an *Erinnerung* of things past, reconstructed according to the best archeological data available today. This *erinnerung*, or re-membrance of

¹ *The Necessary Foundational Primacy of the Law of Identity* first appeared in *Parvum Litterarum*, 15.12 (1823): 7-77.

² *Sublimis Res*, a diverse semi-popular scholarly journal founded by D. Ellington Walker and Judas P.K. Christianson, is now defunct, having fallen apart soon after the conviction and incarceration of its founders. An investigative study performed by Dr. Francis Armington of San Pueblo University revealed a consistent pattern of purposeful manipulation of the archeological findings cited in the writings of many of *Sublimis Res*' contributors. Upon further investigation it was revealed that these contributors were paying for space in the journal in the hopes of establishing credibility among Biblical scholars.

On 1 January 1815, Dr. R. S. Motley, an editor and frequent contributor to *Sublimis Res*, confessed to having accepted a considerably large sum of money to publish erroneous archeological data cited by Dr. J. Garner in *Archeological Data and the Categorical Filters of Dogmatical Biblicism: A Materialist Approach to the Onto-Epistemological Problems of Textual Criticism*. Motley was then fired from his position as Chair of the Department of Materialist Historical Critical Studies.

³ Robert S. Motley's *curricula vitae* is available upon request. Please contact the present editor of *Futonian Fragments*, Jonathan Cullings, by email by clicking here: [Futonian Fragments](#).

⁴ Dr. Futon is here referencing the well know article, *Archeological Data and the Categorical Filters of Dogmatical Biblicism: A Materialist Approach to the Onto-Epistemological Problems of Textual Criticism*, which appeared in *Sublimis Res*, 45.4 (1823): 600-666.

⁵ *Die Genealogie der Reformatorische Gedanke: Überlegungen Post-plotinische Aussagenlogik Idealismus*, appears in *Hauptstudium* 120.66 (1819):7-29.

things past, does not require that we operate on any solid theological foundation seeing as theology itself is what is in question. How do we know what we know about God? Garner's position is that what we know about God, since it is subject to change as one encounters and seeks to explain more physical data, is never absolute. He writes,

“Human knowledge is solely derived from the senses; therefore, it is subject to growth in one area, death in another, and competition in another as an older idea, less fit to continue in its striving against a younger and more virile idea, either grows to adapt to the existing cultural environment, dies due to an inability to adapt its new cultural environment, or competes in order to keep its place among the more attractive theories of the day. This is no mere metaphor. When we read a text claiming to reveal knowledge to us, let us keep this in mind, lest we think that such a thing exists. Those systematic theologians who smooth out the rough bumps of history in order to promote their systems of theology do us a great injustice. They fail to realize that it is only by the accumulation of data from the past, by which we can understand the moving parts of Scripture, as it is set in contrast and comparison to today's theological systems, that we can subtract from the present day theologies what doesn't find any place in the text, as we understand it to be in its original setting.⁶

The problem that faces Dr. Garner, however, is exactly this: *Who* determines what the original setting was? The shifting knowledge theory of Garner does not account for the stable underpinnings of his methodology, which of course, according to him, *cannot change*, since he holds that human knowledge is derived solely from the senses. Dr. Garner may attempt to deny the universality of his statement, but one only needs to reformulate it somewhat more nakedly to see that it is truly a universal affirmative proposition, viz. *All humans acquire knowledge by their sense alone*. And in the end, we are not given the liberty to speak an intelligible word, since *all knowledge is gained solely by the use of one's senses*, and in order to speak I must presuppose the Law of Identity which presupposes, if not the possession then, the existence of unchangeable facts about one's given object of discourse. When Garner speaks, for example, about “human knowledge,” he is presupposing a closed group of predicates belonging to the subject *human knowledge*. He may attempt to sneak out of this problem by stating that his own theory is subject to the same paroxysmal shifts in signification, but he is still presupposing the Law of Identity by stating that what *is* in some sense that cannot be changed. That is to say, his method is self-referentially absurd in that it seeks to relativize human knowledge by making an absolute claim about how human knowledge works. If human knowledge is acquired solely through the senses, we have a claim to identity, viz. The human sensory faculties at all times and in all places provide human beings with knowledge, which may appropriately be symbolized by the logical sentence: A is A.⁷

⁶ Ibid. pp.620-621

⁷ Futon, borrowing from Kierkegaard, points to the inability of inductive reasoning to lead one to absolute certainty, but departs from the Dane in asserting that what does give us certainty is the Word of God. He writes:

In it [the Bible], we encounter both a progressive historical unfolding of the revelation of God, which culminates in the Person and Work of our dearest Lord Jesus, *and* the logical system of propositions that contextualize these narrative events. All certain propositions must be either (a.) Divinely uttered, or (b.) validly inferred from the truths uttered by our Triune God, for it is only in Scripture, if the words of God are true, where we can find certainty.

(*Letter to Dietrich Concerning his Monograph*)

