

## Why and When the Bible Gives Science<sup>1</sup> the Last Word

*"Ever since the creation of the kosmos,<sup>2</sup> God's...eternal power and deity has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made."<sup>3</sup>*

The Bible rightfully claims the last word and final authority in matters of eternity: with respect to our existential<sup>4</sup> needs and pertaining to the array of philosophical concerns and moral demands. Indeed, this *must* be the case for reason of the absurdity of expecting mere humans (1 Cor. 13: 8-12) to create ultimate answers to our deepest needs; and *fallen* sinners such as we are (James 4:1f) to both *be* just and *instill* justice for all, excluding none. Yet Jesus said both, "*I came that you may have abundant life*" (John 10:10) and "*I AM the first and the last...the living one, I died and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades*" (Rev. 1:17-18). Yet even so, the Bible by both its declaration<sup>5</sup> and also its practices, points us not only to itself; but also submits itself to the scrutiny of truth.

Whenever the question arises whether a given assertion concerning factual matters is true, there are two disparate strategies for seeking assent. The assertor might on the one hand baldly apply the *de jure* ploy<sup>6</sup> by stating, "*My assertion is true because I say so!*" In this case no reasons are offered for justifying the claim; it is instead made solely on his/her *own* personal so-called authority. On the other hand the assertor might employ the *de facto* method by which rational *reasons* are offered that can be publicly-known and which correspond with the claims asserted. Now I ask you which of these methods qualifies as *establishing* the truth of the claim being made. Only the latter means. By this claim I am NOT hinting that God errs or deceives! Nevertheless, even granting (as I do) that God has perfect knowledge about absolutely everything; the *de jure* mode can never qualify as *substantiation* for the simple reason that it entails a tautology, which means it is true only by definition. In other words, it does not bolster the claim with independent verifiable grounds. The only way to advance from *assertion* to *substantiation* is by giving independent grounds (or reasons)<sup>7</sup> which ensure it to be true. Of course Christians are entitled to *hold*, by faith and intuition, that biblical claims are true. I too do this, conditionally.<sup>8</sup> Yet these terms differ categorically from *factual* knowledge and so cannot legitimately be the basis for *demonstrating* the facticity of the claim under consideration.

I have never once encountered evangelical Christians (**EC**) granting final authority on *scientific* matters to scientists as opposed to the text of the Bible. To the contrary (clearly for reasons of the laudable goal to honor the Bible as *God's Word*, and also in trust that God is always right), they seem never to consider that the Bible might, in certain circumstances, *intend* NOT to have the last word. For example, when "*the scientific majority*" (**SM**) and biblical *interpretation* (**BI**) conflict, ECs out-of-hand oblige the SM to defer to the authority of BI. Now as I am naming this expectation, I am pleased to lay my hand on the table by declaring the Holy Bible to be the inerrant Word of the all-knowing God who consequently neither deceives nor errs. Yet along with that confession, I hasten to caution readers that this view does NOT exempt Scripture from obligations of its own related to *validating* its own claims. But notice firstly the distinction I am highlighting by my employment of the SM and BI phraseology, above. The goal for my grammatical choices is to distinguish between, on the one hand, both *percep-*

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<sup>1</sup> Notice that I employ the word, "science," NOT "scientists."

<sup>2</sup> In the Greek text, it can refer either to the world, the entire universe, or the whole created order.

<sup>3</sup> Romans 1:20, boldface mine. See my paper, "Romans 1:18-20, A Study," at my website: [www.christianityontheoffense.com](http://www.christianityontheoffense.com)

<sup>4</sup> That is, both urgent and a matter of life and death with ramifications extending into eternity.

<sup>5</sup> Romans 1:18-21.

<sup>6</sup> I will argue in this paper that even God doesn't employ that tactic. For example, even the frequent Old Testament declaration, "*Thus says the Lord,*" doesn't directly serve to demand confidence in its truth so much as it does to clarify, in the midst of confusion, that source of the words of the speaker is no less than Yahweh, the maker of the heavens and the earth and also its redeemer. Obviously, it logically follows that His words are utterly trustworthy and consequently must be heeded!

<sup>7</sup> See my paper, "The Elephant Standing Between Secularists and their Receptivity to the Gospel," Op.cit. (3).

<sup>8</sup> If the notion of the resurrection of Jesus was overthrown, my faith in Christ would be shattered.

tions of phenomena (SM) and *opinions* in biblical interpretation (BI) that are steered from the standpoint of human finitude<sup>9</sup> and sinful-fallenness AND, on the other hand, the *actual* reality behind the natural phenomena in question<sup>10</sup> and the *real* intentions of the Author of Scripture (2 Timothy 3:16) which are both free of distortion from biases such as we all have. So we must not prematurely assume that Scripture and science contradict with each other when, in actuality, the source of the tension may well lie with one side or the other (or both!) by being in error concerning an aspect of their data.

In any case, scientific claims are established, NOT by an assertion that “*Scientists say so,*” but by heeding scientific methodology which limits its objects of study to empirical entities (EE) together with their interactions with measurable forces (MF) that can be extrapolated so that scientists can, in principle, agree on whatever the calculations across every public context. Even though Darwinists appeal to EE (the fossil record, genetic drift and variations), MFs, by contrast lie outside of the scope of *scientific*<sup>11</sup> analysis in critical contexts. Although philosopher David Hume is heralded as a precursive<sup>12</sup> pathway toward Darwinian theory,<sup>13</sup> he nevertheless wrote a devastating philosophical objection to what Darwin argued is the means by which evolution yielded the biological diversity that the natural order displays today. Hume stated, “*When we look about us toward external objects, and consider the operation of causes, we are never able, in a single instance, to discover any power of necessary connection; any quality, which binds the effect to the cause, and renders the one an infallible consequence of the other.*” (boldface mine).<sup>14</sup> Clearly then, “*following the science*” does NOT bind anyone to embrace Darwinism.

As I have not encountered ECs deferring to the authority of scientific facts over-against biblical pronouncements, they have likewise never offered reasons as to why this should be so. Why is it judged belittling of Scripture to expect<sup>15</sup> its proclamations to harmonize with the phenomena it references since the very point we all desire to make is that God knows all things? If, to give an example, a defendant on a witness stand in a Court of Law is truly innocent, then questions by the Prosecution (assuming that the judge referees) have no authority *except* to exonerate the defendant. Now I fully appreciate C.S. Lewis’ book title, God in the Dock,<sup>16</sup> which is premised on God innately always being above challenge. Yet the context of my essay differs vastly from that of his title. By contrast it firmly acknowledges God’s perfect intelligence and competence to rule the universe.

What I instead address is the twofold question, 1) Is our Christian claim that the Bible is the revelation of God true? and if so, 2) How can we know that it is? To the latter, I reply firstly that the Old Testament warned people not to obey false prophets (Jeremiah 23:21-22) while in the Gospels, Jesus warned his disciples not to follow Messianic pretenders (Mark 12:21f). Secondly, in each case, the locus of the Bible’s adjudicating indicators were NOT *inside* Scripture, but in the *external* realm of history: firstly in Deuteronomy 18:21-22 concerning whether the predictions came true, and secondly in Matthew 11:4-5 concerning whether Jesus’ miracles occurred. It was after all foretold that they would happen when the Messiah came (Isaiah 26:19; 29:18; 35:5-6; 42:18, 61:1-2). Notice further that Jesus

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<sup>9</sup> It is no slam on the scientific enterprise to point out that the on-going discoveries about nature puts every scientist on a “learning curve.”

<sup>10</sup> Immanuel Kant coined the term, “*noumenon*,” which means “the thing in itself” (<https://www.britannica.com/topic/noumenon>) or existence “independent of human sense and/or perception” (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Noumenon>).

<sup>11</sup> See the Hume quotation, above, from note 14, below.

<sup>12</sup> His writings centered around 1740 while Charles Darwin published his major work, *On the Origin of Species* over a century later in 1859.

<sup>13</sup> Self-described “ferve evolutionist” Michael Ruse stated that David Hume’s writing, “Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion” (<https://www.gutenberg.org/files/4583/4583-h/4583-h.htm>) were “the most sustained attack ever penned against theology and religious belief of any kind.” ((*Darwin and Design: Does Evolution Have a Purpose?* (Harvard, 2003), p.23). \*\* I cite other devotees in my paper, “Five Darwinian Tenets Scrutinized Under the Standards of David Hume’s Analytical Criteria,” at my website: Op.cit. (3), p. 2.

<sup>14</sup> David Hume. “Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding.” [http://ebooks.gutenberg.us/Renascence\\_Editions/hume/hume.html](http://ebooks.gutenberg.us/Renascence_Editions/hume/hume.html).

<sup>15</sup> The LCMS so opposes seeking to harmonize Scripture with Science that they sneeringly dismiss that attempt by calling it, “*concordism*.”

<sup>16</sup> Eerdmans, 1970.

did NOT say to John the Baptists' emissaries, "Go to the Scriptures, Cousin!" but instead (paraphrased) "Take note of the array of public miracles which both believers and pagans are witnessing;" it is they that vindicate my claims." This contrast is, to me, an enormous game-changer in regard to these questions.

So far, I have distinguished between indications from science and history which are *external* to biblical revelation yet nonetheless yield evidence that serves to validate it, and on the other hand, the Holy Bible which is, in itself the *vehicle* through which God speaks. So what, finally, does Scripture say to the assertion that this essay is laying out? I recently pastored in the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (LCMS) which unfailingly defends the Bible as the revealed Word of God. Unfortunately however, it was my experience that despite their laudable intention, they at times resisted allowing that Word to clarify, let alone challenge, its occasionally dubious doctrinal decrees. Granting that reality, I repeat the question; is the title of my paper supported by Scripture? Secondly, how does it actually accomplish validating its truth? At the end of the very first paragraph of my essay, I argued in reply that it both names the principle, and consistently practices across its pages, what I is regarded as one classical law of truth-telling known as the "Law of Non-contradiction." It holds that conflicting statements or assertions of fact, cannot both be true in the same way at the same time.<sup>17</sup> It is also known as the "Correspondence view of truth," which is defined as "a property of [a statement] being in accord with fact or reality."<sup>18</sup> So, the question reasonably demands to be addressed, does the Bible embrace this view of truth that Western civilization *elsewhere* has elevated at least since the time of Aristotle? My answer is, yes.

The Bible demonstrates this firstly by its *declaration* in Romans 1:18-20 that all people will be held responsible for their belief or disbelief in God as Creator in the face of the testimony of nature (TN). In v. 20, the TN declares that cosmic phenomena are indicators that an almighty, transcendent, and intelligent being (God) brought it into existence.<sup>19</sup> By contrast the young-earth creationist's (YEC) view that *scientific* study of nature must be filtered through Genesis 1 (as YECs interpret it) undercuts the Bible's claim that suppressing the TN (v. 18) is an act of defying God's *truthful* revelation. In summary, Romans 1:18 decries all refusal to acknowledge and obey the evidence from nature that God exists.

Secondly, the Bible *unfailingly* advanced its message in part by persuading audiences with historical and scientific<sup>20</sup> evidence as well as rational arguments.<sup>21</sup> 1 Peter 3:15 states, "Always be prepared to give a reason for the hope that is within you." The Greek word for "reason" is *apologia*, meaning to give rational (*logos*-logical) grounds for one's views. For this reason, apologetics is today defined as assembling and applying in its preaching evidence that **stands on its own, independent of Scripture**, yet at the same time affirms it is true. Such was the evangelistic practice of the early Church, the result of which led one opponent of the Christian Gospel to mourn that the Roman Empire was being turned "upside-down" by its strong numerical growth (Acts 17:6). Why then don't we embrace that strategy of shining the light of supporting evidence of every sort?<sup>22</sup> For it is this method alone that **follows the leading of the Bible** which, in turn, **led to a growing Church** even in an anti-Christian pagan culture.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/aristotle-noncontradiction/>

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/truth>

<sup>19</sup> See my two papers, "God's Prints are Everywhere," and \*\* "Was the Big Bang the Big Beginning?" at my website: Op.cit. (3).

<sup>20</sup> The word "science" was coined by William Whewell in 1834. Prior to then the study of nature was called natural philosophy.

<sup>21</sup> See my paper, "The Pervasive Employment of Apologetics in the Bible," at my website, Op.cit. (3).

<sup>22</sup> See my paper, "See my paper, "The Elephant Standing Between Secularists and their Receptivity to the Gospel." At my website, Op.cit. (3).

<sup>23</sup> See my paper, "How the Early Church Grew," at my website: Op.cit. (3).