

July/August 2008

Volume 35 • Number 4

# DOES GOD EXIST?

## *Lessons from the Swarms*

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

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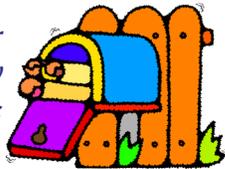
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The picture on the cover is one that most of us have seen in person. We have seen swarms of starlings in the fall flying as a mass—dipping and diving as they move across the countryside. We have seen pictures of swarms of fish in the ocean including Bigeye Jack swimming in a large circle, or herring swimming as a huge cloud. Most of us have seen documentaries of caribou in Alaska or wildebeest in Africa crossing a river. There have been pictures and movies made of Indonesian fireflies blinking in unison resembling the beating of a human heart. We all know about ants and bees and how they work as a unit with swarm behavior being the guide. Individuals in these situations are dysfunctional, and demonstrate very little intelligence. An ant by itself is inept, and yet as a group, ants organize highways, build elaborate nests, stage raids on enemies, and do a variety of things which demonstrate a very high level of intelligence.



There are some superficial gains that all of us know are made by swarm behavior. Starlings and fish confuse predators by their swarms. Ants and bees organize work by their swarm behavior—and in fact there are businesses that have studied these behaviors and are using them to improve the efficiency and profitability of the business. The question is how can a swarm of ants have intelligence of a high degree when the individual ants do not.



Deborah Gordon, a biologist at Stanford University has done some amazing study on the swarm behaviors of ants. This is reported in *National Geographic* (July 2007, page 129). Ants are self organizing—there are no generals, no bosses, and no external management. A half million ants function, with each ant doing a different job every day.

Some ants forage, some maintain the nest, some collect trash, and all of this job allocation is done at the beginning of the day by a variety of techniques. Ants communicate by touching and by smelling and this is one technique that is used. Ants that have been outside the nest smell different than ants inside the nest. The ants from outside the nest come in and touch the antennas of other ants, with the rate of touching telling whether there is a need for more patrollers outside of the nest. Foragers do not come back to the nest until they find food, so the rate of return of foragers tells the other ants what is going on in the surrounding area. When a rich source of food is found, the ants lay down a chemical trail called pheromones for other ants to follow back to the food source.

Charles Harper in the Houston area has a business which supplies liquid gases. He has copied the ants in his business of supplying gases where there is a need. It takes hours with the biggest computers known, but it works. Southwest Airlines is engaged in a similar technique in handling their traffic at the Phoenix airport.

Another example of swarm intelligence is in bees where 50,000 worker bees make group decisions, such as where to build a new hive. In the spring a queen, drones, and half the workers will fly to a tree outside the original hive. To find a place for a new hive there are certain conditions that have to be met. The location has to be well off the ground, have a small entrance hole facing south, and lots of room for the hive. Thomas Seeley, a biologist at Cornell, brought a swarm of bees to Appledore Island. He placed five nest boxes in the

vicinity of the swarm. Four of the boxes were too small to sustain the hive and there was no other nest site or tree on the island. Scout bees visited all of the boxes. They would come back to the swarm and do what is called a “wobble dance” near the swarm. Gradually the swarm migrated to the one box that would meet their needs, something single bees would not do. There are many other behaviors seen in bees that reflect swarm intelligence. One is that when a cool wind blows into a hive, the bees on the outside shiver and that behavior spreads through the other bees in the hive warming the hive significantly and avoiding cold damage to the hive.

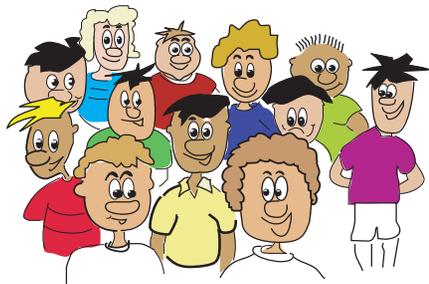


In the case of birds, caribou, and other higher forms of life the animal pays close attention to the animal next to it. This avoids crowding and yet allows the animals to stay close to each other. The direction of the swarm’s flight will be the average of the directions of the birds within the flock. A wolf attacking a herd of caribou will find that the animal he starts after will mesh into the herd and he will lose sight of it—inevitably shifting to another animal. That animal is fresher and in this process, eventually the wolf will give up in exhaustion while the herd will be still relatively fresh. Birds do the same thing, avoiding predation from hawks and eagles as the swarm keeps exposing different individuals to the predator’s view, eventually frustrating the predator.

There are a multitude of lessons that come from our studies of swarm behavior. It would seem to this writer that the nature of swarm intelligence is such that to explain it on the basis of chance defies rational thinking. How do you build a behavior like this over a period of eons? Failure to protect is lethal in cases like this, and it would seem that swarm intelligence has to come from a greater intelligence that perpetuates the species by providing a multitude of techniques by which they can avoid overpredation.

It is also important to understand that fellowship among Christians has many of the benefits of swarm intelligence. Jesus prayed for unity among his followers, and one reason for unity is to avoid the hazards of sin. Being with a swarm of Christians engaged in positive actions to help others will help a person not be vulnerable to sexual predation and sinful exploitation of all kinds. Sexual sin in humans

normally does not happen in group behavior, but happens when one is isolated with a predator. A drunken orgy occurs when the group has isolated itself from God and thus from the intelligence that designed the group. Animals with swarm behavior can get into trouble as a group when it enters environmental conditions that are designed by another outside intelligence. In ancient times bison were killed by humans by running the herd off a cliff. To do that, an outside intelligence had to carefully plan to exploit the swarm behavior. God has told us how to avoid the evil intelligence in the world, and if Christians follow what God has given us the group—the Church—can be of massive help in avoiding sin. “Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is, but giving mutual encouragement and doing this more and more as we see the final day drawing near” (Hebrews 10:25).



—John N. Clayton

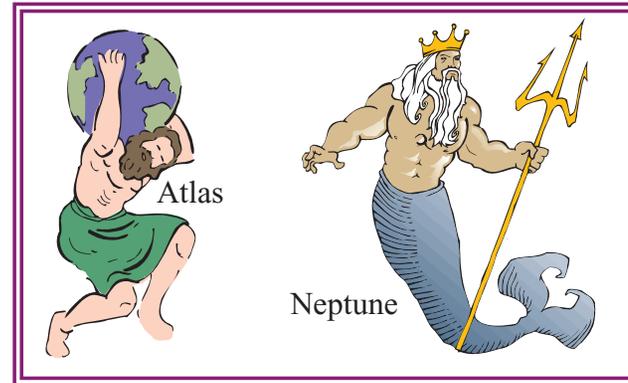
## God of the Gaps and Evidence

One of the more common challenges of atheists is that people who argue for the existence of God are simply using the “God-of-the-gaps” argument to support their belief system. There is no question that this has happened in the past and that it is an easy trap to fall into. In ancient times there were cultures that explained the weather by inventing gods and goddesses that produced weather phenomena. Many of us remember names like Thor and Minerva who were said to cause lightning and rain. People did not understand how lightning was produced or what it took to make rain so they invented deities



Zeus

to do this explaining. Many ancient people worshipped the sun or moon or the volcano goddess Pele because they did not understand these objects and invented gods or goddesses to explain their origin and how they function. This is what *god-of-the-gaps* means: to explain something you do not understand by inventing a god or goddess to do the explaining.



Atlas

Neptune

The god-of-the-gaps mentality is not confined to beliefs about deity. When I was in Scotland many years ago, there was a local ghost at a castle that many people believed in. Strange sounds that took place at

various times of the day were explained in terms of a ghost that was warning people to stay out of the castle. As we visited, I was able to see physical reasons for those strange sounds. The howling in the evening was wind blowing through open spots in the windows in the bell tower. The chains dragging across the floor was contraction and expansion of the large rocks that made up the floor of upper rooms. They made sounds as the temperatures changed with the cooling and heating from the open doors and windows. Everything ascribed to a ghost could be explained in terms of known physics. The ghost was a god-of-the-gaps ghost, produced by the ignorance of some of the local people.

Religious people have certainly been guilty of using god-of-the-gaps thinking in the past. Claims of miracles have sometimes turned out to be natural phenomena and not supernatural acts of God. I have a picture given to me by a friend that shows an appearance of the Virgin Mary. The vision is a very bright object in the sky which does in fact look like artistic portrayals of what Mary might have looked like. There is a blast of light rays behind the vision coming from above, and looking at the picture you can see why someone might believe that it is some kind of supernatural apparition. The photograph was taken in an area that is downwind from the famous volcano in the Philippines named Mount Pinatubo. What is happening is that there are several layers of clouds and heavy dust in the atmosphere. The sun is shining through a break on the upper clouds and is shining on a translucent layer of clouds in the lower atmosphere. The outline is shaped like the Virgin Mary, but that shape is coincidental and in fact

did not last very long. There have been many other claims of miraculous visions and miracles that have easy scientific explanations, and there is no denial that believers have been guilty of god-of-the-gaps arguments in the past.

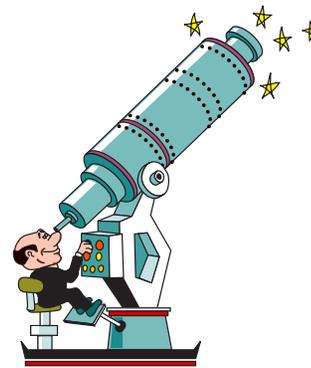
## Are Cosmological Arguments for the Existence of God God-of-the-Gaps Arguments?



Atheists challenge cosmological arguments for the existence of God by claiming that all believers are doing is saying that, since we do not understand how the creation was created, God must have done it. Atheists believe that as science advances, it will eventually explain the creation totally, and that this will eliminate God as an option. In the past, some Christians have in fact used such arguments, saying that no explanation exists; therefore, God must have done it. It may well be that the fear some believers have of science is rooted in a subconscious fear that science will answer cosmological questions and prove that God is not the creator.

Cosmological arguments for the existence of God should not be made from ignorance. We do not invent a god because of what we do not understand. What we do is look at solid scientific choices about

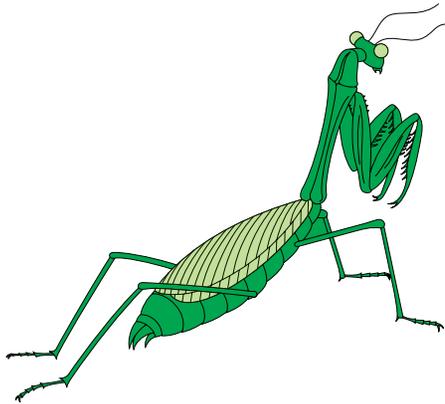
the cosmos. Scientifically we can prove that there was a beginning to the cosmos. If there was a beginning, then the beginning was caused. To say it was not caused and that it was self-existing as the *Humanist Manifesto* claims puts one at odds with all conservation laws of science, because one has to maintain that something can come from nothing. What has to be the nature of that cause? Since the beginning of the cosmos entails the creation of time, space, and matter/energy, the cause must be an entity that is outside of time, space, and matter/energy. We do not stop here and say, "Well, that must have been God." There are other possibilities for what might be external to these things which does not necessarily involve God. String theory, parallel universes, virtual reality, and a number of other alternatives have been offered. What one has to do is look for evidence as to what properties the cause has. More and more scientists are saying that string theory is not a workable hypothesis because it does not have any way of being examined or experimentally tested. It is also important to note that there are other properties of the cosmos which offer evidence along these lines.



As one looks at the creation, one property continues to be obvious and that is the property of design and intelligence. The more we understand the cosmos, the more sophisticated we understand it to be. When I was in college many years ago the list of parameters necessary for a life-bearing planet to exist was fairly small. The Drake Equation which calculated the number of life-supporting planets that could exist included just five variables. Thanks to the Hubble telescope and continued investigation in a wide range of sciences, we know there are at least 47 variables that would have to be carefully chosen to produce a life-supporting planet. We also know that proposals that there could be life radically different than us and based on a different chemistry are simply bad science. The laws of chemistry do not allow such proposals to be seriously entertained.

## Are Design Arguments God-of-the-Gaps Arguments?

Atheists will maintain that the design seen in all of life and in the physical arrangements that allows life to exist are all there because that is the only way life can in fact exist. When we see some wonderful survival technique in a bug or an animal an atheist will say that this technique came about by chance because if anything else had been there it would not have worked. Reasons can be given why animals do certain things, and evolutionary techniques explain how many animal characteristics come about.

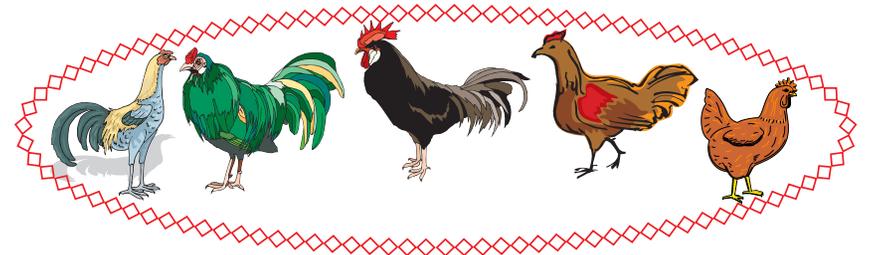


The first problem with such assertions is the assumption that if I can give a theoretical explanation as to why and how a certain behavior came about, that this must be in fact what happened. Many times a proposed explanation turns out to be totally bogus. One of my favorite examples of this is the praying mantis. When praying mantis mate, the female will turn around after the mating and bite the head off of the male and eat him. I have seen biologists

give a long elaborate discussion about what a wonderful example this is of evolutionary process controlling populations, solving food problems, and promoting survival of the fittest. I have also heard atheists talk about how such a behavior is not compatible with the God of the Bible because of its violence and cannibalistic nature.

The problem with all of this is that this behavior does not occur in the real world. It happens in captivity where the animals are forced into close contact and no way of getting away from each other. The eating of the male is almost surely a protection of the babies, and in the wild the males simply leave and go elsewhere and there is no such cannibalistic process. Many times observations of animal behavior is skewed because of the effect of the observer. Human explanations are tentative at best. The fact that we can explain something also does not mean it is a chance process.

Evolutionary models of things also do not disprove God's role in whatever it is we observe. Sexual reproduction is a highly designed



system that allows change in biological systems to occur. We could not have over 100 varieties of chickens if it were not for the fact that the reproductive systems of birds allow change. This is a design feature that is built into the system, and if asexual reproduction was the only method of reproduction we had, change and variety would never take place in biological populations. The incredible wisdom of the DNA molecule, and the way that molecule functions to allow organisms to adapt over time to a changing world is a wonderful work of intelligence.

Francis Collins the director of the Human Genome Project in his book *The Language of God* has pointed out that the whole process of genetic reproduction radiates intelligence and purpose and in its structure shows a plan and wisdom of incredible degree. It is tragic that some like Richard Dawkins have been allowed to stretch these characteristics to attempt to exclude intelligence and relegate everything to blind mechanistic materialism.

Statistics allow us to evaluate the probability of chance being the driving force behind all we see. Researchers from all kinds of philosophic and religious backgrounds have applied statistics to these discussions. The probability factors that all researchers arrive at are astronomically small. Most numbers are in the range of ten to an exponent that is in the hundreds. As more and more understanding has come about concerning how many factors are necessary to produce life and the systems that control life, that number goes higher and higher. Writers who get numbers like one chance in  $10^{400}$  or one in  $10^{800}$  include believers and atheists alike. Francis Crick, Sydney Fox, Fredrick Hoyle, Freeman Dyson, Murray Eden, and countless other scientists all come to the same numbers. We have reviewed many of these calculations in this journal through the years, but all calculations show astronomically small probabilities.

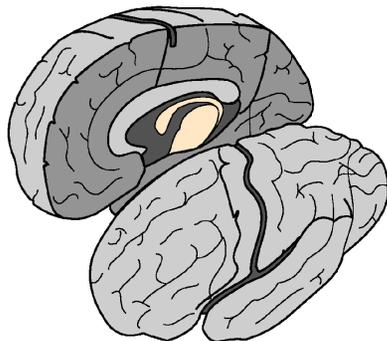
The atheist response to this will be that no matter what the odds are, if you have enough places and enough time it will happen. The problem with this assertion is that we do not have either infinite time or infinite space. If the cosmos began at a singularity, then there is a limit to both time and space. The most liberal estimates of the size of space and the length of time are on the order of ten to the twentieth. The probabilities we have mentioned are on the order of ten to the

400th, 800th, etc., power. They are not in the same range. The Dirac limit, the probability number that is considered to separate that which is possible from that which is not mathematically possible is considered to be ten to the 60th power. Statistics say you cannot just assume; you have to ask whether the proposal being asked is mathematically reasonable and chance explanations simply are not. That does not mean we automatically accept God as the answer, but it does mean that an alternative to chance must be found. Intelligence, purpose, and design certainly must be entertained as a possibility by any fair-minded, thinking person. This is not a god-of-the-gaps proposal.

## Are Arguments for the Spiritual and the Soul Not God-of-the-Gaps Arguments?

In recent years we have had attempts by people studying the brain and studying psychology to explain why man conceptualizes God and participates in worship. In the past there have been attempts to relegate belief to ignorance and stupidity. Lenin said that religion was the opiate of the people, implying that ignorant peasants believe in God, but the educated elite do not. Such arrogance is not supported by the evidence, because throughout history some of the most productive scientists have been people who were deeply religious. Materialism seems to be a better friend of atheism than does intelligence.

In recent years there have been those who have maintained that there is a section of the human brain which causes people to be religious and to engage in religious practices. Let us just assume for a moment that this is true, although evidence for it is sparse. Would this disprove the existence of God? The answer is clearly not. What it would show is that in the design of the human brain there is a provision for the spiritual, but the very fact that we have atheists and agnostics show that this does not robotically program us to be religious. It is interesting that some of those who “blame” our brain for our religious beliefs and claim to be superior to it



also maintain that homosexuality is a brain trait which gives the homosexual no choice but to be gay.

Man is not just unique in his religious activity. Man is also unique in his concept of self, in his structure and use of language, in his creativity, and in his ability to do abstract thinking. There may be contributing factors of a physical nature to these things, but the soul and its existence is an observation shared by even people who deny the existence of God. Man is unique, and we can have different beliefs about how that uniqueness came to be, but it is evidence that causes us to speak about our souls, not ignorance.

Many items about mankind will always exist in a faith framework. Things like one's concept of self are not easily tested by science, and we may have different beliefs about how these things came about. In this journal we talk about evidence and give possibilities that are compatible with faith. Belief that we are created in the image of God with a soul are faith statements, but they are not blind faith. They are based on evidence and are supported by things we can observe. That belief leads to lifestyles and choices that are vital to successful living. We urge the person who rejects the concept that man has a soul and is created in the image of God to look at the alternatives, at not only the evidence but at where the belief system takes one. Does it lead to self esteem, productivity in life, security in death, and a belief in the equality of man? One of Jesus' key teachings is “By their fruits you will know them,” and the fruit of the validity of one's beliefs speaks loudly that man's unique spiritual make-up is not an invented thing contrived because we have no other explanation. There is evidence. Know why you believe what you believe.

—JNC

## Found Things

*by Cary Branscum, Cedars Church of Christ,  
Wilmington, Delaware*

The road from the refinery to the airport in Corpus Christi, Texas, is usually hot and dusty, especially in the maw of a full-blown Texas summer. The humidity from the ship channel mixes with stifling heat and an air-conditioned car is more a necessity than a luxury.

I was riding with another oil company employee down this very road when he suddenly stopped talking and pulled quickly to the side of the road. Leaving the car running, and thankfully, the air-conditioner going full blast, he trotted back a few feet, picked up something, and tossed it in the floor of the car as we resumed our trip. He saw me peering at the found thing near his feet, and mentioned casually, “Tape

measure. I found one by the side of the road some time ago and have looked for them ever since. I've found 10 or 12 tape measures by the side of the road over the past several years."



I was stunned. I had seen nothing. Since that time, however, two things have happened. First, I've read about other people who seem to find arrowheads where no one else does and people who find golf balls in unlikely places. Second, I began keeping one eye peeled when driving. I've found brand new shoes, pliers, hammers, knives, and six hundred dollars in large bills on the street. It's a pleasure to find something of value where no one else does. Isn't it? The wise men found Jesus. Paul found faith, the kingdom can be found, and wedding guests were found literally by the side of the road. A colt, no figs, sleepy apostles, favor with God, and healed servants were all "found things" in the Gospels—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John in the Bible.

My favorite trip of "found things" comes from Jesus' three parables in Luke, chapter 15—the lost coin, the lost sheep, and the lost son. When read together, they show deep truths. You see, we are not only able to look for things; we also have someone looking for us. And when we are found, there is great joy in heaven! We are God's "found things" that bring Him great delight. Yet while you and I are found, we are not "foundlings." A foundling is the term for a child deserted by parents and left for someone else to care for. Our heavenly Father never deserted us; we deserted Him. We all have sinned and turned away from God (Romans 3:23). Nevertheless, God came looking for us by sending His Son Jesus, and at just the right time (Romans 5:8). And the Good News is that He looks for us still.

As humans, we have enough of God's image in us to imitate His search. We can find things. In fact, we can join in His search for people. It's great to find things. It's even better to be found by God. Greatest of all, we can help others be found by God. Open your eyes to show those around you—to your family, your friends, the person at the gas station. Look at them. Even more, help God look for them. Be His eyes and His ears in your world. All it takes is a little desire and practice. It's great to find tape measures, tools, shoes, or money. It's even greater to find that lost coin, that lost sheep, or that lost son.

## So You Think You Are Smart

Here is a little test to let you see how smart you are. There is a major lesson here—so be careful:

1. How long did the Hundred Years' War last? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Which country makes Panama hats? \_\_\_\_\_
3. From which animal do we get catgut? \_\_\_\_\_
4. In which month do the Russians celebrate the October Revolution? \_\_\_\_\_
5. What is a camel's hair brush made of? \_\_\_\_\_
6. The Canary Islands in the Atlantic are named after what wild animal? \_\_\_\_\_
7. What was King George VI's first name? \_\_\_\_\_
8. What color is a purple finch? \_\_\_\_\_
9. Where are Chinese gooseberries from? \_\_\_\_\_
10. What is the color of the black box in a commercial airplane? \_\_\_\_\_

These are pretty easy—right? If you got four right you did amazingly well. Here are the right answers:

- |                     |                |
|---------------------|----------------|
| 1. 116 years.       | 6. Dogs        |
| 2. Ecuador          | 7. Albert      |
| 3. Sheep and Horses | 8. Crimson     |
| 4. November         | 9. New Zealand |
| 5. Squirrel fur     | 10. Orange     |

There are several lessons in this exercise. The first is that, what may appear to be obvious (especially in the affairs of humans) is frequently not the case. The second is that we cannot trust words. Not every use of words is consistent or logical. It is important to ask for clarity on what the question is and what the words connected with the question mean. This is especially important in words like creation, evolution, Christian, Church, and sin. Many misunderstandings develop because people do not understand what the words actually mean. Most conflicts between science and faith have some roots in this area of concern.

—Quiz from J. Kelley

## Man's Addiction to Myth and the Bible

One of the interesting characteristics of all humans throughout time has been man's tendency to look to something higher than himself. This tendency has caused man to invent gods to explain natural phenomenon that he did not understand. When the volcano erupted man invented a volcano god of some kind to explain a phenomena that he did not understand. Today there are still people who believe that the volcano goddess Pele will bring a curse on anyone who violates the sanctity of the volcanic eruption. Lightning, thunder, dust devils, eclipses, earthquakes, hurricanes, and a variety of other natural phenomena have all had their deities invented by ignorant people to explain what they did not understand.

In modern times the inventing of deities to explain natural phenomena may have decreased but man's obsession with myth has not. Many people are mesmerized by magic of any kind. Claims of visits by aliens still flood the media, and movies and television programs on aliens, crop circles, wars in space, ghosts, and paranormal science still sell well. Super heroes continue to be a major attraction for children, and video games and DVDs exist in incredible numbers to continue to provide a steady diet of fiction and fantasy to children.

Atheists, agnostics, and skeptics would charge that everything about God is just one more example of mankind accepting myth to escape reality, and that faith in God is equivalent to believing in Casper the Friendly Ghost, Santa Claus, or aliens from outer space. For many people, this charge

Cecrops



Centaur



Hercules



Medusa



Superhero



is disturbingly close to being accurate. Many people believe in some kind of a god to explain something they do not understand. As research explains these things, faith is shaken or destroyed. Modern stories built around apocalyptic literature like Daniel and Revelation tend to be very similar to ancient myths from the Greeks and Romans. They attract many readers who know nothing about the Bible, but as one man recently told me, "it is the best thing I have read since Stephen King." The entanglement of myth and our understanding of the Bible is a dangerous thing. The early Church struggled with it, and we continue to do so. We need to inform ourselves about some of the areas where this can and is happening, and make sure our children understand that while fantasy can be good entertainment sometimes, we need to know what is myth and what is not and to make choices in life on good information and not mythological stories.

**Myth and religious belief are not the same thing.** *Webster's Collegiate Dictionary (10th edition)* defines myth several ways. One of them is as "A person or thing having only an imaginary or unverifiable existence ... an unfounded or false notion." There are other ways of understanding or explaining myth, but what we have defined in our discussion so far fits this understanding.

Myth does not come from evidence. The same dictionary tells us that the archaic definition of religion is "scrupulous conformity: a cause or system of beliefs held to with ardor and faith." Religion can be based on evidence, and in fact that is what this journal and the **Does**

**God Exist?** work is all about. Most of the articles in this periodical deal with evidence and how we understand that evidence and what it logically leads us to believe. Our primary tool in this approach is science. Religion does not have to grow out of our imagination and our ignorance and in fact should not. The most destructive religions that have existed on our planet have in fact come about in this way, but many people believe in God because of the evidence they have studied and where that evidence has taken them. Believing in God because of studies in astronomy, mathematics, psychology, and sociology is not based on myth.



**We need to understand that "looking to a higher power" does not mean embracing myth.** Most of us know that a major statement in most twelve step programs involves in some way or another statements like "Learn to look to a higher power." Atheists have criticized this statement saying it is an admission of myth into one's life, but the concept involves learning not to depend upon one's own strength to solve the problems of life. It does not mean that some angelic being or mythological creature is going to swoop in and remove the obstacle that we are dealing with. Learning to depend upon a system

of learning we did not invent is part of looking to a higher power. Using prayer and meditation as a way of working our way out of dependency is not embracing mythological creatures. Emotions can become a part of this process, and asking direct help from God can and is usually a part of it, but that is not a creation of our imagination or ignorance. The concept is to get free of ego, arrogance, and prejudice and look elsewhere for one's source of strength.



**We need to be careful not to allow myth to make us misunderstand evidence or miracles.** There have been those who have claimed that pictures found in the artifacts of the ancient cultures are proof that ancient people had regular and personal contact with dinosaurs. There are many such pictures all over the world with especially large numbers in Egyptian and Australian Aborigine drawings. Some look like aliens from other planets. Some look like angels, demons, creatures that are half human and half horse, snakes with human heads, creatures like Medusa, devils with multiple heads, and even insects with human heads and torsos. Does the existence of these pictures, pictographs, drawings and carvings mean that all of these creatures existed?

Mythological creatures always have stories associated with them, and the stories resemble the super hero stories of our day. These myth creatures lead to parades, carnivals, celebrations, festivals, and rituals. Sometimes man-made religions will pick up these stories and use them. Throughout Africa and the Far East we see mixtures of animism and Catholicism as people took their ancient myths and adapted what Catholic missionaries taught to include these imaginative stories.

It is important to understand that personal prayer to God is not an immersion in myth. When a person prays to God for help with a problem, he is not asking anyone else to believe or to participate in what is going on. No story is associated with private requests made to deity. If a person gets a positive answer to prayer, it would be necessary for that answer to be validated by looking at the evidence, but this is a far cry from some one individual making claims that demand certitude because of an unverifiable event.



**We need to make clear that the Bible calls us to evidence and rational thinking, not to endorse myth as Truth.** One of the unique characteristics of the Bible compared to other religious books is that it constantly calls mankind to evidence when man is asked to accept something as being true. The existence of God, for example, is certified by God in the Bible by referring man to the evidence that can be seen in nature. Psalm 19:1, for example, states that man's perception of God's existence comes in seeing His handiwork and wisdom in the *shamayim* and the *erets*. The *shamayim* refers to the cosmos as a whole, including all astronomical bodies that man can see. The word *erets* refers to Planet Earth and again is a reference to what man can observe. In Isaiah 40:26, man is asked the question directly, "Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things ... ." The existence of God is given to man as something perceived through questioning what man observes. In Hindu tradition, the creation is explained in terms of a god cutting open other gods and pouring out their organs. The differences between the biblical and Hindu accounts are striking. In the New Testament, Paul called the people of Athens to what he called "the unknown God." His description of this God concept was that God was a being "in whom we live and move and have our being." He went on to say that this God did not live in temples or have any needs to be addressed by man. All of the myths and misconceptions of God by the Athenians were discarded (Acts 17:16–30).

In Romans 1:19–22 we are told directly that we can "know there is a God through the things He has made." Paul goes on to point out that the customs of his day to turn the concept of God to "an image



made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things” were mistakes again discarding mythical concepts of the nature of God.

An atheist reading this discussion might challenge the notion that the Bible does not endorse myth as Truth by claiming that Adam and Eve, the flood of Noah, and characters like Samson are mythological stories. Adam and Eve are not presented in the Bible as super heroes. They have weaknesses and function pretty much as we do today. You can argue about how they communicated or what the forbidden fruit was, but it changed what they perceived and did not give them superhuman characteristics. Samson did some amazing things, but none of them were on a scale that is impossible to happen. The flood certainly happened and, while you can argue about its cause and extent, it is well documented in secular evidence.



A more difficult argument to handle against the Bible not being myth is the claim of miracles. Biblical miracles are never presented as a normal operative method of life’s processes. The Bible clearly presents those situations where God interferes in the affairs of mankind as abnormal. When Jonah is swallowed by a great fish, the Bible tells us that this was a one-time event and never has happened again. It happened to one man for a purpose that is clear in the writing of the Bible. Every miracle done by Jesus Christ recorded in the Bible had a purpose and was a true miracle. Jesus is portrayed to us as the Creator (Colossians 1:16; John 1:1–10, 14), and His miracles offered support to that claim. This is a theological evidence and supports the incarnate nature of Christ. Stories about Jesus turning a playmate that angered Him into a toad are not in the Bible and, in fact, are a part of the mythological literature of the time of the New Testament, such an act would serve no positive purpose in telling us about Christ.

This may sound like a fine line, but it is a theologically important point. The Bible is not a scientific work even though it contains a great deal of science. It also has messages to convey in morality, philosophy, sociology, psychiatry, and history. The religious history of mankind is complex, but the Bible’s version of it is markedly different. Let us approach it carefully, fair, and in an open way. When we do, we will find “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correction and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work (2 Timothy 3:16–17).

—JNC

## Nobel Scientists and God

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.

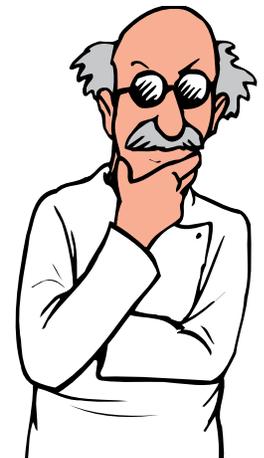
### Arthur Compton—Nobel Laureate in Physics

Compton received his Nobel Prize in 1927 for his discovery of the change of wavelength in X-rays when they collide with electrons (the Compton effect), confirming the dual nature of electromagnetic radiation as both a wave and a particle. He got his Ph.D. from Princeton and did research at Cambridge, and was a professor at the Universities of Minnesota, Washington, and Chicago.

“From earliest childhood I have learned to see in Jesus the supreme example of one who loves his neighbors and expresses that love in actions that count, who knows that people can find their souls by losing themselves in something of great value, who will die rather than deny the truth in favor of the popular view held by his most respected contemporaries. That Jesus lives so vitally in men today makes me hope that by following in his footsteps in my small way I also may live forever.”

“For myself, faith begins with the realization that a supreme intelligence brought the universe into being and created man. It is not difficult for me to have this faith, for it is incontrovertible that where there is a plan there is intelligence. An orderly, unfolding universe testifies to the truth of the most majestic statement ever uttered: ‘In the beginning God ... .’”

“In their essence there can be no conflict between science and religion. Science is a reliable method of finding truth. Religion is the search for a satisfying basis for life.”



“What nobler ambition can one have than to cooperate with his Maker in bringing about a better world in which we can live? Science has created a world in which Christianity is a necessity.”

“I believe that its insistence on the inherent value of individual men and women Christianity has the key to survival and the good life in the modern world.”



### **The Canon of Scriptures**

by F. F. Bruce, InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, Ill., 1988, 349 pages, (hardcover), ISBN 0-8308-1258-X

One of the more prestigious scholars of the past 100 years in apologetics is F. F. Bruce. Dr. Bruce was trained at Cambridge and the University of Aberdeen and had been the Rylands Professor of Biblical Criticism and Exegesis at the University of Manchester, England. One of his most famous books is *Jesus and Christian Origins Outside the New Testament* which we have discussed previously in this journal. *The Canon of Scriptures* is a very academic study of how we got the Bible as we have it and the credibility of the Bible from a scholarship standpoint.

After an introduction, the book is divided into a study of the Old Testament then the New Testament. Bruce discusses the history of each of these books and how we got them. In his discussion of the Old Testament, Bruce talks about the law and the prophets and then the Greek Old Testament. He explains how the canon of the Old Testament came about in the east and in the Latin west and the differences before and after the reformation. This discussion is brief and historical in nature.

The major emphasis of the book is the New Testament with a detailed history of the manuscripts and how they changed throughout history. Marcion and Valentinus are discussed with a discussion of how Catholicism dealt with these writings. The Muratorian fragment

and the works of Irenaeus, Hippolytus, Novatian, the Alexandrian Fathers, Eusebius of Caesarea, and Athanasius are introduced. Bruce traces the history to Jerome and Augustine to the end of the Middle Ages and then shows how printing influenced what we have today as the New Testament. The book concludes with an explanation of the criteria of canonicity, and there are two appendices on “The ‘Secret’ Gospel of Mark” and the work of A. S. Peake.

This is a very academic book. I found it hard to read because of my own limited background in history and canonicity, but I have found it to have a wonderful and useful index for looking up specific questions. It will be a great reference work for scholars and people with a background in theology. For the average reader it will be too much to absorb without deep and long study.

### **Gay Children, Straight Parents**

by Richard Cohen, InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, Ill., 2007, 233 pages, \$16.95 (paperback), ISBN 978-0-8303-3437-2

We have reviewed books on homosexuality in this periodical in the past, but this is the first book we have reviewed that is a treatment book. What I mean by that is this is a book with a program designed to solve the homosexual issue. Richard Cohen is a psychotherapist who specializes in sexual reorientation therapy. He is the executive director of the International Healing Foundation. He is also a man who was gay himself, a fact that he describes in depth in the book.

This book offers a positive, accurate, factual approach to parents who have a child who has same sex attraction. We have pointed out in this journal that gay behavior is not a simple gene expression; it is a complex behavior with multiple genetic and environmental factors involved. Oversimplifying homosexuality has been a problem for everyone dealing with homosexuality, and this book does not make that error.

It is divided into three sections: personal healing, relational healing, and community healing. There are 12 steps suggested with an appendix for treatment plans, a reading list, a list of international resources, and an addendum with contacts for healing seminars and sessions. There also are case studies in which people who have benefited from Cohen’s work describe their journey.

This is a book for families who have Christian values and beliefs who really want help in dealing with a gay child. It is not simplistic or a quick fix, but it does offer an approach to an issue that many families are facing. We recommend it to Christian families in that situation.

# DANDY DESIGNS

## LIGHTNING IN A BEETLE

Most of us have had the privilege of sitting on a porch or boat seat and watching fireflies. Actually these fascinating creatures are not flies, but nocturnal winged beetles. Interest in fireflies has grown in recent years as medical science has discovered how to use the chemical processes of the firefly to address human cellular energy problems. Cancer cells have energy problems and can be detected using the fireflies' processes for generating light. Similar uses have been found in treating breast disease, cystic fibrosis, and multiple sclerosis.



Five components are used to produce the firefly's light:

1. Luciferin, the source of the light
2. Luciferase, an enzyme catalyst for the reaction
3. A. denosine triphosphate (ATP)
4. Magnesium
5. Oxygen

The firefly has three layers in which the process is carried on. The outer layer is a transparent skeleton that sustains the light glowing process. The middle chamber has light cells which store the luciferin and luciferase. The inner-most layer acts as a reflector. It is packed with small uric acid salt crystals which have surfaces that reflect the light.

The firefly breathes in oxygen through a system of small air tubes controlled by nerves in the abdomen. This sets off a reaction aided by

magnesium and ATP so the luciferase acts on the luciferin resulting in a flash of light. Virtually 100 percent of the energy generated is light where, as for comparison, efficiency is 10 percent for an ordinary light bulb with the rest being given off mostly as heat. About 1/40 cp (candlepower) is the brightness. Fireflies communicate with their flashes. The male, while it is flying, will flash about every five seconds. The female will stay on the ground and will flash once about two seconds later. The male will repeat its flashes and will fly toward the female until the two meet for mating. With practice, by the way, you can attract males with a flashlight.



The chemical and physical construction of this wonderful beetle is extremely complex. Not only is the chemistry highly complex with complicated compounds reacting in controlled ways, but the apparatus in which the chemicals are contained is carefully engineered to allow efficient transmission of energy as light. Trying to construct a chance process that can do all of this requires multiple assumptions

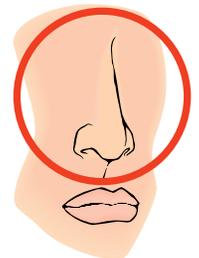
that have no reasonable mechanisms. God's wisdom and planning can be seen in the world all around us.

Source: Adrian Higgins, "Nature's Magical Little Night Lights," *Washington Post* (retrieved from the *South Bend Tribune*, July 28, 2007, page D7).

## what That Nose Knows

The more science studies the organs of the human body, the more amazing their design and function becomes. The human nose has been studied from the earliest days of science, and we are still learning new things about the nose and how it works.

We now know that there are two layers of stem cells in the nose that allow it to function and defend the nose against the damaging effects of harsh chemicals.



The first layer is the most primitive kind of stem cells and they are designed to repair damage to olfactory nerves. Researchers at Johns Hopkins University have recently discovered the second layer of stem cells which they say is a final backup when the nose has run out of other healing resources. Randall Reed who led the Johns Hopkins researchers says “These stem cells act like the Army Reserves of our nose. They don’t come in until things are really bad.”

In addition to the stem cell discoveries, more is being learned about how the nose detects different odors. Much of this research is being done because attempts are underway to make electronic noses that can smell for terrorist materials. The mucus in our noses that we call “snot” is very important. Not only does it collect debris that gets into the nose so that it can be removed, but it also keeps the nose moist and breaks down molecules of what is smelled into the separate scents that we detect. We have 100 million receptors in our noses which help us identify all of the different materials that we smell. The best electronic smellers right now have about 50 receptors.

We have always known that the nasal nerves and the taste nerves in our tongue give us the sensation of flavor, but we are growing in our appreciation of all that our nasal tissues do. It certainly brings to mind again David’s statement “I am fearfully and wonderfully made—your works are wonderful” (Psalm 139:14). Data from *Science and Spirit*, July/August 2007, page 12.

**REMINDER OF OUR SCHOLARSHIP.** For many years the **Does God Exist?** program has offered a scholarship. We have given many \$1,000 scholarships, and occasionally we have had their essays in this journal. To qualify, a person must use the scholarship to pay for schooling beyond high school at a recognized college, university, or technical school. A short essay on the compatibility of science and faith must be written and submitted. We offer scholarships in January and July and we are not limited to any particular number of scholarships.

We do want to mention that these scholarships are not given from funds donated to **Does God Exist?** This money is money that John and Phyllis Clayton inherited from John’s aunt Connie Parsons and Phyllis’ mother Edith Lawson. The scholarships wear their names and are given in their memory. In recent years we have had very few applicants for the scholarships, and we want our readers to be aware of their availability.

More information and registration forms are available by sending us a note at [jncdge@aol.com](mailto:jncdge@aol.com) or by writing us at 1555 Echo Valley Dr., Niles, MI 49120. —John Clayton

## Why Don't Pregnant Women Topple?

One of the interesting unique characteristics of humans is their erect posture. Atheists have derided the concept of God’s intelligent creation of man by claiming that erect posture produces so many problems that no intelligent being would create an erect posture in any living thing. The claim is that back problems, muscle fatigue, hernias, and all kinds of other problems are due to our erect posture. In making a challenge like this, atheists ignore the beneficial aspects of erect posture—such things as ease of digestion (with food being pulled down by gravity), reduction of stroke possibilities since the head is higher than the heart and blood is under less gravitational pull, increased ability for tool use, etc.

What is also interesting is that there are some incredible design features built into man to accommodate erect posture. The equipment designed to eliminate waste is one of these. Another one reported on in *Nature* ([www.nature.com/nature](http://www.nature.com/nature)) is the design of a woman to accommodate pregnancy. You would think that a very pregnant woman would lose her balance and topple over with the ever growing weight up front in her body. Why she does not is an interesting engineering design.



One of the lower lumbar vertebra in women is wedged shaped while in males it is square. The key hip joint in a woman is 14 percent larger than in a man in proportion to body size. Harvard researcher Katherine Whitcome has been studying these differences and comments “It’s absolutely beautiful. A little bit of tinkering can have a profound effect.” There is a lot of tinkering in the creation, and everywhere researchers look they see that a wonder-working hand has gone before. —JNC

# News and Notes

**Creating Life: Again.** The ignorance of the media has been displayed again in the arena of creating life. Newspapers and magazines in January 2008 had titles reminiscent of the late 1950s like “Scientists Create Life,” and “Life From Scratch.” The research being used is some interesting work by John Glass and his associates at The J. Craig Venter Institute in Rockville, Maryland. What Glass and others are doing is taking medium length segments of DNA and using enzymes to join these sections. This may allow a synthetic cell to be produced in which each section would be understood and could be used to address certain medical problems. Trying to relate this to the creation of life is misguided. *Science News* (January 12, 2008, page 29) uses the analogy of trying to build a Ford Model T by using Honda parts. The modern molecules we have are not analogous to what was present when life began on Earth.

A different approach has been presented in Russia where experiments involving microbes in volcanic vents are attempting to construct a model of how life might have started in that environment. The article is titled “Originating Life” and is in *Science* (February 24, 2006, page 1081).

**Fear Not Learned.** Japanese scientists have been able to produce mice that are not afraid of cats. Normally mice will display great fear at the smell or presence of a cat. It has always been assumed that this fear was a learned response, but by altering the genetic material in mice, scientists have produced mice that do not fear cats at all—and will snuggle up to them or attempt to play with them. The question of whether fear is designed into us is a major one for psychology and has ramifications in other areas of understanding why we do what we do. Reference: *Austin American Statesman*, December 23, 2007, page A21.

**Leading Atheist Makes Complete Break with Atheism.** For the past 60 years or so, one of the leading atheist philosophers has been Antony Flew. Many readers will remember his debate with Thomas Warren some 40 years ago. Flew was the son of a Methodist minister,

but became an atheist scholar and a leading spokesman for atheism in his college years. His arguments have always been philosophical in nature, but as he started looking at the scientific evidence for design in the creation he changed his mind. His fellow atheists are trying to suggest that he just got old and senile and afraid of dying, but he has not embraced Christ or the notion of life after death—yet. He holds that open as an option. Flew has released a new book titled *There is A God* which we will review sometime in the future. It is interesting that philosophical arguments were not the prime mover of Flew, but rather scientific evidence. We have always maintained that it is incredibly difficult to be an open-minded, educated, thinking person and be an atheist—and Flew lends support to that idea.

**Relativism Gets Organized.** A prevailing idea in the world today is that there is no such thing as absolute truth. The idea is that all beliefs and thinking have value, and that no one has a right to believe what they believe is any better than what anyone else believes. The Right Reverend William Swing, who is an Episcopal priest, has started a program called United Religious Initiative (URI). This organization wants to bring relativism into religion as a means of solving global conflict. Swing says, “I’m sure that ten years from now the hot topic will be whether Jesus exclusively is the one and only person who saves. Or does God save in multiple ways, including Jesus; or as an outgrowth of Jesus; or as seen in Jesus.” The URI maintains that there should be a *Declaration of Rights* not to be converted to another religion. It would ban all proselytizing and evangelizing. Passages like Matthew 28:19–20 are claimed to be erroneous and the cause of war. We would suggest that the URI is not only opposed to God, but that it is illogical. Religions that advocate religious war, relegate women to second class citizenship, promote polygamy, and teach a pantheistic approach to world economic problems will not bring peace and prosperity as URI advocates claim. Waving a peace flag as you promote relativism may gain a few followers, but it will be inconsequential in solving the issues of our day. Reference: *SCP Newsletter*, Winter 2007/2008, page 1.

**British Data on Church Attendance.** Studies in Britain on Church attendance shows that 6.3 percent of the population attends church twice or more a month. Eighty percent of Muslims in London say they attend mosque regularly. There are more Muslims numerically attending mosque regularly than there are church attendees, and Islam is the fastest growing religion in Britain. Similar data comes from studies in Europe showing the progress of atheism and secularism in the western culture. Reference: *Austin American Statesman*, December 14, 2007, page A27.

**Philadelphia Boy Scouts Lose Building.** In 1929 the scouts built and paid for the Beaux Arts style building and turned it over to the city of Philadelphia with the understanding that the scouts would be allowed to remain in it “in perpetuity” while the city used the rest of the building and shared some parts of it. Recently Romulo L. Diaz Jr. a gay activist who became City Solicitor ordered them to pay \$200,000 a year rent or get out. Most observers believe it is the scouts refusal to accept homosexual members and leaders that is behind what is happening. Christine M. Flowers of the *Philadelphia Daily News* says “Diaz has pursued the scouts with something akin to vengeance, cloaked in the language of equality.”

**Giganticism in the Past.** *Advanced Materials and Processes* (January 2008, page 10) reports the discovery of a giant fossil claw from an ancient sea scorpion. Found in Germany, the claw came from a scorpion that would have been over eight feet long. For arthropods to grow that big, the chemical make-up of the earth’s atmosphere must have been very different than it is today—and the temperature must have been much higher. Data on the dinosaurs indicates similar conditions and tells us a great deal about how life has changed throughout time. Mammals do not do well in the kinds of conditions we are talking about, and all of this has much to say about why the dinosaurs and their contemporaries existed and how they have contributed to making the earth able to support man.

**Nonprayer Breakfasts for God-Free Currency.** One of the more aggressive atheist groups in the United States is the Freedom From Religion Foundation which operates out of Madison, Wis., and is directed by Annie Laurie Gaylor and Dan Barker, a former Baptist minister. The group is sponsoring billboards and nonprayer breakfasts and raffles for removal of reference to God on American currency. Their billboards usually show a church’s stained glass window and a sign that says “Beware of Dogma” and then gives their name and web site. Look for it in your area.

**Native America Morality.** When Europeans came to America, the native Americans were treated badly. The spin given this by many who are hostile to Christianity is that a peaceful, moral, population was attacked by a disease-carrying exploitive warlike people. Scientists have now traced the epidemic of syphilis that occurred in 1495 in Europe with strong evidence that the syphilis came from Columbus and his crew and was given to them by the native Americans. Learning from the past can only happen if we come to history without an ax to grind—whether that ax be atheistic or religious. Reference: *Science News*, January 19, 2008, page 38.

**Evolution Theology.** A new book and program titled “Thank God for Evolution” has entered the evolution/creation controversy. The husband-wife team promoting this program are Michael Dowd, a Unitarian minister, and his wife Connie Barlow, a science writer. They also maintain a Web site at [www.thankgodforevolution.com](http://www.thankgodforevolution.com). Dowd believes that God’s revelations are not just made through the Bible, but that they also come in the form of scientific discovery. It is obvious that Dowd has resolved the evolution/creation controversy by discarding the Bible as Truth, and relies on the current understanding of neoDarwinism to base his scientific data. That will produce a synthesis of the two, which is what evolution theology is, but it will be a constantly changing materialistic theology, and not one that addresses the real problems of people living in the twenty-first century.

**Texas Creationist School Demands Teacher Training Be Accepted.** We have discussed denomination creationism many times in this journal. What we mean by that phrase is a program of various churches that builds a scientific understanding around the teachings of a certain denomination. In the last fifty years the theological position of dispensational millennialism has led to an attempt to confine the earth’s age to less than 10,000 years. Previously the ministry promoting this had its base in California, but in recent months it moved its offices to Texas. Now pressure is being put on Texas to certify the teacher-training program of this group. Henry Morris III is the CEO who has led this effort, and scientists and Christians all over Texas are objecting to the positions being taught to prospective teachers. We have discussed some of the scientific and biblical errors of denominational creationism many times in this journal, and you can read some of it in a book on our Web site ([doesgodexist.org](http://doesgodexist.org)) titled *God’s Revelation in His Rocks and His Word*. It will be interesting to see how all sides of this issue respond to this challenge. Reference: *Austin American Statesman*, December 11, 2007, page B1.

**Does God Exist? DVDs Now Available on Web Site.** We want to remind our readers that we now have our DVD series on the existence of God available on our Web site [doesgodexist.tv](http://doesgodexist.tv). All of the 24 DVDs can be watched on the site, and in fact can be copied from the site. There are also previews available on the site. We have done this because of technical problems with the versions of the DVDs that are on Google, Godtube, and Youtube. If you wish to copy the DVDs you are welcome to do so. We ask the copies not be sold, but making copies for your own use or to give to someone else is fine. We will be adding other DVDs in the months ahead, including our children’s DVD series.

This journal is a part of a program of service titled **Does God Exist?** The purpose of the program is to provide thinking, seeking people with scientific evidence that God does exist and that the Bible is His Word. It is our conviction that all men can logically and rationally believe in God. In addition to this bimonthly journal, the Does God Exist? program offers DVDs and video tapes, CDs and audio tapes, courses, books, and other materials. These materials are offered on a loan basis or at our cost. We also are more than willing to correspond with you and answer any specific question(s) you might have. If you would like further information on borrowing or purchasing these materials, we would be glad to send it to you. Check the boxes below to describe what you would like and mail it to us. We will get it right out to you.

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