

DOES GOD EXIST?

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

May/June 2014
Volume 41 Number 3



THE WONDER
AND WISDOM OF

Beauty

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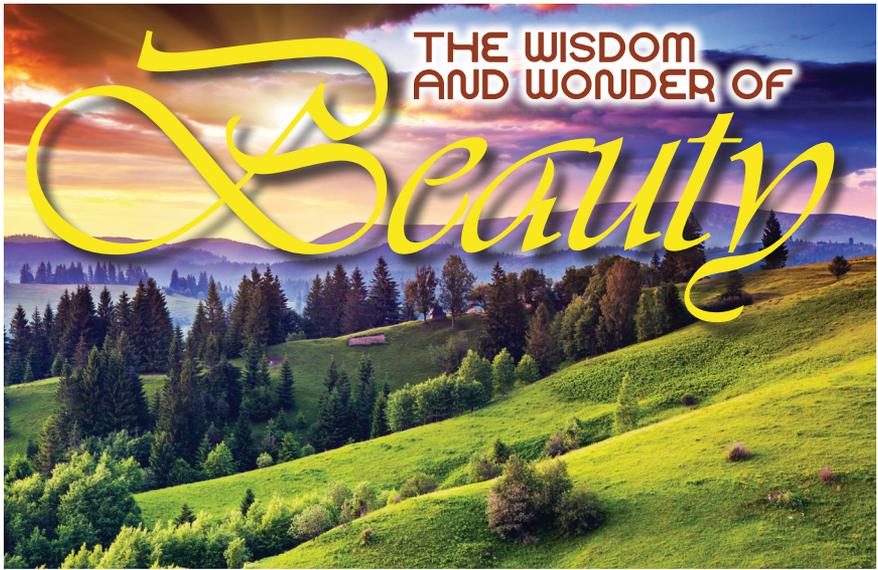
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Many years ago I was hiking in the Ontario wilderness, when I stopped to sit on a log from which I could see a lake in the distance. It was very quiet, and I was sitting very still, when suddenly a fox trotted onto a rock in front of me and stopped to clean himself and rest. Since I was sitting perfectly still and the wind was blowing from the fox toward me pushing my smell away from him, he did not realize that I was there. It was late summer, and the animal's coat was beginning to change for the upcoming winter season. The fox's coat shimmered in the sunlight, and the range of colors in its fur was dazzling. I had never seen a wild fox in the north before and this animal's beauty astounded me. The encounter must have lasted three or four minutes before he happened to look my way. When he saw me, the fur rose on his neck and back making him appear larger, and displayed his colors even more than before. We stared at each other for a few seconds and then he bolted—running away from what I am sure he thought was a very ugly predator.

In my house I have many things I have found in my rock hunting that are incredibly beautiful. They include a nautilus which is made of stunning pink and white mother-of-pearl, slices of volcanic rocks my mother-in-law collected from the western U.S., and beautiful purple fluorite crystals that came from southern Illinois and a volcanic area in Montana. You can buy books that deal with the extravagance of beauty in nature—the peacock's tail, the colors of rain-forest frogs, or the colors of a chameleon. You can enjoy the fragrance of roses, the song of a wren, the courtship dance of Sandhill cranes, the flickers of fireflies, and many more. Philosophers have pondered the meaning of beauty for all of recorded history. Is beauty an intrinsic feature of

the physical world, like mass? Is beauty an artifact of human perception? Does it arise solely from the operation of physical laws? How does it generate a quality so pleasing to us? Is it by design or are we designed to interpret it that way? Why do we strive to create beauty?

From a naturalistic, evolutionary viewpoint all of these things must be explained by chance or natural selection. The chemical makeup of minerals does different things to the light, producing the colors. Things like the fox's fur, the peacock's tail, and the rain forest frog's colors may be camouflage to avoid being eaten, or ways of selecting the most fit mate for procreation. The songs of wrens and whales are communication devices that help locate mates and warn competition to stay away from their territory. These are certainly some of the fringe benefits of beauty, but they are inadequate explanations for many of the cases that we see in the natural world.

The first problem with naturalistic arguments for beauty is that most animals are color-blind, and camouflage has more to do with

pattern than with color. The zebra, for example, is essentially black and white, but is marvelously camouflaged for its habitat. In cases like the chameleon, where the main predators have color vision, the idea of color being an aid to concealment may have validity. In many cases the extravagant color makes camouflage more difficult. The red of the cardinal makes it easy to see year-round. In ocean reefs color is frequently the main way to locate various forms of marine life.



around us. The opulence of the nautilus with its mother of pearl shell showing cream, pink, blue, and green cannot be explained by camouflage, because most of the shell's beauty is on the inside. It can only be seen by cutting the shell open. Most flowers are far more complex than they need to be. The attraction of pollinators is carried on efficiently by pheromones which attract insects by the smell, not by the opulent color or the complex design of the flower itself. Bleeding hearts and irises have a flair that is unnecessary just for a pollinator to be attracted to the flower. Who can look at an orchid and believe all of that flair is necessary to produce pollination, especially when one realizes that the time when the flower is at its maximum in most cases is not when the pollinator is most active.



The third problem with naturalistic explanations of beauty is that many of the most beautiful things we see are not related to living things, and thus cannot be explained by natural selection. We enjoy the beauty of sunsets, the auroras, the blue of glaciers, and the colors of geodes containing amethyst, agate, jasper, or chalcedony.

These things have to be explained by chance since no natural, biological law will explain their formation. Some beauty is seen only with an electron microscope—such as the intricate patterns seen in diatoms.

If you believe that the universe is only a machine grinding away for billions of years, then beauty has no intrinsic value. It is simply a commodity to be used up to suit our appetites. Nothing in nature has value except as it is useful to suit our appetites now or in some future generation. Proponents of this view would ask what value a wilderness has if you cannot drill for oil, or if it does not yield so many board feet of lumber. People with this view would ask why we should protect wild salmon when we can grow them in vats. They would refuse to worry about non-human species.

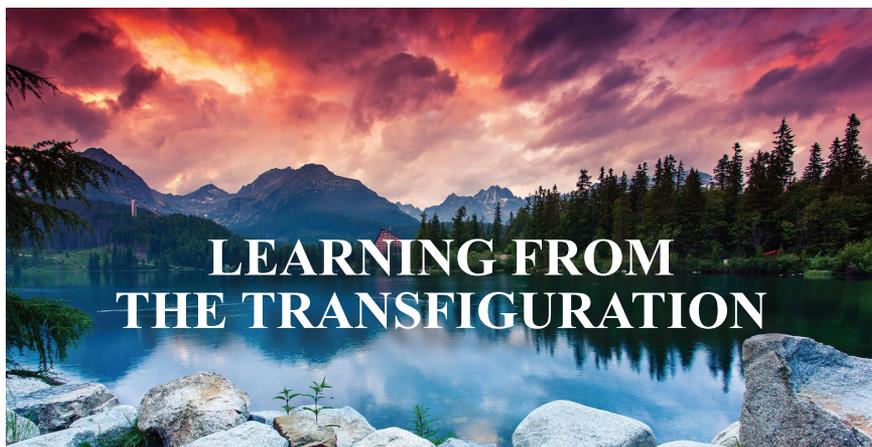


Those of us who believe that the universe was created by God would suggest that beauty is something the creator is very fond of and on which he places great emphasis. Beauty calls us out of ourselves. It provides standards for art, science, language, and literature.



Beauty inspires affection and gratitude. We need to rejoice in beauty and take care of it. “See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these” (Matthew 6:28–29).

—John N. Clayton



LEARNING FROM THE TRANSFIGURATION

I would suggest to you that the third most important event in the Bible after the resurrection and the creation is the transfiguration. In this day of religious pluralism and multiple claims of religious authority, there is a very poor understanding of Moses and Elijah and how their roles related to Judaism and the unique claims of Jesus Christ. The transfiguration demonstrated what Jesus was about, and the event is rooted in an understanding of the “mountain experiences” of Moses, Elijah, and Christ.

The mountain experience of Moses is described in Exodus 24:13–18 when Moses went up on Mount Sinai. Moses entered a cloud that symbolized the covering of divine presence. In Acts 1:9 a cloud hid Jesus from the sight of the disciples, and we are told in Revelation 1:7 that “he is coming with the clouds.” Moses was on the mountain 40 days and 40 nights and was given the Law. Moses has no known grave to this day. (The Bible makes reference to this in Deuteronomy 34:6.)

The mountain experience of Elijah is nearly identical. In 1 Kings 19:8 he traveled for 40 days and 40 nights until he reached Mount Horeb. Elijah established the prophets, and, like Moses, he has no known grave. Second Kings 2:11 tells us that he was taken into heaven in a whirlwind. It is interesting that all three figures in the transfiguration account have no grave, unlike most other religious figures.

The Law and the Prophets were the basis of the Jewish religion. Over and over we see Jesus referring to “the Law and the Prophets,” such as in Matthew 5:17, “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets: I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.” In Matthew 7:12 Jesus says, “In everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.” Malachi 4:4–6; Luke 24:4; Acts 1:10; and Revelation 11:3 all record the two witnesses and carry similar messages.

In the transfiguration, the Law and the Prophets are brought face to face with Jesus Christ in the persons of Moses and Elijah. The miraculous nature of this whole scene is portrayed by several facts:

- (1) The physical features of Christ were altered (Luke 9:29).**
- (2) Moses and Elijah appear “in glory” and the disciples hear them speak but are not aware of what is being said (verses 30–33).**
- (3) The cloud indicating divine presence appears (verse 34).**

All of this establishes Jesus Christ as the one that should be listened to indicating an end to the Law and the Prophets.

The parallels between Jesus and Moses are hard to miss. Their birth and childhood situation, the governmental situation under which they lived, the way they were treated by the Israelites, and even their mission have strong similarities. The concept of their mission seems to escape many people. The message of the transfiguration is freedom. Moses led the Israelites from Egyptian slavery to freedom. Jesus led all of mankind from slavery to sin to real and eternal freedom.



Colossians 2 spells out this freedom in crystal-clear detail. Verse 8 warns Christians to avoid philosophical and traditional ties to the world around us. In verses 10–15, a parallel is drawn between Jesus being raised from the dead and Christians being raised from the death of sin through baptism. Being raised from the deadness of sin is done through Christ and the Christian is freed from the legalism of the law of Moses “blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us which was contrary to us, ... nailing it to his cross” (KJV). Jesus fulfilled all of the prophets and gave mankind freedom.

We are warned about giving up this freedom by going back into the slavery of the Law. “Let no man, therefore, judge you about meat or what you drink and in respect to holy days or new moons or of the sabbath days” (verse 16). In verses 20–22 Christians are again warned not to give up the freedom that came to them in Christ. “Since you died with Christ to the elemental spiritual forces of this world, why,

as though you still belonged to the world, do you submit to its rules: ‘Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!’? These rules, which have to do with things that are all destined to perish with use, are based on merely human commands and teachings.”

Christianity calls mankind to real freedom. The transfiguration is the final nail in the coffin of legalism. God does not call Christians to live under a system of “Thou shalt nots.” Rather than just condemn murder, Jesus calls Christians to a new commandment — to love one



another (John 15:12; 1 John 4:7–8; 2 John 5). If we are filled with love, there is no room for hate. Turning the other cheek and going the second mile are ways of defusing the possibility of violence. Being free does not mean being free to hurt someone else. Rather than just condemning adultery,

Jesus calls us to think and have an attitude of treating sex as a bond that makes marriage what God intends for it to be — a true oneness. Sex is a great and precious gift given to us through God’s design of our bodies. It gives us freedom from the frustration and unfulfilling expression of short-term, uncaring relationships. Our freedom is freedom from sin and all the negatives that sin brings.

What a tragedy it is that mankind continues to try to take away the freedom that the transfiguration and Christianity in general have brought to us. There are people who want to make Christianity a series of negatives that oppress and leave people without positive options. They want to make humans especially vulnerable to sin because positive alternatives rooted in freedom are not offered. In addition to that, we have believers who try to infuse politics with Christianity. Jesus made it clear that he wanted no part in political activity. “Then give back to Caesar what is Caesar’s, and to God what is God’s.” (Luke 20:25). This statement makes a clear separation between the spiritual things that have to do with freedom and the enslavement of humans in political activity. Romans 13 makes it clear that government is necessary for mankind, and that Christians are to respect government. Jesus and the first century church functioned under one of the most oppressive and abusive political systems of all time, but rather than fight that system Jesus said, “My kingdom is not of this world” (John 18:36).



Dispensationalism and its attempts to enslave mankind to a physical, political future rob us of the freedom that God wants us to have.

Christians need to live freely. We need to be careful, however, that our freedom does not, to use the words of Paul, “become a stumbling block to the weak” (1 Corinthians 8:9). Teaching legalism or politics can “cause the weak brother, for whom Christ died,” to perish (verse 11). What all of us need is the promise of an eternal life of joy and peace with the God who created us and wants to have a relationship with us.

“We were buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead ... we too may live a new life. ... our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be



slaves to sin ... I put this in human terms because you are weak in your natural selves. Just as you used to offer parts of your body in slavery to impurity and to ever-increasing wickedness, so now

offer them in slavery to righteousness leading to holiness. ... For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6:4–23).

—JNC



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ADOPTING A PROACTIVE HEALTHY LIFESTYLE

by James Mitroka, Ph.D.

Editor’s Note: In our November/December 2013 issue we discussed foods and what a Christian should eat. That article brought in a great deal of mail. Our readers are obviously interested in the issue of a Christian’s response to caring for the “temple of God” (1 Corinthians 3:16). One of our readers, Jim Mitroka, is an associate professor of pharmacology at Palm Beach Atlantic University. He submitted the following which we are pleased to share with you.

THE IMPORTANCE OF A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE

What do you think is the best way to minimize the ravages of disease on health? Unfortunately, our focus is often on drugs and medical treatment. Largely because of our reliance on modern medicine, we naturally look to products found in a bottle as solutions to illness. Likewise, we tend to think in terms of treating existing illnesses rather than preventing them in the first place.

The drugs-only perspective is shortsighted, since many — indeed most — of the chronic diseases that plague our society are largely the result of poor lifestyle choices. In other words, they are avoidable or at least “delayable.” A recent review published in *Archives of Internal Medicine* states that four simple lifestyle factors appear to be associated with as much as an 80% reduction in the risk of developing the most common and deadly chronic diseases.¹ Those factors are: (1) never smoking, (2) maintaining a healthy weight, (3) exercising regularly, and (4) following



a healthy diet. Lifestyle has been associated, to various degrees, with Alzheimer's disease, atherosclerosis, asthma, some kinds of cancer, chronic liver disease or cirrhosis, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, type 2 diabetes, heart disease, metabolic syndrome, chronic renal failure, osteoporosis, stroke, depression, and obesity.

Drug therapy can play a key role in treating illness. However, we need to be mindful that, for most diseases, drugs are an adjunct treatment, rather than the first-line approach to treatment. Most of the public health measures that have lowered the incidence of infectious disease have resulted from better sanitation or even the simple act of thorough hand-washing. In the same way, some non-western populations live long and healthy lives with little or no availability of medications. This is well documented in the book, *The Blue Zones*.²

WHY IS A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE IMPORTANT?

The psalmist tells us that we are “fearfully and wonderfully made” (Psalm 139:14). As Christians, the importance of making proper lifestyle choices is a fundamental part of our faith. First Corinthians 6:20 tells us, “You were bought at a price, therefore honor God with your body.” That means more than simply avoiding sexual sins. Those of us who are healthcare professionals know at a very deep level the meaning of being created in God's image (Genesis 1:27). It is incumbent on us to respect the Creator by taking care of the one body he has entrusted to each of us. What is equally marvelous is how keeping a healthy lifestyle is a manifestation of living a godly life as described by the Bible. A lifestyle that results in better health is a great witness that we respect and obey God's exhortation concerning our bodies.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE KEYS TO A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE?

So, what are these lifestyle factors that are key to better health? Of course, the list is endless, but we can focus on three key factors: (1) proper diet, (2) exercise, and (3) rest. We have intentionally left non-smoking out of the list, since this goes without saying! Also, you may notice that “maintaining a proper weight” is not listed as a factor. For the most part, eating a healthy spectrum of foods and getting adequate exercise takes care of this automatically. Now let us look at each factor individually.



DIET

The first and possibly most important factor is diet, or simply eating right. With respect to diet, it is interesting to note that the traditional Atkins style diet, which shuns carbohydrates and favors meats and fats, has largely been put to rest. The Bible speaks highly of bread from many writers of the Old Testament. Jesus even calls himself “the bread of life” (John 6:35).

The Bible has many references to food, but two that are particularly relevant are the approbation against gluttony (Philippians 3:19) and the story of Daniel and the three Hebrew trainees who asked to have vegetables in place of the King’s rich meals. The overall message from this passage in Daniel 1:12–13 is



that we are to eat primarily plant-based foods and eat amounts of food that are in moderation. The diet of our Lord, now referred to as “the Mediterranean diet” which is characterized by eating fruits and vegetables, unsaturated oils (i.e., olive, canola), and fish, has been shown to have numerous health benefits. One study, the Lyon’s heart study, showed that adherence to such a diet lowered the incidence of cardiac events by 70% relative to the low-fat diet recommended by The American Heart Association (AHA).³

The Bible goes on to give us two other caveats regarding diet. One is that salt is acceptable, even vital in small quantities. Consider the scripture: “Let your conversation be seasoned with salt” (Colossians 4:6, paraphrased). Also, Jesus said: “You are the salt of the earth” (Matthew 5:13a). Jesus would not have used something that is harmful to us in this positive illustration. The other caveat to remember is that wine, in moderation, is acceptable, but the Bible warns against drunkenness and the effect of strong drink (Ephesians 5:18; 1 Corinthians 6:10; Proverbs 20:1). On the other hand, Paul instructs Timothy (1 Timothy 5:23) that a little wine may be beneficial. Studies have supported that wine and unfermented grape juice can have a distinctly protective effect against cardiovascular disease and Alzheimer’s disease.⁴ (Editor’s note: see “Alcohol and Memory Loss” on page 30.)

EXERCISE

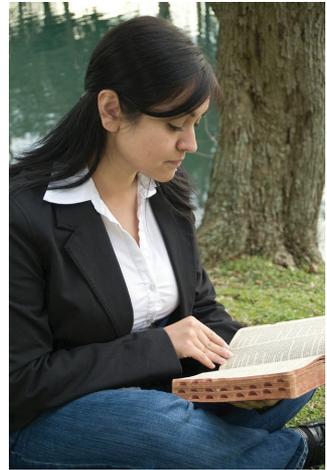
The next area is exercise. Here the scripture says relatively little, but a consideration of the life of Jesus, and the long distances he traveled by foot along the hilly terrain of Galilee and the surrounding areas suggests a lifestyle characterized by movement. Also, Paul in his letters frequently mentions “running the race” (1 Corinthians 9:24) and “physical training” (1 Timothy 4:8). Most studies suggest that 30 minutes of moderately intense exercise, like a brisk walk, most days of the week, is a good place to start. Activities such as walking, biking, hiking, and gardening, a few minutes here and there throughout the day provide most of the cardiovascular benefit of an intense workout at the gym. Also, exercises that provide resistance to the major muscle groups two to three times a week help strengthen bones and muscles.⁵ The key to exercise is finding a way to make it enjoyable, or at least less burdensome! Biking, hiking, gardening, and other activities that get you out and moving in God’s world provide you with exercise while bringing joy, peace, and a closeness to the Creator.



REST

The last area of concern is rest. By this, we mean enjoying freedom from stress (at least for some time during the week) and getting adequate sleep. Short-term stress is a natural part of the human condition, say in response to a test, a car accident, or some other challenging event. However, long-term stress can cause significant harm to the body. Long-term stress results in chronic elevations in circulating cortisol and epinephrine levels. The result is familiar to any pharmacist because they virtually mirror the adverse reactions of long-term corticosteroid elevations: weakness of the bones, thinning of the skin, derangement in intermediary metabolism, heightened susceptibility to infection, and ulcers. In addition, stress is a factor in heart disease. Coping with stress is challenging, but as Christians we need to turn our fears and worries over to the Lord. The discipline of having a special place and time for daily, quiet meditation on God’s word and quiet time with God in prayer can go a long way to “de-stressing” our lives and filling our “spiritual tanks” (Mark 1:35). It is also helpful to get rid of the frivolous and unimportant activities that steal our time and leave us feeling rushed and depleted spiritually and emotionally. The special time we spend seeking God’s plan for our lives, meditat-

ing on his Word, and planning our day according to his priorities can also help de-stress and can even bless our busy day. Jesus was very clear in emphasizing that we should not allow ourselves to become stressed. Consider his words: “Do not let your hearts be troubled” (John 14:1), and “Do not be anxious for your life” (Matthew 6:25). Also, consider his example: “After he dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray” (Matthew 14:23). We are to trust the Lord and make an effort to be at peace. Part of each day, and even one entire day each week (as stated in Exodus 35:2) should be set aside for rest, serving as a “Sabbath” from the everyday activities of life. Getting a good night’s sleep, in terms of both the quality and the quantity of sleep, is a key element of rest in a healthy lifestyle. Seven or eight hours of sleep, on a regular basis, is a good guideline. It is also important to maintain a regular sleep schedule so that the body can develop a regular rhythm of activity and rest.



CONCLUSION

The benefits of a healthy lifestyle are enormous. Taking care of our bodies not only helps us to serve others more fully, but it also provides an example and witness of our faith. It reflects a character of commitment and discipline. It shows that we honor God by taking care of his handiwork—our bodies. Jesus’ exhortation of loving God and loving others as we love ourselves (Matthew 22:38–39) is a great guide for a healthy lifestyle. We love God by getting to know him more each day as we spend time with him, letting our love for him flow through us to love others. How can we “love others as we love ourselves” if we do not even take care of the magnificent gift God has given us in our own bodies?

So, as we began with a question, we conclude with another. Given that the lifestyle described above promotes a long and healthy life, we still have to ask, “Why bother?” Let us be honest, eating right, exercising, and getting enough sleep when we want to catch that late night TV show all requires discipline. But the Lord’s Word tells us that while no discipline is pleasant at the time, later, it brings a harvest.

When we take care of our physical bodies, we free our mind to focus on the important things—heavenly things. We minimize the physical encumbrances that can interfere with our ability to serve others. We honor the Lord by showing that we care about his creation—our physical being, and we provide an example to others to

do likewise. The Bible tells us in Jeremiah 29:11 that the Lord has plans for us. While we do not know the details of his plans, we are expected to be ready to carry them out as they are revealed to us. Let us be ready in all ways, including our physical life, to do just that.



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As our theme for this issue we chose “The Wonder and Wisdom of God’s Creation.” We celebrate:

1. *The amazing beauty of all we see.*
2. *The amazing body which allows us to see and enjoy.*
3. *The amazing grace that makes it all worthwhile.*
4. *The amazing love that makes it all possible.*

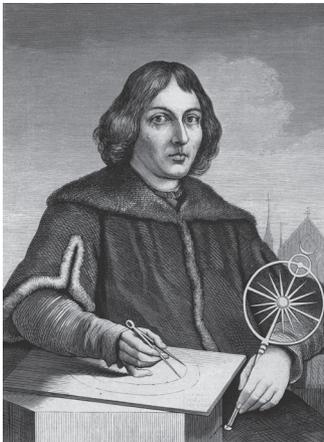
Perhaps the saddest moment of an atheist’s life is when he/she feels grateful for the beauty of this world, and has no one to thank. Atheists can experience numbers 1 and 2, but without knowing God they are deprived of number 3. But God still loves them (number 4).

—Roland Earnst



Three of us were discussing science and religion. A fourth person entered and someone mentioned what we were talking about. The newcomer responded, “I believe in one of them.” We all understood that he was discarding religion as worthless, or perhaps evil. Certainly, Richard Dawkins and others have striven to cast it in that light.

At the 1959 Darwinian Centennial, agnostic Loren Eiseley presented the case that modern science is a child of religion. The Judeo-Christian religion had established the case for a logical and rational creation that could be investigated. That differed from the voodoo and mystical concepts of most cultures.



Nikolaus Copernicus

However, from its inception, that “child” challenged ingrained doctrines established by religious leaders. Copernicus, Kepler, and Galileo studied the world and found themselves at odds with some keepers of the established beliefs. Many people claimed to find biblical proofs that the earth was at the center of the universe. The conflict was resolved with the gradual realization that it arose from the arrogant defense of unwarranted human interpretations of Scripture. However, science continued to challenge religious doctrines.

A significant segment of the religious community, especially in North America, has set its peg at the young-earth interpretation and rejected a huge part of modern science. At the same time, an arrogant segment of the scientific community has declared all religion to be a bunch of ancient myths that need to be discarded. This polarization has resulted in many people choosing a side and acting desparagingly toward the other side.

The late scientist Stephen Jay Gould wrote of what he called separate “magisteria” for science and religion. At first that approach may sound good. However, Gould claimed nearly everything for science and left a god who could not interfere with natural causes. His analysis of the world only left room for a god who was nearly dead or relaxing on some very distant beach.

Christianity teaches us values of humility, compassion, generosity, love, altruism, faith, honor, worship, holiness, purpose, family, integrity, character, and beauty. Science merely reaches the fringes of some of these. A world without pure religion is not an ideal home for humanity. Eiseley wrote of man, “... without a sense of the holy, without compassion, his brain can become a gray stalking horror—the deviser of Belsen” (a World War II concentration camp). Though many scientists are stellar citizens, that characteristic is not a product of the influence of science’s domain. Science is morally indifferent.

Difficult times are frequently part of the future for those trained in a culture where the science fields of geology, geography, biology, and astronomy are viewed as atheistic assaults on the Bible. Also, the extensive study of the radio-active decay of dozens of elements has broad application in science. It is not discredited by a few examples of contaminated samples.

Young people, who enter a science field after being raised in a church culture where young-earth is presented as a Christian doctrine, are thrown into an unnecessary dilemma. They are left believing that they must choose between faith and science. Some face the conflict and work through it to an acceptable solution, but most perceive a fundamental flaw in the faith system and drift away from it.

On the other hand, I too was exposed to instructors who used their science professor platform to denounce Christian faith. Evangelistic atheists regularly prey on the youth they instruct and add fuel to the conflict.

However, for the one who comes to the conclusion that there is a God who gave us the Word and the world, harmony is attainable.



Scientists study details concerning the world, but topics that relate to value and purpose are not subject to research done by physical tools. They are topics of Christianity.

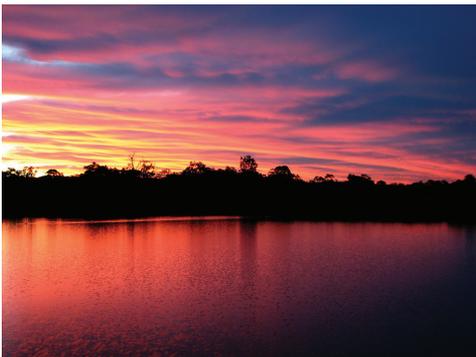
Francis Collins, who headed the human genome project, wrote, “This Moral Law shone its bright white light into the recesses of my childish atheism, and demanded a serious consideration of its origin. Was this God looking back at me? ... [God] has therefore instilled this special glimpse of Himself into each of us.” I concur that everyone has the opportunity to perceive God.

When Genesis 1:2 says, “the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters” that indicates a process. Teaching Genesis 1 as purely prose and demanding literal days from that text is an interpretation that is not without serious question. Being dogmatic about that view is not the same as being faithful to God and the Bible.

Consider the following parallelism in Genesis 1:

Day 1; “light” ----- Day 4; “sun, moon, and stars”
Day 2; “sky and water” ---- Day 5; “birds and fish”
Day 3; “land and plants” -- Day 6; “land animals and man
— plants as food”

There is tremendous satisfaction in being drawn into the harmony of the Word and the world. Turn to Ecclesiastes 3:11 and note the beauty, the God-spot within us, and the unfathomable creation. Listen for the voice of the cosmos as described in Psalm 19:1–4. Combine Romans 1:20 with a view of sunsets and backyard birds and sense the Author of the Word and the world. Open to Hebrews 3:3, 4 and land on a reasonable explanation for your existence and for the world around you.



Is reality a random consequence arising out of an unpredictable past or a God-caused event? Let the privileged planet, the fine-tuned universe, and the unimaginable transition of the meaning of the Roman cross underpin a faith that is unshakable. It does all come together as the great reality in which we survive and believe.

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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.

WILLIAM DANIEL PHILLIPS

1948-

Nobel Prize winning American physicist speaking
at the 1998 Millennium Lecture Series
with Stephen Hawking at the White House.



Why the universe obeys any laws at all? is “a really good question. ... All of the wonderful things Professor Hawking talked about can actually be described in a very small number of relatively simple equations and then a lot of complicated mathematics. Why is it that the universe is so simple? Why is it that it follows mathematical laws?”

“... One possible answer is that if the universe had been any different from what it is, we wouldn't be here. That is, if the laws of the universe hadn't been what they are or if there were no laws at all, it would have been impossible for life to have evolved. It would have been impossible for us to

have evolved to the point that we could ask that question.”

“On the other hand, there is another answer, which isn't actually that far from that answer, and if you're a person with religious faith, as I am, you could answer that the reason we have a universe that follows laws is because God decided to make the universe in that way, because God wanted us to develop the way we have and to evolve in the way that we have; and that is, of course, a philosophical and theological answer and it has more to do with one's faith than one's scientific conclusions, but it's an answer that I like very much and I don't find it to be very different from the first one.”

Cynthia's Corner



The Wonder and Wisdom of God's Creation

The wonder and beauty of the world we live in are all around us every day. We enjoy the beautifully colored birds and flowers, the gorgeous skies at sunrise and sunset, the splendor and wonder of a star-filled sky, and the awesome power of the wind and ocean waves. Living in a world full of such beauty and diversity, we tend to take it for granted. We expect one season to flow into another. We expect blue skies, white clouds, green grass, brilliant white snow, multicolored leaves in the fall, flowers of almost every color and shape in the spring and summer. We expect birds, animals, insects, and fish of all sizes, shapes, and colors. We enjoy and appreciate rivers, lakes, oceans, sandy beaches, hills, mountains, and woodlands. The diversity and beauty of our world are almost endless.

But, we can take these things for granted and never ask why God made our world as it is. Did he have to give us so many colors and varieties? Could the world function without color and diversity? Probably. So, why did God create our world and the universe with wonder and beauty in mind? I think the answer reflects who God is, his nature, and the fact that he made mankind in his image with the ability to be creative and artistic and to appreciate beauty and art.

The magnificence, wonder, and beauty of the creation tells us about its Creator. "The heavens declare the glory of God" (Psalm 19:1). The beauty, diversity, complexity, vastness, and order we see in creation reflects the nature, power, and wisdom of God. God is not a God of chaos or deception. He created everything with wisdom and order so that humanity could seek and find him (Acts 17:24–27). What is science, but man discovering how God made everything? Hard science will always lead us to the intelligent Designer who put everything together with wisdom and order (Proverbs 3:19–20). "In wisdom you made them all" (Psalm 104:24).

Scientists may look into the intricate workings of God's creation, but those of us who are not trained in the mechanics of science can see God's hand just as clearly in the beauty, diversity, and wonder of his creation. "God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made" (Romans 1:20).

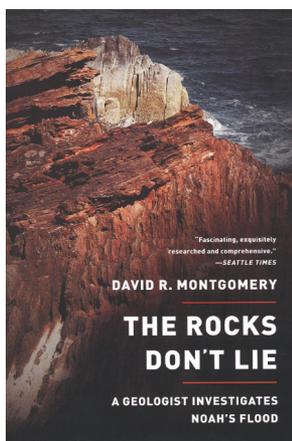
—Cynthia Clayton



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.

The Rocks Don't Lie

by David R. Montgomery, W. W. Norton Publisher, © 2012,
302 pages, \$17.95 (paperback), ISBN-13: 978-0-393-34624-4



David Montgomery is a geologist and a professor at the University of Washington. While he is not a religious figure, and does not have a church background he is very well informed on creationism and the history of the evolution/creation controversy. This is not a book about faith or the Bible. It is a book about the consistency and accuracy of dealing with the evidence for Noah's Flood, and what it can be used to explain.

The reason we are reviewing this book is that we frequently have Christians who say they cannot understand why the flood described in the Bible cannot be used to explain the Grand Canyon, the Niagara dolomite, or the age of the earth being less than 10,000 years. We have frequently discussed the biblical problems with young-earth theology. We have also said that taking such a position is a negative with college students and even high school students who have had a course in earth science. This book explains why.

The book is divided into 13 chapters and includes an index. Montgomery writes very well, and his explanations are clear and easy to understand. This is not a book that supports atheism. Montgomery's approach is more about reading the Bible as literature. He writes, "The back and forth through history between science and religion is more of a dance than a war." Montgomery does not take the Genesis account or the story of the flood to be literally true. Rather he views it as a literary work. He says "a literal reading of the Creation in Genesis does not do the story justice" (page 251). He views the Genesis

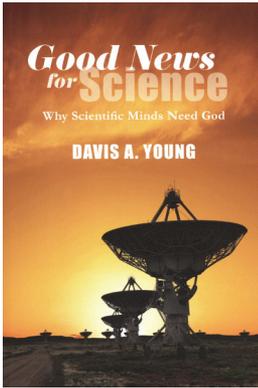
record as “a symbolic polemic intended for early monotheists rather than as a Bronze Age scientific treatise.”

This book is accurate in its science, and does a good job of showing the weaknesses in flood geology. Many fundamentalists will view its religious message as compromising the biblical record in order to fit science. While not agreeing with all of Montgomery’s biblical views, I found the book useful. I recommend it to those interested in understanding why many scientists reject denominational creationism and its attempts to use Noah’s Flood to explain the historical geologic record of the earth.

Good News for Science

by Davis A. Young, Malius Press, © 2012,

349 pages, \$14.50 (paperback), ISBN-13: 978-0-9820486-1-0



Dr. Davis Young is a respected professor at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan, where he has taught for 26 years. Calvin College was founded by the Christian Reformed Church and named in honor of John Calvin the sixteenth century Protestant reformer. This does not mean that Calvinism is promoted by the book. Young is a professor of geology and graduate of Princeton and Penn State with a Ph.D. from Brown University. As a person trained in geology myself, I appreciate the accuracy of his scientific comments and his refusal to embrace the errors seen in some writers from religious schools.

The subtitle is “Why Scientific Minds Need God” and the thrust of this book is to explain the Christian faith to scientists seeking to understand Christianity. These explanations are very well presented and easy to understand. The fact that the book addresses the scientific community should not be a deterrent to even high school students interested in putting science and faith together in a constructive way.

This book is designed for college students and professors. The broad subject matter includes systematic theology curriculum, biblical studies, scientific evidence, moral arguments, and the evidential Christian world-view. Young exposes the errors of atheists like Dawkins, Hitchens, Harris, Russell, Sagan, and Stenger; but he also deals with the errors and misguided arguments of some fundamentalists.

The book is well written and challenging in its approach, although some readers will not agree with all of Young’s conclusions. We recommend this book to mature readers who want contemporary answers to the challenges of modern-day atheism — and especially to college students struggling with their faith.

DANDY DESIGNS

PLANT SMARTS



If you do any flower gardening, you know that plants frequently turn or grow towards sunlight. How they know where the sunlight is, and how the plant turns toward that sunlight, are examples of incredible chemical design.

Cells communicate through a language of chemical signals. Compounds such as hormones and neurotransmitters act like words and phrases in telling a plant what to do. In our bodies, for example, our pancreas detects the presence of food that has just been eaten. When this happens it releases insulin, a hormone, to tell other cells in the body to remove glucose from the blood. Just like we need ears to hear communication from a mouth, cells also need “ears.” For plants, the ears are receptor proteins located on the cell wall. They hear all of the chemical symbols coming from a variety of sources and respond to the ones designed into the plant. That is like us hearing 50 people talking to us all at once, and picking out the one we really need to hear.

In the case of plants turning toward sunlight, it is the tips of plants that do the “listening.” These tips of plants produce auxin—a hormone that tells cells to grow and divide. The less sun the tips get, the more auxin they produce. That means that the cells on the shady side of the plant get more auxin, and their cells grow more than the sunny side of the plant. When the shady side grows more, the plant will bend toward the sunlight.

It may seem to be a simple thing for a plant to grow towards sunlight, but the mechanics behind this simple act of survival demonstrates incredible wisdom and planning. Each chemical has to be carefully designed, and the chemistry of the receptor cells and their method of emitting signals are incredibly complex. The more complexity we see, the more we can wonder at the intelligence involved. We can know there is a God “through the things he has made” (Romans 1:20). Source: *Discover*, October 2013, page 12.

THE MANATEE — THE UGLIEST MERMAID

Many years ago my wife and I rented a houseboat in Deland, Florida, and spent a delightful week exploring the inland waters around Deland. One of the places we visited was called Blue Springs. I knew about this area from my teaching, and when I told the boat owner that I wanted to go to Blue Springs, he said, “Oh, you want to see the ugly mermaids.” Stories about mermaids go way back in marine history to when men envisioned creatures with a beautiful woman’s upper body and a fish’s lower body. The name “manatee” comes from a pre-Columbian Caribbean people meaning “breast.” The boat owner warned me not to get into the water with these mermaids, and to be aware that they were very stupid.



Manatees live in many places around the world including Africa, the Amazon, and the West Indies. They can be 13 feet long and weigh 1,200 pounds. In spite of that large size, they have the smallest brain-to-body ratio of any mammal, and the brain is totally smooth, not folded with fissures. This led scientists in the past to assume the manatee was a very stupid animal. That conclusion is being challenged by modern research. Manatees are vegetarians, so they are used in some sea areas to keep vegetation out of water intakes and boat canals. Their teeth are made to grind up plant material. They have a simple stomach with a large cecum to digest tough plants. The animal has 45 meters (over 120 feet) of intestines to do its digesting, and it produces a great deal of gas in the process. The bone density of the manatee is very high allowing it to be submerged in the water easily. The manatee has 2,000 vibrissae (“whiskers”), which are specialized hairs on its face. Six-hundred of these are arranged in a circular region between the nose and mouth and are used to explore objects. There is some evidence these special structures are also used for navigation.

It is hard to imagine how sailors in the old days looked at this animal called “a sea cow” locally, and saw in it a beautiful woman. (That might depend on how long they had been at sea.) To a modern biologist, however, there are wonderful features of design to be studied that are unique to the manatee. Like everything we see in the world around us, we find wonderful engineering by God, carefully designed into all his creatures. Sources: *The New York Times*, August 29, 2006, page D1, and “manatee” on wikipedia.org.

News and Notes

BILL NYE AND KEN HAM. I am not in favor of debates. The recent debate between Bill Nye, “The Science Guy,” and Ken Ham, founder of the Creation Museum, is a good demonstration of why I oppose debates. Nye has been a popularizer of science for children for many years. He is articulate, speaks kindly, has a good sense of humor, and a good understanding of science. He is incredibly ignorant of the Bible, and seems to assume that Ken Ham represents all Christians. Ken Ham is abrasive, aggressive, and dogmatic in his presentations of his denomination’s theology and how it deals with scientific evidence. Atheist publications are saying “Nye won easily.” Many creationist magazines are saying that Ham “settled the argument once and for all.” Because Nye appealed to the human senses and the reality of how science has contributed to our well being, and because Ham used the Bible as his major source of rebuttal to Nye’s science material, the debate was almost useless. Neither Nye nor Ham made coherent arguments for their positions. We have been flooded with e-mails from young people who feel that Nye won them over, and no e-mail from an atheist indicated they learned anything from what was presented. Debates do not offer objective evidence and the outcome is badly tainted by the skill of the debaters, not by who has the truth. In this case, it did not seem that either debater had the whole truth.

THIRD VAN ALLEN RADIATION BELT FOUND. There is a constant tug-of-war battle going on between the earth’s gravitational field and magnetic field. The objects involved are particles from space that have a charge. Gravity pulls these particles into the earth, and the magnetic field of the earth pushes them away. The charged particles come from the sun, other stars in the cosmos, and what is left over from the explosions of stars and other objects in space. The heavier particles orbit close to the earth. The lighter particles, such as hydrogen ions, can be as far out as 40,000 miles. In February 2013, NASA announced it had discovered a third belt of particles which may be the result of energy changes in the sun working on the other belts. The magnetic properties of the earth are important to all of us, and they are part of the design that is built into the wonderful planet on which we live. Source: *Discover*, January/February 2014, page 88.

ABORTION RATE DROPS. The Guttmacher Institute, which is an abortion rights group, released a scientific study on February 3 showing that there was a 13% decline in abortions from 2008 to 2011 causing the abortion rate in the United States to be the lowest since the legalization of abortion in 1973. There is no single thing that has caused this drop. The birthrate in 2012 was the lowest on record, and advances in contraception have also affected the rate of unwanted pregnancies. If you believe that a child comes into existence at conception, then infanticide is a part of our culture and 1.1 million abortions were recorded in 2011. The dropping of the abortion rate does offer some hope that there is a third choice in the abortion dilemma, and that is to reduce the abortion rate to zero, or as close to zero as possible. Source: *Time*, February 17, 2014, page 18.

BUILT IN AVERSION TO SNAKES? Recent studies of the brains of primates have shown that there is a specialized visual center in the brain that responds to a view of snakes. Neuroscientists implanted electrodes in the pulvinar section of the brain of macaque monkeys, and these areas responded to the visualization of geometric shapes, faces, hands and snakes. There was a 40% greater response to snakes by the pulvinar section. One has to be reminded of the enmity described in Genesis 3:15. Isabelle Blanchette who was involved in the study stated, however, that “in humans, higher brain processes, such as learning, may influence our behavior just as much as our instinctive snake sense.” Source: *Science*, 1 November 2013, volume 342, page 541.

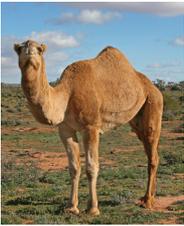
SNAKE DNA AND LEG LOSS. A study by Harvard researchers of snake DNA has shown that snakes have a nearly complete set of Hox genes, which lay out body plans for animals. However, they are missing a gene called Hox-D12 which is important for limb development in four legged creatures. This matches the curse of Genesis 3:14 very well and seems to be what God used to make the punishment for the serpent. Source: *Science News*, January 11, 2014, page 7.



CEMETERY CENSORSHIP. A preacher’s wife wanted to include the word “Jesus” on her headstone in Sterling, Colorado, in the city-owned cemetery. The director and city officials refused to allow the name of “Jesus” to appear on the headstone because “the name might offend somebody,” and likened it to putting a swastika on a headstone. Source: *Citizen* magazine, January/February 2014, page 9.

THE VALUE OF AN ASTEROID. One interesting use of objects in space may be mining the wealth of minerals to supplement what is available on earth. God may have provided for our needs in the future by having these mineral resources available in space. Recent measurements show that a 20-foot-wide asteroid would have 100 tons of water, 100 tons of carbon compounds, and 90 tons of metals—mostly iron and nickel. Source: *Astronomy*, March 2014, page 26.

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC ATTACKS BIBLE ON CAMELS. A recent article has appeared in *National Geographic* claiming that there were no domesticated camels at the time of the biblical patriarchs, therefore, the Bible has to be in error.



Dromedary

On Wikipedia, you will find a heavily documented article from a wide range of sources about the history of camels. First of all, you do not have to be the origin of something to use it. Fireworks were invented by the Chinese, but were used all over the world at various times after that. The fact that Americans did not invent fireworks does not mean Americans did not use them. The camel was domesticated in Somalia and southern Arabia around 3,000 B.C., and in Iran by 2,500 B.C. Bactrian camels were ridden in 1,200 B.C., and saddles exist to verify this. When camels are being used all around Israel, it is a pretty



Bactrian

safe bet that they came into Israel and were traded for and purchased by locals. It seems that this is a witch-hunt by *National Geographic* over an issue that has been raised in the past. It is unfortunate that a quality magazine like *National Geographic* continues to generate very prejudiced and negative press towards the Bible and Christianity.

EUTHANASIA IN BELGIUM. In 2002, the Belgian senate passed a law that allowed physician-assisted euthanasia for any person with physical or emotional pain they considered unbearable. Doctor-assisted deaths in Belgium make up two-percent of all deaths. Twin brothers who were deaf from birth were euthanized when they found that they were also going to lose their useable sight. A 64-year-old woman was euthanized when her depression was deemed incurable. Now the right to be killed is being extended to children as long as parents consent. Source: *The Week*, December 27, 2013.

POLYGAMY UPHOLD BY COURT. One of the problems with the acceptance of same-sex marriage is that once you change

the definition of marriage, then any definition of marriage can be accepted. The U. S. District Court in Utah has ruled that the Utah law banning polygamy is a violation of the First Amendment right of freedom of religion. Therefore, the 38,000 fundamentalist Mormons cannot be charged with bigamy. We would expect that similar rulings will come about on group marriage and communal marriage in the near future. Source: Associated Press, December 15, 2013, in the *South Bend Tribune*, page A11.

RACES AND SPECIES OF HUMANS. Fossils of ancient hominids found in Spain have given enough DNA samples to be able to shed some light on the history of mankind. This find gives scientists DNA that is four times older than what was available previously. Twenty-eight specimens have been found in the area, so a significant sample is available. There are genetic links to the DNA specimens that have been found, with enough common DNA to suggest that all of the human remains found from that area are racially different, but are one species. This again is evidence that Eve was the mother of all living humans. Sources: *Science News*, December 28, 2013, page 8, and *The Week*, December 20, 2013, page 17.

LEARNING LANGUAGE IN THE WOMB. One of the sticking points in the abortion debate is the question, “When is a human really a human?” Is it at conception, three months, birth, or when? We have suggested that logically it would seem that the baby is an individual at conception, and all evidence supports that view. One of the evidences of that unique makeup is the fact that, while in the womb, the unborn baby hears and reacts to the outside world. Babies whose mothers watch a soap opera at the same time every day become quiet when the soap opera comes on. Babies think and respond to outside surroundings, and they start doing this at a very early age. Source: *Science News*, December 28, 2013.

EXORCISM NONSENSE. We often see an article in the newspaper about someone who has killed someone else because of an alleged demon possession. The 2013 movie, *The Conjuring*, told the story of Roger and Carolyn Perron. They and their five daughters moved into a Rhode Island farmhouse and had a parade of clairvoyant experiences, including demon possession. Movies and television shows like this fan the imaginations of believers and nonbelievers alike. It is important to teach our young people that they are responsible for what they do, and that no force is going to take over against their will and cause them to do something wrong. Demon possession and exorcism as presented in the Bible do not happen today. For more information go



to our doesgodexist.tv or doesgodexist.org websites and watch our video (free) on demon possession. It is video number 16 or audio program 23.

ALCOHOL AND MEMORY LOSS. There have been claims that drinking alcohol reduces the chances of heart attacks, but another study has shown that drinking more than two beers a day speeds up memory loss, causing up to six years of loss for that amount of alcohol. Our bodies are the temple of God (1 Corinthians 3:16), and taking care of the temple is important. The consumption of alcohol can do damage to us both physically and mentally. Source: *The Week*, January 31, 2013, page 18.

NO METHANE ON MARS. One of the indicators of life on a planet is whether there is methane in the atmosphere. Microbes on earth produce 95% of all atmospheric methane. When the space vehicle Curiosity sampled the atmosphere on Mars many scientists thought that it would find significant amounts of methane, suggesting that similar microbes are active on Mars. Only a small trace of methane was found, so the existence of any significant life similar to our planet can be pretty well ruled out. Source: *Science News*, December 28, 2013, page 30.

THE NEW NATIONAL RELIGION. *The Washington Post* claims that football is America's national religion. Over 60 percent of all Americans now consider themselves to be fans of football — double the percentage of 50 years ago. Modern sports stadiums function like great cathedrals and “millions of people are passionately devoted to their teams, and their tribal fever rivals that of religious people for their particular denomination or sect.” The article quotes 18th and 19th century clergymen as worrying that religion and sports would vie for loyalty. It is hard not to admit that those concerns are valid today. Can you be loyal to Christ and your favorite football team at the same time? Of course, but priorities become an issue.

WATCHING CREATION. Nearly every day there is an article speculating about how the earth and moon were formed, and how life came to be as we see it today. What is interesting about all of this

speculation is that it becomes more elaborate and opens more questions about the source of the energy and intelligence that is built into the world around us. Can you visualize God flinging an asteroid into a molten earth and breaking off a blob of material, then parking it in orbit around the earth to become the moon? Can you visualize God colonizing the primitive earth



with bacterium to produce the oxygen and first cells that man would need to live on earth? The Bible tells us God did the creating, but the details of how he did it are not spelled out. What becomes increasingly obvious is that the complexity of what God did was so far beyond human abilities that we cannot even formulate a good scientific guess as to how it all came about. *Science News* (February 8, 2014, page 16) has an interesting article on the traces of life that have been found recently in Australia and how many interpretations of that life are known at this point.



BIGFOOT DNA. One interesting area of fringe science is the claims of Sasquatch studies. Veterinarian Melba Ketchum published a paper claiming that she had DNA proof that the North American Sasquatch was a hybrid human-unknown primate. No confirming data from another researcher has been published on this, but Dr. Bryan Sykes, a geneticist at Oxford University has been researching claimed yeti DNA samples in Asia. He has announced common animals for all DNA study claims, including

Ketchum's. Between TV commercials and Animal Planet programs on finding Sasquatch, this is a myth that is hard to kill. There are those who seem to feel that this issue has evolutionary connections. If by chance someone found a gorilla-like primate in a remote area of the world, all that would show is that animals have an amazing ability to avoid detection. It would have no significant evolutionary connections. Source: *Skeptical Inquirer*, March/April 2014, page 11.

SLAVERY ISSUE AGAIN. In their attacks on Christianity, atheists continue to pick on the social issues of our day and attribute them to the Bible. One area that continues to come up is the claim that the Bible teaches slavery. Passages like Ephesians 6:5–6; Colossians 3:22; and Titus 2:9 telling slaves to obey and please their masters in all things, are quoted. The object is an attempt to show that the Bible teaches slavery—equating it to the slaving of blacks in the early days of this country, and the human trafficking and sex slaving of today. This totally ignores the role of slavery at the time in which the Bible was written. Romans 6:16 gives us a picture of slavery in Jesus' time: "Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey . . ." A slave in Jesus' day was walking through the business district, had money, had a family, and could save up and buy their way out of being a slave. They were not kidnapped and forced to serve against their will. The choice was frequently to either sell yourself as a slave or starve to death. Read Paul's letter to Philemon, especially verses 8–16 to see how the slave Onesimus was viewed by Paul.

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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