

# Dare We Neglect our Best Weapons?

*“For the weapons of our warfare are not worldly but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God and take every thought captive to obey Christ.” (St. Paul in 2 Corinthians 10:4-5)*

All of my essays can be accessed at my website: <http://www.christianityontheoffense.com>

When Christians identify the Bible as our strongest weapon for drawing unbelievers to faith in Christ we are correct IF we are taking into consideration its entire *material contents* in our proclamation of the Gospel of Christ so that the lost are converted to its truth. Scripture indeed is no less than the revealed Word of God (2 Tim. 3:16) through which the Holy Spirit convicts unbelievers of sin, converts people to faith in Christ, and empowers us by His same Spirit in our sanctification toward full maturity in Christ (Rom 1:16). Furthermore, it was by Christ's *spoken* word that He brought the entire universe into existence (Heb. 11:3)! Yet at the same time, certain Christians thereby wrongly suggest that, for the reason of its saving power, the Bible should be our *only* tool for evangelizing unbelievers, irrespective of circumstances. I will argue that this stance contradicts the very Scriptures that they seek to defend.

To draw on St. Paul's analogy in 2 Cor. 10:4-5 (above), because people typically obtain a weapon (e.g. a handgun) for the purpose of self-defense in the face of an unforeseen attack, they familiarize themselves with its features as their very first order of business. It is only after examining how its constituent parts fit and function together to fulfill its purpose, that they reach a level of confidence sufficient to effectively (and safely) use it. This is why, with respect to the Bible, I encourage a carefully examination of its *material contents* for the reason that the Bible itself clarifies the question of our consideration of employing evidence of a kind which lies out-side its pages. What we find in Scripture is insight into both *how* to employ logic and reason,<sup>1</sup> and how to assess the witness of nature (scientific knowledge).<sup>2</sup> Furthermore we discover the frequency of its appeal to historical evidence as an aspect of evangelistic proclamation.<sup>3</sup>

The challenge that this essay seeks to address is the reality that the largest “faith group” in the United States today, according to the article, “Why People Leave Religion,” is no longer Catholics (21%) or White Evangelicals (16%), but instead “Nones” who represent 25% of the population. The article begins, “A majority of the religiously unaffiliated...say they fell away from faith not because of any negative experience, but because they stopped believing, usually before the age of 30” (boldface mine). “Nones” are people who identify themselves as those “*who don't believe in religious teachings,*” but instead “*have detached completely from religion and are finding meaning in their jobs, in raising kids, in their communities, in nature,*” states, Katherine Ozment, both a self-described “none,” and author of the book, Grace Without God. In reply to this challenge, Ed Stetzer of the Billy Graham School of Evangelism notes that Christians need to be retrained in how “*to reach secular people.*”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> While Aristotle clarified the rules of logic, he did not invent them. See my **seven essays**: “The Elephant Standing Between Secularists and their Receptivity to the Gospel,” \*\* “How Did the Early Church Grow?,” \*\* “Martin Luther and the Lutheran Confessions on Apologetics and the Use of Reason,” \*\* “A Diet of Worms and the Two Plates on the Table Today,” \*\* “The Pervasive Employment of Apologetics in the Bible,” \*\* “Truth is Never Less than One,” and \*\* “Why a Rational Defense of Christian Faith is Consistent with a Living Faith in Jesus Christ (34 reasons)”.

<sup>2</sup> In Romans 1:18-20 the Apostle Paul declares it to be “wickedness” to either ignore or explain away the truth of nature (“*the things [God] has made*”), for the reason that such (scientific) evidence reveals both God's “*invisible nature*” and His “*eternal power and deity*”). See my two essays: “What the Bible Teaches about What to do with the Facts of Nature,” and \*\* “The Apostle Paul's Assessment of the Testimony of Nature.”

At the same time, I emphasize that legitimizing scientific knowledge entails no compromise whatsoever with the integrity of Genesis 1. See my seven essays: “The Bible Literally Says and Teaches the Following,” \*\* “The Biblical Demand to Take Another Look: Ten Exegetical Reasons the Creation Days of Genesis are Non-24-Hour,” \*\* “A Critique of ‘Biblical Demand’ by an LCMS Professor,” \*\* “Defusing the Alleged Conflict Between Scientific Fact and Genesis 1 Without Compromising Either One,” \*\* “The CTCR of the LCMS Affirms the Legitimacy of My Essay, ‘The Biblical Demand,’” and \*\* “LCMS statements about What to do with the Facts of Nature,” \*\* and “Was there Animal Death Before the Fall?”

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> <http://religionnews.com/2016/09/22/why-most-people-leave-religion-they-just-stop-believing/>

It is encouraging to note that in a small sense the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (LCMS) is waking up and responding to this challenge through seeking a strategy to evangelize younger generations of lapsed Christians with apologetic evidence that is related to creation. Nevertheless, the strategy of the “Denver Creation Society”<sup>5</sup> of LCMS churches (representative of the nearly-unanimous opinion in the LCMS<sup>6</sup>), for example, is not legitimate for three vital reasons: 1) it is premised on an interpretation of Genesis which is exegetically dubious,<sup>7</sup> 2) it directly contradicts a fundamental stricture highlighted in Romans 1:18-20,<sup>8</sup> and 3) it urges largely naïve students to selectively reject scientific data insofar as is deemed to conflict with Genesis and embrace the tenets of “young-earth creationism (YEC) whose so-called “facts” contradict broadly and heavily-substantiated scientific knowledge pertaining to the age of the cosmos.<sup>9</sup> My primary dispute with YECs, then, is their approval of the *suppressing* scientific facts (which they do selectively); not because these “facts” are demonstrated to be scientifically false, but solely for the reason that they contradict their peculiar interpretation of Genesis.<sup>10</sup>

Indeed, with respect to how one is to regard the testimony of nature, the contrast between a vital tenet of YEC (just described) and the Apostle Paul’s declaration in Rom 1:18-20 can hardly be wider. While YECs advocate either suppressing or explaining away certain aspects of scientific knowledge which are deemed to conflict with Genesis 1, the Apostle Paul describes that very posture as an act of wickedness.<sup>11</sup> Why? Speaking through the Holy Spirit he identifies three profound reasons: 1) suppressing the witness of nature entails pushing aside truth itself, 2) the witness of nature is indeed a vehicle of revelation through which the existence of God as creator are manifest to all people, 3) and consequently all people will be judged as “without excuse” for their disbelief in Him on the basis of what nature plainly tells them. How then, I ask, can suppressing such knowledge as “*the things [God] has made*”) be justified, even in defense of the Gospel, when we should instead be calling people to examine the entire body of scientific knowledge with the question, does it point to a creator (God), or does it not?

There are then two fundamental reasons (one is negative and the other is positive) why we must not neglect our best apologetic argument in the proclamation of the Gospel. Firstly, Christian belief is under attack (Hebrews 12:3-4, Jude 3). It is therefore urgent that we shore both our resources and our protections for the spiritual and mental battle which is raging around us. C.S. Lewis put it best,

*“To be ignorant and simple now—not to be able to meet the enemies on their own ground—would be to throw down our weapons, and to betray our uneducated brethren who have, under God, no defense but us against the intellectual attacks of the heathen. Good philosophy must exist, if for no other reason, because bad philosophy needs to be answered.”<sup>12</sup>*

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<sup>5</sup> [http://rm.lcms.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/Denver-Society-of-Creation\\_November-Flyer.pdf](http://rm.lcms.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/Denver-Society-of-Creation_November-Flyer.pdf), \*\* also <http://www.societyofcreation.org/conferences.php>

<sup>6</sup> “Of Creation.” <http://www.lcms.org/doctrine/doctrinalposition#creation>

<sup>7</sup> “The Biblical Demand,” Op.cit. (1), 2<sup>nd</sup> paragraph, and my additional essay, “Genesis 1:1-2 Anticipates Big Bang Cosmology.”

<sup>8</sup> “What the Bible Teaches,” Op.cit. (1), 1<sup>st</sup> paragraph.

<sup>9</sup> See my two essays, 1) “Was the Big Bang the Big Beginning?” and \*\* 2) “The Biblical Demand,” Op.cit. (1), pp. 14-15). This data has absolutely no *scientific* relationship to Darwinian dogma.

<sup>10</sup> The Biblical Demand. Op.cit. (1).

<sup>11</sup> It is not my point to equate the posture of YEC with willful rejection of the claims of the Gospel. It is to say, however, that by YEC’s stance, three consequences follow: 1) the convicting aspect of the testimony of nature is thereby undermined, and 2) the insistence that people deny clear scientific truth in order to consider the claims of the Gospel is to effectively impose a stumbling block in the way of people embracing the Gospel (2 Cor. 6:3), and 3) the biblical doctrine of creation is being distorted.

<sup>12</sup> C.S. Lewis, The Weight of Glory and Other Addresses. (MacMillan, 1980), 28.

Furthermore, for the reason that everything the Bible addresses entails truth-claims,<sup>13</sup> Christians must not settle for employing faulty argumentation so that Christianity is greeted with mockery. It is not our privilege as Christians to impose on potential Christian candidates an illegitimate stumbling block in the way of Christian belief (2 Cor. 6:3).<sup>14</sup> St. Augustine states,

*"[I]t is a disgraceful and dangerous thing for an infidel to hear a Christian, presumably giving the meaning of Holy Scripture, talking nonsense on these topics; and we should take all means to prevent such an embarrassing situation, in which people show up vast ignorance in a Christian and laugh it to scorn."<sup>15</sup>*

Second, there is a body of both historical<sup>16</sup> and scientific evidence<sup>17</sup> which powerfully affirms the truth of the Gospel. One document of the LCMS has correctly stated that, "*In light of the virtually unquestioned authority attributed to science by many today, scientific data might be especially persuasive in attempts to establish a natural know-ledge of God* (that is based on recent scientific discoveries)."<sup>18</sup> In particular it highlights the following argument:

*"This is one of the conclusions of modern science that substantially strengthens the older cosmological argument of e.g. Aquinas...Advances in astronomy during the twentieth century...led to the discovery that the universe is not static, but is expanding. This and related discoveries thus suggested (by projecting backwards) the now generally accepted conclusion that the universe of space and time had an absolute beginning in the finite past."<sup>19</sup>*

When an atheist attending a recent Christian assembly<sup>20</sup> stated publicly that he has finds no evidence to support the existence of God, I challenged him to produce an atheistic accounting for the above phenomenon on the basis of a materialistic cause. He acknowledged that while there is no such *known* scientific explanation, he nevertheless refused to entertain the solitary sufficient answer, that "*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth*" (Genesis 1:1).

The fact of the beginning of the cosmos out of absolutely no pre-existing material at the Big Bang stands as the single most powerful argument for the existence of the God of the Bible. While that phenomenon is entirely consistent with both the text of Gen. 1:1, and Biblical doctrine that God is almighty and transcendent,<sup>21</sup> it is at the same time based on scientific evidence which simply cannot be explained away. Yet this is but one of an extensive array of evidential arguments supporting the God of the Bible (Ps. 19:1-2). Let us not leave these apologetic tools on the shelf, but to the contrary, boldly employ them for the glory of God.

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<sup>13</sup> See my essay, "Truth is Never Less than One."

<sup>14</sup> See my essay, "The Elephant Standing Between Secularists and their Receptivity to the Gospel."

<sup>15</sup> Augustine. *The Literal Meaning of Genesis*. J.H. Taylor, S.J. tr. v.l. (Newman 1982), p.42f.

<sup>16</sup> Josh and Sean McDowell. *The Unshakable Truth*. (Harvest House, 2010).

<sup>17</sup> William Lane Craig. *A Reasonable Faith*. (Crossway, 2008).

<sup>18</sup> A Report of the CTCR. *The Natural Knowledge of God in Christian Confession and Christian Witness*. (LCMS, 2013), p.57.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid*, p. 59.

<sup>20</sup> The Puget Sound Chapter of *Reasons to Believe* which is a think-tank which harmonizes mainstream science with Biblical revelation.

<sup>21</sup> See both my introduction and conclusion to "The Biblical Demand," and my paper, "Was the Big Bang the Big Beginning?"