

## Truth can Never be Less than “One”

“If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things?” -- Jesus (John 3:12)

“Truth” has a standard definition. It means “*The property of [a statement] being in accord with fact or reality.*”<sup>1</sup> For three reasons, this poses a **major challenge** to those who say that the final word must go to Scripture in alleged<sup>2</sup> disputes between science and the Bible:

1. While that assertion is motivated by a desire to protect Scripture, it has no foundation in Scripture. My study of nearly a thousand references to matters of truth and falsehood in Scripture indicate that the biblical writers don’t employ the concept of truth in that sense.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, St. Paul warns to the contrary that the **testimony of nature must not be suppressed** for the very reason that it is a **revelatory vehicle** of God’s “*eternal power and deity*” against which all people will be held accountable (Romans 1:18-20).<sup>4</sup> In short, the Bible *obligates* itself to ground its truth claims on its consistency with the facts of nature.
2. This assertion depends on fundamentally altering the definition of the word “truth.” Yet it is not even *logically* valid to ground the truth of a testable<sup>5</sup> claim solely on the authority of the claimant. Irrespective of the demonstrated character of the person under consideration, the *grounds* for justifying<sup>6</sup> the claim in question must reside outside the asserter by showing it to be in accord with the facts. Legal scholars employ two words to distinguish between two categories of criteria by which judgments are rendered in a legal trial. Firstly the word, *de facto* means, “*in fact,*” or, “*in reality,*” while *de jure* by contrast means, “*according to rightful entitlement.*”<sup>7</sup> For the purposes of this essay, I cite theologian John Frame as an example of the employment of the latter in an illegitimate manner:

*“Divine authorship is the ultimate reason why Scripture is authoritative. Its authority is absolute because God’s authority is absolute...I conclude that Scripture is inerrant because the personal word of God cannot be anything other than true.”<sup>8</sup>*

Now while I by faith affirm with Dr. Frame that the Bible is without error for the reason that God possesses perfect knowledge and is righteous in character, I regard the task of persuading our skeptical world with truth claims pertaining to both the things God created and the providential works He has done, to be a very different endeavor. The latter challenge entails a category of intellectual reflection that is distinct from our obedient submission to the lordship of Christ in a living faith. Proclaiming the Gospel to our skeptical neighbors in the Great Commission involves the additional task of *effectively* commending it as truth to a world which assumes that it is not (2 Corinthians 10:5).

3. This leads to a third aspect of the concept of “truth” as it pertains to the word “one.” In one context the word means “*being a single unit or thing.*” Yet it is more relevant to this essay to note that “one” is also defined as “*being in agreement or union.*”<sup>9</sup> It is this latter

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<sup>1</sup> “Truth.” Bing.com. <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/truth>, (Boldface mine).

<sup>2</sup> I consider my inclusion of the modifier “alleged” to be a vital factor in this dispute. Even Luther conceded that the text of Genesis 1 is “difficult” (Jaroslav Pelikan, ed. Martin Luther. “Lectures on Genesis.” *Luther’s Works* v. 1. (Concordia, 1958), p. 3.

<sup>3</sup> James Strong. *Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*. (Thomas Nelson, 2001).

<sup>4</sup> See my paper, “Romans 1:18f Challenge to Young-Earth Creationism” at my website (<http://www.christianityontheoffense.com>).

<sup>5</sup> Jesus affirmed this reality in John 3:12, as referenced below the title, above.

<sup>6</sup> Duncan Pritchard. *What is this Thing Called Knowledge?* 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Routledge, 2014), p.23.

<sup>7</sup> “De facto” and “De jure.” Op.cit (1), (Boldface mine).

<sup>8</sup> John M. Frame. *The Doctrine of the Word of God*. (P&R, 2010), pp. 165 and 176, (Boldface mine).

<sup>9</sup> “One.” Op.cit. (1), (Boldface mine).

definition which most closely relates to the meaning of “truth” that I cited previously. If a given claim to truth fails to entail an aspect of oneness in this latter sense, then it violates of its own truth claim **by definition**. The renowned LCMS scientist, Dr. John Klotz, clarified this matter especially well when he wrote that our faith “*cannot go contrary to science and reason and observation... There must be a basic unity between [scientific] facts [on the one hand,] and truth as it is given to us in revelation.*”<sup>10</sup>

### **The Bible Habitually Employs *De Facto* Arguments in Justifying its Truth Claims<sup>11</sup>**

The consistent assumption of the biblical writers is that *all* truth is *one* truth in the sense that truth claims which pertain to the phenomenal<sup>12</sup> world must harmonize with either “reality” or “fact” (above). While Aristotle deserves acclaim for both critiquing and codifying logical propositions,<sup>13</sup> he obviously didn’t *invent* logic, but instead *clarified* these principles which were (and are) in fact already implicitly acknowledged by all people everywhere, including every biblical writer. For example, nearly five hundred years prior to Aristotle, with respect to the rampant practice of idol worship within Israel, the prophet Isaiah derided as irrational, people who shaped metal objects into idols, or carved an image from a fallen log, only to fall down and worship as a god such objects as were **of their very own making** (Isaiah 44:9-20).

In addition to grounding truth *logically*, the biblical writers also reconciled scientific and *historical* claims by appealing to such facts as were publically knowable. For example, Jesus connected the believability of His own teaching about “heavenly things” to the accuracy of His words regarding “earthly things” in his conversation with Nicodemus (John 3:12). When John the Baptist sent emissaries to express doubts to Jesus about His Messiahship, Jesus replied, “*God and tell John what you hear and see; the blind receive their sight...the lame walk, lepers are cleansed...the deaf hear...and the dead are raised...*” (Matthew 11:4-5). Also, in the first Christian sermon ever preached (Acts 2:14-36), St. Peter affirmed the truth of Jesus’ resurrection from the dead by appealing to publically-knowable confirmatory signs, by declaring, “*This Jesus God raised up, and of that **we are all witnesses...as you yourselves know***” (boldface mine). In addition, St. John grounded his claim that God the Son (Jesus) became *fully* human (John 1:14) on the *phenomenal* reality that Jesus was “seen” with the apostles’ “eyes” and “touched” with their hands (1 John 1:1). Furthermore, with respect to cosmos, Psalm 19:1 declares that the fact of the created order in *actuality* indicates that it was made by the God of Genesis 1.

Taken as a whole, the numerous examples of *phenomenal* evidence employed in the Bible<sup>14</sup> further indicate that God-breathed Scripture (2 Timothy 3:16) gives substantial weight to the legitimacy of truth by which its assertions will harmonize with the realities that they describe.

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<sup>10</sup> *Modern Science and the Christian Life*. (Concordia, 1962), p79, note also.137f, (boldface mine).

<sup>11</sup> I am not disputing God’s rightful authority as Lord and Master, but am instead distinguishing between our call to follow Him and the challenge of verifying truth claims, as Scripture does, before a doubting world. Both the Latter Day Saints cult and the religion of Islam adamantly resist submitting their documents to serious critical analysis. Eastern religions (Hinduism, Buddhism, etc., for varying reasons, are simply indifferent to critical scientific and historical investigation. Since the Judeo-Christian tradition uniquely asserts truth claims with respect to nature and history, these aspects of our message must legitimately stand up to the critical analysis of each. I agree with LCMS scholar, John Warwick Montgomery ([Faith Founded on Fact and History, Law, and Christianity](#)) that the Bible does indeed stand up to serious scrutiny!

<sup>12</sup> “Phenomenal:” Objects and events which are testable because they can be apprehend by means of our five senses.

<sup>13</sup> “Posterior Analytics.” *The Philosophy of Aristotle*. Renford Bambrough, translator. (Mentor, 1963), pp. 160f.

<sup>14</sup> See my paper, “The Pervasive Employment of Apologetics in the Bible” at my website, Op.cit. (4).