

Apologetic Methods: The Bible's? or Theirs?¹

Taking notice of Scripture's unapologetic appeal to scientific² evidence (Romans 1:18-21)

One website that addresses the relationship between Jesus Christ and the concept of truth³ says at its outset that truth is about *more* than *simply* facts. Even so, it further states that truth-claims *must* harmonize with the phenomena they address.⁴ To this progression of thinking I say, "Amen!" What I most fear in regard to current views on truth is the *failure* of many *Christians* to grasp that the concept of truth is a very high priority in Holy Scripture.⁵ For this reason I am urging a Bible-based Reformation in our *apologetic* calling with the goal that evangelicals appeal to *phenomenal*⁶ evidence (not just "pious" stirrings) to undergird our conviction that God exists. The context that I employ in framing my argument is the creation of *the universe*. The crisis I that decry is the 40% of Christians⁷ (prodded by intractable⁸ leaders) who **oppose the very strongest body of scientific evidence for the existence of God;**⁹ which is the **Big Bang (BB)**.¹⁰ They oppose it because they allege that it contradicts the first chapter of Genesis (**G1**) and for that very reason they reject every scientific claim that conflicts with their interpretation of G1.¹¹

I am assuredly NOT disparaging the text of Genesis 1. To the contrary, concerning the duration of its' creation periods with respect to both the word "day," and the "evening...morning" refrain, the *Hebrew* text yields substantial clues that the *Day-Age* interpretation is the superior view.¹² Indeed, in my paper "The Biblical Demand...", I list numerous conservative scholars who embrace the "eon" reading of "days."¹³ Furthermore, by YEC's denial of a BB beginning, they deprive Gen. 1:1 of any coherent connection to the creation days, while, by contrast, locating the BB at Gen. 1:1 as the very first event of creation thereby unites Chapter One entirety, not only grammatically, but also by ringing true to established scientific facts.

The YECs' malignment of *science* that I referenced earlier ignores the truth that the Apostles' Creed highlights **actualities**;¹⁴ **not** abstractions! For this reason we ought to ignore YECs' hinderances that are so-far thwarting our charge to *intellectually* commend the existence of God.¹⁵ Consequently we should frame arguments that are both biblically-faithful AND *scientifically*-factual that can disintegrate the wave of materialism¹⁶ that is sweeping multitudes away from belief in God. The polemic at hand entails two camps: (1) **Young-Earth-Creationism** which, on the *alleged* authority of G1, ignores much of science in order to advance its' claim that creation happened thousands of years ago, and (2) the **Big Bang**, which draws on the *entire* factual evidence that indicates the cosmos **began out of absolutely nothing** 13.7 billion years ago. Notice the **irony** in this contest! While the "Bible-only" (YEC) view effectively **denies** the claim of Psalm 19:1 that it is specifically **nature**¹⁷ (science) that *declares God's glory*;" by contrast, even certain *leaders*¹⁸ within the *science-only* view highlight a **correlation** between the Big Bang and Gen, 1:1.

¹ An echo of Roland Allen's famous book title, *Missionary Methods: St. Paul's or Ours?* The word, "theirs" refers to young-earth-creationists.

² Provided *scientific* pronouncements remain within legitimate *scientific* parameters. See both my paper, "Scientism is Not Science," and my body of quotations by a former atheist titled, "Why Antony Flew Came to Believe in God," at my website: www.christianityontheoffense.com

³ <https://www.christianity.com/jesus/is-jesus-god/names-of-jesus/how-is-jesus-the-truth.html>

⁴ See my paper, "Disarming the Perceived Conflict Between Scientific Fact and the Text of Genesis 1 Without Compromising Either," Op.cit. 2.

⁵ I count nearly 1000 times in the Bible where the concept of truth is addressed. *Strong's Concordance of the Bible*. (Thomas Nelson, 2001).

⁶ I use this term in the technical sense of factual events that are perceivable by the senses (i.e. **science**). See also n. 8, below.

⁷ <https://www.livescience.com/46123-many-americans-creationists.html>

⁸ Contrary to the spirit of Acts 17:11, I am objecting not only to their disapproval, but also their refusal to *consider* relevant new information.

⁹ The evidence is publicly observable and testable. It indicates that the universe is expanding, as it has ever since it began from out of nothing in a manner consistent with Genesis 1:1. See my paper, "God's Prints are Everywhere," at my website: Op.cit. (2)

¹⁰ Having recently converted from atheism, Astronomer Alan Sandage stated before a stunned audience that, in the Big Bang there "is evidence for what can only be described as a supernatural event." Stephen C. Meyer. *Return of the God Hypothesis*. (Harper One, 2021), p 108.

¹¹ The LCMS study, *In Christ All Things Hold Together*, says "Science is not authorized to stand as an arbiter over God and His Word," p.110.

¹² Notice that I am appealing NOT to *proof*; but the scientific method called "*inference to the best explanation* among **competing** hypotheses."

¹³ See my papers, "The Biblical Demand to Take Another Look," and "16 Clues Indicating that Creation is Ancient" (2 Pages). Op.cit. (2).

¹⁴ Or, phenomena. ** J. W. Montgomery. *Faith Founded on Fact*. (Nelson, 1978). ** My paper, "Hoax? Myth? Or Literally True?" Op.cit. (2).

¹⁵ No more should biblical claims be exempted from intellectual soundness than for parents to permit kids on unsound ice covering a lake!

¹⁶ While materialism says matter is absolutely all there is, the BB proves that the only conceivable source of a beginning or of matter, is God.

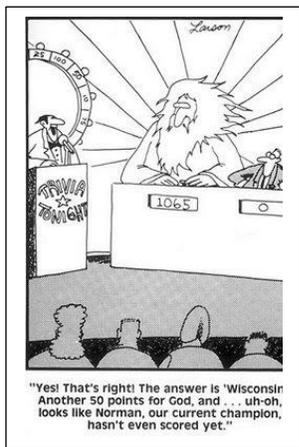
¹⁷ By their only permitting scientific data if it agrees with their YEC views, they are impugning the testimony of nature as untrustworthy.

¹⁸ Op.cit. (10).

It is not as though YEC ignores the science altogether (their literature is filled with random *scientific* facts). Yet since their “facts” have to pass through the filter of G1, they treat “facts” in a **non**-scientific way. When I was in high school I picked cherries in the summer. I remember being sternly charged by our boss to not strip the branches bare, but only pick the ripe ones. On the other hand, in the altogether different context of gathering evidence to answer a problem, to “*cherry-pick*” for only the desirable is to do it wrong! In investigating a mystery, the determination to attain the truth leaves no clues behind!

With respect to this essay, the schema of “cherry-picking” for “**the facts**” by retaining only “evidence” that favors a *sought-after* outcome, utterly sabotages the prospect of attaining truth. One glaring example from my own experience involved virtually an entire audience a few years ago who refused to consider the crucial point of my lecture, namely that the history of our universe is best explained in light of the Big Bang. They objected not as if my facts were wrong, but because they insisted that the BB contradicts Genesis 1. Further still, neither any *quantity* of evidence, nor *degree of validity* or *explanatory power*, could reverse their opposition because of their conviction that God, the author of the Bible (2 Timothy 3:16), has reasoning power vastly superior to the greatest of scientists.¹⁹

To now bridge my opening paragraph with the above views, YEC insists further that every time scientific evidence appears to conflict with a Bible passage, Scripture must be granted to have final word. Now, very sincerely I understand that *rationale* for the reason that God IS omniscient rather than perceptually-limited. Consequently, God’s knowledge about everything is perfect, immediate, and complete. Humans by contrast, who are both sinful and finite, are chronically (though not entirely) prone to error. Not only that! At even our *conceivably*-best, we could never approach, even in principle, infinite knowledge. In addition, I also share the YEC view that God is omnipotent and for this reason can effortlessly create a universe in an instant (far quicker than the six-day creation week YEC’s insist on!) if He chooses. So, I understand how the notion of a multi-billion-year-old universe can *appear* to diminish God’s omnipotence. After all, the power of a computer is calculated by how quickly it accomplishes its task. Why then, not God’s power?



Nevertheless there are thoroughly-valid reasons why insisting on the science is NOT an affront to either God’s omnipotence or His omniscience. These reasons however require our appreciating the concept of rationality in its every aspect; concerning its source, what rationality entails, and how it evaluates disputes about truth-matters. These “reasons” have nothing to do with the competence of God’s thinking! Firstly, the controversial expectation this paper seeks to defend; that God not only willingly *does* commit Himself to validating His truth; but also that He really *is* obligated to do so by means of evidence; is premised on the grounds that **God Himself is a rational Being!** Even while Isaiah 55:8-9 affirms both that God’s existence is on a vastly higher plane than we humans can comprehend, and that His knowledge of all things is perfect; it does **NOT** follow from this that God’s conception of *truth* is *utterly* different from ours. For example, having argued that God could have created other kind of universe that have differing strengths of the **physical** forces, William Shedd argued differently in regard to *rationality*:

“We can conceive of only one species of reason. When God creates a rational being, he makes [us] after his own image [Genesis 1:27] ... All finite reason must resemble the infinite reason in kind. When God creates a rational spirit, he must, from the nature of the case, make it after his own likeness and after no other pattern.”²¹

¹⁹ See my papers, “By Which Authority?” and ** “The LCMS Bondage to Non-Biblical Boundaries,” at my website, Op.Cit. (2).

²⁰ <https://duckduckgo.com/?q=TV+contest+with+God%2C+farside+cartoon&kp=1&t=chromentp&iar=images&iax=images&ia=images&iaj=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.redicecreations.com%2Fimg%2Fnewsletter%2FGod-game-show.jpg>

²¹ William G.T. Shedd. *Systematic Theology*. 3rd ed. (P&R, 2003), p. 61, Original edition, 1888-9. **Boldface mine.**

Please note that Shedd is not claiming that our reasoning powers are equal to God's. Nevertheless, even though *His ways are not our ways* (Isaiah 55:8), we have grounds to *trust* that God is both good and right in His purposes including making us with a conscience to apprehend both reason²² and right and wrong.

I will shortly show **from the Bible** that, in His interactions with human beings, God employs and applies the same rational principles that are being laid out at this stage of my paper. Firstly however, I wish to highlight that the "species" of rationality which flows from the character of our Maker, has attributes that are also consistent with the **physical** universe (*kosmos* Gk.) He created. Indeed, the *birth*²³ of science as a *disciplined*-research into the *substance* of the natural world, occurred in a specifically *Christian* culture. This is NOT as though Christians were smarter than people in other cultures, but rather *because* Christians distinctively held that nature was (and is) the creation of a personal rational God; the consequence of which gave the first investigators of nature confidence that matter, at its core, was (and is) intelligible as opposed to chaotic and meaningless.²⁴ And lo and behold, what they have discovered over successive centuries was that physical nature is universally permeated; from quantum interactions at the sub-atomic level all the way to the myriad of galactic swarms of stars stretching to the farthest extent of our expanding cosmos, with mathematical consistency and precision. Astronomer Dr. Paul Davies wrote of this reality, "*Atheists claim that the laws [of nature] exist reasonlessly and that the universe is ultimately absurd*" (boldface mine). Yet former atheist, the late Dr. Antony Flew, stated that, to the contrary, "*The laws of nature pose a problem for atheists because they are a voice of rationality heard through the mechanisms of matter.*"²⁵ So even in the *creation* He has made, the revelatory aspect of every facet of creation is pervaded with signs of God's rationality. And the ramifications of this reality are enormous (for example, to getting us to the moon).²⁶ So far then, I have established from both Scripture and characteristics of His creation, that the rationality of God is expressed in the entirety of *physical* reality. So now I turn our attention to aspects of God's rationality with respect to the intersection between Himself and human species, under the following four categories:

For the Reason that God is a Rational Creator:

- A. Rationality is humanity's universal means of apprehending reality.
- B. The Bible assumes the authority of the principles of rationality.
- C. The principles of rationality are hedged in by both "First Principles" and logic.
- D. The Bible Employs Rational First Principles in its Proclamation.

Rationality is Humanity's Universal Means for Apprehending Reality

Having established first of all that God is innately rational and that His created order reflects that feature, God further *instills* a sense of moral and rational order in the hearts and minds of people everywhere irrespective of whether they are acquainted with the Scriptures (Romans 2:14-16).²⁷ Although the philosopher Aristotle is rightly lauded for clarifying and categorizing the core tenets of rational thinking,²⁸ it is not correct to think he *invented* logic. On the basis of Gen. 1:27, biblical theology also holds that rationality is an innate trait of every human in their interface with brute reality. Indeed I defy anyone to name an example where Scripture demands, either that people believe God because He demands it,²⁹ or

²² I include rationality for the reason that our intellectual life too is intended to be guided by morality (Romans 1:18-21).

²³ I emphasize "*birth*" for the reason that, apart from a biblical world view, the dominant view of nature what that it was. at bottom, chaotic.

²⁴ Stephen C. Meyer. Return of the God Hypothesis. (Harper One, 2021), pp. 20-25. On p. 37 he references Edgar Zilsel's article, "The Genesis of the Concept of Physical Law," by noting that "*the first people to conceive nature as an externally governed system were the...Hebrews,*" p. 23.

** Langdon Gilkey. Maker of Heaven and Earth. "Creation and the Intelligibility of Our World," ch. 5." (Doubleday, 1959).

²⁵ Antony Flew with Roy A. Varghese. There is a God: How the World's Most Notorious Atheist Changed His Mind. (Harper One, 2007), p. 111.

²⁶ Fuzale Rana. Fit for a Purpose: Does the Anthropic Principle Include Biochemistry? (RTB, 2021), esp. ch. 9.

²⁷ The word translated "law" is derived from the Greek noun, *nomos*.

²⁸ [http://www.filosofia.unimi.it/zucchi/NuoviFile/Paolo%20Crivelli-Aristotle%20on%20Truth-Cambridge%20University%20Press%20\(2004\).pdf](http://www.filosofia.unimi.it/zucchi/NuoviFile/Paolo%20Crivelli-Aristotle%20on%20Truth-Cambridge%20University%20Press%20(2004).pdf)

²⁹ The purpose of the O.T. phrase, "*Thus says the LORD,*" is to identify the speaker. The obedience which ought to follow is by implication only.

that He unambiguously³⁰ insists that people accept factual absurdities. The common claim alleged in the name of science that the concept of God is a fantasy, doesn't qualify as a rational objection since the question of a creator is an intellectual option that is sufficiently plausible to demand investigation.³¹

The Bible Assumes the Rightful Authority of the Principles of Rationality

Contrary to popular assumptions, the Holy Bible from its very beginning in *Genesis* all the way to the Book of *Revelation* at its close, likewise embraces these same principles as substantiated by the frequency of such words as “*true, truth, false, deceive and lie,*” etc., within the very text of Scripture.³² Yet even so, Scripture did not introduce rationality into the world for the first time since, as Romans 2:14-16 states, rationality is deemed to be an innate character trait in humans ever since the creation of humanity according to the biblical doctrine of creation (Gen. 1:27).

The Principles of Rationality are Hedged in by both “First Principles” and Logic

What is identified as the “correspondence view of truth” holds that an assertion is true only if the reality it addresses harmonizes with the claim. I earlier said that YECs demand that whenever Scriptural assertions conflict with scientific observations or conclusions, then God's Word must be deemed the final authority. Yet it must be noted that YEC hermeneutics³³ contradict firstly Philosophical First Principles (PFP) without which rationality is impossible³⁴ and secondly certain rules of logic. The most prominent of the PFP First Principles is the “Law of Non-Contradiction” (LNC). Aristotle stated that “*without the principle of non-contradiction we could not know anything that we do know.*”³⁵ He also wrote, “*To say of what is that it is, or of what is not that it is not, is true.*”³⁶ Put more clearly the LNC holds that two conflicting propositions cannot both be true in the same way and at the same time. Consequently, it must always be the *ambiguous*³⁷ assertion that is liable to correction; not duly-established empirical reality.³⁸

The Bible Without Fail Employs Rational First Principles and Logic in its Proclamation

Socrates famously modeled “*follow[ing] the evidence where it leads,*” to his critics.³⁹ Scripture in its own way urges that very dictum. Indeed, with respect to evidence, Romans 1:18-21⁴⁰ so insists that the testimony of nature is true; disbelief in God will lead to judgment insofar as the evidence of nature is ignored. As for Jesus' posture toward evidence, instead of demanding belief on the basis of His word alone, His methods to the contrary are best illustrated in Matthew 11:4 where Jesus effectively said, “**Take notice of the evidence!**” Indeed, in the Bible scores of examples are to be found where it appeals to evidence of every kind.⁴¹ The reason is that assertions can *only* be substantiated by appealing to verification that they are indeed true. Truth-tellers that are confident in their own case grasp this and for that reason they relish the scrutiny. My contention is that God likewise fears no cross-examination!

Gary Jensen, Retired NALC Lutheran Pastor © February 25, 2022

Ggjensen549@gmail.com ** Christianityontheoffense.com ** offensivechristianity.blogspot.com

M.Div. Degree from Luther/Northwest Theological Seminary ** M.A. Degree with Honors in *Science and Religion* from BIOLA University

³⁰ For examples of articles that frame accounts in Genesis in a plausibly-different light, see notes 13 and 14, plus my articles on Noah's Ark.

³¹ Op.cit. (8). ** Also my paper, “Was the Big Bang the Big Beginning?” Op.cit. (2).

³² Op.cit. (5).

³³ Named after the Greek God, Herman, the word stands for correct principles of interpretation.

³⁴ Philosopher of Science and Christian, Dr. J.P. Moreland states that people in general acknowledge that “*religion and Christianity in particular such that [the two] cannot, even in principle, conflict with scientific or philosophical claims about the world.*” Christianity and the Nature of Science: A Philosophical Investigation. (Baker, 1989), p. 17.

³⁵ <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/aristotle-noncontradiction/>

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Op.cit (13, 14).

³⁸ Empirical means the data is verifiable by observation or experience rather than by theory or pure logic.

³⁹ Plato's Republic. GMA Grube, ed. (Hackett, 1974), p. 394.

⁴⁰ See “Romans 1:18-20: A Study,” ** and “In Christ All Things Hold Together: My critique of YEC with respect to Romans 1:18-21. Op.cit. (2).

⁴¹ See “The Pervasive Employment of Apologetics in the Bible.” Op.cit. (2).