

DOES GOD EXIST?

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



WHAT MAKES HUMANS SPECIAL?

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Articles in this Issue:

What Makes Humans Special? 3
Survival of the Fittest:
The American Way? 10

Guest Articles:

What Should You Do When
Doubts Arise? 14

Special Features:

Scientists and God 20

Cynthia's Corner 21

Book Reviews:

God's Crime Scene 22

Keeping Your Kids on
God' Side 23

Dandy Designs:

The Secret of Vanilla Flavor 24

Champion High Divers! 25

News and Notes 26

So God created mankind in his own image, / in the image
of God he created them; / male and female he created
them.
Genesis 1:27 (NIV)

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A major issue which is poorly understood in America today is the question of whether humans have any more value or worth than any other living thing. If all of life is viewed as a product of a naturalistic evolutionary process, and if survival of the fittest is what separates humans from all other life on earth, then if some form of life comes along that is more fit, humanity will become extinct. This scenario is the starting point for many science fiction stories.

We have seen the acceptance of naturalism and evolutionary origins of all living things in the claims of animal rights groups. Several years ago President Obama was taken to task by People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) for swatting a fly (Fox News, 6/18/09). We have also seen multiple lawsuits on behalf of a variety of animals concerning property rights and abuse (see the March/April 2013; July/August 2014; and March/April 2015 issues of this journal). The scientific community is heavily divided on this issue because much of the research in psychology, medicine, and the development of drugs of all kinds is usually done on animals. Rats and mice are used extensively, but sometimes even monkeys are used to test a drug or procedure. There was a time not too many years ago when a pregnancy test involved the probable death of a rabbit.

The biblical point of view on this subject is very clear. In Genesis 1:26 the first couple are told to be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth. In Genesis 2:15 we are told that “God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it.” It is clear that man was the caretaker of



the garden and was responsible for managing it. God made the first clothing for humans out of skins (Genesis 3:21) suggesting human superiority to other living things. However, the major difference in humans biblically is that the man and woman were created “in the image of God” (Genesis 1:27). The Hebrew word for fashioning the man’s body is the word *yatshir* used in Genesis 2:7. This word is normally used in reference to something a potter would do—forming a statue or a piece of pottery. There is nothing special about the human body as we



are made of the dust of the earth and it is to that dust that we shall return (Genesis 3:19). What is different is the spiritual makeup, as humans are described as being in the image of God. Genesis 1:27 says, “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female

he created them.” The Hebrew word *bara* is used in this passage and translated “create.” This word is used only in reference to what God can do, never in reference to what humans can do.

It is interesting that the humans are more than just a singular being just as God is. The word for God used in Genesis 1 is “Elohim” which is a plural word. In Genesis 1:26 when God describes the human’s total makeup the plural reference is given, “Let US make man in OUR image.” Here the reference is to the other parts of the Godhead, and the fashioning is to be “made” (*asah*) a plural being. Just as Elohim refers to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; humans too are made of more than just one part, we have body, spirit, and soul.

How do we know that this picture is true? What evidence do we have to back it up? We do need to emphasize that humans are told to take care of the creation and not to abuse it. Part of taking care of “the garden” means not polluting it, not damaging it, but rather being a good manager of it. It does not mean abusing the animals that live on this planet, and the Bible does not condone making animals suffer. It is based on the realization that animals are to be managed and cared for by humans, and throughout the Bible, we are told to use animals for our well being and even as a sacrifice to God.



WHAT IS NOT SPECIAL ABOUT HUMANS?

Many times we see statements about animals that fail to realize how special animals are. Animals think, and they can be very intelligent. The problem with making reference to animal intelligence is that it is difficult to measure, and that is true of human intelligence as well. As the father of a mentally-challenged son, I can tell you that measuring intelligence in humans is very difficult. My son as a child would score over 100 on an Otis* IQ test. On a Stanford-Binet IQ test, he would score less than 50. That is a huge difference, but it is because of what the tests are measuring. The Otis test was highly verbal, and my wife and I read to our son as a child. His verbal skills to this day are quite good. That does not mean that understanding always goes with the verbal skills. One of our favorite family stories involves a disciplinary situation where my son in anger stomped out of the room yelling, “You’re causing me to commit adultery!” He knew adultery was a bad thing and that it was something you commit, but he had no idea what was involved in an adulterous act. The Stanford-Binet was not as verbal and was probably a more realistic evaluation of his mental ability. There are all kinds of intelligence, and that is true of animals as well. We also need to point out that the size of the brain has nothing to do with intelligence. Some of the world’s geniuses, like the famous Japanese scientist Yukawa, had brain sizes well under 1000 cc, and animals such as whales have larger brains than do humans.

Animals can think and reason. If a banana is suspended from the ceiling completely out of reach of a chimpanzee, but there is furniture in the room, the chimp will stack the furniture until it can reach the banana. Those of us in the Midwest who feed birds can tell you that raccoons can think of incredible ways to get the bird seed even when it is stored in supposed “break-in-proof” containers.

Many times writers suggest that animals cannot talk, but

it is important to understand that the word “talk” is far too restrictive to be useful. Parrots talk, but that talk is mimicking rather than conveying information. Most animals have ways of communicating. Birds singing are often sending a message to other birds about





territory or reproduction or food. What animals do not have is language. They do communicate, but they do not have language. Language is defined as “the ability to acquire and use complex systems of communication.” That involves more than just identifying territory or making sexual or material contact.

The textbook discussion of language says “language has the properties of productivity, recursivity, and displacement, and relies entirely on social convention and learning.” Animals do not have to be taught their communication skills. Those skills are instinctive and are present in animals even when they are not in social contact with other members of their kind.

A similar discussion is involved in the word “love.” The reason the Greek language has five words for love is that there are so many different kinds of love. Parent-child love is different from brotherly love which is different than sexual love. The biblical concept of love seen in the Greek word *agape* expresses a form of love that does not seem to take place in animals. The whole subject of emotions is very complex, but everyone who has had a dog for a long time has seen what appears to be joy and perhaps anger. We tend to ascribe human characteristics to animal behavior. A built-in survival skill that is instinctive may not be emotional, but whatever their control and origins may be, animals do seem to express emotions.

Suggesting that animals do not control their environment as a means of identifying animal characteristics is also prone to misunderstanding. Certainly, beavers control their environment and many animals choose certain environments and shape them to maximize their survival and the survival of their young. Examples are fish who scoop out bowls to lay their eggs, prairie dogs that dig underground homes, and birds that hollow out trees for nests. These things seem to be instinctively driven in most cases, and it is the role of instincts that may be more of an issue than the actual product of what that instinct might produce.



WHAT IS SPECIAL ABOUT HUMANS?

What sets humans apart from other animals and makes humans special is their spiritual makeup. We are in the spiritual image of God. God is a spirit (John 4:24), and we are in his image. That is



what allows us to do things that have a spiritual base. We worship God “in spirit and in truth” because we have a soul that was created in the image of God. Animals do not worship no matter how advanced they appear to be. If worship were naturally acquired as a product of evolutionary processes, then one would expect to see worship carried on in some way in higher forms of life. Electroencephalograms show certain brain responses in humans during worship activities such as praying and singing, and no such pattern is seen in any way in other living things. This led some researchers in psychology to suggest that

there is a section of the brain that only humans possess that causes worship. That would mean that such an area should be functional in some way in other life forms, and that is simply not the case.

Similar evidence is involved in human creativity. There have been elaborate attempts to show that animals create art or express themselves in art and music. The problem is that it is very difficult to avoid anthropomorphic influences by those doing the research.

Koko, a gorilla who has mastered the sign language of the deaf released a music album of “Koko Favorites.” The album was constructed by the researchers playing a song for Koko and then asking for a “thumbs up” or a “thumbs down” by the gorilla as to whether that song should be included in



the album. The problems with such a project should be obvious. The music played is from a certain culture using a certain set of musical instruments in a particular structure of music. The diatonic scale, the chromatic scale, etc., are choices humans make. More to the point is that this is a human enterprise. Koko is being led to make choices of human types of music. Researchers have pointed out that this is operant conditioning using a form of the modified American sign language which her trainer, Francine Patterson, describes as



Gorilla Sign Language. Koko did not spontaneously express herself by creating an expression of feelings, emotions, or wonderment. She has been rewarded with food for making the response the researchers wanted.

In addition to creativity, humans are capable of a very special kind of love. It is incorrect to say that animals do not experience love, but the word love has multiple meanings and applications. The Greek language, the language of the New Testament, has many different words for love, each having a different meaning. Biologists and psychologists have researched love on a chemical basis. We know that lust

releases testosterone and estrogen and that strong feelings can exist for significant periods of time—even months. The brain releases neurotransmitter hormones, dopamine, and serotonin, and these all play a role in the physical expressions of love. In animals, this is instinctively driven and results in the propagation of the species. Also instinctively driven is the care of a mother for her offspring.

What is unique about humans is that a selfless kind of love can exist that is not physical. The Greek word *agape* which is repeatedly used throughout the New Testament describes and emphasizes this kind of love. “God is love” (1 John 4:16) and “love your enemies” (Matthew 5:44) are two examples. One dictionary defines *agape* love as “the love of the soul.” You may not love your enemy as a brother

(*fileo* in Greek), but you can love his soul as a human and want what is best for him or her. The classic emphasis on the various forms of love is demonstrated in John 21:15–17 when Jesus keeps calling Peter to the *agape* type of love, and Peter keeps responding with a *fileo* type of love that is not unique to humans.



A final aspect of what makes humans special is that humans have a concept of “self.” The notion of self has been a subject of debate among philosophers, psychologists, and theologians for many centuries. There is no physical way to discuss the notion of self because it has to do with the individual’s relationship to culture and the events that are a part of the world around us. A part of this is our capacity to be concerned about our own mortality and what the future is beyond death. Self brings in many of the other concepts we have discussed in this essay. The *agape* form of love can be expressed for a country. The willingness to die for a belief is unique to humans. The whole notion of sin is a product of self, and animals do not demonstrate any concept of right and wrong or good or evil. Atheists like Richard Dawkins want to deny that good and evil exist (see *River Out of Eden* [New York: BasicBooks, 1995] page 133).

The notion of self involves a belief in evil, in sin, and in life after this life. It allows humans to feel guilt, to forgive, and to be sympathetic. Animals do not demonstrate these characteristics, and animal behavior can always be explained in terms of instinct and what promotes their own survival. A dog that dies defending his owner is not expressing patriotism or a self-sacrificing *agape* type of love, but rather is protecting his own source of food and shelter. This instinctive drive may cause an animal to do something that is irrational, but survival and propagation of the species are at the bottom of the action. That is different from humans offering themselves for the survival of another human or for a political idea.

We are all familiar with situations where a wild animal was kept as a pet for years and then suddenly turned on and killed its owner. No attempt to turn a pet into a human will work because no animal is created in the image of God. Humans are special, and the tendency of our world today to destroy human life for animalistic reasons is leading us toward global disaster. As a Christian, I have to believe that no matter who you are or what you believe, you have value as a special creation of God, created in his image.

— John N. Clayton

*Otis–Lennon School Ability Test (OLSAT)



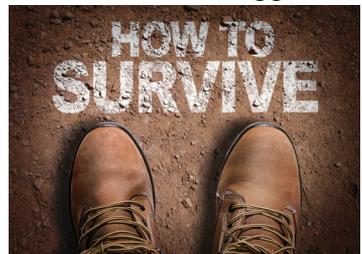


“If one of my competitors were drowning, I’d stick a hose in their mouth and turn on the water. This is rat eat rat, dog eat dog. I’m going to kill him before they can kill me. You’re talking about the American way—of survival of the fittest.”

This quote has been attributed to Ray Kroc, the founder of McDonald’s.*

Evolutionary beliefs come in many forms and are stated in many ways, but certainly one of the most commonly accepted beliefs that has grown out of elementary evolutionary teaching is the belief stated above. This belief has been used to justify slavery, dictatorships, war, economic control, political campaigns, and now is seen in children’s video games. One could argue whether or not that is “the American way,” but there is no question about its prevalence, and how often it is used to justify some human behavior.

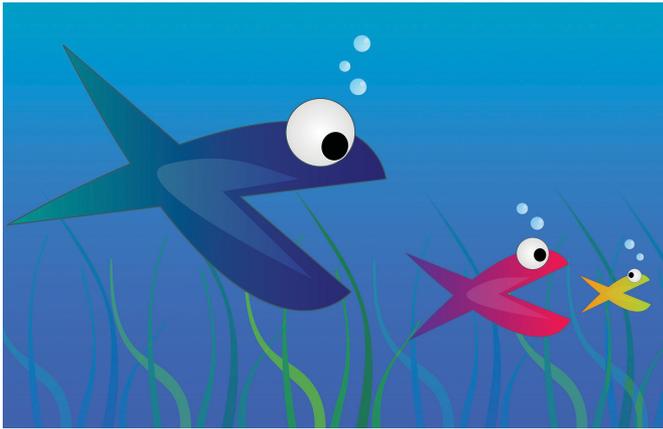
My favorite story of “survival of the fittest” is an experience I had when participating in a National Science Foundation Institute program designed to teach teachers how to teach students an approach to learning called “The Investigative Approach.” The idea was that instead of lecturing students about something, you would have a laboratory experiment or demonstration that the students could do which would show them the principle you were trying to teach.



* <http://www.evancarmichael.com/library/ray-kroc/Ray-Kroc-Quotes.html>

We were at a museum in Chicago in a section designed to show us how to teach students the way natural selection works. A very hungry northern pike was going to be put into a large aquarium that had a bunch of small fish in it. All of the fish were the same size, but some of them were the same color as the sand and the reef rock in the aquarium. Some were of a radically different color than the sand and reef rock, and others had some of the reef coloring but none of the sand coloring. One of the fish was injured and had different coloring than any of the others. That fish stood out because it was so different from all the other fish and swam in an odd, jerky way because of the injury. We were asked to predict which fish would be eaten first and which would be eaten last.

The big pike was carefully admitted to the aquarium and the small fish scattered. The injured fish seemed oblivious to the presence of



the pike. We suspected that was because he was missing one eye and seemed to be unable to see at all as he kept running into things. All of us expected the injured, blind fish to be easy prey and thus eaten

first by the big pike. We predicted that the fish that were hard to see and hid against the reef rock and sand would be eaten last. The big pike scooted past the injured, blind fish and attacked three fish that were hard to see. The aquarium became a cloud of sand and fleeing fish as the pike charged around grabbing one fish after another. Very quickly the fish that were hard to see were eaten, and then the radically different colored fish. The injured blind fish was never eaten and swam aimlessly around the aquarium occasionally bumping into the pike.

There were some 30 of us teachers watching this, and explanations began to fly as to why this happened. Maybe the pike sensed a disease in the injured fish. Maybe the injuries affected the taste of the injured fish. I finally said “maybe survival of the fittest doesn’t always work,” and after a good laugh the group moved on to the next project. The fact is that in nature the fit do not always survive, and the less fit do not always die out.

What is most significant about this discussion is the incompatibility that “survival of the fittest” has with the teachings of Jesus Christ. Humanity has many severe issues confronting it that bring the teachings of Christ and thoughts like those of Ray Kroc in direct conflict with each other. What is humanity to do with people who seem to be so severely mentally ill, or so mentally challenged that they have to be cared for by society for their entire life? Do we continue to extend the life expectancy of humans by creating artificial organs that



replace the heart, kidney, pancreas, liver, etc., of dying patients and allow them to live much longer lives? Some atheists suggest the answer to that should be a resounding “no” and would, in fact, euthanize non-productive hu-

mans emptying nursing homes, mental hospitals, prisons, and care facilities and saving the cost of caring for those individuals.

The biblical perspective on this subject is in opposition to this view. The Bible portrays all human beings as being special. We are all created in the image of God, no matter what our physical, emotional, or spiritual condition might be. In Bible story after Bible story the weak defeat the strong with God’s help. The weak nation of Israel defeats the strong nation of Egypt. Tiny David defeats mighty Goliath (1 Samuel 17). Gideon with 300 men defeats a Midianite army of 120,000 (Judges 7–8). Jesus Christ comes from an insignificant town and from a family with a dubious history (three harlots in direct ancestry to Christ), and successfully opposes the religious hierarchy and ministers to the poor and the downtrodden. The early church fed and clothed the less fit (Acts 2:42–47) and was commanded to comfort the feeble-minded (1 Thessalonians 5:14).

Another contrast between the proponents of “survival of the fittest” and the principles of Christianity is the segregation of humans based on fitness. The history of humanity is full of cases where one population denigrated a group of people who were different from them on the assumption that the denigrated group was inferior to them. America has a bad track record on human rights because of this. Black people were denied the right to vote for many years because they were deemed unfit. The history of women’s rights everywhere

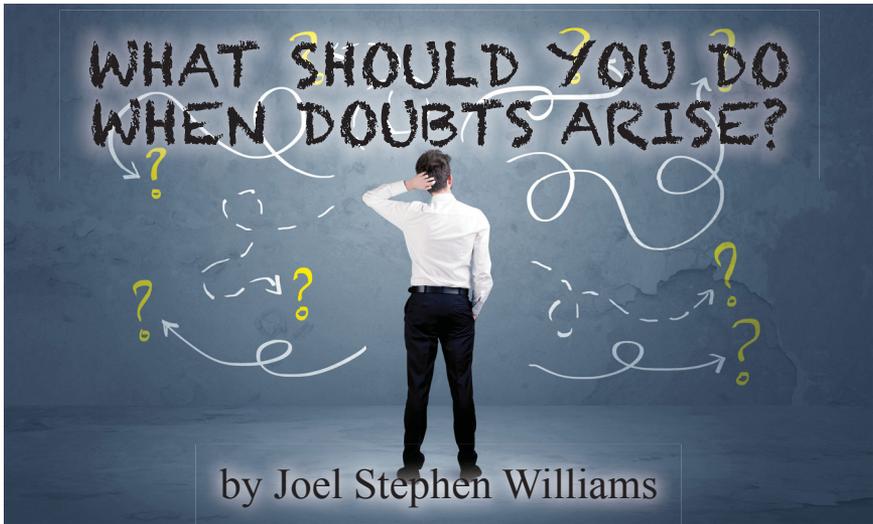
on the planet has been a tragic history of men deeming women less fit and denying them equal status, equal education, and equal pay.

The biblical record goes to great lengths to point out that Jesus viewed all people to be of equal value. The writings of the apostles make it clear that “There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male nor female, for you all are one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:28). One of the more interesting accounts of Jesus’ life is in John 4. Jesus was passing through the land of Samaria. Most Jews made it a habit to detour around Samaria if they could. Under no circumstances would they talk to a Samaritan or have any relationship with them (John 4:9). Not only does Jesus talk with a Samaritan, but the Samaritan was a woman. In that culture, women were considered to be less fit and usually walked behind a man and had no public conversation with him. The disciples of Christ are shocked at what Jesus was doing (verse 12). Later the chapter, Jesus and the Samaritan woman talk about where people will worship God in the future and Jesus says, But “a time is coming and has now come when the true worshippers will worship the Father in Spirit and truth.”

So is survival of the fittest the American way? As our country drifts away from the teachings of Christ, and we become more concerned with things and competition than we are with the quality of life for all people, the answer appears to be that Kroc is right. Christians need to bring Christ to a lost and dying world. If the world does not die to sin as Romans 6 tells us, we will see more Americans being led to “the works of the flesh [which] are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity, depravity, idolatry, sorcery, hostilities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish rivalries, dissensions, factions, envying, murder, drunkenness, carousing, ...” (Galatians 5:19–21 NET). Not only is “survival of the fittest” not a sole agent in the development of living things, but it will destroy us if we adopt it as our way of dealing with each other. The passage in Galatians goes on to describe “those who belong to Christ” as having a different way of living—one we want to urge our fellow human beings to embrace. This way of living involves “the fruit of the Spirit [which] is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Against such things there is no law” (Galatians 5:22–23).

—JNC

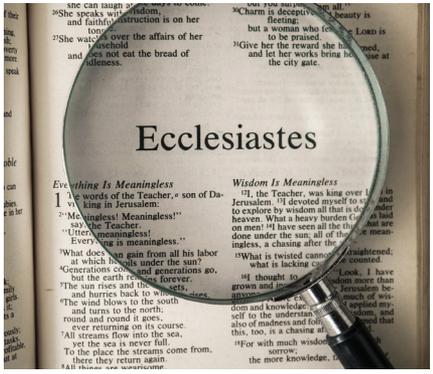




by Joel Stephen Williams

From time to time good-hearted, honest, sincere, humble believers have questions that are not easily answered. Maybe it is the inequities of life or the oppressive weight of a seemingly endless progression of burdens — illnesses, death of loved ones, financial losses, or the severing of relationships — that threaten to overwhelm one’s ability to cope and endure. Through times of struggle like these, a devoted Christian may experience what feels like the absence or silence of God, wondering if God hears one’s prayers. Doubt may begin to arise in many different forms. What should you do when doubts arise?

The wisdom book of Ecclesiastes in the Old Testament records the philosophy of the Teacher, *Koheleth*, who had observed how unfair life could be in his day. He explains, “So I turned and gave my heart up to despair concerning all the toil of my labors under the sun, because sometimes one who has toiled with wisdom and knowledge and skill must leave all to be enjoyed by another who did not toil for it. This also is vanity and a great evil” (Ecclesiastes 2:20–21; cf. 6:1–2*). “The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, nor bread to the wise, nor riches to the intelligent, nor favor to the skillful; but time and chance happen to them all. For no one can anticipate the time of disaster. Like fish taken in a cruel net, and like birds caught in a snare, so mortals are snared at a time of



calamity, when it suddenly falls upon them” (Ecclesiastes 9:11 – 12). Fate seemed to be against the righteous person, or at best it was merely the “same fate” for all. “To the righteous and the wicked, to the good and the evil, to the clean and the unclean, to those who sacrifice and those who do not sacrifice” (Ecclesiastes 9:2–3).

At times the wicked seemed to have a free reign to do evil while the pure in heart had no guardian or protector. The Teacher observed



that “in the place of justice, wickedness was there, and in the place of righteousness, wickedness was there as well” (Ecclesiastes 3:16). He “saw all the oppressions that are practiced under the sun. Look, the tears of the oppressed—with no

one to comfort them! On the side of their oppressors there was power” (Ecclesiastes 4:1). “There are righteous people who perish in their righteousness, and there are wicked people who prolong their life in their evildoing” (Ecclesiastes 7:15). “There are righteous people who are treated according to the conduct of the wicked, and there are wicked people who are treated according to the conduct of the righteous” (Ecclesiastes 8:14).

The Teacher struggled to understand these inequities of life. He believed that humans were more than mere animals because God had “put a sense of past and future into their minds, yet they cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end” (Ecclesiastes 3:11). Unaided human wisdom was insufficient by itself to make complete sense of life or to discern what effect the government of God had on the affairs of humans. “No one can find out what is happening under the sun. However much they may toil in seeking, they will not find it out; even though those who are wise claim to know, they cannot find it out” (Ecclesiastes 8:17; cf. 10:14; 11:5). Faced with all of the vanity of life, the Teacher asked questions that sounded a somber tone of doubt: “Who knows whether the human



spirit goes upward and the spirit of animals goes downward to the earth?” (Ecclesiastes 3:21).

In spite of all of the Teacher’s pessimism, though, there is a marvelous gem, a defiant, firm statement of faith and trust, embedded in the middle of this negative-sounding philosophy: “Though sinners do evil a hundred times and prolong their lives, yet I know that it will be well with those who fear God, because they stand in fear before him, but it will not be well with the wicked, neither will they prolong their days like a shadow, because they do not stand in fear before God” (Ecclesiastes 8:12–13). The evidence was not clear; it was mixed and confusing. Good arguments could be made by intelligent people for both viewpoints, for living a righteous life or for living selfishly without any thought for God. Nevertheless, the Teacher knew that living a righteous life before God was the better choice, even if difficult questions tormented him at every turn.



The discussion was over. All of the evidence had been heard and weighed from the Teacher’s philosophy (Ecclesiastes 12:13). What was the conclusion? What should people do when they had doubts? The answer was clear and simple: “Fear God, and keep his commandments; for that is the whole duty of everyone” (Ecclesiastes 12:13). Why was this the answer not only then, but also now? There are some things that the good-hearted person, who wants to know the truth, can perceive to be right and true, even though complex questions plague one’s mind and remain unanswered. We can know that it is right to fear (worship) God. Prayer and worship are right. We will never feel bad about doing these duties. Obedience to God is right, and what is the number one duty of obedience? “‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself’” (Matthew 22:37–39). We know that it is right to love God by loving other people. So what should we do when doubts arise? We should love and worship God and obey him and love our neighbor in the plain duties that we know must be right, pure, and true.

A British minister, F. W. Robertson (1816–1853), had very similar thoughts along these same lines. He preached a sermon on March 2, 1851, on the text: “If any man will do his will, he shall

know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself' (John 7:17 KJV). From this biblical text, Robertson argued that any person can attain the truth and know it by means of obedience. If we "will," (that is, desire) to know the truth and commit ourselves to doing it, we will, through experience, know that God's will through Christ for us is genuine.

Robertson was aware that people in his day often encountered doubts. "They go to church because it is the custom, and all Christians believe it is the established religion. But there are hours, and they come to us all at some period of life or other, when the hand of Mystery seems to lie heavy on the soul — when some life shock scatters existence, leaves it a blank and dreary waste henceforth forever, and there appears nothing of hope in all the expanse which stretches out, except that merciful gate of death which opens at the end-hours when the sense of misplaced or ill-requited affection, the feeling of personal worthlessness, the uncertainty and meanness of all human aims, and the doubt of all human goodness, unfix the soul from all its old moorings, and leave it drifting, drifting over the vast infinitude, with an awful sense of solitariness."†

Who, in this situation, was most likely to doubt? Robertson continued: "Then the man whose faith rested on outward authority and not on inward life, will find it give Way: the authority of the priest, the authority of the Church, or merely the authority of a document

proved by miracles and backed by prophecy, the soul-conscious life hereafter—God—will be an awful desolate Perhaps. Well in such moments you doubt all—whether Christianity be true: whether Christ was man, or God, or a

beautiful fable. You ask bitterly, like Pontius Pilate, What is truth? In such an hour what remains?"†

When all of your usual supports seem to fail you, and doubt remains, what should you do? Robertson's reply is identical to the book of Ecclesiastes: "I reply, obedience. Leave those thoughts for the present. Act—be merciful and gentle—honest; force yourself to abound in little services; try to do good to others; be true to the duty that you know. That must be right, whatever else is uncertain. And by all the laws of the human heart, by the word of God, you shall not be left to doubt. Do that much of the will of God which is

**GOD
NEVER
BREAKS HIS
PROMISES**



plain to you, and ‘You shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God.’”†

Again, what should you do when doubts arise? If your usual pillars of support on which you have relied in the past are failing



you and if you are unable to deal with questions in your normal way, pause from the mental labor of attempting to solve uncertainties that have plagued great minds for millennia. Focus on what you know must be right. Care for widows and orphans. Visit the sick and those who are grieving. Feed the hungry. Teach a Bible class to inmates in a prison or tell a

friend the good news of Jesus the Savior. Take flowers to residents in a nursing home. Visit a blind person and read the Bible to him or her. Write a letter to someone who needs encouragement. Say a prayer for all of them. Go to church services and sing hymns, pray, remember Christ in the communion, and enjoy fellowship with other believers. Read your Bible every day. If you love the Lord your God and love your neighbor as yourself through these types of deeds, Jesus assured us that we would know



the divine origin of his teaching. We may never find satisfying answers to some complex issues, but there is ample certainty regarding humble, elementary duties through which we can find fulfillment in an abundant Christian life.

* Scriptures are from the NRSV.

† “Obedience the Organ of Spiritual Knowledge” from <http://www.fwrobertson.com/sermons/ser29.htm>

ADDRESS CHANGE? To remain on our mailing list, please give us both your old and new addresses with both zip codes at least six to eight weeks before the move, if at all possible. Thanks!



A SPECIAL NOTE TO THOSE INTERESTED IN THIS MINISTRY.

The **Does God Exist?** ministry was begun in 1968 and has been financially supported without solicitations by the donations of interested individuals throughout its history. We do not have a church or foundation that financially supports us. All of our materials have been and will be made available free of charge to seeking people. Our donations have remained constant over the last ten years, but our expenses have increased. We must make some changes in our finances and one change we are studying is converting this journal from a bimonthly to a quarterly journal. We would like to have your suggestions on this at 1555 Echo Valley Dr., Niles, MI 49120 or at jncdge@aol.com. John Clayton

Visit the Clayton Museum of Ancient History



Located at York College in York, Nebraska, the Clayton Museum of Ancient History features the Foster Stanback collection. **NEW:** Opening this fall is an interactive area where children can

learn about life in ancient times. For information about hours or group tours, call (402)363-5748 or go to www.york.edu/Clayton-Museum or use this QR code.



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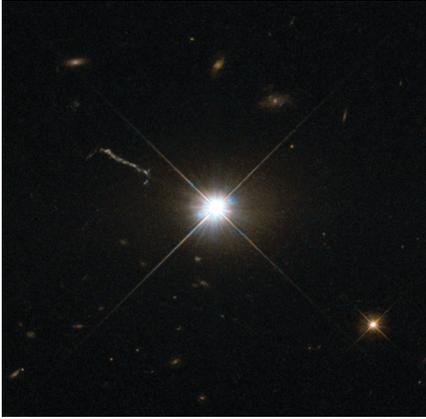
SCIENTISTS AND GOD

ALLAN SANDAGE
1926 – 2010

An American Astronomer who was called “the grand old man of cosmology” by The New York Times. One of the Most Influential Astronomers of the 20th Century.

Discovered the First Quasar.

Staff Member of the Carnegie Observatories, the Palomar telescope.



This is a Hubble photo of quasar 3C 273, 2.5 billion light-years from Earth, discovered by Allan Sandage in the early 1960s.

Allan Sandage said: “The nature of God is not to be found within any part of the findings of science. For that one must turn to scriptures”

“The more we learn about the universe and the physics that governs it, the more reasons we gain to believe in Christ as Creator and Lord.” “The world is too complicated in all its parts and interconnections to be due to chance I am convinced that the existence of life with all its order and each of its organisms is simply too well put together.”

“If there is no God, nothing

makes sense. The atheist’s case is based on a deception they wish to play upon themselves that follows readily from their initial premise. And if there *is* a God, he must be true to science and religion. If it seems not so, then one’s hermeneutics (either the pastor’s or the scientist’s) must be wrong.”



From “A Scientist Reflects on Religious Belief” at leaderu.com/truth/1truth15.html and <http://www.reasons.org/articles/sandage-test-affirms-biblical-creation-model-and-constant-laws-of-physics>

Cynthia's Corner



WHAT MAKES HUMANS SPECIAL?

When God created our world, he created the birds, fish, and animals and “saw that it was good” (Genesis 1:21, 25). However, when God created man, he “created man in his own image.” Humans are the only living creatures that God created “in his image” (Genesis 1:26–27). This alone makes humans unique and special among the animal kingdom. In addition, God also gave to humans the responsibility of “ruling over” the other living creatures he had made (Genesis 1:26, 28). These two things show that God created humans to be special among all his creation. Biologically, *Homo sapiens* are part of the animal kingdom, but God has set humans apart with the gift of “his image” within and a special responsibility without.

What then does it mean to be “created in God’s image”? It is certainly NOT a physical image, or we would all look alike! Humans alone are created in God’s spiritual image with an eternal soul that lives after our physical body dies and gives us part of God’s spiritual makeup. First Corinthians 15 talks about the resurrection of the dead. Our physical body is “sown perishable; it is raised imperishable. It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body” (verses 42–44).

God’s spiritual image, his soul within us, reflects parts of God’s divine nature as referred to in Romans 1:20: “For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made” What are these divine qualities that are “clearly seen” in what he has made? First and foremost is God’s love. The Bible says, “God is love” (1 John 4:8). He created humans with the need to be loved and the capacity to give love, even sacrificial love, which God and Jesus showed us on the cross. God’s other divine qualities such as compassion, empathy, understanding, forgiveness, creativity, artistry, beauty, and diversity in design and function are “clearly seen” in God’s creation and his interactions with humankind.

By creating us “in his image,” God has given these divine qualities to humans; although, because we are imperfect, we do not reflect them perfectly as God and Jesus do. But, humans can appreciate and mimic God’s beauty and diversity of design in his creation with our artistry and creativity. And we can reflect, in our nobler selves, God’s sacrificial love, compassion, understanding, and forgiveness.

—Cynthia Clayton

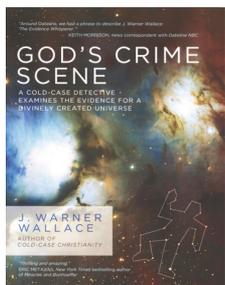
God created mankind in his own image.



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.

God's Crime Scene

by J. Warner Wallace, David C Cook, Publisher, © 2015,
320 pages, \$17.99 (paperback), ISBN-13: 978-1-4347-0784-0



J. Warner Wallace is a “cold case homicide detective.” What that means is that he comes to a crime scene long after the crime has occurred, and by careful analysis and observation uses the evidence to come to a conclusion of what happened, and in many cases, who did it. Forensic scientific investigation is an important scientific method of investigating crime, and the book uses actual cases that Wallace has been involved in to show the reader how evidence is gathered to determine

the facts of the crime. He then applies these methods of examining evidence to investigating whether God exists.

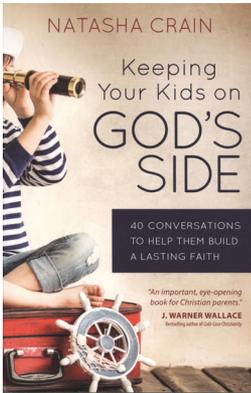
The book is divided into eight chapters, each beginning with an actual crime and the evidence that Wallace and his fellow detectives used to reach a conclusion. Was the crime an inside job, was the evidence tampered with, was there an author, was intelligence involved in planning, is deductive reasoning being applied, was there a choice, was it premeditated, is there a moral imperative, and is there exculpatory evidence? All of these are demonstrated in real crime situations, and then the method used is applied to evidence for God's existence.

The scientific material in the book is well done, accurate, and easy to understand. Like his first book, *Cold Case Christianity*, Wallace draws on scientists, apologists, and even atheists to make his points. There is virtually no denominational bias in the book and the diagrams and sketches in the book are useful aids in understanding the author's points.

We recommend this book highly. It is a unique and useful approach, and would be helpful in answering the questions of college students and professional people who have doubts.

Keeping Your Kids on God's Side

by Natasha Crain, Harvest House Publishers, © 2016,
269 pages, \$14.99 (paperback), ISBN-13: 978-0-7369-6508-8



As Christian parents, we look for ways to build faith in our children. We need to be very careful that we do not indoctrinate them with our views and understandings, but that we help them build a solid faith of their own that will sustain them throughout life, not just the time they are in our house. This is hard to do. Teenagers go through a stage in which they question everything. I think many of our readers have had the situation in life that I have had, where it seems that everything I say is automatically assumed to be wrong. Rather than get defensive, we need to have built a foundation that belongs

to the child, not to us with our pushing the child to parrot what we believe. This book is a useful tool in the pursuit of leading children to have their own faith.

Crain has broken the book into five parts called “conversations.” These conversations each have eight questions that kids ask. The conversations are about: God, Truth and Worldviews, Jesus, the Bible, and Science. As an example of the questions, in the “Conversations about God” section there are questions discussed that include, “How can a loving God send people to hell?” and “Why would God need people to worship him?” In the Bible section, questions about the Bible’s apparent support of rape, slavery, and human sacrifice are discussed. There are 40 questions discussed in this book. I would suggest a great family devotional subject would be to take each question Crain gives, read it, and discuss it to give kids an answer to these vital issues of faith.

When Crain hits a contested issue, she makes it a point to discuss the issue head-on without being judgmental. The age of the earth issue, for example, is explained from both a young earth and an old earth perspective. The science she gives is accurate and well done, but she does not state an opinion about the issue leaving it to the reader to decide what they will accept.

We recommend this book highly, not just for parents to use to build a catalog of answers to faith issues in their children, but also for adult readers who may have questions of their own.

Train up a child in the way he should go, And when he is old he will not depart from it.

— Proverbs 22:6 NKJV

DANDY DESIGNS

THE SECRET OF VANILLA FLAVOR

The vanilla flavor used in ice cream and many other foods comes from a vining orchid that originally grew in Mexico called *Vanilla planifolia*. A Spanish conquistador discovered the pleasant-tasting flavor used by the Aztecs, and he introduced it to Europe in the 1520s. The Europeans attempted to produce vanilla in their own countries. They were able to grow vines, but the vines produced no fruit.



For three centuries the Europeans depended on Mexico for the tasty substance. In 1836 a French botanist was visiting Mexico and noticed some bees landing on the vanilla flower and working their way under a flap in the flower and becoming dusted with pollen which they transferred to other flowers. Within hours of pollination, the flowers closed and soon seed pods began to form.

The secret of how to pollinate the flowers was known only to those stingless bees of the genus *Melipona* found only in Mexico. The people who were attempting to grow vanilla elsewhere tried without success to bring the bees into their areas. Then in 1841 a twelve-year-old slave boy discovered a way to hand pollinate the flowers using a sliver of bamboo. That method is still used today and because of that, Indonesia and Madagascar produce more vanilla flavoring than Mexico does. This method of hand pollination is labor intensive and requires constant monitoring of the plants because the flowers stay open for only a few hours.

It took humans 300 years to discover how to pollinate the vanilla flower. Before that, only a special bee knew the secret. Without the bees, there would have been no vanilla plant for humans to discover and use. The vanilla orchid could not survive without the bee. Who put that bee there and told it how to pollinate that flower? We see this as another evidence of God's creative work.

CHAMPION HIGH DIVERS!



The northern gannet (*Morus bassanus*) is a sea-bird with incredible diving ability. This bird lives on a diet of fish which it catches by plunging into the water at high speed. The northern gannet can see a fish underwater from 45 m (148 ft) above the water, although they usually fly lower than

that. When they see a fish, they dive into the water making their bodies straight and rigid with their wings tucked back. They use their wings to guide their trajectory until just before reaching the water when they tuck in their wings. With their head and neck stretched out they pierce the water like an arrow at speeds up to 100 km/hr (62 mph). They dive very deep swallowing their prey underwater.

The northern gannets are designed for this high-speed high diving. Their beaks are long and cone-shaped with no external nostrils. Their auditory canals are small and can be closed underwater. They have a long and strong sternum to protect their internal organs when they hit the water. Under their skin, they have several air sacks at strategic locations connected to their lungs. These help to cushion the impact with the water and supply oxygen while under the water. Their wings are long and narrow and located near the front of the body.

The northern gannets usually nest on cliffs overlooking the ocean. They are monogamous, remaining in pairs for a lifetime or several seasons until one of them dies. These beautiful birds are well-designed to be champions of high-speed diving. We see this as another Dandy Design and evidence of the work of the Master Designer.



How many are your works, Lord! / In wisdom you made them all; / the earth is full of your creatures.

—Psalm 104:24 NIV

News and Notes

SUICIDE DATA SHOWS HUGE INCREASE. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention released data from 1999 to 2014 showing a 24 percent growth in suicides in that 15 year period. The highest growth took place among girls from the ages of 10 to 14 showing a 200 percent surge. Adolescent psychiatrist Victor Fornari attributes this to “teens suffering from anxiety and depression influenced by websites and blogs dedicated to dark topics and self-destructive coping mechanisms.” We would suggest that the lack of active faith is a major contributor to this as well. (Source: *The Week*, May 13, 2016, page 20.) Also, the National Center for Health Statistics has released data for suicides showing that for ages 75 and older the rate has climbed 24 percent from 1999 to 2014. For men from 45 to 64 the rate has climbed 43 percent and for women in that same age group it has risen by 63 percent. Male suicides are far more common than female suicides overall. Those over 75 have 40 suicides per 100,000 for men but only 5 per 100,000 for women. We would suggest that not being involved in the work of the church is a major factor in these numbers. Younger males have half as many suicides as age 75 and up. Sitting around feeling useless and watching negative things on television is enough to discourage anyone. Seniors need to be involved! Get your senior group doing something at your congregation! Source: *AARP Bulletin*, June 2016, page 4.

MARILYN VOS SAVANT RESPONDS TO WHY WE EXIST. In her column in *Parade* magazine (May 29, 2016, page 10), the woman who is claimed to have the highest IQ and star proponent of Mensa, made an interesting observation about religion. “What is the reason we are here? I think it depends on your spiritual beliefs. If you have a religion, it provides the answer. But if you don’t believe in a god, the question contradicts your thinking. Having a reason implies having a purpose, which indicates an intelligent being (for cognitive power, etc.) with intent. That’s what people call a god. So if you don’t believe a god exists, you can’t believe a reason exists. You must settle for assuming we got here through some natural process, and that’s that.” We would add that not knowing your purpose for existing leaves you unable to deal with the pain and suffering in life. That could be a reason for the increase in suicide mentioned above.

TEEN BIRTH RATES DROP. *The Christian Science Monitor* reports that teen birth rates have fallen 61 percent since 1991. The percentage of teen females who are sexually active declined from 51 percent to 43 percent between 2006 and 2010. The authors of the study suggest that the other cause of the drop in teen births is access to reliable birth control. Source: <http://www.csmonitor.com/USA/USA-Update/2016/0429/Teen-pregnancies-at-all-time-low.-Is-peer-influence-responsible>.

TEEN ABUSE — A CONTINUING ISSUE. *NEA Today* magazine (Spring 2016, page 16) has an interesting article written for teachers about abuse in romantic relationships among teenagers. It reports that one in three adolescents say they have experienced some form of abuse—physical, sexual, emotional, or verbal—in their romantic relationships. Loveisrespect.org has a hotline which 20,000 teens reached out to in 2015. We suggest that when God’s plan for love, marriage, and sex are not followed that control and ownership becomes a major theme of relationships. Teachers are locked into the values of our secular society in trying to deal with what goes on outside lockers in a typical high school hallway.

THE EARTH KEEPS GROWING. Every day 60 tons of meteoritic dust falls to Earth. In a billion years, that would be two trillion tons of material. If you think that is something to worry about, just realize that number would be about one three-hundred-millionth of Earth’s mass, so it is not dangerous to our survival. It does, however, add useful trace elements to the earth. This may be another design feature of Earth we are just beginning to understand. Source: *Astronomy*, June 2016, page 19.



Satellite View of the Americas

ANCIENT BABYLONIANS HAD HIGH-LEVEL MATH. When you read the book of Daniel in the Bible, you see a great emphasis on education and intellectual skills. A recent discovery of a tablet dated to 325 B.C. contains inscriptions showing that the motion of Jupiter across the night sky was calculated using a system of precalculus. Dr. Mathieu Ossendrijver from Humboldt University in Berlin, who made the discovery, says the find is astounding. It uses a graphic technique of plotting velocity against time. Archeologists know that Marduk was the patron god of the Babylonians and that Jupiter was regarded as a celestial manifestation of Marduk. Their religious beliefs led them to intense study of Jupiter. For Christians, the find simply highlights the conditions that Daniel found himself in during his time in Babylon. Source: *Dallas Morning News*, January 29, 2016, page 14A.

CATHOLIC PRIEST ABUSE PROBLEMS REFLECT IGNORANCE OF ISSUE. The Pennsylvania Attorney General released a report in February of sexual abuse of children that revealed that the diocese's bishop created a payment chart to guide how much victims would receive from the church. The report listed fondling over clothes \$10,000 up to \$25,000. Fondling under clothes up to \$40,000. Forced oral sex would pay up to \$75,000 and forced sodomy or intercourse up to \$175,000. The idea that the sexual abuse of children depends on what is done to the child grossly oversimplifies the long term effect of abuse. It suggests an incredible ignorance of how young minds are shaped or altered by highly personal experiences of any kind. Source: Associated Press release by Joe Mandak, February 29, 2016.

IMPACT OF PORNOGRAPHY. Closely related to the abuse mentioned above is growing evidence that men are especially influenced by viewing pornography. It affects their ability to function sexually in the future. One study showed that 83 percent of U.S. college men who viewed mainstream pornography were more likely to commit rape or sexual assault. Another set of studies has shown that up to a third of men under 40 who were active in watching pornographic videos were dysfunctional in sexual relationships later in life. God never intended for the healthy, beautiful relationship between a husband and wife to be contaminated by pornography in the minds of either or both. Like a lot of things, when we do not do it God's way, we end up with major personal problems. Source: *The Week*, April 22, 2016, page 19.

SCOTTISH REJECTION OF RELIGION. Scotland has a long history of religious conflict. When we were there, we found people to be interested in God but not in the "church." A recently published government survey called "Scottish Social Attitudes" shows that 52 percent of Scottish adults say they have no religious affiliation. We would suggest the same rejection of religion exists in the United States. That does not mean these folks are atheists, but they are weary to the point of rejection of what is done by organized religion in the name of God. Source: *South Bend Tribune*, April 6, 2016, page 3B.

GLOBAL WARMING DATA. One of the reasons there is skepticism about the reality of global warming is that local evidence seems to contradict it. In 2015, for example, Antarctica had the most ice coverage it has had in 30 years. We have seen several articles referring to this fact as evidence that global warming is a scam. What people do not realize is that this is due to local wind shifts, snowfall, and changes in ocean currents. An example of this fact is that the Arctic Ocean

lost ice three times faster than the Antarctic was gaining it. There is no question about whether global warming is happening or not — it is. The real issue is whether this is caused entirely by humans and whether we can change it. Global warming has happened in the past. It even happened when there were no humans on the planet. We may be contributing to it, but we are not the sole cause. We can affect the rate at which it happens, and we need to prepare for its consequences. Making a political football out of it on one side or the other does not benefit anyone. Source: *Smithsonian*, March 2016, page 112.

PETA AND ANIMAL “SELFIES.” People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) has sponsored numerous lawsuits all based on the assumption that animals and humans are equals and that all animals have the same rights as humans. In a recent case, a wildlife photographer named David Slater set up his camera near a group of black macaque monkeys on the island of Sulawesi in Indonesia so the monkeys could trip the shutter and take pictures of themselves. Slater then took the pictures and used them in an article in the *Daily Mail* and in a book titled *Wildlife Personalities*. Slater owned the copyright on these items. In September of 2015, PETA filed suit for copyright infringement saying the monkeys owned the pictures. The biblical concept of humans being responsible for ruling over God’s creation (Genesis 1:26–28) is at odds with denying human uniqueness. While PETA lost this suit because the president and Congress have not extended copyright laws to animals, that is probably in our future. (Source: *Reader’s Digest*, May 2016, page 25) In a related story, it has been interesting to watch the case of the gorilla at the Cincinnati Zoo who was shot because a three-year-old child fell into the cage and was being handled by the ape. There has been a general outcry against the zoo, but virtually no expression of concern for the well-being of the child. One wonders what the animal activists would want the zoo managers to do? Apparently killing the child would be preferable to killing the gorilla in their view.



DRIVING DEATHS DOUBLE IN STATES LEGALIZING MARIJUANA. Washington state legalized the sale of marijuana in 2012. Data from 2014 shows that 17 percent of all fatal accidents in that year involved marijuana. It was involved in 8 percent of all fatal accidents before legalization. The study by the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety warns that THC (the main chemical in marijuana) affects everyone differently and is dangerous because of that. Source: *The Week*, May 27, 2016, page 21.

MORE FLOOD TABLET EVIDENCE. In 1872 a fragment of a tablet was found at Nineveh (present-day Iraq) which contained a story almost identical to the biblical account of Noah. This was part of a 12-tablet *Epic of Gilgamesh*. It had been part of the library of the Assyrian King Ashurbanipal (668 to 627 B.C.). Since that fragment was found, more than a dozen cuneiform tablets have been found which have part of the flood account in them. The oldest of those tablets predates the earliest biblical manuscripts by a thousand years. There is too much evidence to dismiss the flood as an Israelite myth. Source: *Archaeology*, May/June 2016, page 31.

RENEWED ATTENTION TO OLDEST CAVE ART. In 1994 in Chauvet, France, a group of charcoal and red pigment cave paintings was discovered. Similar paintings had been found at Lascaux and so it was assumed that the Chauvet paintings were of the same age. Recent sampling has shown that the Chauvet paintings are some 14,000 years earlier. This makes the paintings of lions in Chauvet the oldest paintings known. What is interesting is that the paintings are beautifully done and highly complex, and they have lasted in the cave for over 30,000 years. Chlorine isotope dating and carbon dating give the same results. The message is that from the earliest days on Earth, humans have expressed themselves in artwork of high sophistication. There is really no such thing as primitive art. Source: *Archeology* magazine, July/August 2016, page 12.

MORE GENETIC EVIDENCE FOR THE ONENESS OF THE HUMAN RACE. The media confuses human history by tending to attach the word “species” to every new find that is made. In 2010, for example, fossils of early humans were found in Denisova Cave in Siberia. The media labeled them “Denisovans” and referred to them as a new species of humans. The scientific literature shows that the finds in Denisova were a racial branch from the Neanderthals and that modern humans contain DNA from both. The variations in genes can be complicated. A gene that can cause a problem in one population can be a benefit in another. The classic example is the gene that causes sickle cell anemia. The gene is destructive but pro-



vides immunity to malaria which is a much bigger problem in some places in the world. Recent discoveries show that a gene which causes hypercoagulation leading to blood clots also accelerates wound healing, which is a huge issue in some populations. God made humans special, but he built into us the capacity to live in a wide variety of environments. Throughout time that capacity has culminated in a wide range of races, Neanderthals being one, and Denisovans being another. Source: *Archaeology*, July/August 2016, page 33.

STDS SURGE. As our country continues its stampede towards promiscuity among all age groups, there are a number of consequences. Some of those are slow in appearing, but recent announcements by the Centers for Disease Control show that STD growth rates are going through the roof. In Indiana, the syphilis rate has gone up 70 percent in a single year rising from 297 cases in 2014 to 505 in 2015. The national average for syphilis rose 15 percent between 2013 and 2014. This is just one indicator, but experts say that the data for chlamydia, gonorrhea, and HIV are expected to be comparable. The notion that passing out condoms or distributing literature about STDs is going to solve the disease problem is obviously unsupported. Changing the way people think about conducting themselves and how they express their sexuality is the only way to change the consequences of not living as God has called us to live. Source: Associated Press article by Rick Callahan, published in the *South Bend Tribune*, June 7, 2016.

GMOS AND GOD'S CREATION. There has been a lot of attention paid to what has been called "Genetically Modified Organisms." Many of us have seen enough science fiction movies that we see a Frankenstein in every advancement made by science in biological issues. The fact is that humans have been modifying the genes of plants for years. Cross-breeding and hybridization are methods that have produced most of the vegetable material we eat. The sweet corn we enjoy today is not the same as the corn grown by the Indians in the American Southwest before Europeans arrived. The National Academies of Sciences has reviewed over 900 studies of GMO crops and has found no difference in the results of eating those crops as compared to others. The bigger risk to us is the chemicals used to kill bugs on plants, or to preserve foods once they have been picked. God gave us the charge to "have dominion ... over all the earth" (Genesis 1:26). Part of fulfilling that command is using the materials God gave us, including the DNA of multiple plants and animals, to provide the food we need. We should pay attention to what is added to our foods, but blanket condemnation of science's efforts to feed a starving planet is unchristian and in defiance of God's commands. Source: *The Week*, June 3, 2016, page 3.

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, CDs, 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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