

# DOES GOD EXIST?

November/December 2007

Volume 34 • Number 6

**A nonprofit effort  
to convince mankind  
that God is real and  
the Bible is His Word.**

**Cold, Commonsense, and Fur:  
Having Fun With the Seasons**



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# Cold, Common Sense, and Fur: Having Fun With the Seasons

One of the things I have noticed about the holiday seasons is that they increasingly have become a source of debate. Last year in this journal we had an article about how much more I like Thanksgiving than I do Christmas. My point was that Thanksgiving is very compatible with God's teachings that we be



thankful and appreciate the blessings we have, but that Christmas has become a political football with everyone from the ACLU to various denominations pushing their own political agenda. Another reason I prefer Thanksgiving is because of the freedom from commercialism that Thanksgiving has compared to the increasingly secular nature of Christmas.

We got several negative letters and e-mails from readers who felt that it was sacrilegious to not extoll Christmas, and that somehow what we said was denigrating to Christ. It is my opinion that Christmas is a secular holiday, established by man and not ordained by God. There is no biblical command or example that shows that we should celebrate any particular day as the birthday of Jesus Christ, and there is no question that December 25 is almost surely not the day that Jesus was born.

By the same token, the Bible makes it clear that any celebration we wish to engage in that honors God and gives thanks to God is acceptable to God and should not divide us. In Romans 14:5-10 there is a discussion of this concept:

One man considers one day more sacred than another; another man considers every day alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. He who regards one day as special, does so to the Lord. He who eats meat, eats to the

We have greatly expanded our on-line materials and encourage our readers to look at our new web sites. In addition to our main web site (see below), we have a site that deals with the problem of human suffering and related issues and one dealing with design evidence in the cosmos. Our main DVDs can also be watched on youtube and google, or you can preview all our DVDs on doesgodexist.tv. With the massive growth of atheist web sites it is important to let others know there are answers on the web too.

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Send subscription requests, orders, or address changes to  
**Does God Exist?**, PO Box 2704, South Bend, IN 46680-2704  
Phone: 574-299-0145

DOES GOD EXIST? (USPS 011-010) is published bimonthly in January/February, March/April, May/June, July/August, September/October, and November/December by Does God Exist?, 814 S. Main St., South Bend, IN 46601-3008. Subscription is free upon request. Periodicals postage paid at South Bend, IN. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to: DOES GOD EXIST?, PO Box 2704, South Bend, IN 46680-2704.

Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who abstains, does so to the Lord and gives thanks to God. For none of us lives to himself alone and none of us dies to himself alone.... You, then, why do you judge your brother? Or why do you look down on your brother?

This passage was written in spite of the fact the Judaizing teachers were doing great damage in the Church. Paul goes on in this passage and talks about not putting a stumbling block in one another's way and that things like this are not what the Kingdom of God is about (verse 17). "Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification" (verse 19).

Let us not engage in meaningless debate about the seasons. Thanksgiving is a time of giving thanks for all we have been blessed with. Join in being thankful, however you wish to express it. Christmas is a time of giving and enjoying a variety of traditions. The following story by an unknown author was on the web this past year and demonstrates how much fun the season can and should be.



My husband and I had been happily (most of the time) married for five years but hadn't been blessed with a baby. I decided to do some serious praying and promised God that if He would give us a child, I would be a perfect mother, love it with all my heart and raise it with His word as my guide. God answered my prayers and blessed us with a son. The next year God blessed us with another son. The following year, He blessed us with

yet another son. The year after that we were blessed with a daughter. My husband thought we'd been blessed right into poverty. We now had four children, and the oldest was only four years old. I learned never to ask God for anything unless I meant it. As a minister once told me, "If you pray for rain, make sure you carry an umbrella."

I began reading a few verses of the Bible to the children each day as they lay in their cribs. I was off to a good start. God had entrusted me with four children and I didn't want to disappoint Him. I tried to be patient the day the children smashed two dozen eggs on the kitchen floor searching for baby chicks. I tried to be understanding when they started a hotel for homeless frogs in the spare bedroom, although

it took me nearly two hours to catch all twenty-three frogs. When my daughter poured ketchup all over herself and rolled up in a blanket to see how it felt to be a hot dog, I tried to see the humor rather than the mess. In spite of changing over 25,000 diapers, never eating a hot meal and never sleeping for more than thirty minutes at a time, I still thank God daily for my children.

While I couldn't keep my promise to be a perfect mother—I didn't even come close—I did keep my promise to raise them in the Word of God. I knew I was missing the mark just a little when I told my daughter we were going to church to worship God, and she wanted to bring a bar of soap along to "wash up" Jesus, too. Something was lost in the translation when I explained that God gave us everlasting life, and my son thought it was generous of God to give us his "last wife."

My proudest moment came during the children's Christmas pageant. My daughter was playing Mary, two of my sons were shepherds and my youngest son was a wise man. This was their moment to shine.

My five-year-old shepherd had practiced his line, "We found the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes." But he was nervous and said, "The baby was wrapped in wrinkled clothes." My four-year-old 'Mary' said, "That's not 'wrinkled clothes,' silly. That's dirty, rotten clothes." A wrestling match broke out between Mary and the shepherd and was stopped by an angel, who bent her halo and lost her left wing. I slouched a little lower in my seat when Mary dropped the doll representing Baby Jesus, and it bounced down the aisle crying, "Mama-mama." Mary grabbed the doll, wrapped it back up and held it tightly as the wise men arrived.

My other son stepped forward wearing a bathrobe and a paper crown, knelt at the manger and announced, "We are the three wise men, and we are bringing gifts of cold, common sense, and fur." The audience dissolved into laughter, and the pageant got standing ovation. "I've never enjoyed a Christmas program as much as this one," laughed the pageant director, wiping tears from his eyes. "For the rest of my life, I'll never hear the Christmas story without thinking of cold, common sense, and fur."

"My children are my pride and my joy and my greatest blessing," I said as I dug through my purse for an aspirin.

Is a story like this one offensive to you? If so, I apologize but I would ask you to think about Romans 14. The Christmas pageant is not an attempt to offend God. We are not told to hold special events of

this kind, but having fun with the season in a loving and respectful way is not an attempt to denigrate Christ. The cover of our journal shows a commercial presentation of Santa. We do not seem to be offended when a bookstore sells materials promoting Christian values, but some



get upset when Santa is presented as the cover picture shows. My brother used to dress up as Santa and bring presents to his three children. One of my favorite memories is when he put an active Airedale puppy in his bag for the twenty foot journey into the room where the kids were waiting for Santa and the wired dog went crazy jumping around on top of every one and every thing and creating total chaos.

It is important that we teach our children the difference between fantasy and reality. We need to distinguish between the fun things of the holiday season and those things which have religious significance or irreligious significance. Let us distinguish between Scrooge and what Christians should be every day of their lives—not just the holiday season. Let us be able to laugh and love and care about others and not sit glumly in the corner and pout because the holiday is not consistent with our belief system. We should be bedfellows with those in the world who see good in the Christian system and wish to celebrate that goodness, not bedfellows with the ACLU who see everything as something to complain about or who look for a lawsuit they can find behind every bush (or Christmas tree). —John N. Clayton

## The Unchurched?

American churches are in a state of change. Churches are busily reinventing themselves to appeal to what has become known as “the unchurched.” In earlier days we (like Jesus) divided humanity into “saved” and “lost” columns. Such terminology now is politically incorrect and hence discarded by mainstream religious leaders.

In the midst of the change crisis, churches are jostling each other trying to discover what it is that the “unchurched” are looking for. Lots of pontification has been going on without much hard evidence. Thom S. Rainer in his recently released book, *Surprising Insights from the Unchurched*, has done some research with people who claimed

no faith and then came to some faith. So he is not describing people who merely changed churches, but those who have moved from unbelief to belief.

I think we can learn from Dr. Rainer’s research and his insights. So what do the “unchurched” say motivates them?

- 90% said “Preaching” was a factor in choosing a church. That’s odd. We have been told repeatedly that few cared about the preaching. Interestingly enough, the preacher did not have to be a dynamic or charismatic leader, but they did enjoy a good speaker.

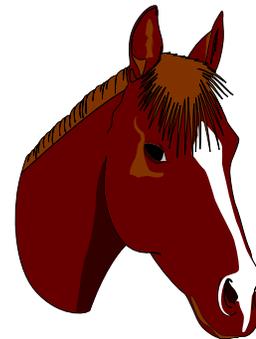
- 90% said that a clean, “well maintained facility” was one of the important items they considered.

- 88% mentioned “Doctrines” as a factor in their choices. Again, this runs against the grain of the popular understanding that “people just want to feel good and do good things.”

- 81% said that the “Name of the church” did not influence their decision. (Remember, we’re talking about unchurched, not church shoppers, and the titles of the churches didn’t influence their decision much).

- 49% stated that “Friendliness” of the members influenced them. Obviously, we ought to pay attention to this quality. An interesting point is that most churches thought they were friendly, but many of the unchurched said they weren’t!

- 11% said “Worship Style/Music” was a factor. (Perhaps we have been oversold on how important this is.)



Well, this sounds like the old story of the men arguing about how many teeth a particular horse had. They argued for hours and only stopped when one of the men thought about opening the horse’s mouth and counting the teeth. What a revolutionary idea that was. Some would prefer to imagine what they think the reasons are, and then design a strategy based on those mistaken ideas.

So let’s open the horse’s mouth and count the teeth before we start taking action.

—by Dan Cooper, Tabernacle, NJ, Church of Christ bulletin

## Stem Cells: A Good Thing

There continues to be a distribution of massive misinformation being made throughout our culture about stem cell research. One part of the misinformation has been rooted in the fact that many people have tried to tie stem cell research into the abortion issue. It is true that there have been some research projects that were created around embryonic stem cells from aborted babies, but between politics, ethical concerns, and complications in the research this has not been where the most productive research has been taking place. Stem cells are a good thing, and may offer wonderful help in the battle against cancer, Parkinson's, diabetes and any number of other chronic health problems that humans face. It is important to be informed about this new tool of medicine, and not allow it to become a political or religious issue to the detriment of all of mankind.



Stem cells are primal cells found in all multi-cellular organisms that are able to reproduce and can differentiate into various specialized cell types. This is a fairly new science which began in the early 1960s. There are three broad categories of stem cells. They are: (1) Embryonic stem cells, which are taken from an early stage embryo of approximately four to five days old and consists of 50 to 150 cells. These stem cells can develop into each of more than 200 cells types of the adult body when given sufficient stimulation.

(2) Adult stem cells, which are found throughout the body that normally reproduce to replenish dying cells and regenerate damaged tissues. (3) Cord blood stem cells found in the umbilical cord and are able to differentiate into all of the specialized embryonic tissues.

To understand why stem cells are so useful, we might consider the repairs on a car as an analogy. If your car is overheating, what is likely to be the cause? Common sense tells you that the electrical system or the motor itself are not the probable villains. It is obviously the cooling system that has a problem, and there are only a few components that make up the cooling system. A quick check could

tell you if you have enough fluid in the cooling system, and if so, a blockage or a dysfunctional water pump would be the likely culprit. It is relatively easy to determine if there is a blockage so if there is not, the mechanic would be likely to replace the water pump.

Many human diseases can be treated in much the same way. If a person is diabetic and his blood sugar is very high, it is not likely that the problem is being caused by the heart or the lungs. We all know that an organ called the pancreas secretes a substance called insulin that allows the sugars in our food to be processed. If there is not enough insulin, our blood sugar will be too high and that has numerous side effects on the individual. We now know that in the pancreas there are cells grouped into what are called the "islets of Langerhans" and each islet contains approximately 1000 cells. These cells are grouped into four groups. Sixty-five to eighty percent are beta cells which produce Insulin and Amylin, 15 to 20 percent are alpha cells which release Glucagon an activating agent, 3 to 10 percent are delta cells that produce Somatostatin, an inhibiting agent, and 1 percent are PP cells which contain a polypeptide. All of this tells us that the design of the human digestive system is incredibly complex. How do you fix it when something is wrong?

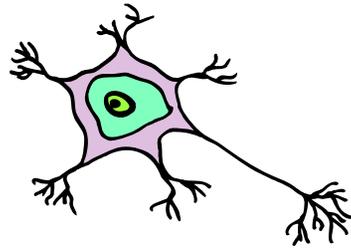


In the case of the car, someone has to have carefully built a water pump that will do what the original equipment was designed to do. That means that the original blueprint has to be understood, and all parts have to be carefully put together in the same way that the original equipment was produced. To fix diabetes, the same process has to be used. In type 1 diabetes in which insulin shots are required, the islets of Langerhans have been destroyed. If we can develop stem cells that will turn into islets of Langerhans and can inject them into the pancreas of the diabetic we will have replaced what is missing with an identical component. Science is very close to accomplishing this from adult stem cells.

Embryonic stem cells are not the answer to this type of research. Embryonic cells can become anything, which is why people have had an interest in them, but this is also a major problem. Embryonic

cells can be misled by biochemical signals when they are transplanted into an adult, leading to unwanted cell types and sometimes to tumor formation.

Three researchers at the University of Missouri have been able to sustain adult stem cells and induce them to turn into specific cell types by exposing them to different chemical signals. No abnormal tissue results from this type of stem cell work. Elmer Price, Randall Prather, and Mike Foley at the University of Missouri have taken the lead in this research. Price says, “In theory, embryonic stem cells have the ability to become almost any cell type or organ. Very complex chemical signals need to be in place with embryonic stem cells in order for them to develop into the appropriate type of cell. However, we have shown that if you can isolate adult stem cells, you can make them generate the appropriate type of cell with much more ease and specificity.”



Remember that blood-derived adult stem cells are normally used by the body for regeneration and repair, and by copying what God has designed for the maintenance of the human body, some wonderful solutions to the afflictions humans endure are possible. Stem cell research is a good thing, and as we learn more about this part of our body’s makeup we have to understand even more fully David’s description of what God has done in forming us from the dust of the earth: “I will praise thee Lord, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made” (Psalm 139:14). —JNC

## Distillation

It is always interesting to read articles that others write on issues that we try to deal with in this journal. Trying to bring peace between science and faith seems to be something that is repugnant to extremists on both sides of the evolution/creation controversy. One frequently voiced challenge to those of us who try to resolve conflicts between science and faith is that we are trying to distill the Bible through science, when we should really be in the business of distilling science through the Bible. The challenge is that if you are using science to understand the Bible you are automatically going to distort the biblical message to make it fit what you believe to be true scientifically. People who espouse this belief would have us interpret

all of science in terms of what the Bible says—rejecting anything that conflicts with the Bible (or more exactly with their understanding of the Bible) as false.



The first point that I would like to make in this discussion is that the word distill is an unfortunate choice of words. When you distill water, you change it into steam and condense it back into water so that any impurity in the water is removed. The water is still water—just not contaminated by salt or bacteria



or some other chemical. To maintain that the Bible is being distilled would be to maintain that it is being purified—that the impurities are being taken out. If the impurities are the additions, speculations, and modifications by humans this would be a good thing. In the past there have been misunderstandings of the Bible that were in fact corrected by science.

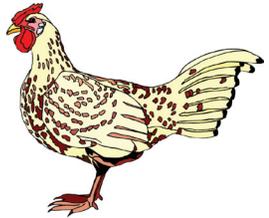
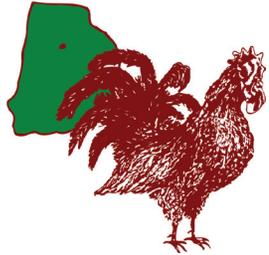
In Revelation 7:1 we are told about “four angels standing at the four corners of the earth.” People deduced from this passage that the earth was flat. When science finally proved beyond any doubt that the earth was round, the teaching about a flat earth disappeared. This was not a biblical error, it was a misunderstanding that had come about because of the ignorance of the reader. We now understand that this apocalyptic passage is talking about the points on the compass and not the shape of the earth, and the error of humans in reading what God has given us has been distilled—corrected.

Another example of how science has purified the Bible is seen in the Bible’s classification of a rabbit as a ruminant. In Leviticus 11:6 and Deuteronomy 14:7 the hare or rabbit is identified as an animal that “chews the cud” and thus was unclean for the Israelites. The rabbit does not have multiple stomachs that allow food to be regurgitated into their mouths to be processed again, so many atheists



used these passages in years gone by to support their view that the Bible was full of mistakes. In recent years science has learned that rabbits practice a special kind of rumination called refection. Vegetable matter that is hard to digest absorbs specialized bacteria and

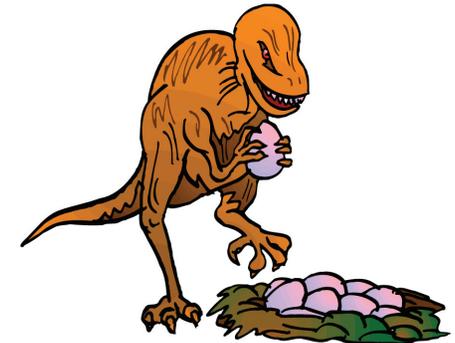
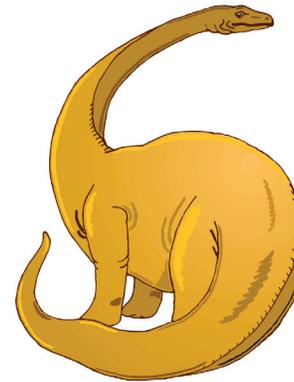
then is deposited as droppings. After a period of time the rabbit will eat these droppings and reprocess the material so that the rabbit is very efficient in using all of the vegetable matter it eats. This is a kind of rumination and in fact fits “chewing the cud” very well. The Bible’s accuracy is clearly demonstrated by science in this matter, but science has not changed the biblical statement in any way. What it has done is provide support for what the Bible says.



The list of examples like these that can be given is huge. Bible writers did not view any fact of the creation to be at odds with their teachings or understandings. When Job writes about the skies in Job 38:31-32 he uses the constellation names of Pleiades and the Bear in his description. These are names taken from the science of the writer’s day, and one needs to understand that science to understand what the author is saying. To suggest that science has nothing to contribute to our understanding of the Bible is an ignorant position, and even in the Genesis account there are contributions that science can make to help us in our understanding of what we are being told. We should now understand that the word *kind* from the Hebrew *min* is not a reference to varieties or even species, but is a much broader word. We now have 142 varieties of chickens; and who would have ever guessed that a chihuahua and a Saint Bernard would have a common ancestor? Questions like how Noah got all of the animals on the ark, and the wisdom of the sequence in which animals were created can be answered from science. Even the difference between creating something indicated by the Hebrew word *bara* in Genesis 1:1 and making something indicated by the Hebrew word *asah* in Genesis 1:16 can be understood and clarified by science. Just like the rabbit question or the shape of the earth, science helps us eliminate our misunderstandings and gives us proof of the credibility of God’s word. The Bible and science support, illuminate, and provide understanding of each other. This is a positive thing and is necessary.

The place where most critics of those of us who believe science and faith are friends comes from, is when science provides help in

places where the Bible is silent. There have been well over 10 million species of animals that have lived on this planet. Genesis makes no attempt to explain them all. The Hebrew words used in Genesis 1 cannot be used to explain viruses, amoeba, insects, leeches, worms, platypuses, sea plants, fungus, marsupials, echidnas, corals, bats, flying reptiles, or even dinosaurs. It is not the purpose of the Bible to give a detailed account of how every living thing came into being. People can assume that even though these living things are not described they are included in the descriptions that are given. That is an assumption and frequently violates common sense. It is not taking the Bible literally. Words mean something, and you cannot violate their meaning to fit your theology. *Behemoth* in verses 24-25 refers to cattle and cannot be applied to a reptile or a platypus. Science gives us some suggestions about these living things, and how they have been designed into the ecosystem. These suggestions are not a distillation of the Bible, but simply provide information where the Bible is silent.



Perhaps the best example of this problem is in the age of the earth. Nowhere in the Bible is the age of the earth stated. Humans have used assumptions to project a specific age to the earth, and these guesses have been heavily tainted by denominational creeds. Bishop Ussher’s methodology, for example, is full of assumptions: (1) that there are no undated events or periods in the Bible; (2) that the genealogies in the Bible are complete; (3) that the genealogies are in a sequential order to be used for chronology; and (4) that there are no missing historical periods in the Bible. By making these and some other assumptions, some believers have been able to get the age of the earth as low as 6,000 years—even though we have cities with historical records older than that. Science offers some other estimates of the

ages of things, based on different assumptions that lead to different conclusions. Could those assumptions and conclusions be in error? Of course they could, just as Ussher's assumptions are clearly in error. The point is that this is not a conflict between science and faith, and it is not a distillation of the Bible through science. It is simply a matter of whether we will take what the Bible says as truth and what it does not say as of no consequence. The two areas are independent and while they might appear to conflict, as better information becomes available both will change until they are in agreement. This is the lesson of history and of common sense. If science is the study of facts, and the Bible is the revelation of the one who created the facts, they cannot possibly conflict.

What happens if we distill science through faith? Science is defined by Webster's dictionary as "knowledge, as opposed to intuition." Science deals with facts. Sometimes some strange methods are used to get to the facts, and those methods may scatter some misunderstandings along the way. For science to function, it has to assume nothing when it starts. If scientists 1000 years ago had accepted Revelation 7:1 as factually referring to the shape of the earth and had not pursued it further, we would still be believing the earth was flat. The history of religion has been that humans have misunderstood scripture over and over and applied it in a destructive way. People have used the phrase "God's chosen people" to justify everything from slavery to political agendas. To use what you believe to control what you do scientifically assumes that you have absolute truth in all you believed, and while a few of us may be that egotistical, most of us are old enough and experienced enough to know that is not true.

Science and faith are friends. They cannot conflict because they deal with different subjects. When they interact they always support each other when the information is correct, and they illuminate one another in very positive and useful ways. Einstein said it best "Religion without science is lame, and science without religion is blind." Galileo said "Science is the study of how the heavens go, not how to go to heaven." Let us work at a healthy, dynamic, positive, growing relationship between our faith and what science tells us. This journal is dedicated to helping those who will think, study, and reason to arrive at that end. —JNC

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# Syncretism

by Cecil May, Jr., Faulkner University

Syncretism is identified as, "the union of conflicting beliefs, especially religious beliefs." It fits the spirit of this postmodern age but is offensive to God.

Worship of the true and living God while also paying homage to other "gods": is stoutly condemned in Scripture. God said, "I am the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt; you shall have no other gods before me.... You shall not bow down to [idols] or serve them, for I the Lord your God am a jealous God" (Exodus 20:2-5).

It may seem strange that "jealousy" is ascribed to God. The word has mainly negative connotations when attributed to humans. But so does "wrath," and Scripture often attributes wrath to God as well. "The Lord is a jealous and avenging God; the Lord is avenging and wrathful; the Lord takes vengeance on his adversaries and keeps wrath for his enemies" (Nahum 1:2).

Jealousy, speaking humanly, is most frequently charged in marriage and is a negative characteristic only when it reflects unjustified suspicion. A spouse ought to be jealous of anyone or anything which tried to insinuate itself into the place only a spouse ought to have. Marriage is an exclusive relationship and every husband or wife ought to be jealous to protect that exclusivity.

In saying He is a jealous God, the Lord is demanding an exclusive place of worship and obedience. The first and greatest commandment is "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength." (Mark 12:30). That leaves no place for a rival.

In the prophets, God often calls idolatry among his people "adultery" and "whoredom." Similarly, just as man feels when his wife sleeps with another man, but to an infinitely greater degree, God feels when those he has redeemed worship other gods.

Zephaniah said God will "cut off from this place... those who bow down and swear to the Lord and yet swear by Milcom" (1:4-5). Milcom was the "god of the Ammonites" (1 Kings 11:33). Significantly, the inspired scribe who wrote 1 Kings also calls him "the abomination of the Ammonites" (11:5). Worship of God is nullified when other gods are acknowledged and worshipped as well.

Christ and Christianity did not change that. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except by me" (John 14:6).

# Nobel Scientists and God

## Erwin Schrödinger—Nobel Laureate in Physics

Editor's Note: One of the things that has come out of the battle between extremists in the evolution/creation controversy has been a flow of literature from atheists claiming that good scientists and intelligent, educated people do not believe in God. This is simply not true. Tihomir Dimitrov has compiled an e-book on <http://nobelists.net> of quotations of Nobel Prize winning scientists. In each issue of this journal we hope to quote statements from some of these.

In the presentation of a scientific problem, the other player is the good Lord. He has not only set the problem but also has devised the rules of the game—but they are not completely known, half of them are left for you to discover or deduce.

I am very astonished that the scientific picture of the real world around me is very deficient. It gives a lot of factual information, puts all our experience in a magnificently consistent order, but is ghastly silent about all that is really near to our heart, that really matters to us. It cannot tell us a word about red and blue, bitter and sweet, physical pain and physical delight; it knows nothing of beautiful and ugly, good or bad, God and eternity. Science sometimes pretends to answer questions in these domains, but the answers are very often so silly that we are not inclined to take them seriously.

I shall quite briefly mention here the notorious atheism of science. The theists reproach it for this again and again. Unjustly. A personal God cannot be encountered in a world picture that becomes accessible only at the price that everything personal is excluded from it. We know that whenever God is experienced, it is an experience exactly as real as a direct sense impression, as real as one's own personality. As such He must be missing from the space-time picture. "I do not meet with God in space and time", so says the honest scientific thinker, and for that reason he is reproached by those in whose catechism it is nevertheless stated: "God is a Spirit."

Whence came I and whither go I? That is the great unfathomable question, the same for every one of us. Science has no answer for it. —JNC



### Evolution From Creation to New Creation

by Ted Peters and Martinez Hewlett, Abingdon Press, Nashville, Tenn., 2003, 206 pages, ISBN 0-687-02374-2

### Can You Believe in God and Evolution?

by Ted Peters and Martinez Hewlett, Abingdon Press, Nashville, Tenn., 2006, 98 pages, ISBN 0687-33551-5

We are reviewing two books together here because they have the same authors and are on the same subject matter. If you are looking for a detailed and positive discussion of theistic evolution, these two books will be of interest to you. Ted Peters is a Lutheran scholar at a Lutheran seminary in California. Martinez Hewlett is a Professor Emeritus of Molecular and Cellular Biology at the University of Arizona in Tucson.

The positive nature of these books is that they offer support for what the **Does God Exist?** ministry is all about—that science and faith are complementary and supportive. It is vital that this message get to young people because there is a strong attempt in our culture to place faith and science at extreme positions diametrically opposed to each other. One of the neatest charts in the two books is one that shows a line for "Divine Action" with theism on one end and atheism on the other. Various beliefs are inserted along the line with creationism on the theism end and materialism on the atheism end. Intelligent design is near theism and evolutionary biology is near the atheism end. Theistic evolution is put dead center. A similar line is on the same page with the label "causal explanation." No purpose is on one end and purpose is on the other with intelligent design near the purpose end and materialism near the no purpose end. Again, theistic evolution is near the middle. What these two books do is to promote this view.

These are books that will probably make just about everybody mad. The books do a vivid portrayal of where historically believing in atheistic evolution has taken mankind, something that will

infuriate atheists. They also challenge the interpretation methods of denominational creationists as well as their scientific claims, which will infuriate them. Their model is interesting and worth reading by those with advanced training in the field. You certainly will not agree with everything in these books, but they do offer some material not available elsewhere and are worth the time and energy of those who have a strong background in science.

### The Dawkins Delusion

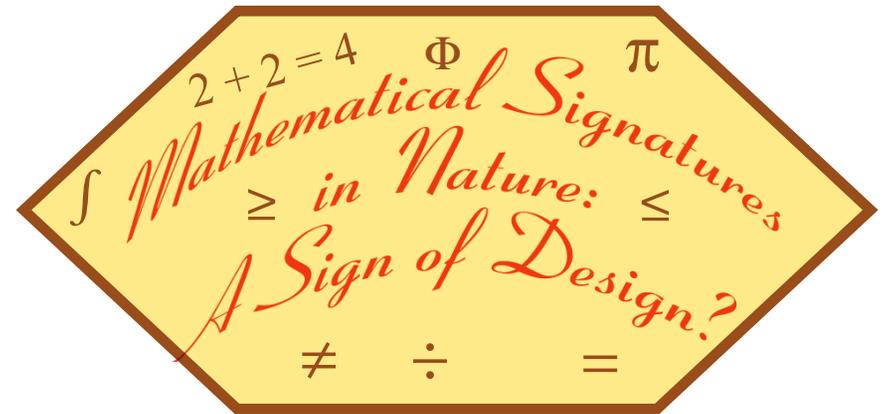
by Alister McGrath and Joanna Collicutt McGrath, InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, Ill., 2007, 118 pages, ISBN 978-0-8308-3446-4

Probably the most popular atheist of today is Richard Dawkins. In 1976 Dawkins published *The Selfish Gene*, and since that time has campaigned actively for atheism. In 2006 he released a book titled *The God Delusion* which is a vicious and hostile attack on all of religion and those who believe in God. We have had several articles in this journal on Dawkins and his claims and diatribes against the Bible and belief in God, and hopefully have motivated some of our readers to think and re-examine the things Dawkins says. The problem with our doing this is that we are small potatoes. What right does a lowly high school science teacher have to criticize an Oxford professor acclaimed by his peers to be the top evolutionist of our day?

Regardless of what your answer might be to that last question, the same cannot be said of Alister McGrath. Dr. McGrath is also a professor at Oxford and is a biophysicist. What he does in this book is to take Dawkin's arguments point by point and basically destroys them. Michael Ruse who is a well known atheist philosopher says "*The God Delusion* makes me embarrassed to be an atheist, and the McGraths show why."

This is a short book—only 118 pages. It has four chapters, each of them taken from Dawkin's material. The McGraths clearly show why Dawkins is wrong, and does so in remarkably clear ways. Commenting on Dawkins incredible ignorance of the Bible, the McGraths say "Imagine someone holding forth on biology whose only knowledge of the subject is the *Book of British Birds*, and you have a rough idea of what it feels like to read Richard Dawkins on theology" (page 22). The McGraths show mistake after mistake in Dawkins material, and answer questions about the origin of religion, whether religion is evil, and whether science has disproven God.

We recommend this book very highly. I would give it to anyone who has read Dawkins and feel he has something significant to say about the existence of God. You cannot argue with the McGraths' credentials or the content of this book. It is very well done.

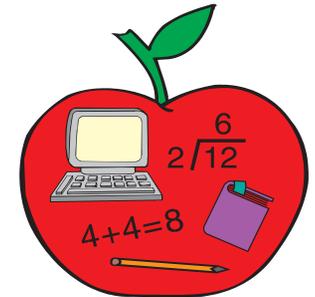


by Darrick Dean, New Castle, PA

[the Universe] is written in the language of mathematics, and its characters are triangles, circles, and other geometrical figures, without which it is humanly impossible to understand a single word of it....—Galileo

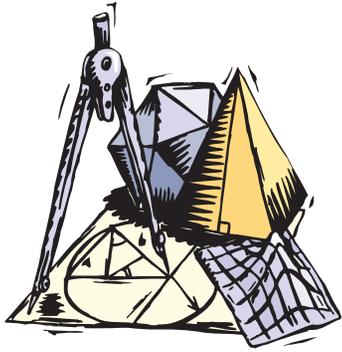
Math is the universal language, but it is not a human construct. Sure, we create symbols for numbers and mathematical computations, but math itself is more fundamental. The equation  $2 + 2 = 4$  is universally true, universal in the sense that everywhere in the universe it is true. It does not matter what symbols we create to communicate " $2 + 2 = 4$ " — the equation always remains true. In other words, what we call math is simply a way to describe or visualize the order that is the foundation of the universe's structure and mechanics.

But such order cannot be produced by chance. The level of order is too sophisticated for a random cause. The patterns that are often revealed are too precise. Only intelligence produces such things. Let us look at some of the mathematical constructs that we have uncovered in nature.



## Phi

Phi (1.6180339887...) is an irrational number like pi (3.141592653...). Phi and pi are both ratios defined by particular



Euclidean geometries, with phi being the division of a line “so that the ratio of the lesser part to the greater part is the same as the ratio of the greater part to the whole.” Phi’s abundance in the universe has earned it names such as the Golden Section, the Divine Proportion, the Golden Ratio, and the Golden Mean. This ratio phi can be found in many natural constructs such as in human and animal proportions (i.e., the arrangement of physical features). Phi relationships can be found in DNA, among the planets

of the Solar System (as in Kepler’s Laws), and so on.

Many argue that phi is purposefully used by humans in such things as art, architecture and music for the balance it produces in designs. However, there are some caveats to this. For example, some claim one can find phi—not surprisingly—in the structure or design of the pyramids. Is phi intentional in the pyramids or merely the result of what is good geometrical design? It is probably the latter. Architecture is often designed with balance and stability which necessitates geometries that contain phi, though these geometries are not always necessary. Phi may be intentional in some structures, but it is accidental or inadvertent in others.

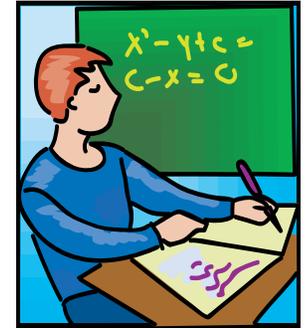
We can purposely incorporate phi or inadvertently do so through our use of the geometries we have discovered. Either way we (intelligent designers) are using precise constructs. How do such precise relations appear repeatedly in nature?

## Fibonacci Series

This is the Fibonacci series: 0, 1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13, 21, 34, etc. It is very simply explained as each number in the series being the sum of the previous two numbers. The ratio of each successive pair of numbers (starting with 3/2) in the series approximates phi (i.e., 8 divided by 5 is 1.6). Why is this important? Because the Fibonacci series is the basis of the spiral patterns common in nature: in shells, hurricanes, whirlpools, spiral galaxies, DNA, and plant life. Phi is all around us. For example: the ratio of scales in the opposing spirals around a pine cone are 5:8; bumps on a pineapple are 8:13; seeds in a sunflower are 21:34. All of these ratios are adjacent pairs in the Fibonacci series.

## Biblical Indications of Phi

Exodus 25:10 writes: “Have them make a chest of acacia wood—two and a half cubits long, a cubit and a half wide, and a cubit and a half high.” Gary Meisner comments that we find “The ratio of 2.5 to 1.5 is 1.666..., which is as close to phi (1.618...) as you can come with such simple numbers and is certainly not visibly different to the eye. The Ark of the Covenant is thus constructed using the Golden Section, or Divine Proportion. This ratio is also the same as 5 to 3, numbers from the Fibonacci series.” Meisner concludes, “The pervasive appearance of phi throughout life and the universe is believed by some to be the signature of God, a universal constant of design used to assure the beauty and unity of His creation.”



## Pi (π)

Pi is the ratio of the circumference of a circle to its diameter (pi = 3.141592653...). Pi is just as fundamental as phi in the universe, but because it is more familiar, its presence does not seem as startling. Yet mathematicians have spent millennia computing its numbers and looking for patterns in the pi sequence.

## Pi in the Bible

1 Kings 7:23 writes: “He made the Sea of cast metal, circular in shape, measuring ten cubits from rim to rim and five cubits high. It took a line of thirty cubits to measure around it.” We know that circumference = pi times diameter. So from 1 Kings 7:23 we produce  $30 = \pi(10)$ . Solving for pi we get 3. Since pi actually equals 3.141592653..., some people reason that the Bible is wrong. Is it?

First we must recognize that the Bible commonly uses rounded figures. These are descriptions, not architectural blueprints. Secondly, it has been shown by some that since the Hebrew has no digits — all letters are also numbers — the relevant Hebrew in this passage can be calculated to find pi. The calculation comes out to 3.14150943... This is only a difference of 0.0000832 with actual pi, making the Bible’s description of pi the most accurate in antiquity!

Perhaps the Hebrews did not specifically calculate pi, but they managed to come very close “accidentally.” Another caveat is that many have tried to abuse the Hebrew and find endless “codes” hidden in the Bible. While certain numbers, sequences, etc., in the Bible and elsewhere have been attributed particular meanings, there is a big difference between pseudoscientific numerologies and scientific patterns. The latter are constant and repeatable (pi and phi) the former are unreliable, inconsistent and variable (“Bible codes”).

Mathematical patterns are inherent to the very structure of the universe. While we use our language of mathematics to describe these patterns and all of the precise fine-tuning found in the universe, the mathematical ratios themselves seem to be design evidences: a universal language, unchanging throughout time or place; too precise and nonrandom to be products of chance.

## DANDY DESIGNS

### *The Strangest Bird of All*

Can you imagine a bird that stands nine feet tall, weighs 350 pounds, runs faster on its two legs than any other two-legged creature, and lays eggs the size of cantaloupes that weigh three pounds. Most of us can, because we have seen ostriches in zoos or perhaps on ostrich ranches. Everything about this bird is strange. The ostrich is a member of the oldest group of birds called the ratites. This group includes many flightless birds found across the southern hemisphere including the rhea of South America, the cassowary of New Guinea, the emu of Australia and the kiwi of New Zealand. Two hundred years ago there was a bird called the moa in New Zealand that was even bigger than the ostrich, towering to 12 feet.



The ostrich can run 10 miles at 30 to 40 miles an hour for up to an hour while keeping its head absolutely level. It has a pronounced

overbite with nostrils set toward the tip of its beak—not the base like other birds. It has small weak wings, massive bare thighs and hoof like feet. Long elastic tendons in their legs act like pogo springs allowing the bird to run very efficiently. An ostrich kick can be fatal, so they can run from predators or kick effectively.

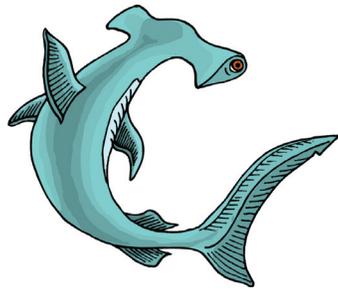
The reproductive system of the ostrich is especially unusual. A hen will lay one large cantaloupe-sized egg a day until there are about six eggs in a nest which is a shallow depression. Other hens will add eggs to the nest until the nest is full. The hen and her mate will then incubate all the eggs for the six weeks it takes for them to hatch. When the babies hatch, they are about a foot tall and they begin walking and pecking immediately. The mother never feeds them so they are not a burden to the parents. The babies will hang around the parents for protection, but they grow very rapidly increasing their weight 100 fold during their first six months of life. After a year the babies are close to eight feet tall, and the mother will run them off so she can mate again. Lamentations 4:3 makes a reference to this behavior comparing people to it, and Job 39:16 seems to indicate the author knew quite a bit about the ostrich.

A great many things about the ostrich seem to defy conventional evolutionary theory. Darwinists are fond of pointing to biological mechanisms that allow an animal to promote its own genes, but the ostriches do not promote their own genes when they hatch another ostrich's chicks. The first birds we see in the fossil record are birds that could fly—archaeopteryx, protoavis and confusasaurus—and the ostrich seems to have come along quite a bit later. All of the ratites are specially adapted to the unusual environment in which they live, and show wisdom and design that allows them to be very successful in what would be a difficult place for any other bird to survive. They are another example of the wisdom and design built into all the living things—a constant testimony to the incredible wisdom and planning of God. Data from *National Wildlife*, August/September 2006, pages 32b.

## Cleaner Fish

There are many mysteries in the ocean, if for no other reason than it is hard to make studies under water. One of the most interesting examples of ocean mysteries is cleaner shrimp and cleaner fish. These small animals called cleaners live in reef areas that eat parasites and dead skin. Larger fish including sharks and rays come to the cleaners

to have parasites and dead skin removed from them. In recent years observers have noted that the cleaner fish will be cleaning a shark hanging vertically in the water over where the fish operates, while ten or fifteen other sharks will be swimming in a circle nearby. The fish being cleaned will assume unnatural positions that allows the cleaning to be more efficient and complete. As soon as the shark being cleans swims away, another shark peels away from the circle and swims up to the cleaner fish to be cleaned. The observers have not observed any conflict among the sharks or rays, and there has never been a case where any of these animals ate or in any way harmed the smaller cleaner fish or cleaner shrimp. In cases like the grouper this is remarkable, since shrimp and small fish make up their entire diet.



There are many complications in the behavioral patterns that are taking place here. Normally sharks are very competitive, and for them to lie still while being cleaned is very difficult for the shark. Sharks are very primitive fish, and normally have to swim constantly to keep sufficient water flowing through their gills to get enough oxygen. If there are strong currents, this problem is lessened, but it seems that sharks will seek out the cleaner fish no matter where the fish is located even if it is very difficult for the shark.

How does such a relationship come about? Evolutionary theory would suggest that sharks that allow themselves to be cleaned survive more readily than those that do not. That simple explanation does not explain the original development of the behavior. Is this a learned behavior? What would have caused either the cleaners or the fish being cleaned to attempt it? Why would the cleaner fish expose itself to such a risk, and why do not other fish eaters and shrimp eaters wipe out the exposed cleaners? It seems there is a special value assigned to the cleaners by all the animals of the area, and all fish no matter what their normal aggressiveness and behavior seem to honor the cleaners.

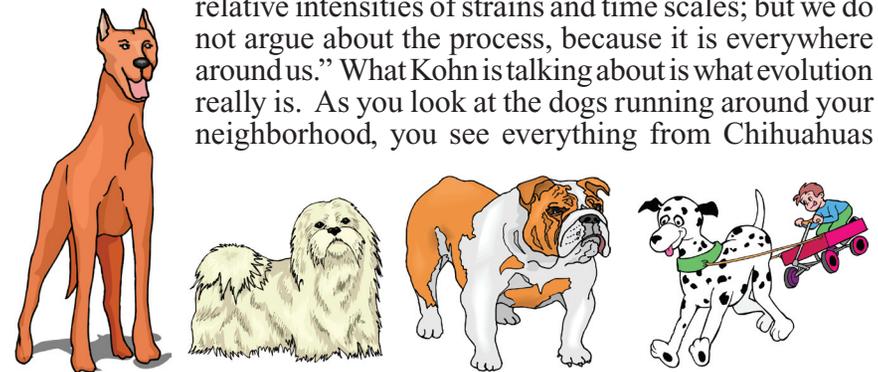
We would suggest this is an example of a designed behavior. The cleaned fish and the cleaner fish seem to have a genetic program designed into their genome that allows this system to function. It benefits the whole reef and the entire ecology of the ocean, but its complexity and design seems to be beyond the reach of blind mechanistic chance. This is just one more example of seeing things in the natural world which helps us to know there is a God through the things He has made (Romans 1:19). Reference: *Natural History*, March 2007, page 8.

## The Debate That Shouldn't Be

The title of our article was a subheading of an article titled “Evolution” in the *Rice Sallyport: The Magazine of Rice University*, Winter 2007. In the article, there are some reports of evolutionary biological research at Rice. The author takes a page to state that there should not be a religious objection to their research. Several of the researchers say they are believers in God and are frustrated at the controversy that the evolution question has generated.

One of the main points we attempt to make in this journal is that science and faith are not enemies—that they are complementary and symbiotic in nature—each mutually beneficial to the other. This *has* to be true if you are a believer in God and in the Bible as His Word. If God created the cosmos, the earth, and all of life on the earth and if God gave us the Bible in which He told us what He did, the two disciplines (science and the study of the Bible) have to agree! If they do not agree, then we have misunderstood the science or we have misunderstood the Bible or both! The lesson of history is that both science and the Bible have had a massive amount of misunderstanding. If we look at the evolution issue carefully, I believe we can reduce or eliminate most of this—and that is what we hope to do in this article.

One of the main problems in this debate that should not be is the meaning of words. Michael Kohn, one of the researchers quoted in the Rice article says, “The simplicity of Darwin’s theory is what makes it so compelling.... Evolution is just change over time. Scientists argue viciously about the mechanisms driving it, the dynamics, the relative intensities of strains and time scales; but we do not argue about the process, because it is everywhere around us.” What Kohn is talking about is what evolution really is. As you look at the dogs running around your neighborhood, you see everything from Chihuahuas



to St. Bernards. When you visit a 4-H fair, you will see numerous varieties of chickens, rabbits, sheep, cows, and horses. When you go to the nursery to buy plants, there is an endless variety of roses, petunias, daisies, tomatoes, etc. These are all evolutionary products and “it is everywhere around us.”

Not only is it a matter of just looking around us, but it is also a practical tool in agriculture and medicine! A major battle for all farmers is to avoid pests that eat the crops and kill livestock. These pests change (or evolve) and what will kill a bug today will not do it tomorrow. Diseases of livestock like mad cow disease and avian (bird) flu evolve and have to be counteracted. The HIV virus has mutated and evolved and this affects how we treat it.

The Bible gives illustrations of evolutionary change. Jacob’s selective breeding of Laban’s flocks using sexual stimulants is an application of evolutionary principles. The serpent’s loss of legs so he was consigned to crawling in Genesis 3:14-15 is a typical evolutionary change. The fact that Eve is the mother of all living humans (Genesis 3:20) and that we have different races of man is again a basic demonstration of evolutionary change.

As you read these illustrations, I seriously doubt that you would want to maintain that they did/do not happen. What is more likely is that you will want to suggest that these examples of microevolution or variation, and you may wish to say that this is not what you object to when Darwin’s theory of evolution is discussed. The fact is, however, that the kinds of examples I have given are what the researchers at Rice and all researchers in the field of evolutionary biology are working

with. The examples I have given you are typical of what Darwin’s work with the finches in the Galapagos Islands was all about. Darwin did not discuss iguanas evolving into finches or seals or giant tortoises. Darwin talked about how the different bills of various birds came to be as they are and how those bill types were controlled by their diet.



There is no need for debate about anything we have considered so far. Young people need to understand that, when they learn about Darwin’s work and how it is used in farming, medicine, and horticulture, they are not looking at anything that has any negative connotations to their faith or to the Bible.

The problem with evolution is the questions that arise when we try to understand how this wonderful capacity to change has come about in living things. Without this capacity, life could not survive on this planet. Climatic change demands that living things be able to change to survive in a new environment. Those of us who believe in God believe that the genomes of plants and animals have been designed by God to allow this to happen. Everything from the SP-3 hybrid selection structure of the carbon atom to the DNA helix have to be carefully designed and planned to allow us to do what we do in agriculture and medicine.

Atheists obviously do not want to admit any kind of intelligence or design in the creation. To explain the complexities of life and its capacity to change without admitting design and intelligence in the natural world, atheists have to find a method that can produce what we see by chance. In addition to chance, they invoke natural mechanisms like natural selection to be the unintelligent causal agent. This belief system is called naturalism, and it is a theoretical proposal to explain evolutionary change without intelligent direction.

There is a lot of room for debate about naturalism. There is also much room for debate about how naturalism should be applied to social issues and ethics. Some horrible things have been done by those who applied naturalism to racial issues, and eugenics has been a product of some of these practices.

Science and faith are friends. Evolution needs to be understood and used in ways to improve man’s food supply and cure diseases. This is not a subject that should be open to debate. What is needed is an understanding of theories and philosophies that attempt to eliminate God from our thinking and force all of man’s relationships to be caused by “survival of the fittest.” —JNC

**Inflation is when nobody has enough money because everybody has too much.**

**A Christian is one who never has to consult his bank book to see how wealthy he really is.**

**A New Year’s Wish: May all your troubles be as short-lived as your New Year’s resolutions.**

# News and Notes

**Baby Killer Chimpanzees.** We constantly are given the picture that chimpanzees are peaceful, nearly human relatives that deserve special recognition and appreciation since their genome is so similar to ours and they share so many characteristics with us. Suggesting that they are animals behaving as animals normally behave always seems to precipitate strong reactions from animal right advocates and promoters of naturalism. In the May 15, 2007, issue of *Current Biology*, a research team headed by Simon W. Townsend reports on an attack and murder of a one-week-old baby chimp by five female chimps. The baby was snatched from its mother after a ten minute attack and fatally bitten in the head and neck. Primitologists are scrambling to explain the carnage, but the picture normally given of chimps as peaceful and holding the key to the best of human behavior is not accurate. Reference: *Science News*, May 26, 2007, page 333.

**New Stem Cell Discoveries Continue.** The battle over embryonic stem cells continues, but scientific progress also continues to impact the discussion. In June researchers announced that they had successfully converted skin cells of adult mice into nascent stem cells that are “identical to embryonic stem cells.” The use of embryonic stem cells as a treatment method is not a practical end, because the number of embryos needed to supply the patients who would need them is so huge. Research showing ways of getting stem cells that do not involve destroying a human embryo have enormous potential, and while knowledge may come by studying embryonic stem cells, the treatment tools scientists need will not come from that source. References: *US News and World Report*, June 18, 2007, page 27.

**Virgin Birth of Shark.** A female bonnethead shark in Omaha, Neb., gave birth to a baby even though no male shark has ever been in the aquarium. DNA analysis of the baby shows no genes other than the mother's, so this is a true case of parthogenesis. The baby got one set of chromosomes during the egg-making, and somehow made a copy of itself. Scientists do not know how this happens. There are designs in reproductive systems of animals that allow reproduction to occur by alternate methods when the animal is isolated. Much remains to be learned about how this happens, but it is another demonstration of the design features built into living things by God that allows them to survive. Reference: *Science News*, May 26, 2007, page 323.

**The Bible as Hate Literature.** In Saskatchewan and in the United States, political action is going on to make it illegal to criticize homosexuality. Section 14 of Saskatchewan's Human Rights Code and House Bill HR 1592 and Senate Bill S. 1105 in the United States contain language which suggests that any negative discussion of homosexuality is hate literature and as such anyone reading it, quoting it, or promoting it is guilty of a hate crime. Reactions to homophobia have been strong by many of us, but precluding debate and study on issues that involve how lifestyle affects quality of life is not beneficial to anyone. Sources: [www.churchsoftwareplus.com](http://www.churchsoftwareplus.com) and [www.afa.net](http://www.afa.net)

**Global Warming on Mars.** In *Science News*, April 7, 2007, page 214 there was a report on evidence that Mars is also going through global warming. The announcement has brought a lot of interesting discussion about what is real and what is not in global warming. Mars has an atmosphere that is 95 percent carbon dioxide, so one cannot attribute the warming to greenhouse gas increases. If the Sun is causing Mar's global warming, then it should also be causing the Earth to have global warming, and even more so since we are closer to the Sun than Mars. The fact is that global warming has many causes, and we know that what is happening on Mars is different from what is happening on Earth.

**Gonorrhea Drug Resistant and Spreading.** A new strain of gonorrhea which is resistant to all available drugs is spreading rapidly in the United States. The infection rate is estimated to be 1.4 million new cases a year according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Cephalosporins are still being used to treat cases, but those who promote sexual permissiveness under the guise that in our modern world we have ways of treating STDs need to look at the facts. God's way works and is superior in every area of discussion. Reference: *Science News*, April 21, 2007, page 245.

**Record Crystals.** When a mining company pumped the water out of a deep cave under the Chihuahuan Desert in Mexico, they discovered that there were massive gypsum crystals that had grown in the 136 degree water of the cave. Some of these crystals were as long as 36 feet and within them is a record of their growth. This will give scientists another tool to measure time. The age of the earth is not given in the Bible, and those whose denominational creed demands that they maintain an earth of around 6,000 years are constantly in need of finding ways to explain away new evidence that shows the Earth is older than their theology can handle. Reference: *Popular Science*, July 2007, page 16.

**1,009,000 Species and Counting.** The Smithsonian has now passed the one million mark of cataloged species of living things. It is hoped that everything will be catalogued by the year 2011 and the

total number of species is expected to be about 1.75 million. Right now 253,680 species of butterflies and moths are listed. Three thousand biologists are working on the cataloging, checking and double checking to make sure the data is accurate. We want to remind our readers that these are scientific species—not to be confused with the biblical kinds. The Hebrew word *min* translated “kind” in the Bible is more general. In 1 Corinthians 15:39 Paul says, “There are four kinds of flesh, the flesh of fish, the flesh of birds, the flesh of beats and the flesh of man.” There would be many species within a kind. If we think about it we can realize why it is foolish to expect a detailed explanation of how each of the species came into existence. That is not the Bible’s purpose nor does it contribute to its message.

Reference: *Houston Chronicle*, April 9, 2007, page A4 and *USA Today*, April 10, 2007, page 10D

**Galileo Data.** Much is made by skeptics about the battle between the Roman Catholic Church and Galileo. The fact is that the more data becomes available about the life of Galileo, the more obvious it is that he was not a very moral person, and that much of the controversy was connected with his immorality. Galileo had three children, but never married their mother. Because his daughters were illegitimate, he would have to pay a dowry for them to marry. He refused to do this, and the girls had to live in a convent for their entire lives. In 1617 Galileo bought a villa to be close to the convent where his daughters lived. By the way—he never dropped balls off of the Leaning Tower of Pisa. Reference: *Popular Science*, July 2007, page 80.

**New Bird Record.** We have always used the Arctic tern as an example of an animal that is programmed to do things instinctively that do not benefit its survival, but do benefit other life forms. The tern travels some 20,000 miles a year providing food and materials to a variety of plants and animals in remote areas on the north slopes and at the southern edge of South America. *Defenders of Wildlife*, Winter 2007, page 7, reports that researchers have tracked Sooty Shearwaters that travel from New Zealand to Alaska to Japan and back to New Zealand—a distance of 40,000 miles. It is hard to argue this is an advantage to the Shearwater, but it does bring nutrients to isolated environments that otherwise would not have them.

**Bigotry Against Christians.** A recent study by the Institute for Jewish and Community Research revealed some unexpected support for Christians who maintain that they are persecuted on various campuses around the country. The study was looking for anti-semitism and surveyed 1,200 professors in a wide cross section of schools. Fifty-three percent of the professors surveyed expressed an unfavorable feeling toward evangelical Christians while negative feelings against Jews and Catholics were nonexistent. Gary Tobin, the director of the Institute that did the study, said that we have “concrete evidence of sheer bigotry.” Reference: *The Week*, May 18, 2007, page 12.



*We hope all our readers have a wonderful holiday season  
Linda Glover, Karl Marcussen, John and Phyllis Clayton.*

Statement of ownership, management, and circulation (Required by 39 U.S.C. 3685). 1A. Title of Publication: Does God Exist?. 2. Publication No.: 011-010. 3. Filing Date: October 2, 2007. 4. Issue Frequency: Bimonthly. 5. No. of Issues Published Annually: 6. 6. Annual Subscription Price: Free. 7. Complete Mailing Address of Known Office of Publication: Does God Exist?, 814 S. Main St., South Bend, St. Joseph County, IN 46601-3008. 8. Complete Mailing Address of the Headquarters of General Business Offices of the Publisher: Does God Exist? P.O. Box 2704, South Bend, IN 46680-2704. 9. Full Names and Complete Mailing Addresses of Publisher, Editor, and Managing Editor: Publisher—Same as #8; Editor—John N. Clayton, 1555 Echo Valley Dr., Niles, MI 49120-8738; Managing Editor—Karl Marcussen, 611 E. Farneman, South Bend, IN 46614-1938. 10. Owner: The Church of Christ of Dowagiac, 58273 M 51 S, Dowagiac, MI 49047-9772. 11. Known Bondholders, Mortgagees, and Other Security Holders Owning or Holding 1 Percent or More of Total Amount of Bonds, Mortgages, or Other Securities: None. 12. The purpose, function, and nonprofit status of this organization and the exempt status for Federal income tax purposes has not changed during the preceding 12 months. 13. Publication Name: Does God Exist? 14. Issue Date for Circulation Data Below: July/August 2007. 15. Extent and Nature of Circulation:

	Average no. copies each issue during preceding 12 months	Actual no. copies of single issue published nearest to filing date
15a. Total Number of copies (Net press run):	20,662	19,987
15b. Paid Circulation:	none	none
15c. Total Paid Circulation:	none	none
15d. 1. Free or Nominal Rate Outside-County Copies:	17,917	17,530
3. Free or Nominal Rate Copies Mailed at Other Classes:	*	288
15e. Total Free or Nominal Rate Distribution:	17,917	17,818
15f. Total Distribution:	17,917	17,818
15g. Copies not Distributed	2,745	2,169
15h. Total:	20,662	19,987
15i. Percent Paid and/or Requested Circulation	0%	0%
16. This Statement of Ownership will be printed in the Nov/Dec '07 issue of this publication.		
17. Signature and Title of Editor, Publisher, Business Manager, or Owner.		

Signed—Karl H. Marcussen, Managing Editor, October 5, 2007

\*Only two of the six issues had First-Class Mail.

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