

The Urgency of Uniting Truth with Christian Proclamation

And its' Bearing on the "Young Earth" / "Old Earth" Controversy

It is often suggested that in Christian circles this controversy should be subordinated to other concerns for the sake of peace and harmony in our community. Feelings are commonly hurt from insults hurled back and forth between these two camps. In addition, it is frequently (though falsely) implied that what one believes about the age of the earth has a bearing on their personal salvation. Yet this clearly is not a saving matter, at least in the context of this article,¹ since Scripture clearly says we are saved solely by faith in Jesus' redemption on the cross for our sins (Rom. 3:24). It is further evident that young-earth creationists (YEC) by certain measures are converting many people to the Gospel of Christ with a level of success that appears to deserve praise from the entire Church. Why not, then, set this concern aside and simply redirect our missional focus to invite people to know Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord?

In reply, although I neither question the motive of YECs nor deny their successes, the Bible rejects any use of tactics which compromise truth, even if employed in the name of Christ. St. Paul writes,

"We have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways; we refuse to practice cunning, or to tamper with God's word, but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to [everyone's] conscience in the sight of God." (2 Cor. 4:2 RSV).

Even though the context of this passage pertains to the misrepresentation of specifically "God's Word," the obvious principle at stake here also entails tampering with truth in a much broader context.

While it is the case that YECs' appeal to scientific evidence at a certain level in their proclamation of the Gospel, they habitually do so only selectively. The basis for that practice is their conviction that since the Bible is God's word, then by its divine nature it is higher in authority than scientific (human) knowledge. This methodology entails six profound errors: 1) it violates the rational principle of the unity of truth since truth isn't based on mere pronouncements by a judge, but on an *actual* state of affairs. 2) The YEC discriminative filter is based on an interpretation of Genesis that is not first established.² 3) Maintaining their interpretation is dependent on its adherents conveniently ignoring evidence that contradicts it. 4) Other Scripture that is equally authoritative to Genesis explicitly forbids the dismissal of scientifically-attained knowledge for any reason (Rom. 1:18-20). 5) While claiming to be scientific, YEC rejects the rational dictum which undergirds the scientific method of *following the scientific evidence where it leads*.³ 6) By adhering to the agenda of protecting a dogma, they disqualify their position of being unscientific in principle (5, above). If it were true that YEC explains the array of *scientific* evidence better than OEC, then it would be rational to embrace YEC as the superior view of creation. Yet this is not the case. The problem however isn't merely the overwhelming body of scientific evidence that affirms the universe is ancient. Neither is it because they identify God as the Creator. It is instead for the reason of the six above examples where truth is either explained away, distorted, or ignored.

Simply evading this controversy cannot, even in principle, satisfy either party. YEC and OEC logically cannot both be true under the scrutiny of the rational law of non-contradiction. In either case, to affirm one position is to deny the latter. On the other hand, any attempt to affirm both positions

¹ This paper concerns the question of salvation with respect to unbelievers becoming open to consider the invitation of the Gospel.

² I find no biblical foundation at all for the magisterial/ministerial role of reason paradigm.

³ H.D.P. Lee, tr. Plato. The Republic. (Penguin, 1955), # 394, p. 133.

effectively nullifies both of them by disarming their potential apologetic weight for the following reason: appeals to *specific* evidential support for either position effectively cancels out the merit of the other point of view. On the other hand, laying aside such evidence altogether for both positions denigrates each view to the level of empty assertions. To utterly suspend the question on the table neutralizes the very body of evidence that is required in order to reach an answer to this dilemma. Consequently only one of the two positions has the potential to rationally prevail before the bar of truth.

The Bible from beginning to end takes the concept of truth very seriously. I have numerated nearly 1,000 instances⁴ in Scripture where the concept of truth in all of its facets appear. Furthermore I have highlighted numerous examples where Scripture appeals to evidential and rational arguments affirming not only the truth of Scripture, but the existence God in creation and the acts of Jesus Christ, including His resurrection from the dead. Check out at my website (www.christianityontheoffense.com) the array of relevant articles I have written that affirm not only that Scripture employs apologetic arguments, but that it also makes good on its claims with respect to God's power and wisdom in nature (both in the Big Bang and the origin of life). An additional body of evidence powerfully affirms Jesus' life, death, and resurrection from the dead in history. So it is simply false that the Bible ignores the employment of evidential arguments in order to advance its truth.

This leads to my final reason why truth of a kind that is manifestly evidential belongs in Christian proclamation. For the very reason that the Bible asserts God's intervention into both nature and history, it should be expected that there will be signs of evidence in these arenas that are consistent with these claims. In matters of creation specifically with respect to the YEC/OEC debate (title, above), claims to phenomenal events that cannot tied to reality simply cannot qualify as evidence. For example, one YEC Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (LCMS) document is premised on the assumption that cosmology cannot be trusted⁵ because it contradicts recent-creation⁶ "science." So it is highly ironic that this same publication declares that the "steady-state" cosmological theory that is proposed by Sir Fred Hoyle is now rejected by the scientific community on the grounds of "*the overwhelming evidence that the universe came into existence a finite time ago.*"⁷ While I affirm this document's assertion as true, it struck me that it *has* not, because it, in principle *cannot*, offer actual scientific evidence in support of its claim. It is solely *because* the Big Bang is *demonstrably* true based on a host of *observational* scientific grounds, that it amounts to the greatest *scientific* indicator of all for the existence of God as Creator (see my paper, "Was the Big Bang the Big Beginning?").

Ironically, even though Stephen Hawking roundly deserves his reputation as among the greatest living scientists in the entire world, he also at times borrows his deserved authority within his own field of *theoretical* physics in order to assert a position that lies in another field (*classical* physics). While the latter appeals to empirical data, the "data" of the former isn't accessible to scientific investigation but is instead based on abstract conjectures that aren't grounded on observation. When non-specialists hear that Hawking rejects the notion of a transcendent (God-caused) beginning, it is easy for them to imagine that this renowned scientist has explained away the Big Bang. Yet he has done no such thing with respect

⁴ The New Strong's Expanded Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible. (Thomas Nelson, 2001). The Bible elevates the concept of truth while decrying the concepts of falsehood and deceit 984 times; every instance in a way that is consistent with truth under its classical definition.

⁵ "...even the best scientific theories are the products of finite, fallen minds, and have at most a temporal and penultimate status" A Report of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. In *Christ All Things Hold Together: The Intersection of Science & Christian Theology*. (February, 2015), p. 10.

⁶ "Science is not authorized to stand as an arbiter over God and His Word." (Ibid).

⁷ Op.cit. (5) p. 119, n. 302.

to the hard facts of science.⁸ This is a prime example of the necessity for Christians to distinguish between mere empty assertions made in the name of science as opposed to the scientific evidence itself. Sadly, however, YECs have nothing to contribute to this consideration for the reason that they take the same posture as Hawking with respect to prioritizing evidence over ideology. Only by embracing the biblical posture toward the authority of evidence on the basis of Romans 1:18-20 can Christians demand that the testimony of nature be heeded as truthful.

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⁸ See my paper, "Was the Big Bang the Big Beginning?," p. 7