

# Getting the Facts Straight

## *How Grammar, History, and Logic Can Rescue Education from Postfactualism*

Ryan C. MacPherson, Ph.D. ([www.ryanmacpherson.com](http://www.ryanmacpherson.com))

*Postfactual education coaches students to feel good about themselves without ever memorizing facts or distinguishing truth from error. Grammar, history, and logic have been so neglected that few students ever acquire the ability to read with understanding. As the Lutheran Reformers noted 500 years ago, a re-centering of schools around the classical liberal arts can restore biblical literacy to the church and capable self-governance to the community.*

### I. 21st-Century Schools Are Primarily “Postfactual,” Ruinous to Both Church and State

- A. “Postmodernism” rejects objective truth and promotes subjectivism and skepticism.
- B. Postmodernism thereby leads to “postfactualism”: facts and reality—indeed, truth itself—are dismissed as outdated concepts.
  - 1. My local library’s summer reading program now awards prizes to children who neither read nor are read to—various “alternative learning activities” may be substituted in the interest of “equity.”
  - 2. Not even mathematics has precise answers anymore. Students “construct” from imagination.
  - 3. Compared to prior generations, today’s Americans are essentially illiterate.
  - 4. Schools now exist for a postfactual purpose: to make people feel good about their “identities.”
- C. But, if nothing can be true, then:
  - 1. ... how can the Bible be true? ... how can the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth be factual?
  - 2. ... how can the rights to life, liberty, and property be real, and worthy of government protection?
- D. Grammar, history, and logic can restore education as a pursuit of truth, providing a reasonable framework:
  - 1. ... for the church to demonstrate that Jesus is the Christ.
  - 2. ... for the state to guarantee the protection of people’s natural rights.

### II. Three Grammar Lessons (revealing our origin, our problem, and the eternal and temporal solutions)

- A. The grammar and vocabulary of Genesis 1 reveal that God created everything in six 24-hour days. (And the grammar of other Old Testament passages reveals that this occurred roughly 6,000 years ago.)
  - 1. Genesis 1:5a defines “day” narrowly to mean “light,” vs. “night” to mean “darkness.”
  - 2. Genesis 1:5b defines “one day” inclusively to mean “evening and morning,” hence “day” here refers to the 24-hour period of both nighttime and daytime.
  - 3. Subsequent verses repeat “evening ... morning,” up through the “sixth day.”
  - 4. The *Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (the \$323 / 2094-page, “gold standard” in today’s scholarship) defines “yom” as “24-hour day” in specific reference to Genesis 1:5.
  - 5. The Hebrew sentence structure for Genesis 1 matches the standard pattern of historical books (e.g., 1 Kings) and differs from wisdom (Proverbs), allegories (Song of Solomon), and prophecy (Ezekiel). (See p. 5; also, Ryan MacPherson, “Is the Old Testament Reliable?” [www.blc.edu/apologetics2019](http://www.blc.edu/apologetics2019))
- B. The grammar of Genesis 3 reveals that after Adam and Eve fell into sin, God not only judged them but also promised them a Savior—a promise fulfilled later in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.
  - 1. **Chiastic parallelism** (A–B–C–C’–B’–A’) reveals the central point of Genesis 3 to be the promise of the Savior. (In the Hebrew “sandwich,” the “meat” is always in the middle!)

**A:** Adam is accused. (v. 11)

**B:** Eve is accused. (vv. 12–13a)

**C:** Satan is accused. (v. 13b)

**C’:** Satan is judged. (v. 14) —► **THE SAVIOR IS PROMISED. (v. 15)**

**B’:** Eve is judged. (v. 16)

**A’:** Adam is judged. (vv. 17–19)

- The **parallelism** in Genesis 3:15 reuses the *same* vocabulary but with a *difference* in emphasis to reveal that the woman’s Seed will triumph over the Serpent. (Again, the “meat” is in the middle!)

And I will put enmity

**A:** Between you [Serpent] and the woman [Eve]

**A’:** And between your seed and her Seed;

**B:** He [Christ] shall bruise [רָצַח] your head,

**B’:** And you shall bruise [רָצַח] His heel.

Jerome

*conteret* [grind]

*insidiaberis* [lurk]

Luther

*zertreten* [crush]

*stechen* [sting/bite]

Geneva

break

bruise

NIV

crush

strike

- Galatians 3:16 notes that “seed” in Genesis 12:7 (as in 3:15) is not “‘seeds,’ as of many, but as of one, ‘And to your Seed,’ who is Christ.” The OT prophetic grammar proves the NT fulfillment!
  - Compare “God remembered Noah” as the “meat” in the “sandwich” of Genesis 6–9. (See p. 6.)
- C. The grammar of the Declaration of Independence differs from the grammar of a communist alternative. *Do people have natural rights? What is the source of natural rights? What is the purpose of government?*
- “All men are created equal, ... endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights ... life, liberty, and [property]. ... To secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed.” (Declaration of Independence)
  - “Citizens have freedom of speech and of the press in keeping with the objectives of socialist society. Material conditions for the exercise of that right are provided by the fact that the press, radio, television, cinema, and other mass media are state or social property and can never be private property. This assures their use at exclusive service of the working people and in the interests of society.” (*Constitution of the Republic of Cuba*)
  - “... equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family ... life, liberty, ... property. ... These rights and freedoms may in no case be exercised contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations.” (*U.N. Declaration of Human Rights*—a compromise with Soviet communism)

### III. Three History Lessons (straight facts concerning the so-called “three [say what?!] Abrahamic faiths”)

*While today’s Western Civ./World Cultures textbooks portray biblical religion as “one among many ancient faiths” and claim that both the texts and their teachings gradually evolved, the facts reveal otherwise.*

*Likewise the claim that Islam is an “Abrahamic faith” together with Christianity is demonstrably false.*

A. **OT Judaism:** *The religion of the Hebrew Bible is essentially historical. 1 out of every 12 words in the O.T. is a proper noun, identifying a specific person, place, or nationality. Modern archaeology corroborates the location, chronology, and pronunciation of these proper names.*

- The Hebrew religion professed Yahweh to be the only true God: the creator of heaven and earth, the redeemer of sinful man, and the sanctifier of believer’s hearts.
- The Hebrew religion was preserved and transmitted through the written Torah of Moses (ca. 1500 B.C.) among a broadly literate population; neither Moses nor the Torah were late inventions.
  - Archaeological artifacts indicate that Israel’s characteristic worship of Yahweh, David’s dynasty, and the names of numerous persons and places mentioned in the Bible were known among neighboring kingdoms for centuries *preceding* the Babylonian conquest (ca. 600 B.C.). None of these ideas were invented *post-exile* (536 B.C.).
  - Skeptics used to complain that the oldest manuscripts were from the Middle Ages (A.D. 600 to 1000). When the discovery (1940s/1950s) of the Dead Sea Scrolls (ca. 200 B.C.) confirmed those manuscripts, skeptics complained that the Dead Sea Scrolls lacked vowels. But, archaeological artifacts also confirm the pronunciation of nearly 200 proper names (dating back to 2000 B.C.)
  - See: Clive Anderson/Brian Edwards, *Evidence for the Bible*; Titus Kennedy, *Unearthing the Bible*.
- The Hebrew political system developed in stages from *patriarchy* (ca. 2000 B.C.) to *republicanism* (ca. 1500 B.C.) to *constitutional monarchy* (ca. 1100 B.C.), initially with a clear distinction between church and state, before decaying into *royal absolutism* (ca. 900 B.C.) with state sponsorship of polytheistic cults (through ca. 600 B.C.).
- The Angel Gabriel gave Daniel, the chief of the Babylonian magi, a 490-year countdown for the coming of the Messiah. As the countdown approached zero (Galatians 4:4), the same Gabriel appeared to Mary, a virgin who then gave birth to Jesus of Nazareth. Little wonder, then, that magi came to hail him as the fulfillment of prophecy! (Daniel 2:48, 9:24–27; Luke 1; Matthew 2)

- B. Christianity:** *The New Testament situates the foundational facts of Christianity in the historically verifiable world of the first-century, corroborated by contemporary primary sources and archaeology.*
1. Jesus of Nazareth lived in historically verifiable places, during historically verifiable times, among historically verifiable persons, including individuals who produced written legal testimony and written historical accounts of His life, death, and resurrection.
    - a. Luke-Acts appears to be a legal brief, providing the factual background for Paul’s appeal before Caesar: he was accused of maliciously inventing a new religion, but the facts insist otherwise!
    - b. Eye-witness accounts, not some haphazard “oral tradition,” substantiated Christ’s resurrection.
  2. The earliest Christians regarded the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth as compelling evidence that He and only He is the fulfillment of the Hebrew Bible’s messianic prophecies, including specific prophecies that foretold the Messiah to be true God as well as true man who would suffer, die, and then rise back to life for the sins of all people.
  3. The central message of the NT is repentance from sin and forgiveness through Christ, and the central fact of the NT is the bodily resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth, proving Him to be the Christ.
  4. By both word and action, Jesus and His apostles taught the early Christians to evangelize through peaceful means, distinguishing carefully between church and state.
- C. Islam:** *Despite the etymological connections among “Islam,” “Muslim,” and “peace,” this religion is, at its essence, ahistorical, militaristic, and “enthusiastic” (SA III, VIII, 9), rendering people afraid of Allah.*
1. By both word and action, Muhammad and his followers taught the early Muslims to establish an imperialistic mosque-state through coercive means.
  2. The Quran explicitly differs from the Bible concerning historical matters:
    - a. Contradicting biblical texts dating back to 1500 B.C. (with the oldest extant copies dating to about 200 B.C.), Islamic oral traditions claim that Ishmael, not Isaac, is the child of blessing.
    - b. Written 600 years after the fact and contradicting 10 Christians, 3 Romans, and 1 Jew writing within a century of the fact, the Quran denies that Jesus died (Quran 4.158).
    - c. Contradicting widespread eyewitness accounts from the 1st century, the Quran denies that Jesus rose from the dead (Quran 4.158).
    - d. Islam also denies the connections between Old Testament prophecy and New Testament history that reveal that Jesus is the Messiah through whom our sins are forgiven.
  3. Was Islam tolerant? Well, Christian parents’ lives could be spared, but only by the taxation and confiscation of their property, and the forcible proselytization of their children into Islamic soldiers who would achieve “upward mobility” (so the textbooks whitewash it!) by persecuting Christians.
  4. Does the history of the Crusades prove that Christianity is violent and inhumane?
    - a. At their best, the Crusades were a long overdue defensive measure; at their worst, the “Christian” Crusades represent an abandonment of historic Christian principles and a borrowing of historic Islamic jihadism.
    - b. The standard is never what *Christians do*, but what *Scripture teaches*.
    - c. Read: Ryan MacPherson, “Is the Church Really to Blame? Shedding Light on the ‘Dark Ages,’” *Lutheran Sentinel*, Jan.-Feb. 2022, [www.issue.com/lutheransentinel](http://www.issue.com/lutheransentinel).
- (The *Mystery of History* and Notgrass history curricula are among the best grade school/high school options.)

#### IV. Three Logic Lessons (not as lords over God’s Word, but as servants to the Christian faith)

- A. When skeptics and scoffers criticize the Bible, they often resort to the “**straw man**” fallacy—falsely portraying an idea in order to “prove” that the idea is bad.
1. “The Old Testament is a collection of Near Eastern religious myths ...”  
*Reply:* John N. Oswatt, *The Bible among the Myths: Unique Revelation or Just Ancient Literature?*
  2. “The God of the Old Testament is capricious, vindictive, and violently abusive ...”  
*Reply:* Ryan MacPherson, “Is the Old Testament Reliable?” [www.blc.edu/apologetics2019](http://www.blc.edu/apologetics2019).
  3. “Christianity gradually emerged from an evolving oral tradition that eventually claimed that Jesus was the Son of God and that he rose from the dead.”  
*Reply:* J. Warner Wallace, *Cold-Case Christianity: A Homicide Detective Investigates the Claims of the Gospels*; Geisler/Turek, *I Don’t Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist*.

4. “Applying the Bible literally means not eating pork (Leviticus 11:7), but since Christians no longer follow that rule, then why must they insist that homosexuality (Leviticus 18:22, 20:13) is a sin?”  
Reply:
  - a. Read Leviticus in full: no penalty for eating pork; huge penalty for homosexuality. So, Leviticus clearly does not treat the two instances as the same level of offense.
  - b. Read the Bible in full: the NT relegates pork prohibitions to OT ceremonial laws while reaffirming the OT sexual code as moral law, revealed both in nature and in Scripture.
  - c. Study church history: the ceremonial/moral law distinction is the universal, 2,000+-year-old consensus among rabbinical, Roman Catholic, Lutheran, and Calvinist writings!
5. “History shows that whenever the church influences the state, the situation becomes horrible. Just think of the Spanish Inquisition. The best government would strictly separate religion from politics.”  
Reply: John Eidsmoe, *Historical and Theological Foundations of Law*.

- B. Avoid **formal fallacies**, such as the “old witch” of Zwingli’s invalid syllogisms.
  1. See Martin Cothran, *Traditional Logic*; or (more advanced), Peter Kreeft, *Socratic Logic*.
  2. Luther faulted Zwingli for violating both the natural laws of language and the universally necessary rules of Aristotelian logic: illicit major/minor, undistributed middle term, fallacy of four terms.
  3. A biblical understanding of the real presence adheres to those universal laws of language, without which human communication would be impossible, and likewise those universal laws of logic, without which human cognition would be impossible.
  4. Scripture and reason are on Luther’s side; Zwingli has neither Scripture nor reason on his side.
- C. Respect the **limits of logic**: reason cannot reach the higher mysteries of the faith.
  1. Note the fine line between the **magisterial misuse** of reason vs. the **ministerial use** of reason.
  2. For the “mysterious articles of faith,”\* theologians must dispense with philosophical arguments. (\*i.e., articles of faith in which philosophy and theology cannot define their terms identically—esp., Trinity, Two Natures of Christ, Real Presence)
  3. J. A. Quenstedt, *The Nature and Character of Theology*, trans. Luther Poellot (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1986), 159, 173, 172–73, 167:
    - a. The laws of logic should be “allow[ed] in theology, for they are formed not only in view of finite but also of infinite nature.” However, “Each discipline [theology, philosophy, etc.] has its own axioms, which are not to be carried over into another frame of reference.”
    - b. “The articles of faith are in themselves not contrary to reason but only above reason, but it happens by accident that they are also contrary to reason when reason takes to itself judgment regarding them on the basis of its own principles and does not follow the light of the Word but denies and attacks them.”
    - c. Philosophy may be rightly applied to theology for sake of “illustration, explanation, and secondary proof where the matter is clearly defined by Scripture ... [as] instruments in the interpretation and explanation of Holy Scripture, in refuting the arguments of opponents.”

## V. Conclusion: What Sort of Education Do We Need?

- A. Classical education values accuracy over originality, teaching students to mimic excellence as they master such topics as grammar, history, and logic.
- B. Grammar matters: it reveals how words are related and what sentences mean, applicable also to the Word.
- C. Facts matter:
  1. Christianity is a uniquely *factual*, a uniquely *historical*, and a uniquely *gracious* religion.
  2. The fact that each of us is *created in God’s image* provides the proper foundation for political science.
  3. The fact of *Jesus’ resurrection* provides the proper foundation for Christian theology.
- D. Logic is helpful, when kept on a short enough leash: ministerial use, but not magisterial misuse.
- E. In a society over-committed to “feeling good about yourself,” it may take awhile for facts to be appreciated, but in the end, reality has a way of talking back:
  1. The human conscience faces the facts of God’s moral law: sin leads to despair, death, and damnation.
  2. The fact of Jesus’ resurrection points to the higher truths of the Gospel: the forgiveness of sins, newness of life, and eternal salvation.

# The “Vav Consecutive”: The Hebrew Syntax for Historical Narratives

ו = the letter *vav*, pronounced like /v/, meaning “and” (or “so,” “then,” “next,” etc.)

and appearing as prefix, i.e., attached to the beginning of a word (that’s the right side, in Hebrew).

Vav consecutives (vav+verb at the beginning of sentence) are the standard form for historical narratives.

1 Kings 2 (nearly every verse starts with ו)		Genesis 1:1–31 (again, nearly every verse starts with ו)		Song of Songs 1:1–2:14 (here, not one verse starts with ו)	
וַיִּקְרְבוּ יְמֵי־דָוִד	1	וַבְּרֵאשִׁית בְּרָא	1	שִׁיר הַשִּׁירִים	1
אֲנֹכִי הֲלֹךְ	2	וְהָאָרֶץ הָיְתָה	2	יִשְׁקְנֵי מְנַשְׁקוֹת	2
וְשִׁמְרָתְךָ אֶת־מִשְׁמֶרֶת	3	וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים	3	לְרִיחַ שְׁמַנְיָךְ	3
לְמַעַן יָקִים	4	וַיֵּרָא אֱלֹהִים	4	מִשְׁכְּנֵי אַחֲרֶיךָ	4
וְגַם אֶתָּה	5	וַיִּקְרָא אֱלֹהִים	5	שְׁחוּרָה אֲנִי	5
וַעֲשִׂיתָ כְּחֻמְתְּךָ	6	וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים	6	אֶל־תְּרַאנֹנִי	6
וְלִבְנֵי בְרוּזִלִי	7	וַיַּעַשׂ אֱלֹהִים	7	הַגִּידָה לִּי	7
וְהִנֵּה עֹמֵד	8	וַיִּקְרָא אֱלֹהִים	8	אִם־לֹא תִדְעִי	8
וַעֲתָה אֶל־תִּנְקְהוּ	9	וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים	9	לְסִסְתִּי בְרַכְבִּי	9
וַיִּשְׁכַּב דָּוִד	10	וַיִּקְרָא אֱלֹהִים	10	נָאוּ וְלַחֲיִיד	10
וְהַיָּמִים אֲשֶׁר	11	וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים	11	תּוֹרֵי זָהָב	11
וְשָׁלְמָה יֹשֵׁב	12	וַתּוֹצֵא הָאָרֶץ	12	עַד־שֶׁהִמְלִיךְ	12
וַיָּבֵא אֲדֹנֶיהוּ	13	וַיְהִי־עֶרְב	13	צְרוּר הַמָּר	13
וַיֹּאמֶר דָּבָר	14	וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים	14	אֲשַׁפֵּל הַכֶּפֶר	14
וַיֹּאמֶר אֶת־יַדְעָתְךָ	15	וְהָיוּ לְמַאֲוֹרֹת	15	הַנֶּדָּה יָפָה	15
וַעֲתָה שְׁאַלְהֵי	16	וַיַּעַשׂ אֱלֹהִים	16	הַנֶּדָּה יָפָה	16
וַיֹּאמֶר אֶמְרֵי־נָא	17	וַיִּתֵּן אַתֶּם	17	קִרוֹת בְּתֵינֹנוּ	17
וַתֹּאמֶר בֵּת־שֹׁבַע	18	וְלִמְשַׁל בְּיֹום	18	אֲנִי חֲבַצְלֹת	2:1
וַתָּבֵא בֵת־שֹׁבַע	19	וַיְהִי־עֶרְב	19	כְּשׁוֹשְׁנָה בֵּין	2
וַתֹּאמֶר שְׁאַלְהֵי	20	וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים	20	כְּתַפּוּחַ בְּעֵצִי	3
וַתֹּאמֶר יִתֵּן	21	וַיִּבְרָא אֱלֹהִים	21	הַבִּיאֲנִי אֶל־בַּיִת	4
וַיַּעַן הַמֶּלֶךְ	22	וַיִּבְרָךְ אַתֶּם	22	סִמְכוֹנֵי בְּאֲשִׁישׁוֹת	5
וַיִּשְׁבַּע הַמֶּלֶךְ	23	וַיְהִי־עֶרְב	23	שְׁמַאלוֹ תַּחַת	6
וַעֲתָה חִי־יְהוָה	24	וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים	24	הַשְּׁבַעְתִּי אֶתְכֶם	7
וַיִּשְׁלַח הַמֶּלֶךְ	25	וַיַּעַשׂ אֱלֹהִים	25	קוֹל דּוֹדִי	8
וְלֹא־בִיטֶר הַכְּהֵן	26	וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים	26	דּוֹמָה דּוֹדִי	9
וַיִּגְרַשׁ שְׁלֹמֹה	27	וַיִּבְרָא אֱלֹהִים	27	עֲנֵה דּוֹדִי	10
וְהִשְׁמַעְהָ בָּאָה	28	וַיִּבְרָךְ אַתֶּם	28	כִּי־הִנֵּה	11
וַיֵּלֶד לְמֶלֶךְ	29	וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים	29	הַנְּצַנִּים	12
וַיָּבֵא בְנֵיהוּ	30	וְלִכְל־חַיִּית	30	הַתְּאֲנָה חֲנֻטָּה	13
וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ הַמֶּלֶךְ	31	וַיֵּרָא אֱלֹהִים	31	יֹנְתִי בְּחֻגֵי	14

**Genesis 6–9: The “Meat” of the Flood Account Is “Sandwiched” in the Middle (Chiastic Parallel)**

- A: \_\_\_\_\_ (6:10a) [one person]
- B: \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_ (10b) [three persons]
- C: \_\_\_\_\_ to be built (14–16)
- D: \_\_\_\_\_ in the future (17)
- E: \_\_\_\_\_ with Noah (18–20)
- F: Food \_\_\_\_\_ the ark (21)
- G: Command to \_\_\_\_\_ the ark (7:1–3)
- H: 7 days waiting for \_\_\_\_\_ (4–5)
- I: 7 days waiting for \_\_\_\_\_ (7–10)
- J: Noah and the animals \_\_\_\_\_ ark (11–15)
- K: the LORD \_\_\_\_\_ Noah in (16)
- L: 40 days \_\_\_\_\_ (17a)
- M: Waters increase (17b–18)
- N: Mountains \_\_\_\_\_ (19–20)
- O: 150 days, water \_\_\_\_\_ (21–24)

**THE MAIN POINT IS IN THE MIDDLE → P: “God remembered Noah” (8:1)**

- O’: 150 days, waters \_\_\_\_\_ (3)
- N’: Mountain \_\_\_\_\_ (4–5)
- M’: Waters \_\_\_\_\_ (5)
- L’: 40 days \_\_\_\_\_ (6a)
- K’: Noah \_\_\_\_\_ a window of ark (6b)
- J’: Raven and dove \_\_\_\_\_ ark (7–9)
- I’: 7 days waiting for \_\_\_\_\_ (10–11)
- H’: 7 days waiting for \_\_\_\_\_ (12–13)
- G’: Command to \_\_\_\_\_ ark (15–17)
- F’: Food \_\_\_\_\_ ark (9:1–4)
- E’: \_\_\_\_\_ with all people (8–10)
- D’: \_\_\_\_\_ in the future (11–17)
- C’: \_\_\_\_\_ (18a)
- B’: \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ (18b)
- A’: \_\_\_\_\_ (19)

As further literary confirmation that Genesis 8:1 tells us the main point of the flood account, the same theme occurs again after the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah: “God remembered Abraham.” (Genesis 19:26) Likewise, “the Lord was with Joseph.” (Genesis 39:2,21,23) In each case, this is a Gospel-remembering, that is, a gracious, saving remembering. Hence, God’s mercy is the main point, the “meat” in the middle, as evidence further by 1 Peter 3:19–22: “... the Divine longsuffering waited in the days of Noah ... eight souls were saved through water ... an antitype now saves us—baptism....”