

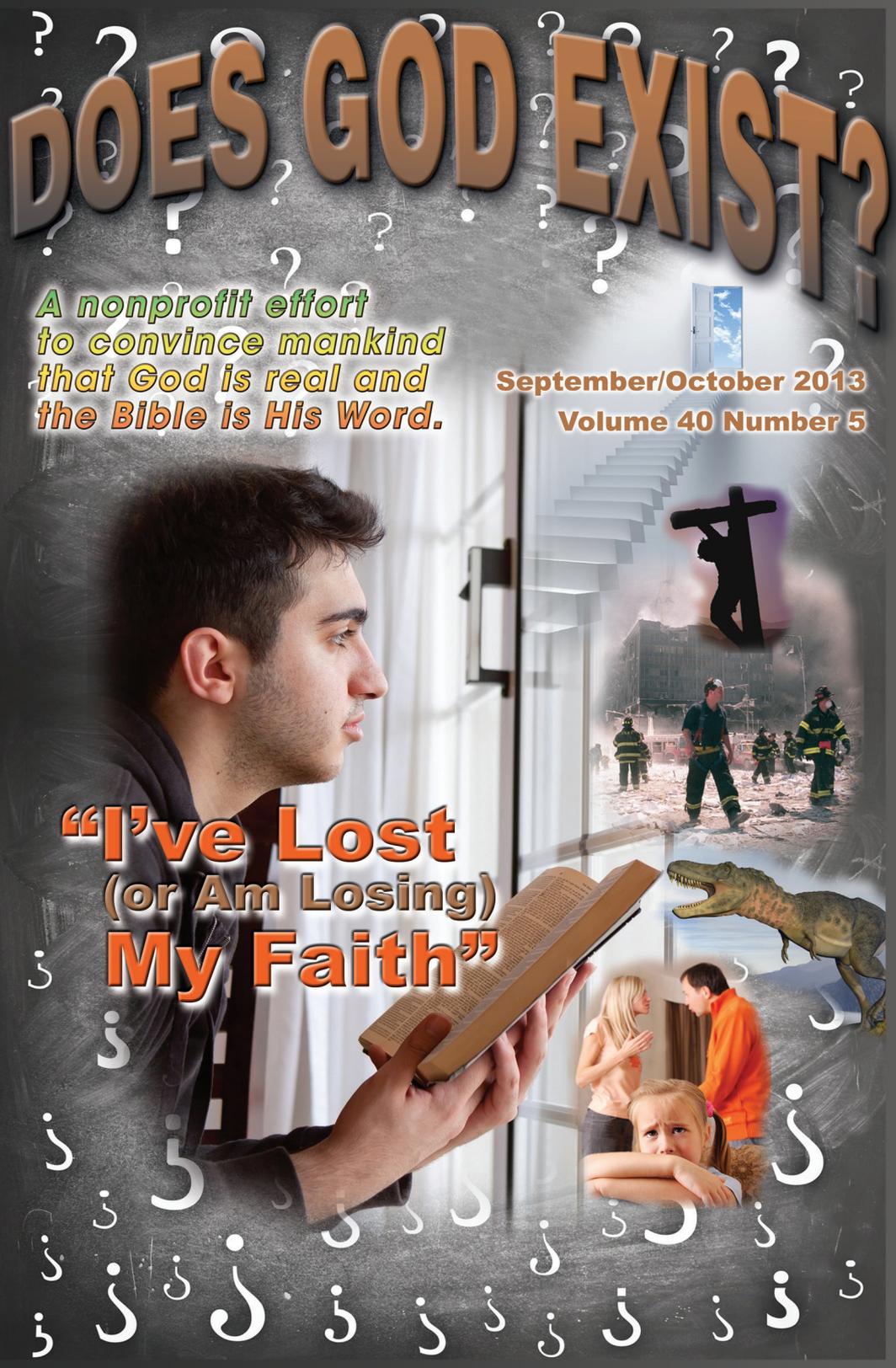
DOES GOD EXIST?

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

September/October 2013

Volume 40 Number 5

**"I've Lost
(or Am Losing)
My Faith"**



Does God Exist? Lectureships

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- Oct. 13 Kentwood, MI
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*Check our website for an updated list of lectures and contact numbers for the lectureships listed above.
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In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. ... The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. (John 1:1–3, 14)

The **Does God Exist?** program offers apologetic materials in several languages for all ages. We are designed to serve and help others. Our materials are available on a loan basis or at our cost. If you are not aware of our DVDs or video tapes, CDs or audio tapes, courses, books, teaching materials, materials for the blind, and on-line question/answer services, contact us for a catalog and information sheets or visit www.doesgodexist.tv.

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“I’VE LOST (OR AM LOSING) MY FAITH.”



The **Does God Exist?** program has maintained a website or multiple websites for 18 years. One of the things that we have invited people to do on these websites is to send us their questions at jncdge@aol.com. This has resulted in an average of some 200 e-mails a day coming to us from all kinds of people with all kinds of questions.

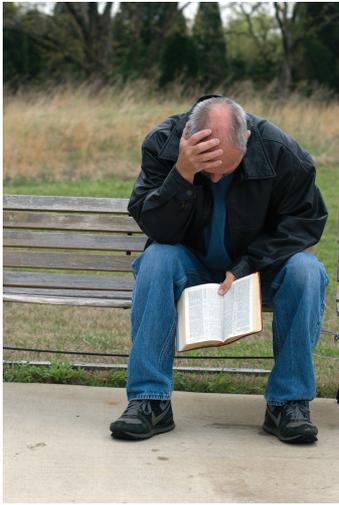
Once you get past the spam and daily hate mail, there is a significant number of questions from atheists who would like to believe in God because they are frustrated with where their atheist belief system is taking them, and people who have been a part of some church but are losing their faith. This is not new. In the Bible there are a number of times when people asked things like “I believe, help my unbelief” (Mark 9:24). Some of the reasons that people had to struggle with their unbelief are the same as today, and some are different. What we would like to attempt to do in this article is to identify what we believe are the six major causes of people losing their faith and make a brief response to each of them.



ATHEIST PROPAGANDA. Atheism has become increasingly aggressive in the past decade, and qualified writers like Richard Dawkins have provided a wide range of atheist arguments. Very little of this has focused on evidence, but has mostly involved attacks on a theological or philosophical basis. From the pens of these writers have come a massive number of atheist websites which quote Dawkins and others, or paraphrase them, usually without giving credit. As these websites have attacked the **Does God Exist?** program, there has been a very small number who have actually e-mailed their questions or challenges to us. In most cases they have been young people who really did not understand the arguments, but found it to be fun to get a reaction from religious people. In several cases I have

learned that the person I was communicating with was under 15 years of age, and yet he had a website and sent e-mails filled with profanity and abuse towards those who believe in God.

The atheist arguments are not much of an issue for someone like myself who has been handling atheist attacks and threats for over



40 years. However, for a young adult who is not acquainted with the approach and the material, the attacks may sound convincing. What we have tried to do in this journal is to respond to some of this material in articles that deal with specific challenges and attacks. We have also prepared videos which can be watched free of charge on our doesgodexist.tv web site. Program 25 titled “The New Atheism” goes into some of these questions. Here are some articles and issues during the past five years, where we have dealt with some of the atheist challenges: (These articles can be accessed on our doesgodexist.org website by going to the Journal Archive in the navigation bar on

the home page or printed copies can be mailed upon request.)

“Separating the Old and New Testament,” Jan/Feb 2012

“The Moral Impossibility of Naturalism,” May/June 2011

“Pollution, Pain and God,” May/June 2010

“Answering Challenges to the Bible,” Jul/Aug 2009

“Does Santa Equal God?” Nov/Dec 2009

“Maligning God in Ignorance,” Jan/Feb 2009

“Strange Does Not Equal Supernatural or Atheism,” Mar/Apr 2008

“God of the Gaps and Evidence,” Jul/Aug 2008

“Atheists Declare War on Faith,” Jul/Aug 2007

“The Church Is Stupid,” Jan/Feb 2007

“The Debate that Shouldn’t Be,” Nov/Dec 2007

“What Is Reliable History and What Is Not,” Jul/Aug 2007

“Apologetic Problems with Miracles,” Sept/Oct 2007

There is a large number of excellent books written by qualified authors who have responded to atheist material including the challenges of Dawkins. We have reviewed some of these as well. Some recent books along these lines which we have reviewed include:

Field Manual for Christian Apologetics by John Oakes

God Behaving Badly by David Lamb

On Guard by William Lane Craig

Who Made God? by Edgar Andrews

Atheist Delusions by David Bentley Hart
Fabricating Jesus by Craig Evans
Reasonable Faith by William Lane Craig
Is the Bible Intolerant? by Amy Orr-Ewing
When Critics Ask by Norman Geisler and Thomas Howe
The Dawkins Delusion by Alister McGrath

CREATIONIST DENOMINATIONALISM. Another major source of people losing their faith is religious people who promote their denomination's creed and doctrines in creationist teachings. Ronald Numbers in his book *The Creationists* shows that a vast proportion of creationist materials are from dispensational millennialists. Popular creationist programs like Answers in Genesis, Dinosaur Adventure Land (closed), and The Institute for Creation Research and speakers like Kent Hovind and Ken Ham use everything from public seminars to theme parks to promote their doctrine. Like the atheist website material, these teachings are picked up by people who do not understand the science or the doctrinal concepts and that material is used in sermons, Vacation Bible School programs, camp programs, youth rallies, and Bible classes. Much of the material in these presentations is very good, but there are many things that are bad science and/or bad theology. Some examples are:

- *Claims that Darwinian evolution caused the crusades.
- *Bad interpretations of cave drawings claimed to be dinosaurs.
- *Claims of Egyptian armor found in the Red Sea.
- *Arguments made about the Grand Canyon being analogous to canyons on Mount St. Helens.



We have also seen a host of attempts to discredit all methods of dating that might suggest that the earth is more than the 6,000 years old. This is demanded by dispensationalism and its predictions of the rapture and the ultimate re-establishment of Judaism with Jesus sitting on David's throne.

The problem with all of this is that when young people get further along in their education, they begin to see the mistakes in that which they were taught as a child. Then they assume that since they were taught incorrectly about some of these things, that the entire content of their religious education must be wrong—or at least suspect. This is by far the area that brings us the most e-mails. We have tried over the years to provide help in evaluating some of the areas of concern.

Some of the recent articles we have had are:

“Misunderstanding the Death Sin Produces,” Mar/Apr 2012

“Westernizing the Biblical Account,” Jan/Feb 2011

“Why Dinosaurs?” Jul/Aug 2011

“A Christian View of the Business of Spirits, Ghosts and Demons,”
May/June 2011

“The Wisdom of God: Proverbs 8:12–30,” Jan/Feb 2011

“Making Sense of Rocks,” Nov/Dec 2011

“Misreading the Message,” Mar/Apr 2010

“The Roll of Chance in Creation,” Nov/Dec 2009

“The Laws of Thermodynamics,” Jul/Aug 2009

“Misunderstanding Radiation,” Mar/Apr 2008

“Destructive Dispensationalism,” Nov/Dec 2008

LIFESTYLE ATTRACTIVENESS. Closely associated with the two sources of faith loss we have mentioned so far is the fact that rejecting God offers a temporary “high”—especially to young



people. To suddenly be free of the moral restrictions that faith brings is an attractive offering to a young person whose hormones are raging and who is frustrated as he struggles with his own sexuality and peer pressure to engage in a “party mentality.” I have frequently had a young

person come up to me after a lectureship and say that he or she could not respond to my evidence, but was not about to change his or her lifestyle. Paul Chamberlain’s book *Can We Be Good Without God?* is a good discussion of this, and we have had a number of articles on morality and life choices in this journal. See Dr. Paul Smith’s articles in our May/June 2012 issue or our article on “The Moral Impossibility of Naturalism” in the May/June 2011 issue.

HYPOCRISY IN LEADERSHIP. A number of surveys by the Barna Institute and other groups have shown that many young people have not seen their parents, siblings, or church leaders live up to what they taught. This point is so obvious that we will not elaborate on it here. This is a very personal problem, and any generalization would be inaccurate. Our last point in this essay will get back to this issue.

LACK OF FOUNDATION TEACHING. What I mean by “foundation teaching” is the basics of why we believe what we believe. For many young people Bible class and worship have been entertaining stories, flashy presentations, and emotional appeals. None of these things is destructive in and of itself, but when that is all there is to a child’s religious education, that child is in trouble. Why do we believe that God created the cosmos? Why cannot the cosmos be eternal? How do we know the Bible is true? Who created God? Why do we follow Jesus and not Muhammed or Buddha? How do we explain the horrible stories of the Old Testament, and the claims of Jonah and the great fish, or the crossing of the Red Sea? The list of fundamental questions is very long, and while we need to teach Bible stories to the very young, we also need to give them a foundation so that they will know how to answer or at least understand the answers to those who will challenge their beliefs as they grow up.



There has been a belief in many churches and congregations that as long as we teach the kids the right memory verses, and help them have a good time at church they will be okay. The references we have given earlier in this article contain many responses to these kinds of questions. We are not equipping our youth to know how to handle these challenges, and because of this we are finding many of our young people leaving their faith rather than confronting the challenges.

FAULTY CONVERSION. Does any significant change happen to us when we become a Christian? Acts 2:38 is quoted by many of us, emphasizing the importance of being baptized for the forgiveness of our sins. The rest of that verse says “you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” If we take that verse at face value, then the Holy Spirit will work in all of us who become Christians. Romans 6:1–9 talks about dying to sin and becoming a new creature — a process associated with repentance. The problem is that for many people becoming a Christian was not because there was a conscious desire to change and repent and die to sin, but rather an emotional response made to a wonderful sermon, or a direct confrontation by a minister or friend. If response was made on a purely emotional basis then

as soon as the emotion went away life returned to normal. There was no fundamental change in how the person lived and thus no opportunity for the indwelling of God's Spirit to help in changing that life.

Christianity is a way of life. We need the help of God's Spirit to become Christ-like. Just getting wet does not do that. We



may not have the intelligence to answer every question that is thrown at us, and we may even make mistakes in our choices in life. In 1 John 1:8 we are told that if we say we do not sin the truth is not in us. We will make mistakes, and in answer to questions we will sometimes have to say, "I don't know, but I will find out." I have had young people tell me that they were baptized into Christ "to keep peace at home." They had no intention of ever attending church services or living the Christian life once they left home.

The church is facing major challenges in the second decade of the twenty-first century. We hope that there will be a groundswell in the membership of the church to get back to basics. Let us be less concerned about being entertained, and more concerned about letting God's Spirit live within us to change the world.

— John N. Clayton



Top: © McIninch, Bottom: © chesterf, Both images from BigStockPhoto.com.



THE MAN IN THE MIDDLE

I am in the 45th year of this ministry which we call **Does God Exist?** When you have given as many talks as I have, written as many articles as I have, taught as many classes as I have, and answered as many letters and e-mails as I have—you have generated a number of people who are antagonistic to you and a number who have found your efforts to be helpful. Those who are antagonistic fall into two broad camps—those who feel I am too conservative and those who feel I am too liberal. Both of these groups like to coin labels to fit what they perceive our errors to be. I have acquired quite a collection: “theistic evolutionist,” “mitigated evolutionist,” “literalist,” “progressive creationist,” “old-age creationist,” “shadower of Darwin,” “flaming liberal,” “modern infidel,” “scientific creationist,” “naive literalist,” “modernist,” “ignorant Biblicist,” and “liberalist”—just to identify a few. There are many more that have obscenities, racial implications, Americanisms, and/or profanities that we will not include in this journal.

You may notice that these descriptions are on all sides of the various issues that we explore in this journal and in our ministries. Some are from the skeptical side of the issue, but most are from the religious side. I believe there is some value in looking at where some of these antagonisms are coming from, because a number of them are valid concerns and have some useful concepts involved that we all need to be aware of.

FROM THE “CONSERVATIVE” SIDE

I put the word “conservative” in quotes, because I do not think any of us really know what the word means in religious matters. Many times I have met with people who had very conservative views on how the church should conduct their worship, or what the worship service should include. These same folks were, in some cases, very liberal in their morality values and standards. They would be vehemently opposed to a congregation sending money to a children’s home, but saw no problem in social drinking or abortion. In matters of apologetics, which is what this ministry is about, these would be

folks who believed that the earth was about 6,000 years old, that Noah had in the ark two of every species of animals on the earth today, and the giants (*nephilim*) of Genesis 6 were in fact huge men towering well over 10 feet tall. Any suggestion that the earth was older than 6,000 years or that life has changed throughout the history of this planet would be viewed as a liberal intrusion to the church and sure to weaken the faith of young people. A frequent accusation of this system of belief is that those who accept scientific explanations of things twist the Bible to fit science.

The fundamental concern of this group of believers is valid. We cannot be biblical minimalists who reduce what the Bible says to such a level that it is obvious that we do not believe the Bible is God's word, and thus literally true. If I do not accept the biblical statements about man's creation and the Garden of Eden, why would I believe that Jesus was in fact born of a virgin or that he rose from the dead? If I do not believe what the Bible says about these matters, why would I believe it is accurate in condemning adultery or any other moral issue? It is valid to suggest that if we say something in the Bible is false and something else is true, that we have reduced the Bible to a choice and not a guide.

FROM THE "LIBERAL" SIDE

Once again I put the label in quotes, for the same reasons as stated earlier. Many of these folks would suggest that it is my poor education (or non-education) that is causing me to take a document that was not intended to be a history book, and make it into something it was not intended to be. The accusation here is that the cosmology of Genesis 1 is the belief system of the day in which it was written, and must be interpreted as such—not as a test-

able account relevant to twenty-first century science. The stories of the Old Testament concerning David and Goliath, the flood of Noah, Jonah and the great fish, and the like are just that—stories to teach an object lesson and not histories of what actually happened. For many of these folks even the miracles of Jesus were object lessons and not historical events. The feeding of the 5,000 is said to teach us that generosity can motivate others to give. The idea is that Jesus did not miraculously create the food, but motivated those there to give what they had stashed away.



If the Bible is perceived as a group of fairy tales, then like Santa Claus, the Easter Bunny, and the Great Pumpkin in the *Peanuts* comic strip, they will be discarded by many people in the name of what is reasonable and what can be documented. Trying to offer an apologetic for the validity of biblical events is viewed to be futile, because the events never really happened but are object lessons, and their value is reduced when they are put to rational testing. My experiences in Europe have been that a vast number of people in most European countries view the Bible as impossible for enlightened humans to believe. It is no help that sometimes fundamentalists have caused a weakening of faith in people by trying to defend a biblical story with evidence that can be easily shown to be bogus.

The extreme members of the liberal view have even gone so far as to suggest that any attempt at apologetics is misguided. Some would make that claim simply on the basis that man is incapable of comprehending the complexity of the cosmos and the creative process that accomplished it. Others would maintain that everything God has done was accomplished by miraculously speaking it into existence. Both liberals and conservatives have been known to suggest that since God's ways are not our ways and his thoughts are not our thoughts (Isaiah 55:8–9), God must function in such a way that humans cannot understand anything God does. This view contradicts the spirit and statements of the Bible. Passages like Psalm 19:1; Romans 1:18–23; Proverbs 8; and many others encourage man to learn from the creation and to build faith from seeing God's wisdom, power, and design in all that surrounds us.

IN THE MIDDLE

I had a well known preacher tell me in 1968 when I started this ministry, that as long as I was being chastised by both the liberals and the conservatives I was probably teaching what was right. The fact is that both sides I have tried to briefly describe have valid points to make. There are risks involved in any interpretation of scripture. Our definition of taking the Bible literally has always been that you have to look at who wrote it, to whom it was written and why, and how the people to whom it was written would have understood it. I try to apply this principle to



any passage of scripture that I am studying. That sometimes takes a lot of time and work.

As an example, in Genesis 6 we have an account that has been mishandled by a wide range of teachers. Some have found aliens, or super heroes, or ghost creatures in this account. The chapter in which the account is given is the flood chapter. Is the flood of Noah a story about alien visitation or ghost creatures afflicting mankind? Certainly not. The word translated “giants” in Genesis 6:4 came from the Vulgate translation where the Latin *gigantus* was rendered from the Hebrew word *nephilim* which literally means “fallen ones.” “Fallen ones” certainly fits the theme of chapter six if you look at who wrote it, to whom it was written, and how the people of that day would have understood it. This is not an object lesson passage as the liberals might claim. For those who regard it as a separate story, the word *nephilim* is not inconsequential to the rest of chapter six. You cannot allow a superficial reading of a few verses to project a message which ignores what the context is about or what the words literally mean. That will only cause a misunderstanding of what the author of the passage intended to convey. This is just one example of stories in the Bible that have been radically misrepresented by people from all sides of the faith spectrum.

“In the middle” does not mean “out of touch.” We do not have to reject modern science and our understanding of how things work scientifically to believe the Bible to be true. I recently read an article by a preacher condemning quantum mechanics as a tool of Satan. The article was written on a computer and distributed by a system that depends on quantum tunneling, a product of quantum mechanics. We cannot reasonably condemn modern science and then go to the doctor and have the things we condemned save our lives. The discovery of the Higgs boson in July 2012 made the Standard Model of modern physics appear to be valid. The particle was called the “God particle,” but all that meant was that it was the tool to be used in forming mass and the things that make up the physical world. What has happened with the Higgs field and the Higgs boson is that science is understanding more of the complexity of producing mass and charge and it has been found to be so complex that a chance explanation for it to happen is virtually impossible.

When you look at Jesus and the apostles, I believe you see that they were also “men in the middle.” Much of the adult life of Christ was



spent opposing the legalists and conservatives of his day. In Matthew 23:23 Jesus points out that the scribes and Pharisees did all the right things in worship but “omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith” (KJV). In Matthew 5 through 7 Jesus makes a contrast between the legalistic interpretations of the Old Law and the beautiful attitude changes that Christianity would provide. The Apostles faced the same extremes, not only from the Jewish leaders that Jesus dealt with but also the Nicolaitans and Gnostics who were on the liberal end of things. Many of the warnings given to the early church involved these “liberal” groups as well as the “conservative” legalists.

It is important for us to continue to search for truth without getting swept up by either extreme we have mentioned. The Bible makes it clear when something is a miracle and when it is a natural event. In the Old Testament the word choices in the Hebrew clearly define miracles. If the Hebrew word *bara* is used in reference to a process or event, then God has done something that is miraculous to us. The word *bara* is never used in reference to something a human can do.

TWO HEBREW WORDS

bara = To create. Something only God can do.
A miraculous event.

asah = To make. A natural or man-made event.
God can also “make” new things from what
he has already created.

When the Hebrew word *asah* is used it describes something that has a natural cause and man can in all probability duplicate it. Sometimes an event may be described without the clear word choices, and we may not be able to answer whether the event was a miraculous act of God, but the cases where this happens are extraordinarily rare.

When the Bible says something was a miracle, the question of whether it happened or not is a matter of faith. If you do not believe miracles ever happen, then all claims of miracles have to be assumed to be just stories to convey a message. This may be useful for object lessons, but it makes the reader’s relationship with God very distant and impersonal. I believe we should take the Bible literally, and that means that if an event is said to be a miracle, or would have been understood by the people of the time to have been a direct act of God, we accept that and assume that in fact it was. The virgin birth of Christ, his resurrection, the raising of Lazarus from the dead, walking on the water, and the demon exorcisms are just some of the miracles that we



either accept on faith or reject. If you do a careful study of the miracles of Christ you will see there was a purpose that each of them served.

So was there a flood? I believe there was because it is presented as an event. Did Noah build an ark? I believe

so because of the concordance of a variety of stories in different cultures that give the same account, and because the Bible records it as history. Was it made of planed wood with modern stalls and watering systems? I do not believe so because the culture of that time did not know about those things. Did it have two of each of the 26 million forms of life that have lived on this planet? The Hebrew word for “kind” is not the same as the English word “species” so that is not what the Bible says. Did it cover the whole globe or the part of the earth where man lived? I was not there to personally answer that question, but passages like Luke 2:1 and Colossians 1:23 show global wording can be used for things that were not global. The flood covered all people living at the time whether or not it covered the whole planet. The question of whether uninhabited lands were covered is irrelevant to the account given and diverts our attention from the primary message of the account.

Being the “man in the middle” means that I do not have the answer to every question. I am still learning and growing and trying to understand all of God’s Word. I may change my opinions on various items and issues as God continues to work with me. I am encouraged that even the apostles had to go through the same process. Peter had a terrible time understanding that the gospel was for all people, and that we are all equal. His struggle was so great that the Apostle Paul had to discipline him as described in Galatians 2:11–14. None of us should be so arrogant that we feel that we have nothing to learn or that there is no issue on which we might need to change our opinion. I love the motto, “Where the Bible speaks we speak and where the Bible is silent we are silent.” The challenge for all of us is to actually do what the motto says.

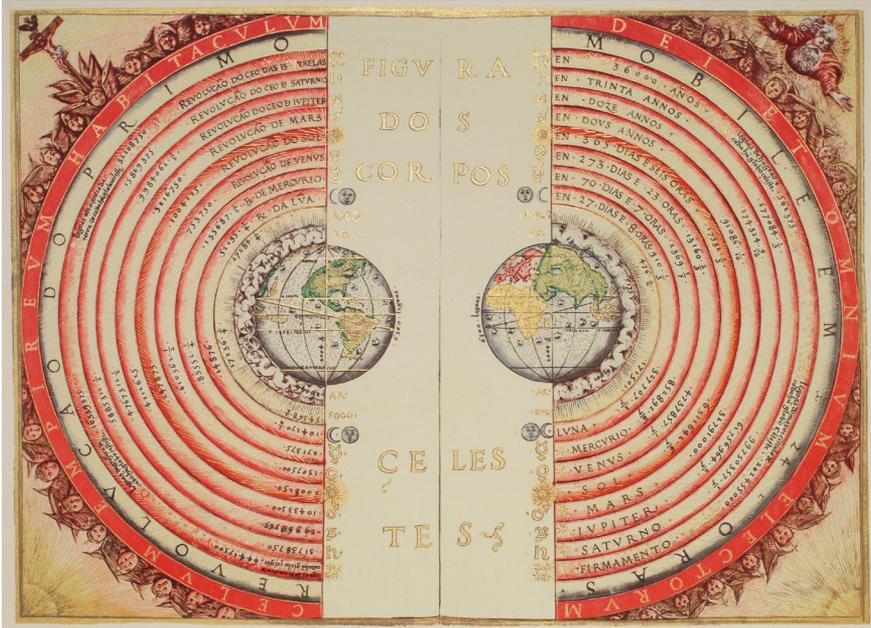


—JNC

LOSING GOD

by Al Cornell

Nearly every Bible scholar and student had latched onto a particular interpretation concerning the universe. The earth was the center, the sun and moon circled it, the fixed stars were in a canopy that also circled the earth, and each of the wandering stars (planets) had its peculiar orbit around the earth.



Geocentric Universe by Bartolomeu Velho, 1568 (Bibliotheque Nationale, Paris)

Had that concept been correct, science would, centuries ago, have proven all its tenets. Beyond that, the concept of the God of the Bible would be virtually proven, and we would be walking by sight.

While the Bible clearly proclaims a spiritual realm, it distinguishes that realm from the physical realm. “For we walk by faith, not by sight” (2 Corinthians 5:7). Yet the creation does supply us with abundant clues to a realm beyond. “The heavens declare the glory of God; ... Their voice goes out into all the earth” (Psalm 19:1, 4).

As the discipline of science developed, it conflicted with the accepted biblical interpretation, and an unnecessary wall was erected.

Gradually, religious leaders relented on their incorrect interpretations and opened the door for some harmony with scientific advancement.

However, some participants in the battle prefer to continue to fight. Some in science believe that foolish theological concepts strengthen their atheistic concept and support their attack on all religion. Some who endorse religion stubbornly fight science as the enemy.

Yet, I suspect that for more people who are turning from faith, God is not lost in an intellectual battle, but in the vast unknown. We commonly hear of billions of stars that God created for our enjoyment and for nighttime navigational purposes. Yet less than one star in a million billion is discernible by the naked eye.

For most people, it would be easier to perceive of man being important to God if man occupied center stage in the universe. As it became known that earth is an unimaginably minute speck in the universe, it became easier to suppose that we exist without purpose.

Our social culture and obsession with behaviors that are biblically designated as sinful have resulted in ignoring scriptural moral standards. They also probably constitute the major driving force for unbelief. Scientific intellectualism is often claimed as the reason for endorsing atheism. This environment has

resulted in a slow increase in atheism. However, the current-century term “apatheism” is now applied to a more rapidly growing segment of the population. Apatheists suppose that faith is an unimportant concept and that their lives would be unchanged if they ever decided to believe in theism or atheism. Thus, God, if there is a God, is irrelevant to their decisions and life styles.

Fundamental atheists regularly proclaim that religion is the cause of most of the world’s problems and that it is the ultimate evil. That premise may be scientifically testable. If it is true, as atheism increases, we should be seeing an improved quality of life. There should be fewer individual and political conflicts. There should be more compassion and fewer crimes.



Stars being created in the Eagle Nebula
7000 light-years from earth.

However, as it relates to these matters there is a discernible direction that societies move in when faith diminishes. There is no higher quality of life that results from unbelief.

Clearly, many unbelievers are excellent neighbors and exceptional humanitarians. Perhaps they represent a generation that is still significantly influenced by spiritual standards. Those who have applied “survival of the fittest” concepts to our neighborhoods and work places have diminished the quality of life for many.

Though it is true that religion has been at the heart of much conflict, the model of faith-living portrayed in the Gospels as the teachings and life of Jesus Christ remains difficult to fault. Even the agnostic, Loren Eiseley, acknowledged the worthiness of Jesus’ influence with the words, “... love, compassion, call it what one will—which however discounted in our time, moved the dying Christ on Golgotha with a power that has reached across two thousand weary years.” Any society that increases its devotion to the Christ-standard improves its quality of life.

When it comes to Jesus, those who attack religion usually satisfy themselves with imagined uncertainty about his existence and small talk about the Gospels being written decades after Jesus died. The major faults that they want to heap on religion never come close to the one who hung on Calvary’s cross.

Fundamental to the concepts of faith and the freewill to believe, is the fact that science will never find God. Our older generation was amazed at the proclamation of the first cosmonaut to circle the earth from space. He taunted believers by declaring that he did not see their God. Yet the premise of his conclusion is at the heart of modern intellectual unbelief. Some believe that if it cannot be determined by science it has no reality. Their minds are closed to the concept of God, and they do not believe in the existence of anything that is not detected by microscope, test tube, telescope, or other physical tools. Yet many arrive at a different conclusion and view water molecules, warblers, sunsets, and Hubble photos as evidence to believe or increase their faith in God.

Ecclesiastes 3:11 states, “He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the hearts of men; yet they cannot fathom what God has done from the beginning to the end.” Those who are losing their grip on faith in God because the cosmos is complicated missed that point. The expectation that if God did it then it should be somehow simple is amazing when you think that the alternative is to attribute the complexity to chance.

There is no need to lose God in the vastness of the universe. We will never understand it all, but that does not constitute a reason to deny purpose and reject faith in God. After all, to turn away would not be turning to a more intellectually satisfying explanation.

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.

LOUIS PASTEUR

(1822-1895)

French Chemist and Microbiologist

Founder of Microbiology and Immunology

Pasteur's research into the cause and prevention of disease has saved countless lives.

“The more I study nature, the more I stand amazed at the work of the creator.”

“Science brings men nearer to God.” “In good philosophy, the word cause ought to be reserved to the single Divine impulse that has formed the universe.”

“Little science takes you away from God but more of it takes you to Him.”



Louis Pasteur by Pierre Lamy Petit

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Cynthia's Corner



WHAT IS FAITH IN GOD'S WORD?

We can approach this topic from an evidential point of view. God does not expect us to believe in him or his Word blindly, without proof or evidence. The whole Bible and the world (Dead Sea Scrolls, archeological, and scientific findings, etc.) are full of many kinds of evidences showing the Bible to be what God says it is: His God-breathed revelation to man. (Galatians 1:11, 12; 1 Thessalonians 2:13; 2 Timothy 3:16; 1 Peter 1:12; 2 Peter 1:20, 21).

However, I want to approach this practically. For those of us who believe that the Bible is God's Word, what does that belief mean to us? Does believing cause us to read it, study it, even meditate on it? Does it change our behavior and attitudes? What does real, biblical faith mean? The book of James is very clear that "faith without deeds is dead" (James 2:26). "Faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead" (James 2:17). "I will show you my faith by what I do" (James 2:18). Indeed, "faith without deeds is useless" (James 2:20).

So, what kind of faith is James (God) talking about? Our faith, if it is genuine and sincere, should change the way we think, feel, and act. Christian faith is not just going to church and saying we believe the Bible; but, actually doing what it says! "The man who says, 'I know him,' but does not do what he commands is a liar, ..." (1 John 2:4). "This is love for God: to obey his commands" (1 John 5:3). "Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?" (Luke 6:46). "Whoever claims to live in him [or believe in him] must walk as Jesus did" (1 John 2:6).

Real biblical faith is transformational. "And we, ... are being transformed into his likeness." (2 Corinthians 3:18). God's Word and his Spirit have the power to change us from the inside out. "The mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace" (Romans 8:6). This is the challenge to all of us who say we believe in God and in his Word. Are we letting God and his Word change us? "For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12). Are we conforming our lives and our thinking to his Word? "Be transformed by the renewing of your mind" (Romans 12:2) "Be made new in the attitude of your minds" (Ephesians 4:23). Are our hearts and minds being purified by His Word and His Spirit? "Purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and Spirit" (2 Corinthians 7:1). This is a daily (hourly), life-long challenge and process for all who claim to have faith in God and his Word.

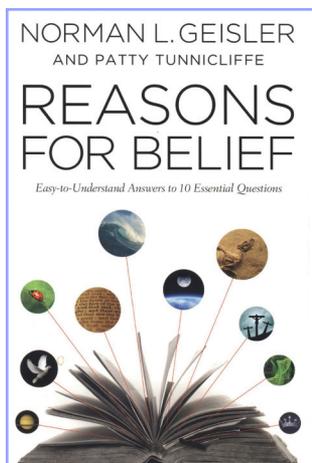
—Cynthia Clayton



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

REASONS FOR BELIEF

by Norman Geisler & Patty Tunnicliffe. Bethany House, © 2013,
237 pages, \$13.99 (paperback), ISBN-13: 978-0-7642-1057-0



Norman Geisler is a Professor of Apologetics and has written over 80 books, some of which we have reviewed previously. Patty Tunnicliffe has been a speaker on many denominational lectureships in recent years. This book takes ten challenges from atheists, and provides responses to them. The challenges are: (1) “Real Truth Does Not Exist. ‘Truth’ Is Just Truth to You.” (2) “God Does Not Exist.” (3) “If God Exists, He Isn’t Necessarily the God of the Bible.” (4) “Miracles Don’t Happen.” (5) “The New Testament’s Many Errors Make It Unreliable. It’s More Like a Collection of Myths and Legends.” (6) “Jesus Never

Claimed to Be God.” (7) “Jesus Didn’t Prove He Is God.” (8) “Jesus Did Not Rise From the Dead.” (9) “The Bible Isn’t the Only True Religious Book.” (10) “Christianity Is Too Narrow. There Are Many Ways to God Besides Jesus.”

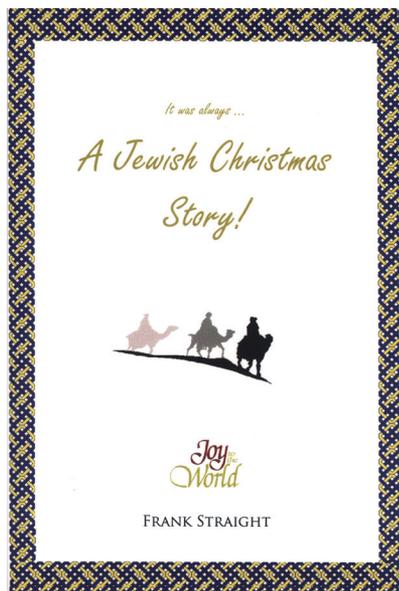
This book is written at a level that bright junior high school students can understand. It is clear, well organized, and well written. The book is too superficial for college students, but that is expected with the range of topics covered. For beginning students the explanations of the “big bang”, the second law of thermodynamics, and the views of skeptics and other religions is handled in a fair and understandable way.

We recommend this book for grades 5 to 12. It will give understandable answers to non-technical readers and help young people understand the key issues in apologetics today.

A JEWISH CHRISTMAS STORY

by Frank Straight, Xlibris Publishers, © 2010,
95 pages, \$15.99 (paperback), ISBN-13: 978-1-4415-9076-3

Christmas can be a very frustrating time for preachers and church leaders. Not only is there the constant battle with materialism and commercialization, but even those who want “the true meaning of Christmas” are frequently caught up in creative, heart-tugging stories that sometimes are so rooted in fantasy that they can actually be a detriment to faith. Those of you who have followed this ministry for the 45 years of its existence will recall that many of my debates with atheists have been based on their statement that they do not believe in God for the same reason they do not believe in Santa Claus.



Here is a book that gets to the heart of the true Christmas story. Frank Straight has developed a classroom study which gets into the real meaning of the birth of Jesus Christ. Jesus was a Jew living in a Jewish culture, and Matthew was a Jew writing for a Jewish audience. In order to get the real meaning of Jesus' birth you have to come into

the subject with an understanding of the Jewish Scriptures — the Old Testament. Straight fits the birth of Jesus described by Matthew into the context of the Old Testament Jewish faith.

All eight chapters of Straight's book are based on Matthew chapters 1 and 2. The book deals with the genealogy of Christ and the history of his ancestors. Other issues covered are: Mary's pregnancy outside of marriage; what the “star” was; who the Magi were; how Herod figured into the picture; and why Nazareth was an issue in Jesus' life and ministry.

The chapters are short and easy to read. Each chapter is followed by a series of questions. There is an appendix with the answers to the questions. This is an in-depth Bible study that would be great for a class or a home devotional study. This is not an apologetic work, but we recommend it as a very worthwhile study as we approach the Christmas season.

DANDY DESIGNS

BEAUTY

Life is full of beauty. In the early days of the **Does God Exist?** ministry when we traveled long distances to lectureships in a station



wagon pulling a pop-up trailer, my wife's mother went with us. Edith was a collector of anything she saw beauty in, which meant her house was full of things she collected. She shared my interest in geology and rocks, and she loved to collect geodes. The outside of a geode is not impressive but if you cut it in

half with a rock saw or smash it with a hammer you will find the inside is full of beautiful colors—purple (amethyst), red (jasper), yellowish brown (iron), orange (agate), or light blue (chalcedony). She would also buy slices of rocks that had veins of minerals running through them that were full of color and intricate designs.

We love the beauty of the birds on our feeders, especially the ruby-throated hummingbirds. We marvel at the colors of the butterflies that visit our special butterfly bushes, and we relish the smell of our roses. The flicker of fireflies, the song of a wren, and the intricate pattern of diatoms under an electron microscope all impress us with the beauty built into the creation around us.

But what is beauty, and why should it exist? Is it an intrinsic property of our world—like mass? Is it an artifact of human perception? Does it arise by the operation of physical laws, and if so, how do these laws generate a quality so pleasing to us that we strive to create it? Is it something done by a Designer who values beauty and wants to impart that value to those created in his image?



From the position of a utilitarian naturalist, natural selection is the sole cause of beauty. The smelliest flowers are the ones that get pollinated the most by insects, so roses are simply selected over less fragrant plants. The colors of birds and butterflies and frogs are just camouflage according to this view and we just like the camouflage. There are many problems with this explanation. The extravagance of design is far beyond what is needed for basic camouflage. Many of the animals involved are color blind, so the elaborate color patterns are unnecessary. Look at the bleeding heart or the iris and ask why the flair? Many examples of beauty are in nonliving things and thus not selected in my way. Sunsets, sunrises, the auroras, mineral colors, the intricate patterns in snowflakes, patterns in galaxies and nebula are generally unnecessary to their existence. If the universe is only a machine grinding away for billions of years then its beauty has no value. Those things we think are beautiful are just a commodity to be used up—to suit our appetites. Nothing is of value unless it is useful to human beings—now or in some future generation. What good is a wilderness to a naturalist? If you cannot drill for oil—why protect the wild? What good are salmon if we can grow them in concrete vats? What good is a forest if it does not yield board feet of lumber? Why worry about non-human species if they are not fit and you are? Measured by its consequences, the utilitarian ethic and the naturalistic foundation on which it has been built have been disastrous.



Those of us who believe in God concur with biologist J. B. S. Haldane's discussion of the enormous range of colors and patterns in beetles when he said, "the cosmic designer must be inordinately fond of beauty." Offering no survival benefit the logarithmic spiral

of the nautilus caused Descartes to identify the mathematical beauty of what his equations described. The beauty around us provides standards for science, language, and literature. It calls us out of ourselves and inspires affection and gratitude. Rejoice in it. Care for it.



News and Notes

NOW IT'S HOOKAH SMOKING. Our society continues to embrace using drugs of all kinds as a way to cope with life. Public hookah bars use water pipes with a tobacco and fruit mixture and have grown in popularity. Researchers have found that these water pipes produce high benzene levels as well as high pyrene levels. These chemicals have been linked to leukemia, lung cancer, and immune problems. The Christian concept of being responsible for the care of your body involves not damaging it. First Corinthians 3:16–17 lays a strong charge on us not to damage “the temple.” Source: *Science News*, June 1, 2013, page 9.

NUMBERS SUPPORT CHANGE IN MORAL VIEWS. A Gallup Poll released May 31, 2013 show that 60% of Americans say it is morally acceptable to have a baby outside of marriage—up from 45% in 2001. Those who believe it is morally acceptable for unmarried people to have sex now stands at 63%—up from 53% in 2001. Homosexual relationships are morally acceptable to 59%—up from 40% in 2001. Source: *The Week*, May 31, 2013, page 17.

MUTATIONS IN OVERDRIVE. One of the questions that we hear a lot about is why there are so many diseases and disabilities in mankind. The question usually revolves around the question, “If God created us why are there are so many defects?” As the human genome has been studied, scientists have found that the mutation rate in man is huge. Each generation has roughly 100 billion mutations. Humans have five times as many rare gene variants as would be expected in any animal population and the reason is that our population has grown so rapidly—from 5 million people 10,000 years ago to over 6 billion today. If Adam and Eve’s gene pool was perfect, the natural process of mutation would have produced problems since most mutations are harmful. God has given us the ability to understand our genetic makeup, and to do something about it. The incredible complexity of our genetic makeup speaks strongly of the fact that we can know God is the Creator by seeing that we “are fearfully and wonderfully made” (Psalm 139:14). Source: *Discover*, June 2013.

THE NOAH'S ARK REPLICA CRAZE. We have mentioned in this column in the past that Answers in Genesis, the organization operating the Creation Museum, is building a \$73 million theme park with a full-scale ark and zoo in Williamstown, Kentucky. We also have mentioned that Johan Huibers in the Netherlands has built a 3,000-ton, full-sized model that actually floats. John Hagee's church in San Antonio has built an "inside the Ark" model complete with animatronic animals. Churches in Frostburg, Maryland; Florenceville, New Brunswick; and Broomfield, Colorado have all built arks. The government in Yerevan, Armenia, is involved in a plan to build an ark theme park in view of Mt. Ararat. A full-sized replica of the ark is part of a resort on Ma Wen Island, Hong Kong. Most of these models are not designed to educate. They are promotional tools for money-making entertainment and/or ways of promoting a denominational creed. They are inaccurate and convey the wrong message about Noah and the flood, but they sell. Source: *Christianity Today*, June 2013, page 9.



OXYGEN AND DINOSAURS. One of the many reasons why dinosaurs and humans did not live together is the fact that in the age of dinosaurs the oxygen content of the atmosphere was considerably higher than the 21% we have today. By studying charcoal remnants from the time of the dinosaurs it is now known that the oxygen content was at least four percent higher than today. The higher oxygen content allowed dinosaurs to be larger because higher oxygen content facilitates breathing. A negative factor would be that fires would be far more likely and more intense. With a four percent higher oxygen content even moist vegetation would ignite. Dr. Sarah Brown says, "Fires were a regular part of the dinosaurs' lifestyle." All of the world of the dinosaurs was designed to prepare the resources God knew man would need, and understanding how these resources were produced allows us to find them and synthesize them. They were a part of "God created the heavens and earth." Source: *National Geographic*, May, 2013, page 19.

POPE FRANCIS EMBRACES ATHEISTS. On May 22, 2013, Pope Francis told worshipers at morning mass “The Lord has redeemed all of us, all of us, with the Blood of Christ: all of us, not just Catholics. ... Even the atheists.” This has unleashed a flood of explanations, denials, praise, and condemnation from Catholic scholars, atheists, humanists, and all kinds of philosophers. The Pope can explain himself and probably will eventually, but the quote is out of context and is consistent with the Pope’s previous statements about Catholics reaching out to people “who don’t belong to any religious tradition.” The Blood of Christ redeems all humans who are willing to be redeemed, but just like a condemned man can refuse a pardon, people can and do refuse God. Let us not jump to conclusions about the Pope abandoning his faith. Source: CNN blog: <http://religion.blogs.cnn.com/2013/05/23/heaven-for-atheists-pope-sparks-debate/>.

PLAN B AND MORALITY. A federal judge has ordered the FDA to lift its restrictions on the sale of Plan B drugs to girls under the age of 17. Plan B drugs prevent the implanting of an embryo and thus effectively prevents pregnancy after an episode of unprotected sex. Very few people want to see children having a baby. One writer summarized it as “‘young kids are sexy beasts whose urges cannot be controlled,’ and that whenever they have a little ‘accident’ like unprotected sex, they should be able to ‘nip on down to the drugstore for a fix.’” Many of us who waited until marriage to have sex are quite amazed to hear anyone say that our “urges cannot be controlled.” More to the point is the incredible ignorance of our culture concerning what sex is and what it brings to those who use this great gift of God as he directed. Sex is not just an emotional release, it is a bond to oneness that has real meaning and purpose for a lifetime. To trivialize the purpose of sex is to lose a great and precious gift. The wrong message is being sent to children by the rhetoric of the Plan B proponents. Source: *The Week*, May 17, 2013, page 19.

HUMAN MICROBIOME DISCOVERED. This is probably a new word for you, because according to scientists we have discovered something that is “like finding an organ we didn’t know we had.” In the past ten years researchers have discovered that the human body hosts 100 trillion benign bacteria which help us digest food, program the immune system, prevent infection, and even influence mood and behavior. This host of bacteria is now called our “microbiome.” We sometimes think of bacteria as what make us sick, but in reality most bacteria help us live and are carefully designed and constructed tools to shape our lives. “I will praise you Lord, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made” (Psalm 139:14). Source: *The Week*, May 17, 2013, page 11.

KILLING OURSELVES. The American Lung Association in its 2013 “State of the Air” report has rated the ten dirtiest cities in the U.S. Seven of the ten are in California with the Los Angeles area being number one, and the Bakersfield area number 2 through 5. Houston and Dallas are numbers 7 and 8, and Washington D.C. is number 9. The data shows that we already have 1,000 excess deaths every year due to pollution of this type, not to mention the pain and suffering that pollution causes when it does not cause immediate death. A vast percentage of human suffering is due to our careless use of what God has given us, not to some failing on God’s part. Source: *Discover*, July 2013, page 82.



MISUNDERSTANDING CLONING. A well known theologian, Sean O’Malley, has called human cloning immoral saying, “Human cloning treats human beings as products, manufactured to order to suit other people’s wishes.” That reminds me of the first complaints by some theologians against surgery when the first surgery to remove a dead fetus from its mother’s womb was being done. They maintained that opening the human body was usurping God’s authority. In May it was announced that cloning has been used to make human embryonic stem cells, opening the door to making new organs out of a patient’s own tissues. Imagine the potential for good of being able to make a new liver out of your own cells to replace a cancerous liver! There would be no rejection because it was your cell material that was used, and the old cancerous organ would be no longer a part of your body. Understanding God’s design for life is giving man the ability to eradicate much of the disease and suffering that is a part of this world. Source: *The Week*, May 31, 2013, page 19.

ALIEN WORLD COUNT CONTINUES TO CLIMB. The study of exoplanets (planets orbiting stars other than our sun) is expanding rapidly. The May 3, 2013 issue of *Science* magazine (page 565) has a detailed discussion of the data and how it has been secured. Over 900 planets have been confirmed to be orbiting stars in our galaxy, and over 3,000 have been detected but not verified. During its lifetime the Kepler orbiting telescope was able to provide a wealth of data showing that the creation process has spawned massive amounts of matter in space providing unlimited horizons for man to explore and venture into. What an exciting time to live, when an unlimited universe is opened up to man and with resources so enormous that

our only limitation is our ability to get along with each other. That is a problem that only the principles given to us by God can solve.

ALCOHOL AND MILITARY RAPE. We have all been saddened by the newspaper accounts of sexual assaults in the United States military—estimated to be at 26,000 assaults in 2012. Lt. Col. Elizabeth Robbins has reported to the *Washington Post* that most of the attackers had been drinking heavily at the time of the assault, as had many of their victims. Those of us who have been in the military know there is a lot of social pressure to drink when off duty and inhibitions can be lost when alcohol is involved. Robbins says the military “must attack its drinking culture . . .” and we would suggest that admonition applies to our entire population. Christians need to lead the attack against this destructive recreational drug, not be a part of it. Source: *The Week*, May 31, 2013, page 9.

OTZI'S GENOME. In 1991 a Stone Age man was found sticking out of an Alpine glacier and he was given the name Otzi. Analysis of Otzi's genome shows that over four percent of his genes are Neanderthal genes indicating a strong connection between the different races of man early in man's history. We are all related and all go back to a common human ancestor and all evidence available to us supports that fact. Source: *Science News*, May 18, 2013, page 13.

WHITE HOUSE AND ATHEISTS MEET. The Secular Coalition for America (SCA), an atheist lobbying organization has been praising a meeting that was held between the White House Office of Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships . . . and half dozen atheist representatives including The American Atheists, American Humanist Association, and Military Association of Atheists and Freethinkers. The recognition of atheist groups as having significant input to faith-based programs is interesting. The SCA statement says “The White House is looking to better include atheists.” Such a meeting might not be all bad, but we would worry about whether the ultimate objective would be to exclude believers in God from having input into national moral issues. Source: theblaze.com.



COMETS AND WATER. One of the interesting questions that astronomers have wrestled with is how planet earth got so much water—a substance essential to life. All of science is a study of how God has done what he has done, and how he created and distributed water is important. In July 1994, Comet Shoemaker-Levy 9 slammed into Jupiter leaving dark streaks containing water. Recent measurements of the water in Jupiter’s upper atmosphere show that 95% of the water there came from Shoemaker-Levy. For the data see the April 23, 2013, issue of *Astronomy and Astrophysics*. Source: *Science News*, May 18, 2013, page 18.

NATURAL FRACKING. There is a concern about fracking to produce gas and oil, fearing that such activity may contaminate groundwater. In Buffalo, New York, there is a fire burning under a waterfall that has been burning for as long as humans have been in the area. The fire is produced by a natural gas seep coming from the fracking of a shale 1,200 feet deep in the ground. It is bizarre to see this fire burning under a waterfall, but it is a reminder of how God has provided man with more than enough resources to live on this planet we call Earth. Source: *Science News*, June 15, 2013, page 4.

AFRICAN ORIGINS QUESTIONED. The media would have us believe that our origins are in Africa, and that man’s origin is totally African in nature. Repeated finds have been made in Asia which challenge that notion. The most recent is an animal named *Archicebus achilles* recently found in China. The Bible indicates that man’s origin is in the Fertile Crescent area in modern day Iraq, which is generally accepted as the “birthplace of civilization.” The definition of what is man is part of the issue in this debate, but the “out of Africa” theory has evidence problems of its own. Source: *The Week*, June 28, 2013, page 17.

RECREATIONAL MARIJUANA ISSUE GROWS. In November 2012, Washington State and Colorado became the first states to legalize recreational marijuana. Between the medical uses of marijuana and the growing acceptance of it as a recreational drug, we can expect to see an accelerated growth in the health and social consequences of drug use, just as we have with alcohol. It has been well documented that people using marijuana perform poorly on tests of working memory. It has also been shown that the drug blunts concentration, weakens motor coordination, and interferes with the ability to scan one’s surroundings for obstacles. The danger of people driving while using marijuana should be obvious. A 2009 study showed that tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) levels of 5 ngm/ml of blood was as impairing as alcohol blood levels of .08. Between 1992 and 2006

hospital and rehab centers for minors abusing marijuana showed an increase of 188%. Alcohol abuse for the same group dropped by 64%. It would seem that Christians need to stand against this destroyer of God's temple (1 Corinthians 3:16–17) and not be participants in it. The argument that legalization means controlling the substance and lessening its effect does not seem to be compatible with the facts available on abuse. Source: *Scientific American*, June 2013, page 34.

INTERNET ABUSE. The ultimate case of Internet abuse took place in March 2010, when a South Korean couple let their three-month-old daughter starve to death in their apartment while they spent 12 hours a day nurturing a 3-D fantasy online role-playing game known as Prius Online. A documentary was released in June titled *Love Child* which details this story. The parents were brought to trial and their defense was that Internet addiction has impaired their judgment. With gambling online becoming fashionable, we can expect more irresponsible behavior like this from adults. Like a lot of things, moderation has to be preached in how much and in what way we use the Internet. Source: *Scientific American*, June 2013, page 24.

NEW VIEW OF QUANTUM THEORY. Quantum theory is used to describe the very small and the basic questions of how charge and mass are produced. It has been very successful in explaining some of the behaviors of things like quarks and neutrinos, but it produces some absurd possibilities. One of the most famous is called “Schrodinger’s Cat” in which a thought experiment produces the absurd view that a cat could be both alive and dead at the same time. A new view of quantum mechanics called “Quantum Bayesianism” suggests that the experiment is just a description of the observer’s mental state. The cat is either alive or dead and the observation reveals which. Wave function is the issue, and if you are confused you might be helped by a well written article in *Scientific American* (June 2013, page 47) titled “Quantum Weirdness? It’s All in Your Mind” by Hans Christian von Baeyer.

ATHEISTS ERECT MONUMENT ON GOVERNMENT PROPERTY. Starke, Florida, is familiar to many of us, because there is a large prison there that has worked with many of us involved in prison ministries. In Starke there is a granite slab that lists the Ten Commandments in front of the Bradford County Courthouse. Atheists have tried for some time to get the slab removed. Since they could not accomplish that, they erected a 1,500-pound granite slab near it giving quotes from public figures in the past including Madalyn Murray O’Hair supporting atheist views and ridiculing the Bible. Source: *Huffington Post*, July 1, 2013.

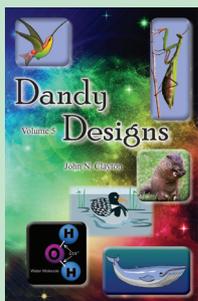
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