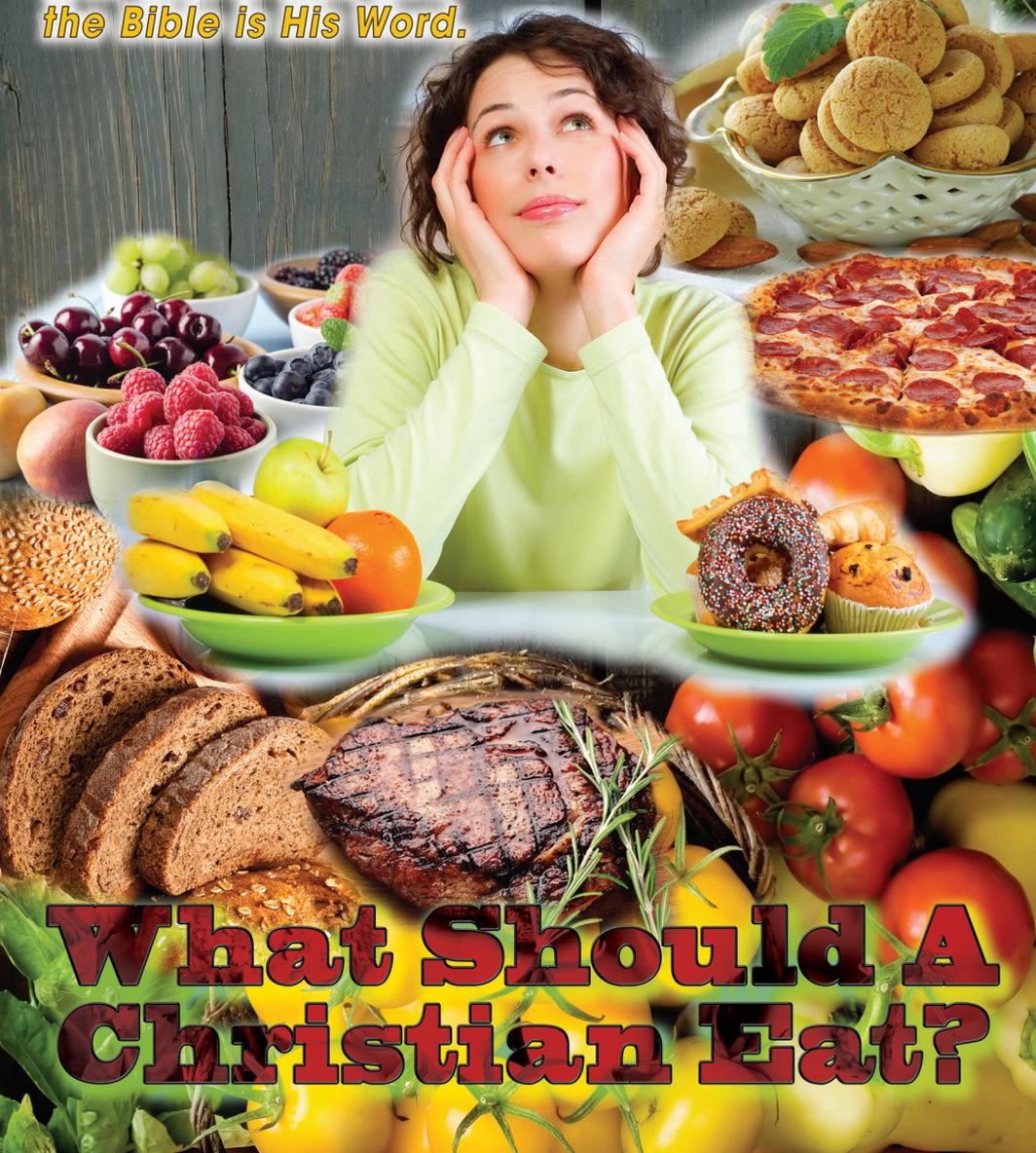


DOES GOD EXIST?

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

November/December 2013

Volume 40 Number 6



What Should A Christian Eat?

Does God Exist? Lectureships

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WHAT SHOULD A CHRISTIAN EAT?



All of us have seen the media's infatuation with the "fat American." Statistics on how many children are overweight, and how high blood pressure and cholesterol levels plague middle-aged adults provide content for television shows ranging from "Dr. Oz" to "20/20." It was fairly predictable that we would

find skeptics blaming Christianity and the Bible for obesity, and animal rights groups have now joined in condemning the Bible for everything from animal sacrifice to the eating of trans fats. Should Christians be vegetarians? Is the raising of cattle, sheep, pigs, and poultry cruel to animals and detrimental to healthy diets?

Let us begin this discussion by reviewing the history of humans on this planet. When God created man and placed him on the earth, man was what anthropologists call "a gatherer." What that means is that the first humans did not farm or raise animals for food. They lived by eating fruits of all kinds which were found growing in the wild. God said in Genesis 2:16, "... You are free to eat from any tree in the garden." All archeological evidence supports the fact that early man ate a wide assortment of leaves, roots, seeds, and fruits. There is some evidence that clams, crabs, fish, and perhaps a few other small animals may have been eaten as well. Piles of shells in some caves do not seem to have accumulated naturally. This would have been a healthy diet, but protein would have been in short supply and gathering time must have been extensive.



When man sinned and died spiritually, his method of securing food also changed. God says, “Cursed is the ground because of you; . . . and you will eat the plants of the field” (Genesis 3:17–19). We know for sure that man not only had to fight all the battles that farmers fight with weeds today, but we also know animal husbandry was practiced because Abel was a keeper of flocks (Genesis 4:2). Whether Abel ate some of his animals could be debated. The fact that he sacrificed of his flock would suggest that he did, but that evidence is indirect. After the flood, as mankind spread throughout the world and increased in number, the food supply became an issue. Feeding a large



population on plant material alone is difficult to do, because plant carbohydrates do not provide a long-term energy supply. Animal protein and fat do provide a greater supply of essential food minerals. As you read over the food rules and regulations in ancient Israel, you see great wisdom in what they were told to do. Imagine feeding a wandering group of thousands of people. There is no time to plant and nurture a garden. Israel’s flocks were vital to them until God sent the manna and quail giving nutrient balance. Throughout the period when kings ruled Israel, similar problems existed. The alternative to eating meat would be massive food shortages.

Jesus Christ lived under this system. We know he participated in the wedding feast at Cana. We know he prepared a fish meal for his disciples (John 21:9–13) and fed 5,000 from a start of two fish and five loaves of bread. Nowhere did he command his followers to be vegetarians nor did he command food rituals. His emphasis was clear, “What goes into a man is not what defiles him, but what comes out.” Jesus was far more concerned with man’s spiritual health than he was with man’s physical health.



Perhaps the most significant change in God’s dietary instructions for man took place in Acts 10. When Peter saw a

sheet lowered to him with “all sorts of animals, reptiles, and birds” (verse 12, NLT) and is commanded “Get up, ... Kill and eat” (verse 13, NIV). Peter responds from Jewish law saying he has never eaten anything that is unclean, and he has no desire to start (verse 14). God’s response to this is most interesting. “Do not call something unclean if God has made it clean” (verse 15, NLT). The obvious emphasis of this account is that the gospel is now to go to all men, not just the Jews and the special Jewish food rituals would be done away with. Colossians 2:10–16 tells us not only that Jesus nailed all of the Jewish laws and traditions to his cross, but also that no one should “judge



you in meat, or in drink” This was a hard lesson and occupied much of the time and energy of the early church. Paul devotes much of Romans 14 pointing out that special days, foods, and celebrations are not to become issues which divide the church. Still, a part of this was that there were no food taboos in early Christianity.

So if there are no doctrinal prohibitions to eating meat, what should be the concerns of Christians as far as diet is concerned?



First Corinthians 3:16 tells us that our bodies are the temple of God and we are not to defile the temple. Taking care of our bodies has many side benefits to offer. Paul talked about his death from time to time. In Philippians 1:21–24 and 2 Timothy 4:6–8 he indicated he was ready to die, actually preferred it, but also saw that

God had more work for him to do and he wanted to do all God had in mind for him to do. I am ready to go to a better place, but I want my life to bear all the fruit that is possible.

Christians need to take care of their bodies, not because there is a ritualistic law that commands us to do so, but because we want to live complete, fruitful lives. Exercise is important, keeping blood pressure and cholesterol under control is taking care of the “temple of God.” We do it to serve, not to obey a religious law.

— John N. Clayton

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RELIGION ON TRIAL



One of the valid charges that atheists level against those who believe in God is that belief in a god has historically produced conflict, a great deal of war, oppression, and abuse in the human population. This is not a question of a supreme being allowing these things to exist, but rather the charge that religion has frequently been the cause of these terrible things. There is no question that the Crusades, the Branch Dividians, the Jim Jones Guyana massacre, or the September 11 tragedy were rooted in religious beliefs. Is all of this a valid reason to eliminate religion from the planet? Many vocal atheists are saying that it is. Listen to some of the most prolific atheist writers of our day:

Stephen Weinburg — “The world needs to wake up from its long nightmare of religious belief.”

Sam Harris — “Unless belief in God is eradicated, civilization is likely to end up in a murderous sea of religious warfare. At some point, there’s going to be enough pressure that it is going to be too embarrassing to believe in God.”

Gary Wolf (*Wired* magazine) — “Religion is not only wrong, it is evil.”

William Provine — “No gods worth having exist, no life after death exists, no ultimate foundation for ethics exists, no ultimate meaning in life exists.”

Richard Dawkins (describing God) — “... arguably the most unpleasant character in all of fiction: jealous and proud of it; a petty, unjust, unforgiving control-freak; a vindictive bloodthirsty ethnic cleanser; a misogynistic, homophobic, racist, infanticidal, genocidal, filicidal, pestilential, megalomaniacal, sadomasochistic, capriciously malevolent bully.”

These are serious charges and claims. To the general public they may be convincing, and they certainly give reason for all of us to look at what they are saying and what they are based upon. It also may be that adherents of some religious beliefs will need to reexamine what their faith teaches, or discipline those who are using their religion as a club to do terrible things to others. Here are some points to consider no matter what your personal beliefs are.

THE DEFINITION OF “RELIGION” HAS TO BE UNDERSTOOD CLEARLY. Webster defines religion as, “Any specific system of belief, worship, conduct, etc., often involving a code of ethics and a philosophy. Any system of beliefs, practices, ethical values, etc., resembling, suggestive of, or likened to such a system.” If we accept that definition, then atheism has to be included in what is meant by “religion.” The usual response to this point is that what is meant is “organized religion” not just a system of belief. The problem for atheists in this definition issue is that in the twenty-first century atheism is becoming more and more organized. The list of organized atheism and skeptical groups is huge including the American Humanist Association, The Skeptic Society, The Freedom from Religion Foundation, the American Atheists, etc., etc.

WE MUST SEPARATE WHAT INDIVIDUALS DO FROM WHAT THE RELIGION THEY CLAIM TO FOLLOW ACTUALLY TEACHES. There have been people who have done terrible



things in the name of Jesus Christ. I have Muslim friends who tell me that jihad is not what Muslims believe to be true. Some atheists have been guilty of murder and genocide and war. If we are fair and honest, we have to understand that there are evil and violent people in every human insti-

tution that exists, and ascribing their irrational acts to the belief system of a religion is unfair and irresponsible.

What is possible to minimize the blaming a religious system for the act of an individual? The answer is to look at what the documented beliefs of that system are. In the cases of the major religions on earth this is fairly simple on a general level. The Bible clearly states the teachings of Jesus Christ. Matthew chapters 5–7 leave no doubt about what Jesus taught as to how people should live, and the entire New Testament deals specifically with nearly every issue of human experience. In a similar way, the Koran spells out what the followers of Mohammed should do and how they should treat those around them who were not Muslims. Similar writings exist for Hinduism, Buddhism, the Urantia, Judaism, Taoism, Mormonism, and Jainism.

Within these major systems is a wide variety of sects or denominations. In Islam we have the Shiites, Sunnis, Sufis, and some smaller groups. In Christianity you have many denominations which rely on the statements of either the Pope or the Bishops of Eastern Orthodox Church. You also have many denominations which have added their

own creed or belief system which may or may not agree or compare favorably with the Bible. Each must be considered independently. Sometimes there is no specific writing that each person can read and follow, but the foundation for belief systems is still given and can be easily followed. Atheists have several documents like this, that are subscribed to and followed by a majority of more visible and well-known atheists. “The Humanist Declaration” is one of these, written by a consortium of prominent atheists and promoted by the American Humanist Association. The Freedom From Religion Foundation and American Atheists have also published belief statements that can be read and considered.

TO BE VALID, RELIGIOUS SYSTEMS MUST BE PERSONAL AND VOLUNTARY AND THE RELIGION MUST NOT RADIATE IRRATIONALITY.

In 1997 Marshall Applewhite convinced a group of followers that if they killed themselves



Comet Hale-Bopp

they could catch a ride on the Hale-Bopp comet going by and experience spiritual paradise. Jim Jones convinced 909 followers that if they drank a solution of cyanide they could go to heaven as a group and be in an eternal existence with him in heaven. The Reverend Sun Myung Moon presented a religion in which he claimed to be God, and took on himself the role of determining who should marry whom and how they should live. In all of these cases the individual’s freedom to choose

was restricted or inhibited in some way. In atheist states those who attempted to practice any kind of religion other than atheism were severely punished by imprisonment and having their possessions taken away.

When considering religion it is vital that each individual have the freedom to investigate and choose what he will do with no coercion, threats, force, or financial consideration involved.

THE SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND STATE IS ESSENTIAL TO AVOID ABUSE AND WAR.

Nearly every country in the world has had a time when there was a state religion. This may have been declared by the state leadership, or it may have simply been the fact of the situation. The most fundamental problem of mixing church and state is that the methodology of these two institutions is, or should be, radically different. The state is to maintain law and order,

to defend against outside aggression, and to provide infrastructure so that business and transportation can be carried on by the citizens. The role of the church is to provide moral structure for people to live by, and a belief system for people to be able to interact with one another and live productively, even when personal strife and failure are experienced by individuals.

The boundaries between church and state do get blurred. The state may need to go to war to avoid destruction by aggressors, but the morality of war and how you decide whether to engage in war or not is a religious issue. The church may teach about sexual conduct, but sometimes the state must make a law to control abusive sexual practices. It should be obvious that the religious convictions of state leaders as individuals, which come from their religious perspective, must be how these things are done, not by the church telling the state what to do.

There is no doubt that this picture is oversimplified and idealized. The cultural beliefs of a population radically influence both the perception of the church and of the state. Recognizing the roles of the church and the state and working at keeping a separation between them is vital for stability in today's world.

A PERSONAL TESTIMONY. This discussion has actually been a description of a process that I went through personally. As an atheist, I had come to see that there was a mountain of support for belief in a God who was outside of space/time and created the cosmos and man for a purpose. What I saw in the atheist organization I was an active part of was that the group failed most of the criteria I have tried to describe. At our meetings we had people talking about turning the United States into an atheist country and freeing it from Christian control. Most of our time and money was spent trying to remove what we called "Christian Privileges" sponsored by the government. At that time blue laws existed that made it illegal to do certain things on Sunday no matter what your religious beliefs might be. We fought to remove church-owned properties from tax-exempt status. Our involvement in government was heavy and expanding. All of this and the failure to deal with evidence moved me away from atheism.

My father had joined himself to a Unitarian church and that looked attractive, so I started with their belief system. I then attended every denomination that I could find, which in southern Indiana was a lot of churches. I also studied with a leader of Islam, a Buddhist teacher, an upper-caste Hindu priest, a rabbi, and a student of Urantia. What I found was that all of the religions I considered failed what I have described in this essay. The only system that did not fail was what Jesus Christ taught.

Jesus made it clear that it was up to each individual to decide what he would believe and do. In one incident, the teachings of Jesus were rejected by virtually everyone who was listening to him. He then turned to his disciples and said, “Will you also leave?” (John 6:66–67). It was up to each person to decide how he would react to Jesus’ teachings. Jesus made it clear to “Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar’s; and unto God the things that are God’s” (Matthew 22:21). In Romans 13 the separate role of church and state are clearly described. The scientific accuracy of the biblical statements that were presented as facts (not presented as miracles) was meaningful to me as a person trained in science.



Perhaps the most significant thing about the biblical message was the practical value of what Jesus taught. Matthew chapters 5–7 contain a practical summary of how humans should live. The practical value of how to solve conflict, how to deal with family issues, and how to approach the tragedies and problems of life made sense to me. As I have lived some seventy-plus years dealing with major losses and problems in life, I have seen how well the system works. Jesus’ statement, “You will know them by their fruits” (Matthew 7:16) has been borne out again and again.

I also found that there are people out there who have seen the value of Christianity. They have bonded with others of like faith, and have made Christianity a way of life that brings newness of life, and practical support for the challenges of life. “Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world” (James 1:27).

I recommend the teachings of Jesus Christ. In your community there are people who are following that faith. Find them and serve the Lord with them. Put religion on trial in a fair and open-minded way, and then act on the verdict that you come to. It will be the most important decision you will make, now and in eternity.

—JNC





We live in a time of incredible progress in man's understanding of how matter is structured, and how the material world in which we live has been formed. Quantum mechanics and nuclear physics have given us some new understandings which have the potential to change our whole picture of how matter is put together.

It seems as though there has always been a fear among religious folks that somehow these discoveries and advances are going to be a threat to belief in God and in his creation of the "heaven and earth." This has frequently caused an unhealthy attitude toward science and what science can do. When surgery was introduced there were those who felt that it was some kind of invasion of what belonged to God.



There were those who felt that going to the moon was an affront to the Creator because mankind was told to "subdue the earth" not to subdue the moon. Cloning, stem cells, and genetic profiling have had opponents in modern times by those who felt mankind was "playing God."

The problem with these approaches is that they frequently deny things that are very beneficial to mankind, and portray religious beliefs as opponents of progress. Cloning, stem-cell research, and genetic manipulation give us the capacity to cure some diseases such as cancer that may bring real relief to thousands of people. Our food problems in feeding the growing population of earth can also be met by these new areas of research. It is true that the misuse of these procedures can produce bad consequences. By the same token a knife can be used to do terrible things, but most of us keep knives in our homes because knives can do many good things. The role of religion should be to help determine the use to which scientific discoveries can be put—not to stop research and progress.

One area of rapidly changing understandings is the area of cosmology. Research now has produced a model called "The Standard Model" that seems to explain the creation of matter. The standard model is a theory which concerns electromagnetic, weak, and strong nuclear interactions of known subatomic (smaller than atoms) particles. Begun in 1960, the standard model has 61 elementary particles including quarks, leptons, gauge bosons, and to make the theory



work, a particle proposed in 1964 called Higgs boson. The Higgs boson must have a mass about 133 times that of a proton and no intrinsic spin (which is why it is classified as a boson). It also must interact with itself. In July 2012, scientists believed they detected this particle, making the detection of all particles in the standard model complete.

This is a massively oversimplified explanation but it appears that a workable theory of the composition of all forces that make up the physical world may be at hand. Assuming that to be true, of what practical value can it be? Most of the major technological advances of the past 500 years have come from basic research that did not have a practical goal in sight when it was carried on. Walter H. Brattain's work with semiconductors was not based on a desire to produce transistors, but that is where it ended up. Charles Townes' work on microwaves was carried on to understand the nature of microwaves, but from that work came the laser. It was not Townes' purpose to build a laser, but that incredibly useful tool came from his research. The work with the standard model is very likely to lead us to new energy sources, and new computers that are faster and more useful than those we have today. Already some quantum mechanics work with tunneling is giving us better cell phones and more useful and smaller computers.



In Genesis 1:28 man was told to subdue the earth and have dominion over it. In Genesis 2:15 man's role in the earth was "to dress it and keep it." In Psalms 19:1; 139:14–18; Proverbs 8:4–12; Job 38–42; and Romans 1:19–25, God emphasizes the need for man to use his intelligence and reasoning to know that God is and to understand man's role in God's plan. In Proverbs 8:23 we are told that God's wisdom was present "from the beginning." In verse 27 we are told that "he prepared the heavens" and that wisdom was present. In Jeremiah 10:12 we are told that God made the earth (not that he "zapped" it into existence) and that God "established the world by his wisdom." The passage goes on and says that he stretched out the heavens by his discretion and caused the vapors to ascend from the ends of the earth; making the lightnings with rain. Three times Isaiah mentions that God stretched out the heavens (Isaiah 40:22; 45:12; and 51:13).

God's methods are not spelled out in great detail, but they are explained to the extent that we can see that wisdom, power, intelligence, purpose, and planning are a part of all God does. God's methods in producing the earth are not beyond our understanding. Genesis 2:8 tells us that God planted a garden in Eden. Just as we now know how to plant a garden, we also know how rain produces lightning (Jeremiah 10:13). By knowing these things we are able to mold and shape our world and protect ourselves from the dangers

that might come from the earth's natural processes. If the standard model of how things acquire mass holds up, we may one day know how to change energy into mass and may be able to actually build a device like the one in *Star Trek* where people and material can be “beamed up” from one place to another.

So how did God create the earth? We now know something about how mass is created. The interaction of Higgs fields and Higgs bosons may eventually be so well understood that no one will question it. How the Higgs field came into existence, and how all of the values of the properties of the 61 fundamental particles mentioned earlier came to be exactly what they are, will not be answered by science. They simply have to exist—to be chosen. I would suggest an intelligence was necessary for that choosing to take place. Once matter with mass exists, it can organize to produce galaxies. The forces within the galaxies can produce stars, and stars go through a natural designed life process, beautifully shown in the Hertzsprung-Russell diagram, to produce heavy particles which become solid matter. The design of that matter will cause it to clump together to produce planets of all sizes and makeups. In at least one of those processes, conditions that would allow water-based, carbon-based life to exist took place. It appears statistically that there are so many variables that have to be exactly “right” to allow life to exist, that our planet was designed consciously for life and that life itself was created—not by chance, but with forethought, intelligence, and purpose. Whether that was also done elsewhere in space has not been answered yet, but if life is discovered elsewhere it will simply show that the answer to that last question is “yes.”



There is no reason for religiously oriented people to be upset by the suggestion that God used a process. Genesis 1:1 just states that God did it, not how he did it. We are learning more and more every day about how he did it, and the complexity of the process of creation is incredible. We do not have to deny the facts or the evidence. God “speaking it into existence” does not mean his methods were irrational or beyond our understanding. If life is found under the ice of Europa (one of Jupiter’s moons) it will be interesting and will open new doors of understanding, but it will not be in contradiction to what the Bible teaches and will not discredit God in any way. Quantum mechanics and cosmology are friends of belief in God. They show us clearly that “by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist” (Colossians 1:16–17).



—JNC

THE MAKEUP OF OUR NATURE



by Owen D. Olbricht

One night, when I entered my house and turned on the light, I saw a roach run swiftly away to hide from me. This got me to thinking about the nature of creatures and animals and our nature. When I walk in the woods, the rabbits, deer, and other animals run from me. They have never seen me before to know whether or not I will harm them. Why do they run?

The reason they run is that the Creator built this into their nature. After the flood, God told Noah and his sons: “And the fear of you and the dread of you shall be on every beast of the earth, on every bird of the air, on all that move on the earth, and on all the fish of the sea” (Genesis 9:2).

Throughout all the earth every living thing that moves has natural and innate instincts that determine how it acts.

ABILITY TO CHANGE

Even though all moving forms of life have the nature God gave them, this does not mean that they cannot alter to some extent and within certain limits, the use of their natural instincts. Their nature is built into their DNA. These instinctive traits can be modified or redirected to some extent through training and breeding.

James wrote, “For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and creature of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by mankind” (James 3:7). People can tame these living forms of life so that they will not fear people, even though God put the fear of people in them.

HUMAN NATURE

Besides programming our physical nature, God has also programmed our moral and spiritual nature. Because of this, we have a sense of right and wrong. Unless we pervert our nature, we can instinctively realize and judge what is morally and spiritually correct. God has put this in our genes.

Jesus stated, “If any man is willing to do his will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it is of God, or whether I speak from myself” (John 7:17).

Paul wrote, “For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves, who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves their thoughts accusing or else excusing them” (Romans 2:14, 15).

We have a built-in, moral conscientiousness because God has made this a part of our nature. This includes our conscience which can morally judge us as to whether or not we are living up to what we believe is right. It judges according to what we think is right or wrong but not necessarily by what is true according to God’s principles (Acts 23:1; 26:9).

CONTRARY TO OUR NATURE

Because God has given us the ability to choose, we can misuse our natural instincts. Paul wrote that the Gentiles, who knew better (Romans 1:32) with an innate ability to realize what is the right and wrong (Romans 2:14, 15) had gone contrary to this knowledge. In doing this, they had misused and gratified their good passions outside God’s parameters. Their moral conscientiousness became deadened because they sought to enjoy their bodily functions contrary to their natural usage.



“For this reason God also gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the women, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due.” (Romans 1:26, 27).

There are many sexual practices which are contrary to God’s intended use of sex and a perversion of our sexuality. Like living creatures and animals, whose behavior can be directed away from their natural instincts, we also can satisfy our sexual and other passions contrary to their natural usage.

If we pervert the good desires God gave us, we can develop an animal-like nature that will enslave us to misuse our God-given passions. Peter wrote that such people were “like natural brute beasts,” who had corrupted their nature (2 Peter 2:12). People can become

such deviates that they desensitize their natural instincts and sear their consciences as “with a hot iron” (1 Timothy 4:2).

FUNCTIONING BEST

All that God created can function best within their limited environment. Water is the best habitat for fish. The sky is normally the best way for most birds to travel. Outside their natural environment they may have difficulty functioning, or may be unable to function.

This principle applies to us as well, not only to what we do physically, but also to what we should do morally and spiritually. God has designed our nature so that we function best and life is most enjoyable when we respect certain physical, moral, and spiritual limitations (2 Peter 2:19).

“He who would love life / And see good days, / Let him refrain his tongue from evil / ... and do good; / Let him seek peace and pursue it” (1 Peter 3:10, 11).

“Good understanding gains favor, but the way of transgressors is hard” (Proverbs 13:15).

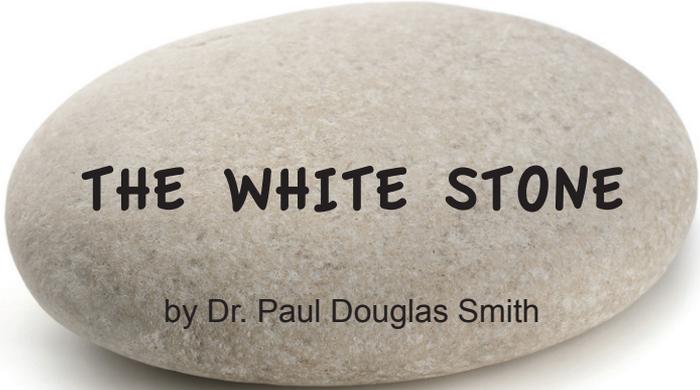
WHY UNHAPPINESS?

If we have been made so that we will find happiness, if we restrict ourselves to correctly use the nature God gave us, why do we have sorrows that seem to devastate us and make us unhappy? We must realize that these come partly because our natural, earthly habitation has been cursed (Genesis 3:17–19). We have pain, suffering, unhappiness, and other problems as the result of other sources, but not because of the proper use of our nature. They come from troubles the world gives us (John 16:33), violation of our nature (Romans 1:27), actions of other people (2 Timothy 3:12), God’s discipline (Hebrews 12:6), and Satan (Revelation 2:10). In spite of these sources, we are happiest and function best when we live in harmony with the nature God gave us. It serves us best even when the storms of this life are at their worst.

CONCLUSION

The principles Jesus taught will help us physically, morally, and spiritually to get the most out of life. Jesus said, “I am come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly” (John 10:10). His teaching can guide us to live the way God designed us to live so that we will receive the greatest benefit and pleasure from our God-given nature. When we live this way, we will function at our best as does a fish in water and a bird in the air.

God, who gave us our nature, has revealed through Jesus the way to use our nature so that it will give us the greatest satisfaction and enjoyment that life can provide.



THE WHITE STONE

by Dr. Paul Douglas Smith

“For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God” (1 John 5:4–5, KJV).

The word overcometh here is the Greek, *nikao*, to prevail. It is a present participle and expresses a continuous act and refers to those in Christ who live in continuous victory over worldly influences.

In Revelation 2:17 we are told that, to him that overcometh the world, Jesus “will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving [except] he that receiveth it.”

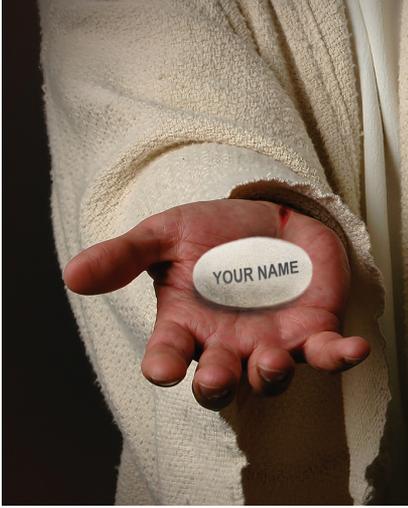
In the Ancient Greco-Roman era, the victor of the Olympic Games received a white stone, inscribed with his name, as a symbol of his victory. Known as a victory stone, the Olympian who held one of these stones was entitled to lifetime support at government expense. Likewise, judges during this era used stones to pass judgment in criminal cases. If the black stone was cast, the defendant on trial was condemned and punished. If the white stone was cast, the defendant was pardoned and given the stone as tangible evidence of his pardon.

Relating this to the Christian experience, white refers to purity. In Isaiah 1:18 we find that because of Jesus our sins will be as white as snow. In Daniel 12:10, we find also that by the cleansing power of Jesus’ blood, we are purified and made white. This purified state will become complete in the Resurrection (Revelation 3:4–5). Secondly, we are told that in this stone we will be given a new name, which in Greek, means a fresh character. This stone refers to our position in Christ and the new name refers to the freshness of our character in Christ. (2 Corinthians 5:17; Romans 10:4).

The white stone also refers to our pardon in Christ. Romans 3:23 says, “For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.” Romans 6:23 says, “For the wages of sin is death [BLACK STONE];

but the gift [WHITE STONE] of God is eternal life [PARDON] through Jesus Christ our Lord” (note John 3:16).

Because of our rebelliousness and sin-nature (propensity toward sinning), we are irrefutably guilty before God and deserving of death, which refers to spiritual death or alienation from God—a place of darkness. But Jesus came to this earth to redeem us from the curse. He freely went to the Roman cross of execution totally innocent of any offense and shed his blood so that we will be granted pardon and reserved a place in his Kingdom where all of our needs will be met for all eternity.



The gift of a white stone is the gift of GRACE and LIFE that only Jesus has the authority to grant—a gift we in no way deserve. As recipients of these gifts, we owe it to Jesus to make a conscious effort each day to walk in his likeness (Romans 6:4) so that others can see his reflection (Matthew 5:16; 1 Timothy 4:12) and draw closer to him and become overcomers and aliens in this worldly realm of Satan. We must be overcomers and CHAMPIONS for Christ Jesus!

—LOREM IPSUM—

For those familiar with publishing and graphic design you will recognize that title as a nonsense placeholder title used to fill a space until the real text is inserted. The paragraphs normally used under that title are similar nonsense letters that are actually a corruption of a Latin text by Cicero on the purposes of good and evil. The *lorem ipsum* nonsense apparently came into wide use through a desktop publishing program years ago. (Search the web for more history of the phrase.)

In many ways, *lorem ipsum* can be an illustration of an empty, meaningless life. The text may look beautiful, but it has no meaning—and no purpose but to fill space. In the same way, a person’s life may look beautiful, but still have no meaning or purpose. The universe has meaning and purpose because it has intelligence behind it. It was created for a purpose. So were you. As I put together this issue I see that the articles speak more to a meaningful life than to apologetics. But is not a meaningful life the greatest apologetic to an intelligent creator God? —Roland Earnst, Design Editor

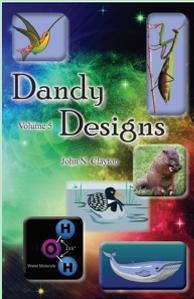
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GREAT SCIENTISTS AND GOD

Editor's Note: There are many writers who claimed that good scientists and intelligent, well-educated people do not believe in God. This simply is not true. Tihomir Dimitrov (<http://nobelists.net>) has been researching the statements of the greatest scientists of all time, and we are reproducing some of their statements in this column.

SIR ROBERT BOYLE (1627-1691)

Known for Boyle's law in chemistry dealing with gas behavior, and considered the founder of modern chemistry.



“When with bold telescopes I survey the old and newly discovered stars and planets, when with excellent microscopes I discern the unimitable subtlety of nature’s curious workmanship; and when, in a word, by the help of anatomical knives, and the light of chemical furnaces, I study the book of nature, I find myself oftentimes reduced to exclaim with the Psalmist, ‘How manifold are thy works, O Lord! In wisdom hast Thou made them all!’”

“The vastness, beauty, orderliness of heavenly bodies, the excellent structure of animals and plants, and other phenomena of nature justly induce an intelligent, unprejudical observer to conclude a supreme, powerful, just, and good Author.”

“If we lay aside all the irrational opinions, that are unreasonably fathered on the Christian religion, and all erroneous conceits repugnant to Christianity, which have been groundlessly fathered upon Philosophy, the seeming contradictions betwixt Divinity and true Philosophy, will be few, and the real ones none at all.”

Cynthia's Corner



AMAZING BODIES

God gives us many blessings, but one of the greatest is the remarkable bodies we have. The Psalmist says, "I am fearfully and wonderfully made." (Psalm 139:14). Our bodies have the ability to fight disease and infection and to repair themselves. But, as with many of God's blessings, we either handle them wisely or not. We have one body to get us through this life on earth. How we choose to take care of it largely determines how long it will last and what condition it will be in. We should know that, in order for it to function optimally as God intends, we need to give it the right "fuel" (nutrition) and exercise. An event in the life of Daniel in the Old Testament is very relevant to this discussion. Daniel and his three friends were being given all the choice foods and wine from the king's table. They refused to "defile themselves" with these foods and asked to be given "pulse" foods (KJV), which are vegetables, seeds, and beans. On this diet they became "healthier and better nourished" than those eating the royal food (Daniel 1:5–16).

The Bible says that early humans ate seed-bearing plants and fruit. (Genesis 1:29) After the flood God permitted them to eat everything (Genesis 9:3). But God also says that we should choose wisely: "Everything is permissible, but not everything is beneficial" (1 Corinthians 10:23). I remember holding my firstborn and wanting to give him the best nutrition and the best start in life that I could. I breast fed and swore to give him only healthy food. As time went on though, the influences of the world invaded and we too ate fries and burgers and bought candy for the kids.

We all need to be reminded that our bodies are an amazing gift from God, and we need to take proper care of them. The apostle Paul said he had to buffet his body and make it his slave (1 Corinthians 9:27). Are we a slave to our appetites? Do they control us? God even says that "physical exercise is of some value" (1 Timothy 4:8). (Quotations are from the NIV.)

If we abuse our bodies with alcohol, tobacco, drugs, overeating, lack of exercise, and poor nutrition, how can we then look to God and say, "Your will be done." Or how can we say, "It's up to God," when we suffer the consequences of our bad choices? We reap what we sow (Galatians 6:7) is a biblical truth and we see it played out in all areas of our lives: relationships, jobs, health, finances, etc. God gives us so many blessings in so many ways, but we are responsible for using them correctly and wisely.

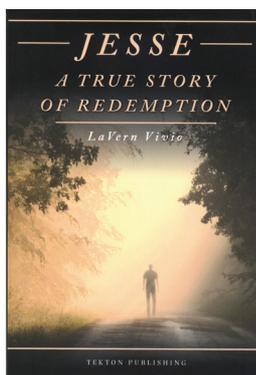
—Cynthia Clayton



The books that are reviewed in the Book Reviews section are not available through us, but can be obtained from a local bookstore or through many online bookstores.

JESSE: A TRUE STORY OF REDEMPTION

by LaVern Vivio. Tekton Publishing, © 2013,
163 pages, \$13.99 (paperback), ISBN-13: 978-0-89098-750-6



One of the things I have learned over the years is that people really find personal stories to be interesting and helpful, especially when they are written with openness and honesty about tough times in life. Our personal story of why I left atheism has had more copies printed than any single book or booklet we have done. It also brings much more mail volume (both negative and positive) than any scientific explanation we have attempted.

LaVern Vivio is a well-known radio personality in the Nashville, Tennessee, area and we reviewed in our March/April 2011 journal a wonderful work of hers titled *Constitution of Faith*. She writes very well with a good sense of humor and an intelligent approach to the faith issues of our day.

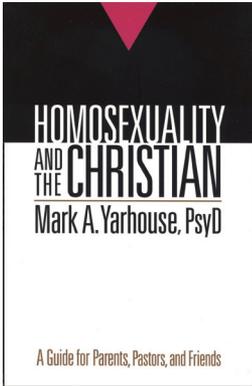
In this book Vivio tells her own story. It is raw and personal, dealing with racial prejudice in her family, in society, and in the church, the role of blind faith and tradition which raised faith issues for her leading to a long struggle with faith and choices in life. Vivio openly explains how all of these things led to bad choices by her personally, and by others who had varying degrees of faith. Her one common friend who stuck with her and gave her meaningful advice was “Jesse.”

Vivio traces her long faith struggle, and how her friend Jesse helped her work through these things. The story is compelling, relevant, and brings in everything from apologetics to struggling with guilt and the long-term effect of bad choices.

This book will be helpful to any reader, and especially to young adults who have struggled with their own battles of faith. We recommend it highly.

HOMOSEXUALITY AND THE CHRISTIAN

by Mark A. Yarhouse, Bethany House Publishers, ©2010,
239 pages, \$16.99 (paperback), ISBN-13: 978-0-7642-0731-0



Mark Yarhouse is Professor of Psychology and the Hughes Endowed Chair at Regent University and the director of the Institute for the Study of Sexual Identity. He has chaired the American Psychological Association's conventions symposium of gay and Christian psychologists and has a PsyD in clinical psychology. This strong background makes this book a reliable source of studies done on homosexuality and what the weaknesses of those studies might be.

The book is divided into three sections with each section divided into chapters. The first deals with God's view, why sexual identity matters, the causes of homosexuality, and whether someone can change. The second deals with family situations when a child or spouse announces that he is gay. The third deals with questions congregations face. All of the chapters cite research, have a conclusion (summary), and "Take Home Points" from the chapter.

This is the best book we have seen on homosexuality. It is research-based, careful not to bash anyone, honest, and practical. Yarhouse shows the lack of objectivity in the past, of studies on all sides. He points out that there is no one simple cause to homosexuality. The difficulty in changing is not minimized, and alternatives available to same-sex attraction are realistic. The author's biblical approach is to emphasize God's design and purpose in sexual relationships saying that "God places the act of sex within the bounds of heterosexual marriage, and Christians should understand sex to be a good thing, something intended by God at creation."

The history of Christians and their dealing with the homosexual issue has not been a positive one, and many people have been driven away from Christianity because of the condemning attitude and negativism that has been radiated by preachers and church leaders. This book is a refreshing change from that approach, and that makes it useful reading for all Christians, and especially for people with same-sex attraction in themselves or in someone they love.

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DANDY DESIGNS

OUR INCREDIBLE IMMUNE SYSTEM



All of us have read articles and heard lots of claims of things that are supposed to support our immune system. We know something about the fact that vaccinations use our immune system to fight off things that would invade our bodies and cause disease and premature death. What we may not know is that the human immune system is made up of some half-a-dozen different cell types that work in tandem. Each cell type has a different and unique job to perform, which is fundamental to the body's ability to defend against invaders and ward off

disease. If one of these players is taken out of commission the entire system is thrown out of whack.

New studies have shown that dendritic cells are a vital part of our immune system. These cells engulf pathogens, break them down into their component parts and display the pieces on their surfaces. This signals other immune cells capable of recognizing these pieces to attack and destroy the pathogen.

Antibodies (also called immunoglobulins) and proteins are made by beta cells. Their normal role is to neutralize toxins or viruses and mark bacteria for destruction by other immune cells. New research has shown that these antibodies also are used to communicate between beta cells and dendritic cells. For laymen what this means is that our immune system is a team of carefully designed components that work together and enable us to live in a world full of chemicals and agents that could bring us illness and death. This complex design system radiates an intelligent designer who carefully built into us an incredible system to protect us. Source: Helmholtz Centre for Infection Research, *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*.

GOOD SEED NEEDS GOOD SOIL IN A WOMAN, TOO

One of the most amazing examples of design in the world around us is the process of conception and a baby growing in the womb. With all of the attention to birth control and related issues one might assume that getting pregnant and having the baby develop in the uterus is quite easy to do, but in fact the entire process is incredibly complex. One of the main players in the baby being able to survive is the lining of the uterus which is called the endometrium.

The endometrium undergoes dramatic changes during a woman's menstrual cycle. It is only receptive to embryo implantation for a few days after ovulation, and any time before or after those few days the embryo will not implant, much like good seed will not grow in bad soil. Researchers have found that the protein content of the endometrial fluid changes radically depending on whether it is in a receptive or non-receptive stage. Part of the studies of the human genome have shown that there is a group of genes that turn on and off at different phases of the menstrual cycle and it is these genes that control the receptive ability of the endometrium.

In the January/February 2009 issue of this journal (page 18), we discussed the fact that the body of a woman treats pregnancy as an invasion by a foreign body (causing morning sickness), and how science is still struggling to explain why the mother's immune defense against this foreign object does not destroy the baby. In our July/August 2011 issue (page 25) we discussed how the body of a woman uses thermotaxis — temperature variation in the fallopian tubes — to help the sperm find the egg and how the egg itself releases attractants to bring the sperm to it. The more we learn of the process of reproduction, the more complex and amazing it becomes. Our studies of the human genome, and our understandings of how genes do what they do has added another layer of complexity to what it takes to conceive and sustain a baby through the nine months of growing inside the woman's body.

David's beautiful praise of God in Psalm 139:14 reflects the fact that from conception on we are "fearfully and wonderfully made: marvelous are [God's] works." Source: *Scientific American*, September 2012, page 18.



News and Notes

LEGAL RIGHTS FOR ANIMALS. There are many subtle consequences of the belief that humans are simply another animal produced by natural means alone. One of those is treating humans like animals and another is treating animals like humans. Those who promote this view range from those who would eliminate zoos and circus acts involving animals to those who would simply stop all uses of animals in medical research and testing. One of the problems is that evolutionary definitions of what is human and what is not, do not work very well. Tool use cannot be used to differentiate between humans and animals because many animals fashion and use tools. Learning and using communication skills does not work because some animals like the bonobos at the Great Ape Trust build sentences and even engage in gossip. No one has shown a true moral code among animals and awareness of right and wrong have not been shown to exist in any animal. Man has an anthropomorphic tendency (to humanize animals) in discussions of this type, but we would suggest that the biblical concept of man being created in the image of God and being charged to take care of the animals works better than naturalistic approaches. Source: *The Week*, August 9, 2013, page 9.



A bonobo using a stick as a tool to catch termites

BOOMER SUICIDE RATES SURGE. Between 1999 and 2010 adult males between 50 and 64 had a suicide rate increase of 45% and women between 60 and 64 had a 60% rise according to a report from the U.S. Government Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. As our society drifts further and further away from God and the plan God has given us to live by, the rate of misery and frustration continues to rise. At the same time purpose and meaning in life declines. Source: *AARP Bulletin*, July/August 2013, page 6.

MILITARY CHAPLAINS FOR ATHEISTS. In June of 2013 an amendment was presented to Congress that would have established a chaplaincy in the military for atheists and “humanists.” The effort is sponsored by the Military Association of Atheists and Free Thinkers. Jason Torpy the president of the group claims that 23% of those in the military have no religious preference and chaplains are not providing “positive outreach and support ... for all of those beliefs that aren’t their own.” He goes on to state that the Humanist Society is recognized as a religious organization by the IRS, so they should have a chaplain. The problem with that argument is that all chaplains are trained to meet every kind of belief system that is in our culture—no one religious organization has its own chaplain. Source: Foxnews.com, July 23, 2013.

MORE DATA SUPPORTING PRE-BIRTH HUMAN QUALITIES. The biggest problem in the abortion debate has been that there has been little discussion about when a human is a human. For many people a human is not human until it is born and breathes its first breath. For those folks abortion should be legal up to birth itself. Others have tried to say that brain waves, or motor responses should define when a baby is a person. There have been a number of studies that have shown that babies are aware of what is going on outside the womb, and a Finnish study recently posted in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* shows that babies pick up language skills prior to week 29 in utero. The Finnish study exposed babies to fake words in utero and the babies were able to distinguish the fake words after having been born. The authors state that prenatal experiences have “a remarkable influence on the brain’s auditory discrimination accuracy” All evidence says that what we call abortion in America today is actually infanticide. Source: *Los Angeles Times* (MCT) Amina Khan, September 2013.

SAME-SEX MARRIAGE DATA. *Atlantic* magazine had a cover story titled “The Gay Guide to Wedded Bliss” in its June 2013 issue. Liza Munday, the author of the article uses Scandinavian studies published in *Demography* in 2006. She did not mention the fact that that study showed a break-up rate among male same-sex marriages that was twice the rate of heterosexual marriages, and for lesbians the break up rate was even 77% higher. The National Longitudinal Lesbian Family Study has also found high dissolution rates with lesbian households breaking up 56% of the time while heterosexual breakups by the same study stood at 36%. The children of lesbian parents also have interesting numbers (from the book *Growing up in a Lesbian Family: Effects on Child Development* by Tasker and Golombok, Guilford Press, page 107): twice as many identify them-

selves as gay bisexuals compared to the general population, and six times as many have engaged in a same-sex relationship. There is an interesting article on this subject with additional data in *Citizen* magazine, September 2013, page 21.

NEW DNA STUDIES SHOW WE ARE ALL RELATED. It will not come as a surprise to believers of the Bible, but researchers at USC have shown that by using vast DNA databases it can now be proven that everyone on earth is related. Peter Ralph and Graham Coop are the leaders of this new approach to establishing huge family trees, and these can be used in studying human migrations, understanding languages, and interpreting ecological changes. For details use the QR code or go to www.biosciencetechnology.com/news/2013/08/everyone-earth-related.



A WAY TO CONTROL INTRODUCED SPECIES! In two words “eat them.” A fascinating article in *Scientific American* by Bun Lai (September 2013, page 41) tells how to control invasive species, that is to “feed them to the world’s greatest predator—us.” The view that invasive species are a catastrophe for environments fails to recognize man as being able to be in “the garden of Eden, dress it and keep it” (Genesis 2:15). Everything from feral hogs to Asian carp can be controlled by just making them food.

EXOPLANET CLAIMS INFLATED. One of the interesting areas of study in astronomy in the past several years has been the study of planets orbiting other stars in the galaxy. At the June meeting of the American Astronomical Society it was announced that the measurements made by the Kepler telescope, which has been the main tool of exoplanet measurements, are up to 35% too small. That means that the planets and their stars are significantly larger than was previously believed. What this does is to reduce the number of “earth-like planets” significantly. We want to emphasize again that finding a planet that could have liquid water on it does not mean there is life on that planet, and even if life is found elsewhere than on earth there is no negative reflection on the existence of God or of his design in the cosmos. It is significant however, that the conditions necessary for life and the



Kepler Space Telescope—NASA

existence of life itself are very difficult to come by if blind chance is the only mechanism you believe responsible for their existence. Source: *Astronomy*, October 2013, page 10.

GLOBAL WARMING TAKES ANOTHER TWIST. Thanks to Al Gore and other opportunists, the global warming issue has been clouded in a sea of controversy. Reputable scholars like Richard Lindzen at MIT maintain there is no problem, but most of us can look at the melting of glaciers and the changes in climate and realize some changes are certainly taking place. The point we have made in the past is that earth has had global warming in the past, and man is almost surely not the singular cause of whatever climate changes are taking place. The interesting new twist in the global warming data is that since 1998 there has been a change in the rate of global temperature rising. Ian Plimer who is a professor of earth science at the University of Melbourne says it has stopped, and other climatologists admit there has been a plateau. The reason may be that temperature changes are being stored in the oceans, so atmospheric measurements are not the sole indicators of what is actually going on. Also changes in the sun may be another factor affecting the measurements. The whole global warming controversy simply points to the incredible design of our planet. Scientists are still struggling to even make measurements, much less understand what is causing the change. That tells us the earth continues to speak of God's wisdom and design. Source: *The Week*, August 30, 2013, page 11.

MARS STUDY ON LIFE'S ORIGIN AND MOLYBDENUM. The media has focused on a study reported on at the Goldschmidt geochemistry conference suggesting that life originated on Mars and came to earth via a meteorite. What is missed by most people is that the basis of the claim in the report is that the element molybdenum, which is rare on earth, is a catalyst that is critical to the process of forming life. Since it is abundant on Mars the suggestion is that life started there. The author of the study, Dr. Steven Benner, points out that only earth had the other conditions necessary for life to thrive. We would suggest that if Mars was the source of one of the chemicals necessary for life it simply means that God gathered all the ingredients together from many different sources to begin the creation process. Source: www.space.com/22577-earth-life-from-mars-theory.html



Mars-NASA, Hubble

CHILDREN'S BOOKS NEED CENSORING. We have published children's books for many years. Our series of 15 books for elementary children show that God's wisdom and design is seen in his created things. Meghan Cox Gurdon has been reviewing children's books for the *Wall Street Journal* since 2005. In a recent article in *Imprimis* magazine, she indicates that recent books for children and young adults push violence, bloodshed, rape, and abuse in the name of telling kids what to expect, what life is, what culture is, and how we are expected to behave. Some of the books she describes have been accepted by *School Library Journal* meaning they have endorsement for inclusion in school libraries. One consequence of our society's rejection of God and of Christian values is that material pushing anti-Christian values and immorality have a smooth passage to the minds of young children. Parents need to be aware of this and look carefully at what their children are given to read. Gurdon's article is available at imprimis.hillsdale.edu/file/archives/pdf/2013_07_Imprimis.pdf, or use the QR code.



CREATION DESIGN SHEET AVAILABLE. One step in the cosmological argument for the existence of God is the process of considering all the parameters that are necessary to allow life to exist. In our lecture materials on design, we discuss the process of listing all of the variables, and then we show a simplified mathematical analysis which involves multiplying the individual probabilities together. In that lesson we choose 10 variables, but we have a sheet which we have now made into a booklet that lists 47 variables and why they are critical. You can find this list at doesgodexist.org/Charts/EvidenceForDesignInTheUniverse.html, or use the QR code. Or we will mail you a printed copy if you send us a return envelope with a first-class postage stamp on it.



CLAYTON NON-APOLOGETICS LESSONS ON WEB. For the past 15 years John Clayton has been working as a non-paid speaker for the Church of Christ in Dowagiac, Michigan. He speaks to the congregation on weekends when he is not in a lecture series somewhere else. These lessons are available in audio form with an outline in the church bulletin on the church's website which is dowagiaccoc.org and there is an archive going back for many months. Let us emphasize that these are not apologetic lessons, but they are 30-minute lessons recorded from the worship service of the church. They are free of course.



As we come to the end of another year, all of us at the **Does God Exist?** ministry want to thank you for your support and encouragement. We wish you a very merry Christmas and the blessings of God in **2014.**

John and Cynthia Clayton
 Roland Earnst
 Linda Glover
 Karl Marcussen

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Signed—Karl H. Marcussen, Managing Editor, October 1, 2013

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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*It's scientists vs. preachers,
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