

## Is Science-Honoring Trust an “Essential”<sup>1</sup> Biblical Posture?

My pastor recently asked me why I thought it so important to insist (as indeed I do) on creation through<sup>2</sup> the Big Bang (BB). That query moved me first to reflect, and then to self-clarify, that my focus is really less on the BB *per se* than it is on the authority of scientific judgments in general.<sup>3</sup> His challenge (which I welcomed) suggested he does not share my position. Indeed, as we continued he told me that some of “our” congregational members hold to young-earth-creationist (YEC) views, and consequently, he expressed disapproval of anyone seeking to dissuade them. Now, it is important to clarify to readers that my pastor and I revere each other and are also cordial friends; a posture that in fact reflects the *actual* tone of this respectful interchange. Since I had already suspected his views, I was actually glad we forestalled our having to dance around the table about this matter. In fact, I assured him that with our congregation, I only desire to bear witness to my view; not to challenge others.

There is no doubt in my mind that, by commending the BB as an apologetic tool for affirming the existence of God, my very presence, to a *degree*, impedes peace (insofar as peace exists) in any Christian circle; much like a pebble caught underfoot in one’s sandal, for the reason that I am *effectively* calling YEC into question. I take no joy in unsettling the faith of YECs (although it should be duly noted that YEC adherents do the same thing with respect to the BB). So, that tension really goes both ways (at least it *should*). Yet since I hold that creation began through the BB, the question logically follows, “Does the Bible authorize dismissing established scientific facts insofar as they seem to conflict with a biblical text?”

In Romans 14:1f, the Apostle Paul states that Christians are free to differ in certain opinions that don’t impinge on central tenets of our salvation through Jesus’ death and resurrection (14:9). Yet Paul’s highest priority centered on Christ’s Church everywhere conforming into a posture of humble **unity** as it is embodied by Jesus in his incarnation (Philippians 2:5f). Rejecting Jesus’ status as no less than God is utterly rejected (John 1:1-18), yet so also (and to the core point of this essay) is denying His *humanity* according to 1<sup>st</sup> John 1:1-2; 4:2. The Apostles didn’t settle for a careless “*just trust in Jesus*” posture that is severed from biblical doctrines, including that of creation. 1 John 4:2, for example, warns that denial of Jesus’ humanity entails repudiating His saving work. Nonetheless, that stricture was not limited to Jesus’ *personal* (incarnational) traits; it also entails the larger posture of denying the Bible’s teaching on creation as a whole. God is Creator of all aspects of *physical* existence, including space, time, matter, and energy (Genesis 1:1). For that reason, God’s created handiwork everywhere manifests “*His eternal power and deity*” (Romans 1:20),<sup>4</sup> even as Psalm 19:1 declares that this very revelation, “*The heavens declare the glory of God,*” is not hidden but, to the contrary, publicly perceivable. Notice further two highly vital ramifications; firstly with respect to Psalm 19:1, what that passage specifically identifies as its grammatical *subject* is the *phenomena*<sup>5</sup> of nature:<sup>6</sup> namely both “*the heavens*” and “*the firmament.*”<sup>7</sup> In other words, the conveyor of its message is expressly the things of nature as distinct from God’s Word. In addition, Romans 1:18-21 gives notice that, in addition to serving as a beacon of light, the witness of

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<sup>1</sup> See Norm Geisler. “The Essential Doctrines of the Christian Faith” part 2, where the document states two essential factors in determining an essential teaching: *First, the doctrine must be connected to our salvation. That is, it must be soteriological or salvific in nature. Second, its connection to our salvation must be crucial. In other words, salvation as God has revealed it would not be possible without the doctrine being true,*” p. 2. (<https://www.equip.org/PDF/JAE100-2.pdf>). Although this document neither *specifically* nor *directly* address my question, the fact YEC is effectively demanding that scientifically-educated people are being demanded to rational truth and empirical data in order for the way of salvation to be opened to them.

<sup>2</sup> The Big Bang did not *cause* the universe. It was the *effect* from God calling the cosmos into existence in a manner consistent with Genesis 1:1.

<sup>3</sup> If science conclusively indicated the earth was created before the sun less than 10,000 years ago, I would embrace young-earth-creationism.

<sup>4</sup> Langdon Gilkey. *Maker of Heaven and Earth*. (Doubleday, 1959), pp. 48-54.

<sup>5</sup> *Phenomenon*, a (pl) is the material stuff of reality that can, in principle, be perceived and measured by our senses or instruments.

<sup>6</sup> “*The evidence relied upon in the Scriptures for divine existence is derived from immediate and universal consciousness of the human soul, as this is awakened and developed by the works of creation and providence.*” William G.T. Shedd. *Dogmatic Theology* 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (P&R, 2003), p. 186.

<sup>7</sup> Not “heaven” as the “abode” of the saints and the angels, but the starry heavens. The word, “heaven,” in the Bible has three definitions.

nature also serves as a standard by which God will judge the world for rejecting Him through the ploy of *suppressing* the truth to which that testimony points. That is, I repeat, God's "*eternal power and deity.*"

Consequently, the propensity of YEC to reject established scientific declarations out-of-hand (as I've described it) illegitimately thwarts St. Paul's insistence in *Romans* that the testimony of nature is trustworthy. Therefore, one chief means by which God seeks to call sinners to Himself is neutralized. Worse still, the Word of God is needlessly mocked by a critical world to the point that unbelievers are actually intellectually repelled from considering the Bible as conveying truth about the Triune God.<sup>8</sup>

The harmful consequences of embracing the *anti-scientific* posture of YEC;<sup>9</sup> completely apart from its utterly incongruent view of creation, are both extensive and of a high magnitude.<sup>10</sup> Yet with respect to the specific reasons that are addressed in this paper, that same posture is undermining our capacity to evangelize the influential "movers and shakers" of today's world that are turning multitudes away from belief in God, the Father of our LORD and Savior Jesus Christ." Although those who defy His lordship will continue in their damaging agenda, it is up to us; that is, we who name the Name of Jesus, who mustn't aid their offensive diversions imposing needless roadblocks<sup>11</sup> that obstruct people from receiving, or at least considering, His claims. As St. Paul urged, "*We put no obstacles in anyone's way*" (2 Corinthians 6:3). Indeed, the Bible never once encourages anyone to defy *legitimate* rationality<sup>12</sup> as a means to advance faith (2 Cor. 4:2). Neither does Scripture ever either advise nor demand denial of physical reality for any reason, including to seek to advance spiritual realities. Even 2 Kings 6:10f. should not be confused with dismissing physical reality in order to celebrate a supernatural reality. Elisha's affirmation of a supernatural army of "*horses and chariots of fire*" did nothing to diminish or denigrate earthly (phenomenal) realities. Finally, appealing to the text of Genesis 1 as *obvious* proof (they say) that that chapter affirms YEC, cannot withstand scrutiny. By my statement I am not claiming *proof* for my views either. Yet as Martin Luther, who adhered to a YEC view, conceded that the text of Genesis 1 is "*difficult.*"<sup>13</sup> Deliberating over the interpretation of specific aspects of this passage can, with effort, be accomplished in a spirit of honor. I of course argue that it is best interpreted in harmony with BB<sup>14</sup> cosmology which compromises **neither** the Bible nor Scripture.<sup>15</sup> As for the question of the weight of Scientific knowledge with respect to God, I have laid before you several Scriptures which support the views of this paper even as Scripture never encourages a posture toward nature that is dismissive of it.

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<sup>8</sup> See my paper, "The Elephant Standing Between Secularists and their Receptivity to the Gospel" at my website: [www.christianityontheoffense.com](http://www.christianityontheoffense.com)

<sup>9</sup> See my paper, "Young-Earth-Creationism Negates the Testimony of Psalm 19:1." Op.cit. (8).

<sup>10</sup> See my paper, "Damaging Ramifications Far Broader than the Age of the Earth," at my website, Op.cit. (8).

<sup>11</sup> Augustine wisely warns, "*It is a disgraceful and dangerous thing for an infidel to hear a Christian, presumably giving the meaning of Holy Scripture, talking nonsense on [matters of science]; and we should take all means to prevent such an embarrassing situation, in which people show up vast ignorance in a Christian and laugh it to scorn.*" (*Literal Meaning of Genesis*, J.H. Taylor, S.J., tr. (Newman, 1982), v.I, p.42f.).

<sup>12</sup> St. Paul is not attacking rationality, but to the contrary what is called "sophistry," which twists the truth by manipulating it either for selfish purposes that oppose the plans and will of God (see 1 Corinthians 1:18-25), .

<sup>13</sup> Jaroslav Pelikan, ed. *Luther's Works, Genesis*. V. 1. (Concordia, 1958), p. 3.

<sup>14</sup> See my papers, "The Biblical Demand to Take Another Look," \*\* "16 Clues from Genesis 1 Indicating that Creation is Ancient," and \*\* "Big Bang Cosmology Easily Harmonizes with Genesis 1, Op.cit. (8).

<sup>15</sup> See my paper, "Defusing the Perceived Conflict Between Science and Genesis 1," at my website, Op.cit. (8).