

## The Bible Expressly Forbids Denigrating the Testimony of Nature

*"The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament proclaims His handiwork." (Psalm 19:1)*

When adherents to young-earth creationism (YEC) assert that the earth was created in six 24-hour days about ten thousand years ago, they are making the following **four claims**:

1. Genesis chapter 1 teaches that creation happened recently and in rapid fashion.
2. For the reason that scientific investigators are, like the rest of us, sinful, scientific knowledge must in turn be deemed an unreliable indicator of the truth of the history of creation. Consequently it needs to be viewed with suspicion.<sup>1</sup>
3. For the reason that the Bible is the inspired and revealed Word of God the Creator, it alone is competent to teach finite and sinful humans about the origin of the cosmos.
4. Consequently the Bible must have the final say even in areas of inquiry where scientists use reliable methods and instruments to investigate the realities of the physical world.

One critical aspect of science is hereby illegitimately undermined every time YECs assert the right of their *interpretation*<sup>2</sup> of Genesis to trump the authority of scientifically-established facts insofar as the latter are perceived to conflict with the former. This is especially so when the data that is in question has been roundly-confirmed by a broad range of testable astronomical observations which have absolutely nothing to do with Darwinism.<sup>3</sup> To be both specific and relevant, in order for YECs to maintain their position, they must reject the 13.7 billion-year age of the cosmos<sup>4</sup> despite the fact that that same data is embraced even by leading YEC scientists.<sup>5</sup> The question then, which must logically follow from the YEC stance is: *"Is YECs' denigration of scientific authority authorized by the Scriptures on which they take their stance?"* The basic answer from the Bible is, absolutely not! To the contrary, insofar as YECs dismiss scientific facts on the grounds of their allegation that they conflict with their YEC interpretation of the first chapter of Genesis, they are **employing a posture which the Bible expressly forbids**.

Not a single Bible passage authorizes or encourages pitting Scripture against the facts of nature. Indeed, in John 9 Jesus chastises His skeptical audience for their resistance to His public miracle. Indeed in Romans 1:18-20 St. Paul condemns suppressing the witness of nature with respect to its bearing on God's existence. He writes under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit,

*<sup>18</sup> "For the wrath of God has been revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and wickedness of those who, by their wickedness, suppress the truth. <sup>19</sup> For what can be known about God is plain to them because God has shown it to them. <sup>20</sup> Ever since the creation of the world his invisible nature, namely his eternal power and deity, has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse."*

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<sup>1</sup> The Commission on Theology and Church Relations study, *The Natural Knowledge of God*. (The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, 2013), p.43.

<sup>2</sup> I argue to the contrary that science and the creation texts of Genesis can be harmonized in my paper, "The Biblical Demand to Take Another Look: Ten Compelling Exegetical Reasons the Creation Days of Genesis are Non-24-Hour. See my website at [www.christianityontheoffense.com](http://www.christianityontheoffense.com).

<sup>3</sup> *The Natural Knowledge of God* (Op.cit. (1)) states that *"Advances in astronomy during the twentieth century...led to the discovery that the universe...is expanding. This and related discoveries suggested, by projecting backwards, the now generally accepted conclusion that **the universe of space and time had a beginning in the finite past**"* (p.59 n.215--**boldface mine**).

<sup>4</sup> YECs commonly dismiss light-travel distances as illusory since God could made the light beams too. I rebut this notion in Op.cit. (2), p.14.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, p.14, esp. n.60.

Notice the following five implications which follow from the Apostle Paul's statement:

1. The witness of nature is truthful and therefore, trustworthy (18, 20).
2. The testimony of nature is deemed to be an actual vehicle of revelation (in addition to Scripture) by which the truth of God's existence is conveyed (19).
3. On the basis of such revelation God judges people to be "*without excuse*" insofar as they reject God's "*eternal power and deity*" in the face evidence that Paul declares to be clear (19). It logically follows that if this testimony were actually not trustworthy, then peoples' culpability for unbelief in light of evidence they deem as faulty, is nullified.
4. Consequently, to underplay this evidence in the manner that YECs employ, is to remove a vital aspect of God's law (Romans 3:19-20) by which He confronts sinners with their/our sinful intellectual dishonesty (20).
5. For these reasons it is "wickedness" to suppress the truth of nature (18).

My employment of strong language here is not intended to belittle the YEC's laudable desire to uphold the inspiration of the Bible. Nevertheless, according to the authority of the same Scriptures that both parties to this debate honor, their zeal needs to be resisted for the reason that it is "unenlightened" (Romans 10:2). I judge this to be so on the grounds that their propensity to selectively suppress the testimony of nature **directly contradicts Romans 1:18-20**. It should be acknowledged that this passage in fact surpasses all others in Scripture with respect to its clarification of the relationship between the witness of nature and the authority of God's Word. On the basis of this passage we are to regard the testimony of nature as one critical aspect of God's revelation with respect to His own "*eternal power and deity*."

It is urgent that the confusion over this relationship be clarified. One often hears that what a person believes about the length of the creation days and the age of the earth is not a saving matter. That is indeed true in the singular sense that no one is saved or lost for adhering to a particular view of creation. Yet in the context of proclaiming the Gospel to scientifically-informed people, the stakes are very high. Whenever Christians state that the Gospel is true, we are asserting that it is in *actual* harmony with the *whole* of reality.<sup>6</sup> Consequently when YECs evade submitting the Bible to firmly-knowable facts of nature, they are casting doubt on the very Scriptures they seek to elevate. Yet, again, the Bible opposes that strategy. With respect to evangelization, the consequences that follow from the YEC error lead to two deeply harmful outcomes. Firstly it nullifies that aspect of God's law by which sinners are confronted with the illegitimacy of habitually evading evidence which in fact points to God's existence. And it neglects to employ our most powerful scientific evidence favoring God's existence by its demonstration that our cosmos began out of utter nothingness in a manner that is consistent with the opening declaration of the Bible, "*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth*" (Genesis 1:1).<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> LCMS scientist John Klotz writes that our faith "*cannot go contrary to science and reason and observation...There must be a basic unity between [scientific] facts and truth as it is given to us in revelation.*" *Modern Science and the Christian Life*. (Concordia, 1962), p.79; also 137f.

<sup>7</sup> Observable indicators of an expanding universe (Op.cit. 3) are of such a nature that they aren't vulnerable to being toppled by new evidence.