



# LSI Journal

## Did Dinosaurs Roam the Earth?

Can Witnessing a Miracle  
Lead to Faith?

*Book Review*  
Clearing a Path for the Gospel

winter 2020

# Evolution

## a Lutheran Response

## Lutheran Science Institute (LSI)

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*Mark Bergemann*

**Front Cover:** Milwaukee Public Museum exhibit. Signs read, "*Dromaeosaurus* (drom-ee-uh-SORE-us), or 'Swift Lizard.' ...was 6 feet long and weighed less than 100 pounds. ...This meat-eating dinosaur was common in eastern Montana 65 million years ago." Photo credit: Mark Bergemann 2016.

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# Can Witnessing a Miracle Lead to Faith?

Mark Bergemann

This article examines what Scripture teaches about apologetics—about defending the faith. Specifically, we will make a case from Scripture for using extra-biblical arguments—arguments from history, science, logic, etc.—as part of that defense of the faith. We will start with a study of what God reveals in Scripture about the role miracles can and cannot play in an unbeliever's path to faith. Then we will move to what Scripture says about the role other things play in bringing a person to faith. That will eventually lead us to a more general discussion of using extra-biblical arguments in our apologetic.

Can witnessing a miracle lead to faith? Let's consider two passages that appear to give conflicting answers.

## **No —Luke 16:27-31**

"He said, 'Then I beg you, father, send him to my father's home, because I have five brothers—to warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.' "Abraham said, 'They have Moses and the Prophets. Let them listen to them.' "'No, father Abraham,' he said, 'but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.' "Abraham replied to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.'" Luke 16:27-31 (EHV)

This passage from Luke relates Jesus' parable of the rich man and Lazarus. It appears to say that witnessing a miracle does *NOT* lead to faith.

## Yes —Matthew 11:20-24

Then Jesus began to denounce the towns in which most of his miracles were performed, because they did not repent. “Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles which were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I tell you, it will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon on the day of judgment than for you. You, Capernaum, will you be lifted up to heaven? No, you will go down to hell. For if the miracles performed in you had been performed in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I tell you that it will be more bearable for the land of Sodom on the day of judgment than for you.”

Matthew 11:20-24 (EHV); parallel in Luke 10:10-15.

This passage from the Gospel of Matthew clearly states that witnessing a miracle *CAN* lead to faith. Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum were towns in Galilee. During his earthly ministry, Capernaum served as Jesus’ hometown. Jesus performed many miracles in these towns.<sup>1</sup> Jesus performed “most of his miracles” in Chorazin and Bethsaida, yet many people living there rejected Jesus as their Savior (“they did not repent”). These people witnessed Jesus perform spectacular miracles, yet remained in their unbelief. For them, witnessing miracles did NOT lead to faith. In Matthew 11, Jesus reveals something amazing. He demonstrates that his complete knowledge of everything past, present, and future even includes knowledge of what could have been. If the miracles Jesus performed in Chorazin and Bethsaida had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, those people would have come to faith!

## Consistent and Truthful

Can witnessing a miracle lead to faith? One passage seems to answer “No,” while another answers “Yes.” How can this be? We know that “Scripture cannot be broken” (John 10:35, EHV) and that Scripture

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew 8: 5-16; Mark 1:21-33, 2:1-12, 3:1-6, 6:45, 8:22-25; Luke 9:10-17.



is truth (John 17:17). All sixty-six books of Scripture present a consistent and truthful message. The central message of Scripture is about Jesus our Redeemer, and Scripture is consistent and truthful about that, yet Scripture is consistent and truthful in *everything* it addresses. How can we understand our Luke 16 and Matthew 11 passages in a way which is consistent with the rest of God's Word? What is God telling us in these passages? To help understand these two passages, it will help us to recall what God reveals about the means of grace.

## Means of Grace

Scripture clearly teaches that God works only through the gospel in Word (the Bible) and sacrament (Baptism and Holy Communion) to create and strengthen faith<sup>2</sup>. We call the Word and sacraments the “means of grace.” This information can be used to explain both our Luke 16 and Matthew 11 passages.

## Pagan Cities

Miracles are not a means of grace, but they can have a role in bringing people to faith. Let's consider how seeing miracles could have resulted in bringing the people of Tyre and Sidon to faith. The Phoenician cities of Tyre and Sidon were located on the Mediterranean coast roughly 35 and 50 miles northwest of the Sea of Galilee. Both were Roman free cities. Most people living there were pagans. They believed in many gods. [Yet some believers did live there, such as the woman whom Jesus commends as having “great faith.” See Matthew 15:21–28].

Try to imagine how these pagans might have reacted to Jesus. If these pagans could witness Jesus performing many spectacular miracles, they would note that their gods did not do such undeniable miracles. This Jesus must be, or at least represent, a god above their gods. They might then listen to what Jesus said, hear the gospel, and come to faith in the true God through that gospel message. Witnessing miracles can lead to faith in this way. The Holy Spirit does not create faith through the miracles, but the witnessing of miracles can lead to hearing the gospel. The Holy Spirit can then work faith through the gospel.

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<sup>2</sup> Romans 10:17, 1 Corinthians 1:21, 1 Peter 3:21, Matthew 26:26-28.

## Sign Miracles

We call many of the miracles performed by Jesus, the Apostles, and the prophets “*sign miracles*.” These miracles were a sign pointing to the true God. These signs confirmed the message being spoken as being from God [Exodus 4:5,8; Mark 16:20]. Regarding Jesus miraculously turning 120 or more gallons of water into wine at a wedding feast, the Apostle John reports, “This, the beginning of his miraculous signs, Jesus performed in Cana of Galilee. He revealed his glory, and his disciples believed in him” (John 2:11, EHV).

God reveals how other people came to faith through sign miracles. Here are some examples:

**Elijah and the Prophets of Baal:** When Elijah confronted the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel, a spectacular miracle pointed to the true God. The result: “When all the people saw this, they fell on their knees and said, ‘The LORD, he is God! The LORD, he is God!’” (1 Kings 18:39, EHV). Witnessing a miracle led these people to faith.

**Doubting Thomas:** Thomas refused to believe that Jesus had risen from the dead (John 20:24-29, EHV). Thomas said, “Unless I see the nail marks in his hands, and put my finger into the mark of the nails, and put my hand into his side, I will never believe.” Later Jesus appeared to Thomas, who said to Jesus, “My Lord and my God!” Jesus replied, “Because you have seen me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.” Seeing the risen Lord led Thomas to faith. *None* of the disciples believed Jesus had risen until they saw their risen Lord (Mark 16:9-14). Thomas was simply the last of the disciples to whom the risen Christ appeared. The great majority of people in all of history, even in Biblical times, never witnessed a sign miracle. Jesus calls them, and calls us today, “blessed” for believing without seeing.

**Crossing the Red Sea:** The Israelites were led to faith by witnessing God drown the entire Egyptian army in the Red Sea. “Israel saw the mighty hand which the Lord put into action against the Egyptians, and the people feared the Lord and believed in the Lord and in Moses, his servant.” (Exodus 14:31, EHV)

*Miracles can remove barriers to the gospel and even point to the true God.* Seeing the resurrected Jesus certainly pointed to the true God. Seeing Jesus alive dispelled any reasoning that Jesus would be unable to raise himself, even though he raised others. That temptation and others were eliminated by seeing a miracle, allowing God to work faith through the means he chose—the gospel.

## **Rich Man and Lazarus**

The forgoing also explains the words from the parable of the rich man and Lazarus: “If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead” (Luke 16:31, EHV). If these brothers continued to reject the gospel, then they will never have faith. Witnessing a miracle, like someone rising from the dead, does not create faith. The best a miracle can do is break down barriers to the gospel, and in some cases, point to the true God. Witnessing a miracle often did NOT lead to faith. Look at the people of Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum. They witnessed miracles yet did not come to faith.

## **Can Witnessing Good Works Lead to Faith?**

“You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its flavor, how will it become salty again? Then it is no good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled on by people. You are the light of the world. A city located on a hill cannot be hidden. People do not light a lamp and put it under a basket. No, they put it on a stand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. In the same way let your light shine in people’s presence, so that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven.” Matthew 5:13-16 (EHV)

Witnessing the good works of a Christian can lead an unbeliever to faith. That unbeliever may ask himself, “What makes this Christian do these good things? What does he have that I don’t have that makes him so kind to others?” Witnessing good works could lead the unbeliever to listen to the gospel message, through which God can bring that person to faith. God can use the good works of a Christian to break down barriers to the gospel.



Daniel Deutschlander put it this way as he comments on this passage in several of his books,

Jesus connects our lives to our doctrine when he tells us, “Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven” (Matthew 5:16). The life that is seen by others as flowing from the Word of God may well draw others to hear that Word.<sup>3</sup>

Jesus reminds us that a life of good works, which by definition is a life that conforms to the law, is even a tool by which he would draw others to hear the gospel. He tells us, “Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven” (Matthew 5:16).<sup>4</sup>

How many have come to hear the gospel because of the peace and the order, the decency and the usefulness to others that they saw in the life of a humble and pious Christian? Such a life certainly brought praise to the Father on those occasions—however rare they may be—when someone was first drawn to hear the gospel by the light of Christ radiating from the life of a Christian!<sup>5</sup>

Lyle Lange comments on this and other passages,

Christians will want their lives to give testimony to others of God’s grace, so others will desire to know what God has done for us.<sup>6</sup>

Armin Panning wrote a 16-page article on this passage. In the following quote he makes the point that “Good deeds are an outreach tool,”

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3 Daniel M. Deutschlander, *Grace Abounds—The Splendor of Christian Doctrine* (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 2015), 211.

4 Deutschlander, *Grace Abounds*, 241.

5 Daniel M. Deutschlander, *The Narrow Lutheran Middle—Following the Scriptural Road* (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 2011), 144.

6 Lyle W. Lange, *God So Loved the World—A Study of Christian Doctrine* (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 2005), 382.

He allows us to be his agents in bringing others to praise his name. It is that encouragement especially which is in evidence when Christ urges us, “Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.” Recall that Christ called his disciples “the light of the world.” Outsiders and worldlings are to see them, like a city set on a hill, and are to be drawn and attracted to what they have to offer. This is true godliness for a godless age. There is a mission consideration involved in letting our light shine. We perhaps don’t often think of it in that way, but Jesus is virtually saying, “Good deeds are an outreach tool.” They are to be instrumental in building the church.<sup>7</sup>

The reflected light of the Savior is a powerful force. Paul realized that, and to spread its mighty beams he enlisted the help of others. For example, he urges the Philippians to live their faith to the full so that “you may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke in the minds of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom you shine as lights in the world” (Php 2:14). Their work, and that of many others, was not without effect. Throughout the ages dedicated light bearers have reflected their Savior and thereby have led countless thousands to praise our gracious Father in heaven. From generation to generation there has been true godliness for each godless age.<sup>8</sup>

Here is another passage showing that witnessing the good works of a Christian can lead to faith,

Live an honorable life among the Gentiles so that even though they slander you as evildoers, when they observe your noble deeds, they may glorify God on the day he visits us. 1 Peter 2:12 (EHV)

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<sup>7</sup> Armin J. Panning, “‘LET YOUR LIGHT SHINE BEFORE MEN’ Godliness for a Godless Age,” *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*, vol. 83 no. 4 (fall 1986), 287.  
<sup>8</sup> Panning, 288.

Daniel Deutschlander comments on this passage,

A Christian neighbor or coworker acts as a priest when he seeks and finds opportunities to share the gospel with those around him. That sharing may come when someone asks him something like this, “What makes you tick anyway? You seem different.”<sup>9</sup>

David Kuske comments on this passage,

Peter urges them (and us) to cling to a noble, praiseworthy way of life—a way of life that is honorable also to those living a life of sin. The purpose/goal of living such a life is to turn the tables on those who run Christians down as evildoers. When and if such people take the time to observe what Christians are doing, they may begin to be drawn to the God whom Peter’s readers (and we) are thanking by living this kind of life. And they end up praising God when the Holy Spirit turns them from unbelief to faith.<sup>10</sup>

Peter continues in his epistle by applying this point to wives with unbelieving husbands. Peter says unbelieving husbands,

...might be won over without a word by the behavior of their wives, as they observe your respectful and holy behavior. 1 Peter 3:1b-2 (EHV)

David Kuske comments on this 1 Peter passage,

Peter continues to encourage his readers to live a praiseworthy life in order to win others for Christ (2:12). He writes to Christian wives who have unbelieving husbands and tells them that they can win their spouses without saying a word.<sup>11</sup> ...Peter, while referring particularly to the yielding of Christian wives to their husbands, is also thinking of other conduct

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<sup>9</sup> Deutschlander, *Lutheran Middle*, 184.

<sup>10</sup> David P. Kuske, *A Commentary on 1 & 2 Peter, Jude* (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 2015), 109.

<sup>11</sup> Kuske, 156.

their husbands might observe. Things such as not being unfaithful to their husbands, not being selfish, not using guile to get what they want, etc.<sup>12</sup>

Mark Jeske puts it this way,

God's way is for the believing wife to treat her husband well—in this way the silent testimony of her love and submission will make Jesus Christ look good, and the husband may later come to faith because of the wonderful way in which she treats him.<sup>13</sup>

There are more Scripture passages where God connects faith to things other than the gospel, such as 1 Corinthians 9:19-23, John 2:11, and John 14:11. As with the passages we already examined, WELS authors comment on each of these passages with remarks about removing obstacles to the gospel.

## Apologetics

We have discussed how God can use miracles and good works to break down barriers to the gospel. An unbeliever who witnesses a miracle, or sees the good works of a Christian, may be more likely to listen to the gospel, and through that gospel, God can work faith. Apologetics has something in common with miracles and good works. Apologetics can also remove barriers to the gospel, and like miracles, apologetics may even point to the true God. Scripture shows a place for apologetics (extra-biblical arguments from history, science, logic, etc.) in our ministry to believers and in our ministry to unbelievers.

**Ministry to Believers:** Apologetics can help *believers* by blunting temptations, helping them see logical inconsistencies in unbelief, and helping them better understand spiritual truths. In places like 1 Corinthians chapters 9 and 15, Paul uses many logical arguments when addressing believers.

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<sup>12</sup> Kuske, 144.

<sup>13</sup> Mark A. Jeske, *James, Peter, John, Jude—The People's Bible*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 2002) 102.

**Ministry to Unbelievers:** While witnessing to *unbelievers*, apologetics can sometimes be of value if it leads to an opportunity to share the gospel message. Jesus repeatedly used logical arguments to silence unbelievers.<sup>14</sup> Peter and Paul sometimes preceded their gospel message with arguments from reason.<sup>15</sup> Reason may also be useful in silencing certain objections to the validity of Scripture, but reason and non-biblical evidence at best provide a short introduction or a point of contact. Presentation of law and gospel should not be delayed.

In both these cases, ministry to believers and ministry to unbelievers, the role of apologetics is to remove barriers to the gospel. Apologetics may be commonplace in ministry to *believers*. In ministry to *unbelievers*, apologetics has a more limited role—that of leading the unbeliever to listen to the gospel message.

Siegbert Becker comments that Luther supported using arguments from reason (extra-biblical claims) in our apologetic, “All of these examples make it abundantly clear that Luther is not averse to the use of reason in the area of apologetics.”<sup>16</sup>

David Valleskey writes about using apologetics in ministry to unbelievers,

Apologetics can properly serve a helping role in evangelism. It can assist in clearing away misconceptions that may have resulted in a person being unwilling to listen seriously to what the Scriptures say. ...It won't make a Christian of a person, but it may well result in his willingness to keep listening. If apologetics has accomplished that, it has done its job.<sup>17</sup>

Angus Menuge mentions an important reason for using apologetics,

Likewise, in a world beset by religious pluralism, we need to give people a reason to think that Christianity alone, and not

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<sup>14</sup> Matthew 12:9-14, 12:24-29, 21:23-27, 22:15-22; Luke 13:15-16.

<sup>15</sup> Acts 2:14-15; 14:15-17; 17:22,23,28.

<sup>16</sup> Siegbert W. Becker, *The Foolishness of God—The Place of Reason in the Theology of Martin Luther* (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1982) 182.

<sup>17</sup> David J. Valleskey, *We Believe—Therefore We Speak, The Theology and Practice of Evangelism* (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1995), 111-113.

its many competitors, is faith worthy, so that they start to look at its claims. Only then, as they encounter the Word, can we relinquish responsibility and leave it to the Holy Spirit to draw them to personal faith. In the collaborative, community project that Christian apologetics should be, scientists can contribute their insights into how Christian conviction supports science as well as hard evidence that supports a Christian worldview.<sup>18</sup>

This article will close with a great quote from Lyle Lange, who at the time was a professor at Martin Luther College. He asks Confessional Lutherans to use “more apologetics” and also discusses using apologetics in ministry to Christians [**bold italics in original**],

Apologetics is a natural outgrowth of our faith in Christ. Christians do apologetics. Apologetics has often been called “pre-evangelism.” I would rather put it this way: Apologetics may involve “pre-evangelism” (removing obstacles which prevent us from sharing the gospel). However, Lutheran (biblical) apologetics *is* evangelism. ...I believe there is a need for more apologetics. Our students are looking for answers to the questions they have and the questions others have posed to them. These questions may come from parents, siblings, relatives, friends, dates, fiancés, spouses, or people with whom they work. Our students sincerely desire to be able to give people a reason for the hope they have. Are we meeting their needs, or, are we sending them out into a hostile world poorly equipped to deal with the barrage of questions they will face?<sup>19</sup>

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18 Angus Menuge, “The Vocation of Scientist,” in *Here We Stand—A Confessional Christian Study of Worldviews*, editor Curtis A. Jahn (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 2010), 253.

19 Lyle W. Lange, “Lutheran Apologetics: From Our Classrooms and into the World,” *Lutheran Synod Quarterly* 51, no. 4 (Dec 2011): 335, 369.  
<http://www.blts.edu/wp-content/uploads/lsq/51-4.pdf> (accessed 1-3-20)



## Clearing a Path for the Gospel –A Lutheran Approach to Apologetics

by Arthur A. Eggert and Geoffrey A. Kieta. *Sun Prairie WI: In Terra Pax Lutheran Publishing, 2019. 353 pages, softcover, \$25.00.*

Apologetics is defending the Christian faith. The book's title is its overall theme: The purpose of apologetics is to "clear a path for the gospel." Sections of the book expound on the nature of truth, God's attributes, the reliability of Scripture, and the nature of science. Many common apologetic topics are hardly mentioned, such as the problem of evil, the person and the resurrection of Christ, and hell, so in that regard, this book is not an introduction to the major categories of apologetics. What this book does is live up to its title. It presents "a Lutheran approach to apologetics."

There is a distinction between Lutheran apologetics and that of other Christians regarding the place of human reason. The authors present the Lutheran (scriptural) position regarding the use of reason,<sup>1</sup> in a scope and breadth found few other places, and apply it to various aspects of apologetics. Even though our Christian faith is created and strengthened solely through the gospel in Word and sacrament, the authors show how our apologetic can use extra-biblical arguments to "clear a path for the gospel."<sup>2</sup>

So much in this book is excellent. The theme of chapter 6 on miracles is great. The authors explain that God continuously uses His power in His "regular way" to keep the entire universe working. When God chooses to use a method other than His regular way, "we call it a *miracle*" [p. 139].

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<sup>1</sup> The "ministerial use" versus the "magisterial use" of human reason is covered [p. 10, 11]. The Bible is described as "self-authenticating" [p. 63]. They also write, "We readily acknowledge that we cannot prove that the Bible is the Word of God based on external sources. If we could, then the external sources would be our real standard of belief and not the Bible itself" [p. 64].

<sup>2</sup> For example, "The goal of apologetics is to speak and write in defense of the truth using logic as well as Scripture. ...Apologetics is a necessary discipline" [p. 6-7]. "The apologist must determine whether the goal should be to impart information, argue the reasonableness of the Christian belief about the Bible or confront the straying with the indefensibility of their position" [p. 63].

Important truths are taught: “If someone wants to be a skilled apologist, that person needs to be in the Word. He or she needs to personally read it regularly” [p. 308]. Practical helps are taught such as using written notes to remember the details of any long-term apologetic conversations [p. 241]. The apologist should avoid mixing weaker arguments with stronger ones, as that leads to your strong arguments being ignored and your weak arguments being attacked. The book puts it this way, “A weak argument is usually worse than no argument at all” [page 228]. The authors write, “The apologist needs to stake the claim for the exclusivity of Christianity [p. 190].

Many people today believe in subjective morality. They reject objective right and wrong. The book recommends that the apologist ask such people if it was right for Americans to enslave Africans. This may lead to an admission that there is an objective standard of right and wrong, and then to the source of that standard (God). “This opens the door to a discussion about Jesus” [p. 179].

Two chapters are especially outstanding. They provide many examples of how the apologist can respond to specific questions of skeptics. The chapter on miracles lists thirteen biblical miracles and how to discuss each one. The chapter on salvation lists many ways skeptics attack the law and gospel and how we may respond.

The chapter on archaeology and secular history has some very good information and suggestions. The “historical claims” of Christianity “are an essential part of the message of the gospel” [p. 193]. “As apologists, we need to ask the skeptic to articulate why these things cannot be true” [p. 205]. “To simply dismiss the biblical account in favor of non-biblical sources because they are non-biblical is not in keeping with principles of academic history” [p. 206].

Appendix I explains 78 logical fallacies “to help the apologist avoid such fallacies in his or her arguments and to detect them in the arguments of others” [p. 313]. This and Chapter 1, “The Nature of Truth,” can help train the apologist in logical thinking and in logical listening.

*Even though much in this book is praiseworthy, readers may find things with which they disagree.* For instance, chapter two is devoted to the claim “all arguments that endeavor to prove the existence of God are a waste of effort” (p. 46). The authors explain nine traditional arguments for the existence of God and common rebuttals. The authors believe these nine traditional arguments are not “logically sound” and “leave us no closer to proclaiming the message of Christ” so “they are of no value to us” (p. 52). Just because there is a rebuttal for an argument does not mean that argument is “of no value,” since there are rebuttals for ALL apologetic arguments. Also, the weakness of an argument is often in the eye of the beholder. Even weak arguments can convince many. Personally, I rarely if ever use arguments for God’s existence, since I tend to see other arguments as more useful. That said, countless Christians have successfully used such arguments to “clear a path for the gospel.” That is our apologetic goal. Learning these common arguments for the existence of God, and learning their rebuttals, is of great value for all apologists, even those of us who disagree with some of the authors’ claims.

The authors set high standards for their book,

We have tried to use the highest standards of scholarship. ...We avoided using *ad hominem* arguments, creating *strawmen* to avoid our opponents’ real positions or engaging in lines of argumentation which they might reasonably recognize as containing fallacies. [p. 7, italics in original]

Unfortunately, the book sometimes fails at achieving these goals, as the following paragraphs show.

“Noah’s ark, however, was not built to rest on land as a tourist attraction, but to float on an ocean under adverse conditions” [p. 143]. This unprofessional jab at the 500-foot ark in Kentucky is unnecessary. The creation apologetic organization “Answers in Genesis” (AIG) employs many Ph.D. scientists. The authors commit the “No True Scotsman” fallacy<sup>3</sup> when they imply these AIG scientists are not “real scientists” [p. 312].

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<sup>3</sup> Using a biased definition to make a false claim seem to be true.

Regarding Christians who “argue that we should soften doctrinal positions in light of social changes,” the authors say, “such people wish to be called Christians” [p. 65]. This is another form of the “No True Scotsman” fallacy. More seriously, it is doctrinally false to imply all such people are not Christians. While false doctrine is very dangerous to one’s faith, God can and does preserve in the elect many who adhere to false doctrine.

*The book at times condemns others for doing something while at the same time doing that very thing.* For example, the book advances the apologetic view that God placed fossils of imaginary animals (trilobites, dinosaurs, etc. never existed as living creatures) and of imaginary plants on every continent. Other possible explanations for fossils, such as the Flood, are rejected with the words, “We cannot constrain the Lord to act in the way we would like him to act, nor can we explain how he acts when he does not tell us” [p. 122]. It seems to me that this line of reasoning can be turned around and used against the authors’ claim that God created fossils. God does not tell us anything about fossils, so in the authors’ own words, we cannot “explain how he acts when he does not tell us.” The authors advance created fossils as the only possible explanation for fossils, based solely on their human reasoning. Here the authors “constrain the Lord to act in the way we would like him to act,” something the authors say we “cannot” do.

In a similar way, the book advances the apologetic claim that light from distant stars may simply be light streams that God created for us to view and that there may be no physical stars on the other side of those light beams. Some Christians prefer other explanations for distant star light,<sup>4</sup> and some of them do so because they think a God-made video of stars that do not actually exist seems to be deceptive. The authors respond in the same paragraph rather forcefully, “It is blasphemy to charge the Lord with deceiving us if he didn’t set up the universe or even the earth in the way that our investigational logic tells us it should be” [p. 116]. The authors here use their own “investigational logic” to claim that distant star light is a movie, yet their explanation, just like the alternative explanations they reject, may not be the way that God “set up the universe.”

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<sup>4</sup> Several other creationist explanations are listed on pages 22-23 in the spring 2016 LSI Journal. [www.Lutheranscience.org/2016spring](http://www.Lutheranscience.org/2016spring) (accessed 1-3-20)

The authors use their own logic to imagine how God carried out the Flood, and then condemn others who do the same thing. They write, “By faith Noah built the ark and got on it, and we need to accept the biblical account by faith, not in terms of how we think that it could have been pulled off” [p. 145]. On the two pages preceding this statement, the authors speculate that Noah’s ark was “much larger” than pre-flood ships, that God gave Noah additional details not in Scripture on how to build, that it took a miracle for the animals leaving the ark to diversify into today’s many species, and that it required a miracle to care for the animals on the ark.

*The book also contains factual errors and misleading comments.* For example: Readers are misled to think that 5 million *species* of land animals descended from the *kinds* on Noah’s ark [p. 144]. This number is grossly exaggerated by including kinds that were most likely *not* on the ark. It is more reasonable to count only amphibians, birds, mammals, and reptiles. There are an estimated 40,700<sup>5,6</sup> species of those alive today.

Fossils are incorrectly defined on page 120, “...only those [living things] which have a structure that can somehow be preserved are candidates for fossilization.” This is incorrect since anything that lived in the past can produce a fossil, even bacteria and jellyfish. The authors’ overly narrow understanding of what constitutes a fossil led them to make another error in their very next paragraph, “In reality, the fossil record does not reach back to the time life supposedly began because those early creatures were too flimsy to be fossilized.” This statement is incorrect. Fossils of microorganisms which evolutionists claim as those earliest life forms were discovered many decades ago.<sup>7</sup>

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5 This number increases constantly as new species are discovered and the definition of species narrows. The number of bird species recently doubled.

Mark Owuor Otieno, “How Many Species of Birds Are There?” WorldAtlas, Nov. 2, 2017. (accessed 1-3-20)

<https://www.worldatlas.com/articles/how-many-species-of-birds-are-there.html>

6 Sophy Owuor Otieno, “How Many Species of Reptiles Are There?” WorldAtlas, Jan. 14, 2019. (accessed 1-3-20)

<https://www.worldatlas.com/articles/how-many-species-of-reptiles-are-there.html>

7 “Fossils of primitive microorganisms show that life had emerged on earth by about 3.8 billion years ago.”

National Academy of Sciences, *Teaching About Evolution and The Nature of Sci-*

## Verbal Inspiration

This book starts down a dangerous path. It starts innocently with the words,

This forces the apologist to face the general issue of when is the Bible stating an eternal truth and when is it only giving an explanation of some principle in terms that were understandable to the people who first read and heard it.  
[page 124]

The book follows these words by listing some questions about nature which God asked to Job. Job did not know any of the answers, but today, we know some of the answers. Jesus tells Nicodemus that he does not know where the wind comes from or where it goes, but the authors claim that modern meteorologists know.

Two paragraphs later we read, “As described above, man is now manipulating life which God created in ways that were unimaginable to men whom God used to write the Scriptures” [page 125]. This line of reasoning is the buildup to the authors’ claim that God’s Genesis 1 commands limiting reproduction to within kind may no longer be enforced today by God. When used as a reason to claim that God may have altered some of His commands, I think this starts down a dangerous path—a path of reasoning which, if followed, can lead us to question much of what God reveals in Scripture.

First, the most troubling words are, “...unimaginable to men whom God used to write the Scriptures.” It is clear from Scripture that the prophets sometimes did not know the meaning of what they wrote (1 Peter 1:10-12). If they had to know the meaning, then the doctrine of verbal inspiration falls apart. Second, the limited scientific understanding of Job and Nicodemus is not reason for us to conclude that God changed His Genesis 1 commands that limit reproduction to be within kind. If the lack of understanding of people in biblical times was reason for us to claim that God may have reversed some of His Genesis 1 commands, then that same

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*ence*, (Washington DC, National Academy Press, 1998), 11.



line of reasoning could be used to claim God reversed many of His other commands. This would also wreak havoc with doctrine.

## New Kinds

The authors write,

Genesis 1 tells us that a specific kind of life can only come from that specific kind of life. ...In Genesis 1:24, God stated that the animals he created would reproduce according to their kind. ...*The Bible does not say the universe and life could not have evolved through natural processes; it merely says they didn't.* It is blasphemous to say that the almighty God could not have established the laws of nature so that macroscopic evolution was possible. Perhaps he didn't, but perhaps he did, yet chose not to use that mechanism for reasons known only to him." [p. 123, 125, and 129, italics in original.]

The authors develop this claim on pages 122 through 132. Here is my summary: God may still be enforcing His Genesis 1 commands limiting reproduction to within kind, or God may have sometime after creation modified His Genesis 1 commands to permit animals and plants to reproduce outside of their kind (to develop new kinds).

This is the first time I have encountered a young earth creationist claiming that it may be possible for new kinds of plants or animals to develop naturally. The book correctly asserts that people may eventually be able to produce new kinds of plants and animals through modern genetic manipulation. Such activity by man does not violate God's directive that the "earth produce" plants and animals "according to their kind." The book correctly asserts that the Bible does not say stars and planets cannot form naturally. Yet God is clear when he reveals that he has limited plant and animal reproduction to be "according to their kind" (Genesis 1:11,12,20,21,24,25).

The common (possibly unanimous until now) position in the WELS is to understand that these Genesis 1 passages limit natural reproduction to stay within kind, that no new kinds ever develop naturally, and that limitation is still being enforced by God today. In preparing this review, I found thirteen quotes by WELS authors supporting created kinds (in books, WLQ articles, and one website). Not one even implied that new kinds may be able to naturally develop. These authors include Daniel Deutschlander<sup>8</sup>, Lyle Lange<sup>9</sup>, and John Jeske<sup>10</sup>.

One reason explicitly laid out in the book for its claim that God may have changed some of His Genesis 1 commands, is the lack of scientific knowledge of people in Bible times. An underlying reason for this claim seems to be the theme expressed in multiple chapters: Evolutionists have strong evidence for “their model of how the world works” [p. 121].

I assume that God’s Genesis 1 commands to reproduce within kind are carried out by God through genetics, but I may be wrong. The book declares that “We must recognize that biblical statements about ‘kind’ ... are not statements about genetics” [page 125]. Why must we disconnect God’s command from genetics? The book implies that our apologetic should do everything possible to avoid questioning the scientific conclusions of evolution, because those evolutionary models are so strongly supported by evidence. Evolutionary science concludes that genetics do not limit reproduction to biblical kinds, so the book requires our Christian apologetic disconnect God’s Genesis 1 commands about kinds from genetics.

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8 Deutschlander wrote in his doctrine book, “Could there be development within a kind? Yes. But one kind cannot successfully interbreed with or become another kind. A bird cannot eventually evolve into a dog or a fungus into a man.”

Daniel M. Deutschlander, *Grace Abounds—The Splendor of Christian Doctrine*, (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 2015), 128.

9 Lyle W. Lange, *God So Loved the World—A Study of Christian Doctrine*, (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 2005), 152-153.

10 Jeske wrote in *The Peoples Bible commentary on Genesis*, “The creator endowed each of these new forms of life with the capability of passing on life to the next generation—again, only of its own kind. This divine restriction does not allow for new kinds, as the theory of evolution proposes.”

John C. Jeske, *Genesis—The Peoples Bible*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 2004), 21.

*Our default position should be that God has not modified His commands, unless God reveals that information to us in Scripture.* God warns us to not change His Word (Prov 30:5-6; Matt 5:18; Deut 4:2; Rev 22:19). We ought not change what God declares about reproduction within kind, just because our sin-darkened human reason thinks that may be the case. The authors warn against setting “our minds over the Word of God” by using our human reason in a magisterial way [p. 11], yet the authors here do the very thing they warn against, when they claim God may have changed His Genesis 1 commands.

## Science and Truth

The authors admit [p. 135]:

- 1) Scientific conclusions are only “provisionally true.”
- 2) That even if a scientific model explains all observations, it still may be false.
- 3) That all science, including evolution, is based on the unprovable presupposition that there is no God, and that conclusions (scientific models, theories, laws) based on a false assumption are “uncertain.”

With these reasons alone, why would the Christian apologist have to accept created fossils as the only explanation for fossils? Why should we speculate that God may have rescinded His Genesis 1 commands on reproduction within kind?

## Recommendation

I recommend this book for those who wish to study apologetics. Most chapters have plenty of solid content. Unfortunately, some chapters also have content with which readers may disagree, especially Chapter 5 titled “Creation and Science,” with its seemingly loose view of verbal inspiration, its claim that new kinds of plants and animals may naturally develop, and its claim that God created fossils of imaginary animals (like dinosaurs and trilobites). May God use this book to spur brotherly discussion of apologetics in our circles.

*Mark Bergemann*

# Did Dinosaurs Roam the Earth?

*Mark Bergemann*

*Dinosaurs:* Is it likely that they roamed the earth?

*Coal and oil:* Might these have been formed by decaying plants?

*Noah's Flood:* Did it most likely lay down fossil bearing rock layers?

*Volcanic islands:* Were they likely formed by magma from the sea floor?

*Ice age:* Is it possible that ice sheets once covered much of North America?

## **Many in the WELS answer “Yes.”**

They probably attribute most fossils to the Flood.

## **Some in the WELS answer “No.”**

They probably attribute most fossils to special creation by God.

## **Flood Apologetic**

Most Christians who believe in a 6-day creation think it likely that the Flood drastically changed the surface of the earth. The Flood probably laid down most of the geologic column with fossil containing rock layers found on every continent and on the tallest mountains.<sup>1</sup> Coal oil, and natural gas are probably the remains of preflood vegetation. Massive ice sheets probably sculpted the North American landscape during the years after the Flood. There may have been a single preflood continent that God broke apart during the Flood to form the Atlantic Ocean.

SUMMARY: These creationists claim that evolutionists are *incorrectly* interpreting geological and fossil evidence. These creationists see these things as happening quickly, during the Flood and in the years immediately following it, while evolutionists think it took 500 million years.

## **Created Fossil Apologetic**

Some Christians who believe in a 6-day creation think it likely that God placed fossils, coal, oil, natural gas, and most or all of the geo-

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<sup>1</sup> For details, see “Geologic Column” on pages 20-31 of the winter 2018 LSI Journal. [www.LutheranScience.org/2018winter](http://www.LutheranScience.org/2018winter) (accessed 1-3-20)

logic column in the ground.<sup>2</sup> Most of these Christians think God did this during creation week, while others claim later times such as when God cursed the ground after Adam and Eve sinned. Many of the fossils God placed in the earth (such as dinosaurs and trilobites) represent creatures that never existed as real living things. Ice sheets never covered North America; God simply made it look like that happened by creating ice age formations. The preflood continents were essentially the same shape and size as the continents we have today. The Flood was tranquil so as not to disturb the fossil containing rock layers.

SUMMARY: These creationists claim that evolutionists are *correctly* interpreting geological and fossil evidence—evidence that God placed in the ground to give the earth *appearance of a history that did not take place*.

## Survey of WELS Pastors and Teachers

Do you agree or disagree: “It is likely that God placed dinosaur bones in rock layers during creation week”? In a 2015 poll of nearly 1,000 WELS called workers, 7% of pastors and 16% of teachers answered “agree” or “somewhat agree.”<sup>3</sup>

This degree of support for created fossils was unexpected, since WELS publications rarely propose created fossils or the related tranquil Flood view. It is common for WELS publications to describe dinosaurs as once living creatures and to attribute their fossils to the Flood,<sup>4</sup> while it is rare for them to propose that God may have placed fossils in the ground.<sup>5,6</sup>

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2 *An idea first proposed in 1857 by Philip Henry Gosse in “Creation (Omphalos) –An Attempt to Untie the Geological Knot.” This was two years before Darwin published his famous book. Free pdf at (accessed 1-3-20)*

<https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/bibliography/147016#/summary>

3 Survey report is at [www.LutheranScience.org/survey](http://www.LutheranScience.org/survey) (accessed 1-3-20)

4 Some examples are listed at the end of this article including quotes from four books in *The People’s Bible* series.

5 In a single paragraph about fossils, one book seems to mix both apologetic views, “But the flood certainly changed the earth and altered rock formation. ... [but by the end of the sixth day of creation] sedimentary rock layers may have already been in existence.”

Richard L. Gurgel, *This We Believe—Questions and Answers*, (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 2006), 47.

6 I can recall only one other WELS publication ever advancing created fossils. There were two or three articles in *Forward in Christ* around a decade ago. In no more than a sentence or two, they briefly mentioned several possible origins for

It is common for WELS publications to describe the Flood as destructive,<sup>7</sup> while it is rare for them to propose a tranquil Flood.<sup>8</sup>

A new book self-published by two prominent WELS authors, “Clearing a Path for the Gospel,” spends over a dozen pages developing the claim that creation by God is the *only possible* origin for fossils.<sup>9</sup> The book already has wide circulation among faculties at our WELS high schools and colleges. This may be the most prominence that the created fossil apologetic has ever received in the WELS.

Reasons to embrace the created fossil apologetic are provided in that book, but there are also reasons to reject the created fossil apologetic. Let’s look at some of the theological and scientific issues involved.

## Symbols of Sickness and Death Before the Fall

Most advocates of created fossils claim God placed fossils in the ground during creation week. Fossils include the remains of dead animals. Some fossils even show signs of cancer. This means there would have been uncountable trillions of symbols of death and suffering in the earth when God said creation was “very good.” Some created fossil advocates go farther than others and claim God did this as a statement of law: “If you sin you too will die.”<sup>10</sup> Yet Adam and Eve had a sinless understanding of God’s law—their consciences were not yet corrupted by sin. God had already given Adam and Eve a clear understanding of the law. Why would God additionally use a less clear, and maybe even unnoticed, conveyance of the law: fossils buried in rock layers below the ground, giving the appearance of past death and suffering?

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*fossils, including their creation by God.*

7 Some examples are listed at the end of this article including quotes from *The People’s Bible* series.

8 I am unaware of any WELS publication which has ever proposed a tranquil Flood. I suppose there may be conference papers where a tranquil Flood is advocated.

9 “To the Christian, the source of these fossils is also clear; namely, the God of the Bible put them where we are finding them. ... What we can be sure of is that it did not happen primarily by the natural processes of which we are now aware.” Arthur A. Eggert and Geoffrey A. Kieta, *Clearing a Path for The Gospel—A Lutheran Approach to Apologetics*, (Sun Prairie WI: Terra Pax Lutheran Publishing, 2019), 120, 121.

10 *Multiple Christians have made this claim while discussing the topic with me.*



We know that sickness and death are a result of the fall and curse (Romans 5:12). All of creation, animals included, is suffering under the curse and its “slavery to corruption” (Romans 8:19-23, EHV). Would God place fossils in the ground—giving the appearance that the curse, and its slavery to corruption, had been in effect in the past—a history that never actually took place?

The authors of “Clearing a Path for the Gospel” react to this in a footnote on page 121, mentioning that fruit in Eden when picked would die, and that soil as we know it is composed of dead plants, so there were symbols of death in a sinless world. Yet Scripture describes plants as “withering,” “finishing,” or “drying up,” not as dying<sup>11</sup> (Psalm 90:6, 129:6, Isaiah 15:6,<sup>12</sup> 19:6-7, 24:7, 40:7-8, Jeremiah 12:4, Ezekiel 17:10, Matthew 21:19, Luke 8:6, and many more). Only people and animals have the “breath of life,” and those that have the “breath of life” are given plants to eat (Genesis 1:29-30, 6:17-19, 7:15-16, 7:22). For this reason, it is clear that plants perishing (“withering”) are not signs of death before the fall. Also, soil today is produced through bacterial action (as the authors describe in a footnote on page 111). Scripture does not address bacteria (other than indirectly through ceremonial laws), but it seems from the preceding discussion that God may not consider bacteria as living or as dying in the same way he considers animals with the “breath of life” as living and dying. The unfallen world probably required that bacteria perish (for instance in the digestive process and in soil). That does not mean that bacteria were symbols of death in a sinless world.

## Thorns Before the Fall

There are fossils of thorns. Could these have been in the ground when God declared everything “very good”? Thorns are a result of the fall and curse (Genesis 3:18). Would God place thorns in the ground—giving the appearance that the curse had previously been in effect?

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11 *In John 12:24, Jesus compares His own death and resurrection to a seed dying as the new plant grows from that seed. No plant perished in that metaphor. Only the seed husk perished, and that is simply a part of a “living” thing, not the living thing itself.*

12 *The EHV translation of Isaiah 15:6 applies both the words “withered” and “died” to plants. A literal translation of the Hebrew would be “finished” or “done,” which the EHV renders as “died,” reflecting modern English usage.*

## Eating Meat Before the Fall

Fossils show tooth marks, indicating that animals ate each other. People and animals were vegetarians before the fall (Genesis 1:29-30). Could bones with tooth marks have been in the ground when God declared everything “very good”? Would God place evidence of animals killing and eating each other in the ground—giving the appearance that the curse had previously been in effect?

## Extra-Biblical Miracles

God tells us nothing about fossils. Proposing that God placed fossils in the ground during creation week evokes an extra-biblical miracle. Once we go down the path of inventing extra-biblical miracles, anything goes. For example: We know God provided for Adam and Eve by making a garden for them. Eden provided them with food and a place to worship (the tree of the knowledge of good and evil). Could we propose that God also provided Adam and Eve with a house and a soft bed on which they could sleep? How is this conjecture any less valid than speculating that God created fossils? The authors of “Clearing a Path for the Gospel” demonstrate that anything goes when they write,

We might be further curious to learn when God buried the fossils around the earth. The Bible does not tell us; therefore, it is not important for our salvation. Certainly, he could have done it at creation; he could have done it after the fall, he could have done it in conjunction with the Flood. Or he could have done it over a period of many years.<sup>13</sup>

## Bones of Imaginary Animals

Many fossils in the earth are of extinct marine creatures such as trilobites, ammonites, and orthoceras. Many fossils are found of other extinct creatures like dinosaurs. If God placed fossils into the ground during creation week, then these hundreds of animal kinds [trilobites, dinosaurs, etc.] never existed as real living creatures. Why would God include the fossils of imaginary creatures with the fossils of actual creatures? The authors of “Clearing a Path for the Gospel” address this question when they write,

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<sup>13</sup> Eggert and Kieta, 121.

...perhaps he [God] wanted to show us what other creatures he could have given us to deal with in our lifetimes; perhaps he did it to test us to see if we trust his Word; perhaps he had some reason that we would never guess on this side of eternity. ...the Lord is the set director for the human saga, then there is no need that the props which he provided for us must be real, only that they must look real.<sup>14</sup>

## Tranquil Flood

Some advocates of created fossils claim that Scripture describes a “tranquil” Flood that would not disturb the fossil bearing rock layers. Their claim is contrary to the very violent Flood described in WELS publications. See quotes from WELS publications at the end of this article. The violent Flood revealed in Scripture would be expected to dramatically change the surface of the earth as the waters come and again as the waters recede. Tidal action would move the waters constantly. Fossils of marine creatures are found everywhere on earth, including on the tallest mountains. That is exactly what would be expected from a planetary flood that killed all but a handful of the people and animals on earth.<sup>15</sup> Supporters of created fossils deny that the Flood laid down the continental sized sedimentary rock layers<sup>16</sup> that cover the entire earth.

If God placed fossils in the earth during creation week or just after the fall, then these fossils and the rock layers bearing them would have to be preserved during the Flood. In addition, some mechanism would have to prevent the Flood from depositing massive new fossil containing rock layers. It is apparent that God would have to miraculously do this. This calls for an additional extra-biblical miracle.

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<sup>14</sup> Eggert and Kieta, 121, 122.

<sup>15</sup> For details, see “Geologic Column” on pages 20-31 (especially page 27) of the winter 2018 LSI Journal. [www.LutheranScience.org/2018winter](http://www.LutheranScience.org/2018winter) (accessed 1-3-20).

<sup>16</sup> “Rock that has formed through the deposition and solidification of sediment, especially sediment transported by water (rivers, lakes, and oceans), ice (glaciers), and wind. Sedimentary rocks are often deposited in layers, and frequently contain fossils.” <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/sedimentary-rock> (accessed 1-3-20).

## Apparent Age

The claim of created fossils is often defended by pointing out that God created a world with apparent age: Adam and the animals were created as adults, the earth's soil and atmosphere were fully developed, and the starlight was visible even though those stars were too far away for that light to travel to the earth in a few hours. Those advancing created fossils ask (or at least imply): Since these had apparent age, might God also have placed fossils in the earth to show apparent age?

The defect in this line of reasoning is that people, animals, soil, atmosphere, and starlight had to be mature to fulfill their God given roles. Adam, the animals, and the trees and plants needed air. Plants needed soil. Adam and the animals needed trees bearing fruit and other vegetation for food. Starlight had to be visible from earth to serve its God given purpose for separating day from night and to serve as signs for seasons, days, and years (Gen 1:14). To argue that God placed fossils in the ground to give the earth apparent age does not easily follow from God giving apparent age to people, animals, soil, air, and starlight; since people, animals, soil, air, and starlight had to be mature to fulfill their God given roles. God reveals nothing in Scripture about fossils. God reveals no purpose for fossils. It is pure conjecture to claim God placed fossils in the earth. We can easily reason from Scripture that people, animals, soil, air, and starlight were mature on day seven of creation week. We cannot so argue that God placed fossils in the ground.

Furthermore, can you imagine a way that God could have created without apparent age? Imagine that God made all the vegetation start from seed. Those seeds would have an apparent age, because as we all know, seeds come from plants. Imagine that God made all the birds grow from eggs. Those eggs would have an apparent age, because as we all know, bird eggs come from a mated pair of birds. The created fossil apologetic claims that since God *chose* to create apparent age, maybe God also made fossils with apparent age. But it seems that God *had to* create with apparent age, since we can interpret anything and everything as having an apparent age. God did not have to create fossils, as there are other possible reasons for the existence of fossils, such as the Flood. The “apparent age”

reason for created fossils falls apart in this way.

## Created Fossils: *Our Only Option*

Many who advance created fossils say that it is our only option. They reject all other explanations, such as fossils being a result of the Flood. I have found such Christians invariably have too high a regard for science in general and for evolutionary science in particular.<sup>17</sup> Evolutionists claim that 3.5 billion years of common descent, driven by mutations,<sup>18</sup> produced all the earth's plants and animals from a bacteria-like ancestor. Christians advancing created fossils see the evidence for billions of years as so extremely solid, that our explanation for fossils *must* be that God created them.

These Christians ask us to accept created fossils as the *only* explanation for fossils, even though there are many theological reasons to reject created fossils. They ask us to accept created fossils on their reason-based claim that the evolutionary model is so solid and compelling. Prominent scientists, including those who champion evolution, describe all science as a biased and subjective process that does not produce final truth, and evolutionary science as especially questionable in the models it creates.<sup>19</sup>

Evolution is based on countless unprovable presuppositions. Three primary assumptions are no God, no Flood, and deep time (millions and billions of years). These assumptions and others force the evolutionist to reject any conclusion that would imply a creator or a young earth. These assumptions even change the way measurements and observations

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<sup>17</sup> For example, the authors of "Clearing a Path for the Gospel" write, "What we can be sure of is that it did not happen primarily by the natural processes of which we are now aware. Geologists have gathered evidence from many thousands of sites and have been able to create a model of how the world works which is consistent with the fossils being buried naturally over the course of almost a billion years. Obviously, God did not use this process, so he must have used a supernatural process or changed the rules of nature." Eggert and Kieta, 121.

<sup>18</sup> In this context, a mutation is a change in inheritable genes (inheritable DNA). Mutation causes include radiation and chemicals.

<sup>19</sup> For six extensive quotes from leading evolutionary scientists see "The Nature of Science" on pages 26-30 in the fall 2018 LSI Journal ([www.LutheranScience.org/2018fall](http://www.LutheranScience.org/2018fall)). More quotes by evolutionist champions are on page 23, 24, and 32 in the winter 2017 LSI Journal at [www.LutheranScience.org/2017winter](http://www.LutheranScience.org/2017winter).

are taken. See “Assumptions of Evolutionists” on pages 7-16 of the fall 2017 *LSI Journal* ([www.LutheranScience.org/2017fall](http://www.LutheranScience.org/2017fall)).

The Christian apologist can also point out that some major models of evolution are being questioned and some are being revised. After a century of stability, the common descent family tree for dinosaurs is probably changing. There are now three very different dinosaur family trees and the same evidence fits each ([www.LutheranScience.org/2018spring](http://www.LutheranScience.org/2018spring), pages 22-24). The human family tree is also in disarray. Many of the leading paleoanthropologists now view all known human ancestor fossils as either fully human or fully ape (similar to the creationist view). These paleoanthropologists cannot agree on how to draw the human/ape family tree ([www.LutheranScience.org/2018spring](http://www.LutheranScience.org/2018spring), pages 25-27).

The evidence for the truth of common descent and millions of years is rather weak in many places. The Christian apologist can also point this out. For example, champions of evolution often provide very weak evidence that natural selection can produce new kinds of plants and animals. See the article, “Evolutionists and Creationists Often Agree – There are many points of agreement on natural selection” on pages 17-32 at [www.LutheranScience.org/2019spring](http://www.LutheranScience.org/2019spring).

With all this in our creation apologetic, why resort to created fossils with all its theological problems?

My personal view is that the created fossil apologetic is the least likely explanation for fossils. Nevertheless, if someone finds that believing in created fossils blunts the temptation of evolution for them, then let them believe in created fossils. They should though, become acquainted with the many theological problems posed by created fossils.

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## WELS authors describing dinosaurs as once living creatures

There are skeletal remains of dinosaurs, and those remains are proof that such large animals existed for a period of time after creation.<sup>20</sup>

The evolutionist talks as though God was not yet present when dinosaurs walked on the earth.<sup>21</sup>

But even if they did not die out before the flood, the ark was large enough to accommodate young, smaller sized dinosaurs so that they could ride out the flood in safety.<sup>22</sup>

There is no reason in Scripture to reject dinosaurs. Our failure to recognize dinosaurs as possible extinct creatures is unnecessary and unwise.<sup>23</sup>

## WELS authors attributing fossils to the Flood

(most also describe the Flood as very destructive)

The great flood at the time of Noah produced changes in the earth's crust. ...totally rearranging water and land masses. ...It appears that ocean basins were lowered, bringing about corresponding shifts of huge land masses. This may very well account for the formation of our highest mountains, most of which are fossil bearing, strong evidence that they were formed by the action of water.<sup>24</sup>

The destruction wrought by this flood is a tale very likely reflected by the sedimentary layers and fossils found in

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20 Rudolph E. Honsey, *Job—People's Bible*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 2000), 324.

21 Arno J. Wolfgramm, *Kings—People's Bible*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 2001), 59.

22 John A. Braun, *Noah—Obedient Builder* (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 2004), 28.

23 Paul R. Boehlke, DINOSAURS, GOD'S CREATURES, *The Lutheran Educator*, 31 no. 3 (February 1991) 53, 54.

24 John C. Jeske, *Genesis—The People's Bible*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 2001), 16, 85, 87.



the rocks around the world. ...What happened to the land under the pounding of this destructive flood? ...The sedimentary layers testify to disastrous lava flows. ...Fossils tell us that the world destroyed by the flood contained many dinosaurs.<sup>25</sup>

When estimating the number of kinds on the ark, we should allow “for possibly extinct families whose fossil remains may not yet have been discovered or which may never be discovered. ...It was noted previously that when Moses described the onset of the flood, he used a number of striking verb constructions to accentuate the increase and the violence of the waters. ...It may have been at this time also that the continents took their present shape.”<sup>26</sup>

Negative Bible critics and unbelieving scientists ...ignore the powerful evidence of the Flood furnished by the fossil finds and the coal deposits.<sup>27</sup>

This must have created imbalances in the earth’s crust effecting tectonic movements, by which the land masses were thrust upward to form our present high mountains. This is not fantasy, since our higher mountains are principally fossil bearing rock formations; but the vast fossiliferous rock layers do not lie horizontally but are tilted in varying degrees. This seems to indicate that while the fossils were imbedded in molten rock masses and laid down in sedimentary layers during the duration of the flood, the present position in which we find them must have been brought about after these rock formations had been hardened.<sup>28</sup>

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25 Cleone H. Weigand, *Creation—God Made All Things—The People’s Bible Teachings* (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 2000), 68, 69, 77.

26 Carl J. Lawrenz and John C. Jeske, *A Commentary on Genesis 1-11* (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 2004), 253, 266.

27 Werner H. Franzmann, *Bible History Commentary—Old Testament*, (Milwaukee: WELS Board for Parish Education, 1980), footnote on page 77.

28 Carl Lawrenz, “God’s Unique Judgment of The Flood,” *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*, 71, no. 4 (Oct. 1974): 290.



The fossil quarry exhibit at Dinosaur National Monument in Utah shows sauropod dinosaur neck vertebrae sections (above) and front legs (below) partially quarried out of the sandstone sedimentary rocks where they were found. Park website: <https://www.nps.gov/dino/index.htm> (accessed 1-3-20).

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## Evolution a Lutheran Response

