



Storming Fortresses

For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh,
but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses.

2 CORINTHIANS 10:4

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Thought Provokers:

Peace if possible, but
truth at any rate.

Martin Luther

The truth makes us
free from our spiritual
enemies, free in the
service of God, free to
the privileges of sons.

Matthew Henry

A dog barks when his
master is attacked. I
would be a coward if I
saw that God's truth is
attacked and yet
would remain silent,
without giving any
sound.

John Calvin

A thousand errors
may live in peace with
with one another, but
truth is a hammer that
breaks them all in
pieces.

C.H. Spurgeon

Twin Towers, Symbol of Hypocrisy

Part 3: Mounting a Defence

By

Murray McLeod-Boyle

Introduction

We concluded Part 2 of this series with a rather large statement, namely, that Christianity, unlike humanism and other forms of religion, is 100 percent defensible. We apologise if that caused tea or coffee to evacuate from your mouth at a rather rapid rate of knots. Our intent is simple. It is time Christianity recovered a belief in itself. We are not talking here in terms of the modern self-esteem nonsense, but rather of the Apostolic confidence that the truth lay in the Gospel, in the whole counsel of God.

The recapturing of this belief is paramount if there is to be revival and reformation in any of our nations. The Church is currently paralysed because of belief and unbelief. It is paralysed by belief in that it has believed the philosophies of the world for too long. It is paralysed by unbelief because the Church is not willing to accept the revelation of God—living or written—in toto.

By this we mean that too many Christians are unwilling to accept certain teachings of the Bible because they live in the fear that "science" will one day

prove that belief to be foolish.

We have no clearer example of this than the belief in a literal six day creation. Christians read the words in Genesis, but they are unwilling to believe them. Because they are unwilling to believe them, they turn the first chapters of Genesis into a myth or some type of simplified teaching tool. Whatever it is called, it spells 'denial of historic revelation.'

This denial, *ipso facto*, leads to further denials of the historic, which in turn lead to a denial of the su-

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pernatural. Any thorny encounter must be, supposedly, rationalised so that it is immune to the toxin of science. This approach was that adopted by the Liberals. Rather than defend the historic, they fled in fear of the new and destroyed any conceivable (by their standards) weaknesses.

To illustrate. How many of you, knowing that there is a family history of heart disease, would go to a doctor and ask him to ‘rip out your heart,’ simply to avoid a heart attack? Not many, we would hazard a guess. Why? Well, the consequences of such an action are fairly obvious. Doc removes heart; Doc or next of kin buys a long wooden box, spade, and a packet of daisies. It is that simple.

Yet this is exactly what many Christians do on an all to frequent basis. These Christians believe *a priori* that the Bible, and thereby our belief

system, is prone to the toxins emitted by science (First mistake). They then sharpen the scalpel (Second mistake). Last, they wield the scalpel at *all they perceive* to be susceptible to the science toxin (Fatal mistake). They are flat-lining at this point).

From the outset these people have had more faith in science than they have had in God. In this article we seek to redress this sad trend.

Rules of Engagement

As we continue it will be necessary for us to add some provisos to our grand statement. However, we will quickly and boldly assert that these are not excuses for disbelieving the statement or an attempt to shrink from the statement. They are necessary only to bear out the truth of the statement. However, before we add these provisos we would like to visit the question of our responsibility to defend our faith.

A. Defence—An Obligation

At the outset it is important to make one thing absolutely clear, namely, Christians have an obligation to defend their faith. This may seem to be a silly statement to make, after all, does not every Christian already know this? Sadly, many do not. Others may know this, but have no knowledge of how to do it.

Therefore it is necessary that this elementary principle be taught again. In this regard, we ask you to remember well the words of the Apostle, Peter:

Sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always *being* ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in

you.¹

In order to understand the full import of this text we must set it in its context. Peter is addressing the issue of Christian behaviour. He plainly states, in accord with Paul (Romans 13), that one should not suffer for acting after righteousness. However, Peter addresses the situation in which the opposite condition applies, namely, suffering for doing right.

In verses 13 and 14 Peter says:

And who is there to harm you if you prove zealous for what is good? But even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, *you are* blessed. AND DO NOT FEAR THEIR INTIMIDATION, AND DO NOT BE TROUBLED.

From this it is clear that Peter is not talking about our ability to give a “testimony” at the church picnic or an evangelistic crusade. No. He says, there are none to harm you if you do what is right. However, if you should suffer for righteousness sake then ... run away and hide? ... call mum? ... have a prayer meeting? ... lodge a complaint with a city official? No, no, no, no!! A thousand times, no!. What does he say? He says, “Defend the revelation of Jesus Christ!

Peter makes his point very clearly, yet a little more unpacking of this verse will help us to see the issues clearly.

Importantly, Peter asks his readers to be prepared to make an *απολογία* (apology), which in Greek means “a speech of *defense*.”² Now Peter is not asking people to say “sorry” (apology), despite what many modern Christians may think. Rather he is asking them to be ready *and able* to

1. *The New American Standard Bible*, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1977. 1 Peter 3:15. All Scripture quotations are from this source.

2. Bauer, Walter, Gingrich, F. Wilbur, and Danker, Frederick W., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press) 1979.

defend the Gospel.

Further, the Greek term has two important aspects which need to be understood. In the first instance, it has a strong overtone of being oral in nature. That is to say that a person spoke in his defence. It concerned the individual. To be able to give an adequate defence a person had to know his doctrine. Second, the idea of the need to give a defence obviously has strong legal overtones.

What we would also like to note at this juncture is what this text does not say. Peter does not mention clichés, dramas, skits or intense leaflet campaigns. No! He puts the responsibility on each person, each Christian, to be able to make a defence of their faith.

Today we have disobeyed Peter's command.³ We rely on tracts and pamphlets, on passing a tape or a book, rather than explaining the essentials with our mouths. Now before the heresy committee is convened, we would like to add that books, tapes and tracts have their place. However, *these should never be a substitute for the Christian being able to defend his faith*, nor should they be a substitute for the Christian knowing what he believes.

Therefore, we as God's redeemed in Christ must understand that we have an obligation to defend our faith. This is the very first point that has to be grasped.

B. Hard Yakka

Following on from Peter's

thought provoking message, we ask, "How many Christians could actually defend their beliefs in a legal setting?" Experience would suggest that there would be precious few who could make an adequate defence.

Christians have generally been left without a defence by the constant flow of pabulum from Christian authors, ministers, and so-called theologians. In this sense, modern Christianity has much in common with modern health fads.

We all know that the only way to lose weight and regain health is through hard work. You have to be disciplined both in what you eat and how you exercise. Yet there are advertisements everywhere stating that you can lose weight without exercising. There are little boxes that you strap on to legs, arms, or abdomen, and these are supposed to build up muscle tone by passive stimulation. Then there are the drinks that replace real food. A couple of spoonfuls in a blender with water or milk and, voilà, lunch is served. Yet the reality is that drinking something akin to the poor cousin of a chocolate milk shake will not turn you into Mr. Fitness—no matter how many special lumpy bits you encounter.

The same is true of Christianity. Dear friend, you will not advance in your sanctification, grow in grace, advance your Biblical knowledge or increase in wisdom by adopting these same methods. Two spoonfuls of "Daily Bread" thrown into a spiritual blender with holy water will not make you into a spiritual giant, even

if they were purchased at a modest price from Heavenly-Helpfuls.Com and came complete with a holographic certificate of authenticity.

To build a spiritual physique one needs to do the same "hard yakka" that is required in building up our physical bodies, albeit on a different diet and regimen. To continue the metaphor, too many Christians are carrying spare tyres. Their diet is wrong and their exercise is almost non-existent.

What is the point? Simple. Defence takes time and hard work. The battlefield concept is one that helps us understand this issue. In a war the ill prepared are walked over. Look at many neutral countries during WW2. Their neutrality was not respected and this is all they had to rely on. When the enemy's tanks rolled through their front gate it was too late to think about making a defensive line. The defences should have been planned and constructed years before.⁴

In this same way, the Christian needs to do the hard work of planning and constructing the defence long before the battle arrives. When the tanks are rolling through the streets it is too late to do anything but hide or run.

C. Explainable?

The second proviso is, do not confuse "defendable" with "explainable." Too many fall for this rouse. Christians are told that if they cannot explain their belief, they cannot defend it, and that they are, therefore,

3. The command that we are given is, strictly speaking, "to sanctify (or set apart) Christ as Lord in your heart." However, we must understand that Peter's words give an explanation of what it means to have Christ as Lord of our hearts (being).

4. We may also note here the lesson taught by the French. They established the Maginot Line. A massive structure of fortifications which was meant to repel any German advances. The only problem was that they did not push the line through to the coast. They stopped short of the Ardennes believing it to be impenetrable. Where did the German assault come from? The Ardennes. The lesson for us is that our defence should be complete.

fools to believe it.⁵

So whilst we are in the mood for big statements, let's make another. There is nothing that the humanist might ask of Christianity in order to destroy it that he can ask of and answer from his own system.

The humanist demands, prove God! Prove the trinity! Prove the resurrection! Prove heaven! Harking back to part 2, he asks, why does God allow pain? He asks, if God exists, why does he allow catastrophe.

All this ranting is meant to prove that Christianity is a superstition for the feeble minded and therefore, simply, a lie.

However, these questions can be turned around. Let the humanists disprove heaven and hell. Let them disprove the Trinity or the existence of God. Let them disprove the resurrection. Here is the challenge. They have science at their fingertips. They can put a man on the moon. Let them pool all these resources to disprove God. The reality is they cannot. In fact, humanism is suffering from a growing number of scientists who, although not Christians, are seeing more and more order in the universe. They are, on the basis of the evidence, abandoning the idea that we come from chaos.

Similarly we might ask, prove evolution! Show us the missing link! Where is the modern evidence for the 'molecules to man' theory! Philosophically we might ask, If God does not exist why is there good in the world? We might ask, If humanism has all the answers how is it that when adopted it only produces misery—abortion, euthanasia, suicide, homicide, family breakdown, loss of

property, loss of society, chaos, anarchy, loss of justice, loss of true freedom?

You see, humanists and the like throw around grandiose concepts in the name of science, but will not admit to their own limitations. Scientists laugh at the concept of an omnipotent God who created the world. They scorn the Christian for such a belief.

All of this would suggest that the scientist/humanist has a very logical and rational explanation for the universe and our being here. We are told that "people in glass houses should not throw stones." Therefore we would expect that those heaping the scorn on Christianity would have a "fool proof" system. However this is not the case.

As a way illustrating this we would like to use a few lines from the comedy series, *Red Dwarf* (Yes, Yes, More of my misspent youth!). To those unfamiliar with *Red Dwarf*, it revolves around the last human, Lister, who is lost in space. A dead bunk mate, Rimmer, has been brought back as a hologram by the ship's computer to keep Lister sane.

Throughout the show the ideas for our existence are often explored. On one episode Lister and Rimmer are having one of their discussion-come-debates. Lister asks, "Do you believe in God?" Rimmer replies, "Good heavens, No! I believe in aliens!" To which Lister replies, "Ah, something sensible at last!"

We like this conversation because it illustrates the point aptly. The criticism of God is not backed up by logical thought, explanation, or proof. Rather something more fanciful than

God is posited.

Let us have a little look at a belief recently put forward. On a particular documentary looking at cosmology, the future of the universe was being discussed. One of those interviewed stated, along these lines, that the universe, being without conscience and unable to feel, evolved us humans with a full range of emotions to, as it were, be the consciousness of the universe and to feel and experience on its behalf. "Ah, something sensible at last!"

Now we waited for a moment for the sniggers and for the camera to shake violently as a result of the cameraman going into uncontrollable fits of laughter. We waited in vain.

Here is the crux. The opposition will laugh at us because they say that our position is not explainable. They then make a mighty leap to say that our position is, therefore, not defendable. Yet they themselves are able to propose any number of outlandish theories, without any evidence with which to substantiate the claim, and that is meant to settle the matter.⁶

Unfortunately, Christians all too often buy this type of nonsense.

Please allow one further explanation before moving on.

I recently had a conversation with a person who was exploring some of the deeper issues of life. They had come from a background of total atheism. Whilst they were open to other options there were the inevitable questions. We posited that it was easier to believe in an almighty God than it was to believe in some of the scientific theories espoused today. The comeback? "Who created God?"

⁵ We are not saying at this point that Christianity is not explainable either. We are simply saying that Christians should not be concerned that they cannot explain every last detail.

Now, to the enquirer this question was significant. The answer to us is obvious. God is eternal. However, for our postmodernist with whom we had the conversation, this concept was a tad inconceivable.

Now we must ask, Does Christianity fall simply because we cannot explain a being who always was—eternal not created? No, it does not. You see, the one thing that we have on our side as Christians is that we argue from the smaller to the greater. By this we mean that Mankind is below God. We were created by God. We are subject to time and space. We were created under God and therefore, even in perfection, had a knowledge that was less than God's. Is this

not made clear in the fall of Man? Satan gave the promise of greater knowledge. A promise to "be like God." In other words, Man's knowledge was not exhaustive. He knew what was necessary to fulfil his purpose in life. However, he did not know everything, neither was he designed or created to know everything. Man was placed upon the earth as God's vice-regent. He was not God, neither was he animal. He stood between as the crown of creation.

More must be added at this point. What ever deficiencies, for want of a better term, Man had at this point were, no doubt, counteracted by the fact that Man had access to God. We often ponder on those verses which speak of God walking in the Garden in the cool of the day. There are Adam and Eve in this Garden. They hear God walking and they hide because they had sinned. Yet, the question, "What was meant to happen?" has to be asked. The answer, no doubt, is, "Fellowship!" Adam would have been free to walk with His God and to explore hidden or unknown things. His place in creation would be of no disadvantage because he had free access to God.

Regrettably, Adam and Eve did not dwell in that state continuously. As noted, sin entered. It has been pointed out, correctly, by many, that Man's sin involved pride. It involved the desire to be God. This now complicates things from the sinners perspective and leads to the very outlandish claims and the simple question noted above.

You see, Man now sees himself as king. He is, if you will, at the top of the heap. Therefore he must know all. Man's pride will not allow him to admit that there are gaps in his knowledge, neither will he admit that there are things that are too wonderful for him to know. Last, but by no means

least, he will never admit to being under authority.

This can be illustrated with a further reference to the movie "Awakenings." As noted in an earlier article, this movie is centred on a mental health institution. A very reluctant doctor finds a number of people in a trance-like state. His research shows that it is the result of an encephalitis outbreak. In his search for an answer, he tracks down a doctor who was involved in the initial research. During a discussion the older doctor says, 'The disease has destroyed the higher function of the brain.' The younger doctor asks, 'Are you sure?' The older doctor replies, 'Yes, it is proven (or fact).' The younger asks, 'How can we be sure?' The older replies, 'Because the alternative is unthinkable!'

This is the reality that faces the sinner. He cannot escape the fact that he is made in God's image. It is there every time he looks in the mirror. He knows that his explanations of the universe do not hold water, yet he claims them as fact. Why? *Because the alternative is unthinkable!!* **He must suppress the truth or reckon with it.**

Therefore the answers to unsearchable questions are more of a bother to the sinner than they will ever be to the saint. This is to say, in short, that simply because we cannot answer the question it does not mean that there is not an answer.

Every aspect of Christianity may not be explainable, but as a system it is defensible.

D. Follow the Captain's Plan

Last of all, we must understand that our faith is only defensible when we agree with God's revelation and apply that revelation consistently. Think of it this way: Our faith is only

6. It is to be noted that the humanist explanation at this point involves contradictions of logic. He speaks of the inanimate producing the animate; the non-feeling producing the feeling; and that which is without conscience spawning that with a conscience. How can something that is unable to think suddenly be able to create? How does that which cannot feel know what feelings are so as to be able to evolve an entity that can feel? Christianity does not experience these difficulties. As analogues of God we understand why we are able to think, move, feel and so forth. The thinking God created thinkers. He spoke, we speak, and so on. Those chained to evolutionary theory have no such comfort. They are but the offspring of random forces. They are accidents. No beginning. No purpose. They are born to die. Their best comfort is that they hope that their decomposing bodies may grow enough grass to help feed a hungry animal.

defendable when defended by our faith. Head spinning? Allow me to explain. What we are saying at this point is that we must follow God's revelation in defending our faith. Too often we try to explain away some aspect that may be unpalatable to our modern mind. In doing so we leave ourselves vulnerable to attack. Laying aside something which is unpalatable is nonetheless removing part of our defensive armour. In order to plug the gap, we usually invent something or seek to add an unwarranted explanation which rarely, if ever, is convincing or suffices in giving adequate protection.

Please allow me to illustrate this. Genesis 1:26-28 says:

Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." And God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. And God blessed them; and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky, and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

This text is commonly referred to as the "Cultural Mandate". It is where God, in a nutshell, outlines his purpose for Man. In that very concise passage we note the following: Man is created; Man is created in God's image; Man is made male and female; Man is given dominion over the earth.

The importance of this text cannot be underestimated. To forsake this text will lead us ... will lead us to where we are today. We live with tree hugging hippies. Our society protects whales, but does nothing to stop

abortion. The most endangered species on the planet is a white Christian heterosexual male. Homosexuality is legalised. Murder is rampant and justice has been thrown out of the window. The family is denigrated and marriage is spurned. How can this be? Let us look at our text.

In the Cultural Mandate we find that God made Adam and Eve not Adam and Steve or Eve and Bev. The reality of this is backed up by God's command to them to be fruitful and multiply.

In order for God's command to become reality he institutes marriage:

Genesis 2:18, 22-24: states:

Then the LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him."... And the LORD God fashioned into a woman the rib which He had taken from the man, and brought her to the man. And the man said, "This is now bone of my bones, And flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, Because she was taken out of Man." For this cause a man shall leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and they shall become one flesh.

That the covenant of marriage works as God had planned is further testified to in Genesis 4:1-2a and 5:4:

Now the man had relations with his wife Eve, and she conceived and gave birth to Cain, and she said, "I have gotten a manchild with the help of the LORD." And again, she gave birth to his brother Abel ... Then the days of Adam after he became the father of Seth were eight hundred years, and he had other sons and daughters.

What we note from these passages is that Adam and Eve were male and female. They were in a covenantal re-

lationship with each other. They were able to have relations one with another. Moreover they were meaningful relations. Adam's penetration of Eve resulted in children being born. This implies the bringing together of the mechanics necessary to produce life—the two become one! If this was a homosexual relationship then children would never have been conceived. We would not be here. The human race would have had such a prominent run that it would have made the triple A list in the 'wannabes and also rans' of the universe.

Instead, real people, a man and a woman, had real sex ("hanky panky" for the sensitive), conceived children as a result, and populated the earth as per God's command.

Last of all we would draw your attention to Genesis 9:5-7:

And surely I will require your lifeblood; from every beast I will require it. And from every man, from every man's brother I will require the life of man. "Whoever sheds man's blood, By man his blood shall be shed, For in the image of God He made man. "And as for you, be fruitful and multiply; Populate the earth abundantly and multiply in it."

This text is a restatement of God's mandate. It is here given to Noah as he leaves the ark. Of interest to us it forbids murder and demands the punishment of the trespasser. Particularly, note that it demands the penalty of man and beast. Now consider our enlightened society. We know of many cases in which dogs have been destroyed for biting a human. *Not killing, but biting*. Yet men who have killed other men are still walking in the land of the living.

In surveying these verses we can clearly see that marriage between a man and woman is sanctioned. The family gets the thumbs up. Homosex-

uals get the thumbs down. Greenies are out. Dominion oriented usage is authorised. Murder is forbidden and capital punishment sanctioned.

These passages are all important, however, one thing remains. The essential ingredient is missing. What is the basis for these commands? It may be fine to outline these issues, but what makes them relevant to today. What makes them normative? What gives them abiding significance. Why should we still heed these rules and mores today? We heed them because of one fact—**Man is made in God's image!!**

In Genesis 1 we see the Cultural Mandate follow the decision by God to make man in "His image." What then follows is a direct consequence of the fact that Man is created in the image of God. Nothing more and nothing less.

Note also Genesis 9. Why is Man's life precious? Why are life takers to be punished? Again, the reason given is that Man is an image bearer. He is not the *swamp creature* from primordial slime. Rather, Man bears the image of God.

The Importance of the Matter

Returning to our thesis on defending our faith, we see that if we deny Genesis as literal we are unable to de-

fend the Christian position on marriage, family, sex, homosexuality, environmentalism, murder, suicide, euthanasia, and a few others.

When man becomes the "swamp creature" then homosexuality, murder, and the gamut mentioned above become commonplace.

Proof? Look at any church/denomination that denies a literal six day creation. We guarantee that they, almost without exception, will be liberal and trying in some way to accept abortion, homosexuality, euthanasia, destruction of marriage (recognition of defacto relationships), and the reduction of the importance of the family.⁷

Therefore, if we are to defend our faith we must argue as the Bible does. We cannot dismiss Genesis as myth, nonsense, or legend and then expect to be able to credibly defend a stance against moral decline. We cannot deny sections of the Bible simply because we find it a little distasteful.⁸

If we do set Scripture aside because of our desire for something more palatable, then know for sure that our faith will not be defended, it will be abandoned. The abandonment will be slow, but it will be deadly. The abandonment will be multifaceted. It will start by questioning. Rela-

tivity will take over. Truth will be declared to be unknowable. The historic will be denied. The supernatural will be explained away. Belief will be internalised. At this point we are back at the beginning. We are admitting that Christianity cannot stand up to scrutiny. We are saying that it is susceptible to the toxins of science.

Now we ask, How many of these trends do you see in Christianity in general? How many are in your denomination? How many are in your congregation? How many do you yourself court?

Twin towers. Two ways.

"How long will you hesitate between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him." But the people did not answer him a word ... O LORD, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, today let it be known that Thou art God in Israel ... "Answer me, O LORD, answer me, that this people may know that Thou, O LORD, art God, and that Thou hast turned their heart back again." Then the fire of the LORD fell, and consumed the burnt offering and the wood and the stones and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces; and they said, "The LORD, He is God; the LORD, He is God."

7. This last aspect is often overlooked because of subtleties. The constant push for children's and youth rights seems nice. The flip side is however, the denigration of the God given right of the father and mother to govern their household.

8. We must also remember that other Biblical writers believed in the literal interpretation of the first chapters of Genesis. They based arguments upon this belief. Jesus, in Matthew 19:5 and the parallel passage of Mark 10:7-8, makes clear reference to the creation. Genesis 2:22 and 2:24 are quoted in 1 Corinthians 11:8-9; 1 Corinthians 6:16, and Ephesians 5:31.