

DOES GOD EXIST?

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

A CHRISTIAN VIEW
OF THE BUSINESS
OF SPIRITS, GHOSTS,
AND DEMONS

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A CHRISTIAN VIEW OF THE BUSINESS OF SPIRITS, GHOSTS, AND DEMONS

It has been said that when someone does not believe in something, that he will believe anything. We live in an age when that saying is being demonstrated in a variety of ways. In Europe and the United States it is now fashionable to say that “we are living in the post-Christian



Cover graphic and this graphic: Roland Earnst

era.” Atheists and naturalists are loudly proclaiming victory over the forces of religion and faith. While one might suggest that such claims are premature, there can be no question

but that western civilization is moving headlong into materialism, secularism, and a rejection of the beliefs of the past. With this new belief system has come a rise in bizarre beliefs, including ghosts, demons and demon possession, spirit creatures, voodoo, witchcraft, occult practices, fortune tellers, and a variety of outlandish medical treatments and claimed cures.

We have seen the rise of Scientology in which everyone is said to be a “thetan” (pronounced THAY-ten) or immortal spirit with unlimited powers over its own universe, even though a person might not be aware of this. Wicca, a modern form of witchcraft, is a growing force in western civilization. Wiccans believe in a god-force which is in everything or in personal beings. New Age has grown incredibly in our culture teaching that everything and everyone is God, with people having unlimited inner power and a need to discover it. Mormons teach that Jesus is a separate God created as a spirit child by the Father and Mother in Heaven, and is the “elder brother” of all men and spirit beings. Buddhism rejects the existence of God and speaks of Buddha as a universal enlightened consciousness. Nichiren Shoshu

Buddhism teaches there is no God and that there is no separation between Creator and creature with spiritual forces being protectors. The list of beliefs in spirit forces is massive and reflects a culture that is grasping for any replacement for belief in the Christian God of the Bible.

Belief in ghosts, demons, spiritual forces, and the like very quickly find their way into Hollywood. The movie *Avatar* has strong connections to Nichiren Shoshu Buddhism, which uses Hindu gods and goddesses as protectors. The Queen Mary ocean liner located in Long beach California has a “Ghosts and Legends” attraction on the ship. This is a tour into the bowels of the Queen Mary that includes narrated stories about ghosts on the ship, along with fog, lights, sound, and other creepy special effects. It is great fun and kind of reminds one of Disney’s Haunted Mansion attraction. Psychics do a major business in all countries of the Western world today, and our televisions are full of programs about the paranormal and the psychic world.



Roland Earnst

Things that become popular in the world around us always seem to find their way into the beliefs of Christians. In the religious market there are books about ghosts, demons, alien spirits, etc., suggesting what they are and what they mean. One popular book suggests that demons are the souls of people who have died and are lost, but have not faced judgment yet. Erratic behavior is sometimes explained away as demons or spirit-based. There are a number of Christians, including several evangelists, who claim to have seen ghosts or demons. Some estimates say that about 50 percent of the people in the Restoration Movement believe in such things. It is vital that Christians understand that this is a dangerous business both spiritually and physically. There are solid biblical and scientific reasons why we should not buy into paranormal claims of any kind, and we need to convince our brothers and sisters in Christ that they have nothing to fear from ghosts, demons, or alien spirits.

REASON 1—SATAN IS ALIVE AND WELL BUT IS NOT ALLOWED TO FUNCTION IN WAYS THAT DEPRIVE US OF OUR FREE CHOICE. One of the most fundamental truths of the

Bible is that God has allowed humans to choose whether or not to obey God and live as God has called them to live. In the Old Testament we see statements like “But if serving the Lord seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve . . .” (Joshua 24:15, NIV). In the New Testament Jesus confronted the disciples with this choice saying “Will you also go away?” (John 6:67). John 20:31; Philippians 2:12; and James 2:14 all challenge us to realize we must make our own choices. God never forces us to accept God’s way of living or doing things, but there are consequences of making choices that reject God. If a ghost or a demon can take over innocent people, and cause them to do things that they would not do of their own free volition, then a fundamental truth of the Bible is compromised.

The New Testament is full of warnings about those things that can put us at risk as Christians. The Church is warned about false teachers, about scams, about false apostles, about false brothers and sisters in Christ, about governments, about lukewarmness, about being unfruitful—the list is long. (See Acts 20:28–31; 1 Corinthians 4:14; Colossians 1:28; and 2 Peter 1:3–9). Nowhere in the Bible is there any warning about the threats of ghosts, demons, familiar spirits, witches, seances, or any paranormal phenomena taking over against our will. Surely if this were a legitimate threat to Christians, God would have warned us about it. Second Timothy 3:16–17 tells us that the scriptures give us everything we need to know to be complete, and no warnings about these things are contained in the Bible.

REASON 2—THE BIBLE WARNS US NOT TO BE INVOLVED WITH THESE KINDS OF CLAIMS. The serious nature of being involved with paranormal phenomena is underscored throughout the Bible. In Exodus 22:18 the price of being a witch was death and it is listed in the same verses as sodomy. Deuteronomy 18:10–12 is more specific: “Let no one be found among you who sacrifices his son or daughter in the fire, who practices divination or sorcery, interprets omens, engages in witchcraft or casts spells, or is a medium or spiritist, or who consults the dead. Anyone who does these things is detestable to the LORD” In Galatians 5:20 witchcraft is listed in a series of behaviors that include sexual immorality, drunkenness, and orgies. (For other references see Leviticus 19:26, 31; 20:6, 27; 1 Samuel 15:23; 28; 2 Kings 9:22; 21:6; 23:24; 1 Chronicles 10:13; 2 Chronicles 33:6; Isaiah 8:19; 19:3; 29:4; Micah 5:12; Nahum 3:4.)

REASON 3—BIBLICAL REFERENCES TO THESE EVENTS ARE NOT DESIGNED FOR US TODAY. We have already mentioned the fact that God does not force us to obey Him or to follow His teachings about how we are to live. One part of our freedom

to choose is that God never overwhelms us with such massive force that we have no choice. When Jesus was in the flesh on the earth, there was massive evidence that He was what He said He was. Satan was given greater freedom, and some of that freedom was present in the form of forces that do not exist today — demons, spiritual forces, etc.

Colossians 2:15 and 1 John 3:8 tell us that Jesus overcame these forces. Zechariah 13:2 and 1 Corinthians 13:8–10 tell us these things would pass away with the coming of the Church. You can argue endlessly about what these forces were and how they functioned, but the early Christians were told “Resist the devil and he will flee from you” (James 4:7). The devil is not a force against which we have no defense. First Corinthians 10:13 tells us that God will always provide a way of escape when problems come against us as Christians. Romans 8:28 indicates that God can take the worst experience that we endure and make good come from it.

We are not helpless pawns in a war that uses us against our will and without our involvement. What went on in the past, whether real or not, does not go on today. We are called to be a people who choose to live God’s way, but no force comes against us that we cannot handle. First Corinthians 10:13 tells us that everything that happens to us is the common experience of humanity. People who claim strange and unique mystical experiences that no one else has may have personal problems that cause misinterpretation of the source of their difficulties. The reality is that our world today only contains what all of us face daily and can handle if we will use the tools God gave us.

This discussion would be incomplete without mentioning the seance of 1 Samuel 28. In this story King Saul is being defeated by the Philistines. He goes to a medium at a place called Endor to contact Samuel, who is dead. The woman does her normal seance, and sure enough, Samuel shows up. When the woman sees Samuel, the Bible tells us she shrieked—screamed at the top of her voice. I would suggest that the woman had a scam which allowed people to see a “deceased relative,” and when the real thing showed up it freaked her out. She was in unfamiliar territory, and she screamed and realized that she was dealing with reality—Samuel was actually there and Saul was also in her presence. This was a miracle of God designed for Saul, and the witch of Endor did not have the power to raise the dead.



Roland Earnst

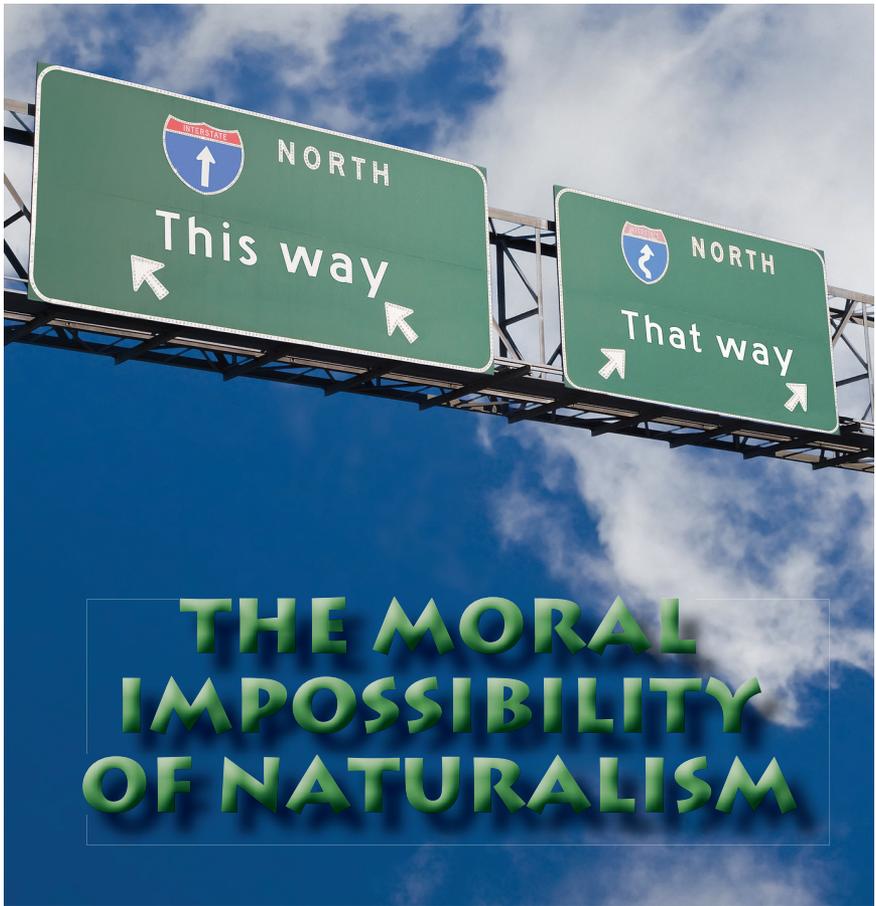
REASON 4—THERE IS NO SCIENTIFIC EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT THE CLAIMS BEING MADE.

One major aspect of the **Does God Exist?** ministry is to deal with evidence. We urge atheists to look at the positive evidence rather than to engage in the theological debate about whether they like the way God does things or what God may have allowed in the world. Spiritual things cannot be tested scientifically in any direct way, but evidence can exist for spiritual things, and it can be investigated. The soul of man is one area that falls into this realm. We cannot conduct a scientific experiment directly to measure or physically handle the soul. The fact is, however, that evidence for the spiritual dimension of man is well recognized by almost everyone whether they are religious or atheistic in their beliefs. Man's concept of self, his creative ability, his language (not his speech), his capacity for worship, and his feelings of guilt, sympathy, and compassion are all evidence for a spiritual component to humans. The debate about the soul revolves around whether the soul can be explained merely in terms of the human brain. That question is the subject of ongoing research and debate.

Research on ghosts, demons, fortune tellers, witchcraft, spirit creatures, demonic possession and exorcism, and paranormal claims in general offers no support of these claimed phenomena. I have personally witnessed several exorcisms and numerous claims of demonic possession. I have attended satanic worship services where "miracles" are performed. I have visited a large number of haunted castles, spook caverns, spirit swamps, and possessed houses. In recent years there have been numerous studies of these phenomena by believers and atheists alike. Magazines like *Spiritual Counterfeit Project*, *Christian Research Journal*, *Skeptic*, and *Skeptical Inquirer* have case after case where mystic claims are shown to have either a fraudulent base, or an easy physical explanation.

We do not live in a world of spirit creatures and people with superhuman powers. When God tells us to "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" (Philippians 2:12), He is not telling us to do something we cannot do. You do not have to live in fear of someone putting a hex on you, or Satan having some stranglehold on you that you cannot oppose. That does not mean that life cannot be hard. It does not mean that you are safe around witches or spirit readers or mediums because people can do strange things when their security is threatened. It does mean that God is in control and His promises are true and binding. You can serve the occult, or the magic promoters, or the fantasy ghost world if you wish, but "as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."(Joshua 24:15).

—John N. Clayton



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Man has a purpose related to his nature as a being created in God's image. The book of Job and Ephesians 3:9–11 and 6:12 make our purpose in the struggle between good and evil clear, and show that our conduct is of paramount importance in this struggle. The unique makeup of human beings is defined in terms not of the natural, material body, but in terms of a spiritual body no longer limited by the physical world in which we live.

Hopefully I have grown to the point where I do not want to disappoint my heavenly Father, and I am not living morally just because I do not want to get zapped. Fear only goes so far in motivating people to change their behavior. The fact is that if I commit an immoral act I am doing so in violation of the standard that I have chosen to live by. I have no rationalization I can go through to justify the act I committed. My moral standards do not change, because the biblical standards are very clear and have not changed down through the ages. Humans

may try to rationalize away what God has told us, but our conduct and our choices are clearly defined if we really follow the Christian system.

My father was an atheist, and he was a very moral man. I asked my father one time why he was so moral, realizing that he was an atheist and a follower of secular humanism, having studied under John Dewey at Columbia University in getting his Ph.D. He thought about it for a while and finally said “I guess it was the way I was raised.” He was raised by parents who were godly people. In fact, his biological father was a minister. In essence it was his religious indoctrination as a child that caused him to be uncomfortable with the philosophy that he had verbally taken on as an adult. His actual behavior was shaped primarily by his childhood association with God’s word. Many atheists live moral lives. Many religious people do not. The question is not whether someone is a good person or a bad person. The question is one of world views, and what we can logically defend as a relevant, working guide to how we live.

Atheism has no such guide. Common sense and study show us the truism of 2 Timothy 3:16–17 which tells us that all scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man or woman of God may be complete and thoroughly equipped for life.

—JNC



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WHAT'S UP WITH HARRY POTTER?

by Glenn Goree

Editor's note: Glenn Goree is an employee assistance counselor for J. P. Morgan Chase and an international consultant for Overseas Incident Stress Debriefing. He is also the director of the counseling program at the Oak Hills Church of Christ in San Antonio, Texas.

God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin (1 John 1:5–7, NIV).



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The Japanese were notorious night fighters in the Pacific during World War II. They waited until the pitch of night to employ deadly skills in the art of night combat. Some stripped naked except for a loincloth and special boots designed for stealth. Others wore a Marine helmet or uniform to infiltrate the front lines unnoticed. Their weapons were not guns but knives, bayonets and hand grenades, because their smokeless rifles made noise revealing their location. It is no wonder Marines were exhausted as much from sleep deprivation as actual combat.

I think Christians are on the front lines of spiritual combat. Paul writes, “For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms” (Ephesians 6:12, NIV). Like these Marines of the Pacific war Christians can become spiritually exhausted. It is tiring to “Be self-controlled and alert” (1 Peter 5:8, NIV). Like the Japanese, Satan “prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour” (1 Peter 5:8, NIV). He is also good at disguising himself, “Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light” (2 Corinthians 11:14, NIV).

I believe a dark deception is hidden in plain sight. It is like the ignored family secret not open for discussion. It is like a criminal's

brazen walk concealed in a crowd. It is like self denial of succumbing to temptation with rationalization for sin's consequence. There are many "deceptions" that may be healthy and entertaining, such as Halloween, ghosts and goblins complete with witches, demons and skeletons. Novels like *Harry Potter*, *Lord of the Rings*, and *The Chronicles of Narnia* illustrate the eternal struggle between good and evil. Who has not seen horror movies about Frankenstein, Dracula, and werewolves?

However, in counseling young people since the late 1990s I have noticed an increasing intoxication in their naïve curiosity with life's hidden darkness. I do not know what else to call it except a dark deception hidden in plain sight, but its behaviors, attitudes, and beliefs are pursued by youth out in the open. Parents do not pay much attention because they feel it is harmless, innocent fun. Yet I believe there is an insidious darkness unseen beneath its smiley, happy face. It is like a parasite growing for decades before its host becomes aware of its inhabitation.

This interest in darkness is more than a passing childhood fascination. It is a focus on life after death in the wrong direction. It is a macabre intellectual, sometimes actual, probing into Satanism, demons, witchcraft, tattoos, and dark spirits. There seem to be several interwoven dark themes. First, there has been a growth of wearing black apparel. Probably the most noticed are the Goths. Second, the lyrics of hard rock music are obsessed with the glorification of death and suicide. Third, youth rebel by nature and inclination. In this hidden darkness rebellion is extended to anarchy. Fourth, they "call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter" (Isaiah 5:20, NIV).

In the literature about Harry Potter and company there are good and bad witches. But the lines between light and darkness are clearly drawn. Right is still right and wrong is still wrong. In this



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case the difference between right and wrong is not being challenged, but reinforced! However, the hidden deception wants youth to believe dark can be light. Once this is accepted it is not long before dark is chosen over light. “The wicked freely strut about when what is vile is honored among men” (Psalm 12:8, NIV).

In Leviticus 19 and Deuteronomy 18 there are six explicit statements on this topic. Practices of witchcraft, divination, sorcery, mediums, casting spells, interpreting omens, consulting the dead and tattoos were all forbidden. Israelites who practice those things were to be executed by stoning. God used words such as defiled and detestable as His attitude toward these practices. In Leviticus 20:6 God warns, “I will set my face against the person who turns to mediums and spiritists to prostitute himself by following them, and I will cut him off from his people” (NIV).

Why does God have a zero tolerance stance on seemingly innocent interests? I think God recognizes covert danger in human curiosity particularly in youth. Like a good parent he warns us of concealed risks we cannot detect. His commands are nothing short of, “Don’t reach on top of the stove.” The Japanese general commanding the Tarawa Island fortress said the Marines could not take it in a thousand years. The Marines conquered the island in seventy-two hours. What is God protecting us from? It is not what but whom — Satan!

Here are two thoughts. First, all that glistens is not gold. What more efficient way to lure youth into darkness than by seemingly guiltless attractions. These tickle human nature’s fondness of flirting with enticements in the gray areas of life. Contemporary society’s view of them is that they are neither expressly forbidden nor fully acceptable. Secondly, if you play with fire you will be burned. The problem with being young is that young people do not believe this statement. They believe they can play with fire and not be burned. Then when they are burned they blame someone else rather than accepting responsibility.

These two realities of the flesh work in tandem to draw youth away from God and toward Satan. This is what Paul was warning Timothy about when he hoped, “... that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will.” (2 Timothy 2:26, NIV).



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OTHER EARTHS



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The history of man is full of stories, myths, and speculations about life elsewhere in space. From *Star Trek* to *Star Wars* we have seen not only science fiction but reputable main-line science crank out story after story and speculation after speculation about life forms on other planets orbiting other stars. With the recent discoveries of hundreds of planets circling other stars there has been a lot of gasoline thrown on the fire of speculation as to whether there are other planets with other sentient beings asking the same questions that we are asking here on earth.

The question of life elsewhere has no direct implications for those of us who believe in the God of the Bible. The Bible has no direct mention of life or the lack of life elsewhere, and the message of Jesus Christ is directed to those living on this planet. Any mention of what that message might be for a “Mr. Spock” who lives on some other planet is purely speculative.

There has been a recent flood of mainstream articles in the media on planets like Gliese 581g which is claimed to be “the first extrasolar planet likely to be hospitable to life” (*Science News*, November 6, 2010, page 14). Some of these claims turn out to be premature, as did this one. On October 11 the Geneva Observatory in Switzerland announced it could find no evidence of that planet, and whether it is eventually found or not points out how desperate some seem to be to find a life-supporting planet. We once again want to emphasize that

this issue has no biblical ramifications, and certainly such planets will eventually be found even if this one turns out to be a case of overzealous misinterpretation.

All of this posturing over life in space is rooted in an oversimplification of what it takes to have a place like Earth. The sole criterion for an earth-like planet in these scientific discussions is whether or not the planet in question has a “habitable zone.” It turns out a habitable zone is defined by these researchers as one where liquid water can be found. It may sound as though every planet would have a habitable zone, because if a star is very hot the planet can simply be farther from it to reduce the temperature or if the star is cooler the planet can just get closer to it and raise the temperature. The problem with that view is that there are other parameters affecting whether or not water can exist as a liquid. If a planet is too small, then it does not have enough gravity to hold the water. The reason there is virtually no hydrogen in the earth’s atmosphere is that our gravity is too weak to hold hydrogen and any hydrogen that is in our atmosphere will escape to outer space because of our weak gravity. A planet like Mercury has virtually no gases in its atmosphere because of its small mass. There are similar complications if a planet is too large. So the planet’s size is also a factor in the planet’s habitable zone.



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The shape of the orbit of a planet around its star is also an issue. If the orbit of a planet is eccentric (very oval), then as it goes around its star the temperatures will vary radically. When the orbit is close to the star (perihelion) the temperatures will go very high and when it is at its greatest distance from the star (aphelion) the temperature will go very low. Most extrasolar planets have been found to have very elliptical orbits. The earth’s orbit is much more circular avoiding extremes in how much energy reaches the surface.

Articles in the mainstream media about life in space infer that if there is a habitable zone there will automatically be life on that planet. The fact is that there is a variety of other factors that must be carefully managed for life to exist on a planet. Stars give off a variety of very destructive radiations that are a product of the nuclear reactions that provide the energy of the star. Any planet that harbors life must have

a series of defense systems to protect against the radiation. In the earth's case there are several such defense systems. We have a strong magnetic field which deflects radiation if the particles are charged, as many of them are. The atmosphere is also a part of the defense of any planet that allows life to exist on it. The earth's atmosphere not only has a thickness that absorbs some radiations, but it also has layers within the atmosphere that remove certain kinds of radiation. Most of us remember discussions of the ozone layer of our atmosphere which protects life on the planet from incoming ultraviolet radiation. The ozone layer is just one of as many as a dozen layers, each designed to handle a particular kind of radiation from reaching the surface of the earth.

In addition to radiation, a planet needs a shielding device to protect against incoming solid objects. As natural processes take place in space, there are chunks of rock ranging in size from hundreds of miles in diameter to micrometers. We have names to describe these



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objects such as meteors, asteroids and comets. These solid objects have to be intercepted to prevent them from having a negative impact on life forms on any planet. In the case of the earth we have an incredible system of planets placed at strategic distances and having carefully designed sizes so that

their gravitational fields absorb debris coming in along the ecliptic which otherwise would pose a significant hazard to life forms on this planet. Neptune, Uranus, Saturn, Jupiter and the Moon all serve as shields to the earth. In the past few years we have witnessed Jupiter taking direct hits that otherwise might have posed a threat to the planet on which we live.

Having stable weather conditions on a planet is also a prerequisite to life. Neptune is a planet where we have seen lightning bolts the size of the state of Texas, and where wind velocities exceed 1,000 miles per hour. Weather conditions are controlled by many things—the tilt of the planet on its axis, how fast it spins, and the chemistry of its atmosphere are probably the three biggest factors. The 23 1/2 degree tilt of the earth on its axis allows a constant shifting of the maximum absorption areas of the surface of the planet. The fact that the Sun's

direct rays move from day to day distributes the heat allowing stability and minimizing violent winds.

The spin rate of the planet is also critical. If the planet spins too slowly, the surface heats up to extreme values causing thermal movement of air creating violent conditions. If it spins too fast, the wind velocities become extreme. Jupiter's spin rate is one revolution in less than ten hours causing wind velocities of hundreds of miles per hour. Having roughly 75 percent of the planet's surface covered with water also has a positive effect upon how our planet handles heat imbalances, with hurricanes being our most common violent adjustment to heat imbalances. Venus, with large quantities of sulfuric acid in its atmosphere, will obviously be quite different.

This very brief and oversimplified picture should say to us that we see what we have on this planet as something very special, very fragile, very much worth taking care of. If God has chosen to do similar work elsewhere, we will perhaps eventually find out about it. What the creation should say to us now is "The heavens are telling the glory of God; the skies show forth the work of His hands. Day after day they speak, and night after night they reveal knowledge" (Psalm 19:1–2a, *The Word: The Bible from 26 Translations*).

—JNC



NASA

DOES STEPHEN HAWKING DISPROVE THE DIVINE?

by Dr. Rubel Shelly

Editors Note: This article is reprinted by permission from the November 2010 issue of *The Christian Chronicle*. We feel it is good common-sense answer to the publicity being given Hawking's book and will be useful to many of our readers.

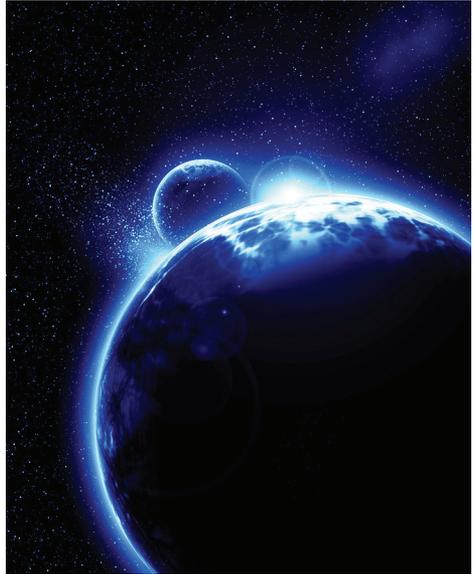
A generation or so ago, our universe was thought by many scientists to be a closed system that had neither beginning nor end. The existence of the cosmos was regarded as a “brute fact” and needed nothing to produce it.

The modern theory of the “big bang” changed all that.

Big bang cosmology posits a formative event some 15 billion years ago. From an extremely hot and dense state, our ever-enlarging universe has since cooled and expanded so as to form at least one habitable outpost—Planet Earth.

If the universe did have a beginning, though, it becomes not only reasonable but also unavoidable that we would ask how that beginning was generated. In asking the question, we have left physics (i.e., how nature works) for metaphysics (i.e., why nature exists at all).

This is the point at which a theist might call attention to a traditional and powerful cosmological argument for God's existence. If the material universe has not existed forever, the possibilities are limited. Either it somehow called itself into being or was brought into being by an eternal, creative God. From Plato to Aquinas to Darwin to Davies, this very reasonable argument—if not intuitive insight—has been offered.



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In his book *The Grand Design*, released in September 2010, Stephen Hawking gives an alternate answer: “As recent advances in cosmology suggest, the laws of gravity and quantum theory allow

universes to appear spontaneously from nothing. Spontaneous creation is the reason there is something rather than nothing, why the universe exists, why we exist. It is not necessary to invoke God to light the blue touch paper and set the universe going.”

Hawking insists the “laws of gravity” and “quantum theory” explain how something comes from nothing. But gravity cannot be defined without mass, and quantum theory accounts for certain interactions between energy and matter. Both have demonstrated value for understanding how existing things function; neither has obvious value to account for the origin of those things.

Hawking and his co-author, Leonard Mlodinow, posit a “multiverse theory” that our known universe is only one among uncounted billions of universes. Given countless universes where all possibilities are ultimately realized, the fine-tuning that allows life just as we experience it on Planet Earth is bound to occur. They would not call it “pure chance” but the sort of inevitable good fortune that most likely has occurred in other possible universes outside our experience.

Any physicist or philosopher will tell you there is nothing ground-breaking here. The multiverse theory (basically, countless universes where all possibilities are ultimately realized) is hardly new at all. Neither is it especially convincing. The theory of multiple universes



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with different laws of nature and life forms (“alien creatures” of science fiction) is altogether speculative and un-evidenced. If they do exist, we are still left with the question of the origin of “deeper laws of physics” that would allow separable universes to operate under non-uniform principles.

From this highly questionable assumption, Hawking and Mlodinow proceed to give their answer to the inter-related issues of (a) why there is something instead of nothing, (b) why human life in particular exists, and (c) why the particular set of laws we seek to understand through science governs our universe.

On their view, infinite possible universes make it inevitable that some universes would have the fine-tuned constants, improbable anthropic properties, and chance events that would allow the existence and evolution of self-reflective human life.

Groundbreaking? Hardly. Plausible? You be the judge.

The notion of “spontaneous creation” that Hawking invokes has been discussed for centuries. Before Lister and Pasteur, it was a theory believed widely in both biology and physics. After their work, it was abandoned as unscientific and unworthy of being taken seriously—except as necessary to solve the problem of the ultimate origin of life without God.



2011 © Harveys Art. Image from BigStockPhoto.com

No one should think that ultimate questions such as Hawking raises are too profound for “ordinary souls” to contemplate; they are central to defining oneself and deciding on the value and meaning of one’s life. Neither should we pretend that a claim such as “something can come from nothing” or “life arose spontaneously and inevitably produced intelligent human life” is somehow plausible because spoken by a brilliant physicist; both are undemonstrated theories that deny the more obvious and direct conclusion of a Grand Designer.

If there had ever been a time when absolutely nothing existed, nothing could exist now. Since something clearly has existed forever, you make the more intuitive, reasonable, and consistent-with-experience choice: Personality or matter? Intelligence or gravity? Creative God or quantum mechanics?

To say the least, the following statement remains both reasonable and defensible: “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.”

RUBEL SHELLY, a longtime minister and author, is president of Rochester College in Rochester Hills, Michigan. He earned a Ph.D. from Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee.

Nobel Scientists and God

Editor's Note: One of the things that has come out of the battle between extremists in the evolution/creation controversy has been a flow of literature from atheists claiming that good scientists and intelligent, educated people do not believe in God. This simply is not true. Tihomir Dimitrov has compiled an e-book on <http://nobelists.net> of quotations of Nobel Prize winning scientists. In each issue of this journal we hope to quote statements from some of these.

SIR JOHN ECCLES NOBEL PRIZE WINNER 1963 ONE OF THE FOUNDERS OF MODERN ELECTROPHYSIOLOGY

“There is a fundamental mystery in my personal existence, transcending the biological account of the development of my body and my brain. That belief, of course, is in keeping with the religious concept of the soul and with its special creation by God.” “I am constrained to attribute the uniqueness of Self or Soul to a supernatural spiritual creation. To give an explanation in theological terms: each Soul is a new Divine creation which is implanted into the growing fetus at some time between conception and birth.”

“I do believe that we are the product of the creativity of what we call God. I hope that this life will lead to some future existence where my self or soul will have another existence, with another brain, or computer if you like. I don't know how I got this one, it's a pretty good one, and I am grateful for it, but I do know as a realist that it will disappear.”

“I repudiate philosophies and political systems which recognize human beings as mere things with a material existence of value only as cogs in the great bureaucratic machine of the state.” “With self-consciousness purpose a person has a great challenge in choosing what life to live.” “One can choose to live life dedicated to the highest values, truth, love, and beauty, with gratitude for the divine gift of life with its wonderful opportunities of participating in human culture.”

(Additional quotes are in our May/June 2010 issue.)

Cynthia's Corner



THE POWER OF LOVE

I have just had a very personal, moving experience of what it means to give without any expectation of return or response; to give in a pure, unconditional, unselfish way as God and Jesus have given their love and sustenance to mankind without expectation of reciprocation.

The experience occurred while taking care of my mother who has dementia. In over two weeks of almost daily care I gradually accepted the fact that she could not remember what we had done the day before, or even hours before. Worse than that, she did not “know” who I was. A couple of times, after coaching her, she remembered my name; but she could not tell me I was her daughter. However, I believe she “knows” me, even though she could not state the relationship. She was always happy to see me and sad to see me go. The time we spent together was precious to me and to her, even though she could not have told you later. I know she was happy when I was with her. We talked and laughed and went shopping so she could see all the “pretty things.” She expressed appreciation and love for me when we were together, but (and here is the rub) she had no mental recollection of it later.

Who is to say however, that her soul was not enriched by the experience? She knew I loved her and she was happy for me to be with her because she felt it and responded in kind. What does it matter that she could not remember it later. I believe that somewhere inside the soul, separate from her mind, she knew she was loved (see Romans 8:26–27 and 1 Corinthians 2:10–11).

Because persons in her mental state cannot tell you what happened to them earlier, or who they were with does not mean that there is no reason to give them your love, attention, and time. It is appreciated in the moment and time it is being given, even if it is not verbalized. The fact that it is not remembered later is sad for the giver, but the receiver is still blessed by experiencing the sharing of love and kindness. Godly love transcends our mental state. It is more powerful than that—it touches our soul (Ephesians 3:18–19).

—Cynthia Clayton

Photo: Patty Gibson

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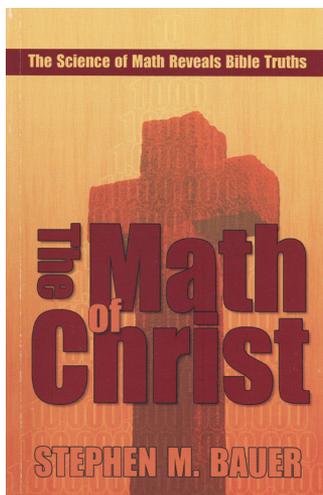


The books that are reviewed in the Book Review section are not available through us, but can be obtained from a local bookstore or through many online bookstores.

The Math of Christ

by Stephen M. Bauer

Bible Belt Publishing, 2010, 184 pages, \$14.95 (paperback),
ISBN-13: 978-1-933641-39-3



This book is subtitled “The Science of Math Reveals Bible Truths.” Stephen Bauer is a retired Army Colonel with 28 years of service. He is known as a lecturer about social life in the White House. He has an MBA from George Washington University. He is not an expert in mathematics nor is he a person with theological training. This has a big impact on this book and its usefulness.

What Bauer does is to take 40 prophecies in the Bible and assign a probability to each of them. The prophecy that the Messiah would be preceded by a messenger is assigned a probability of 1 in 100. The prophecy that there would be another prophet like Moses is assigned a probability of 1 in a billion. The prophecy that the Messiah would come from the tribe of Judah is assigned a probability of 1 in 10. The probability that the Messiah would be born of a virgin is assigned a probability of 1 in a billion. Bauer explains his rationale for these prophecies, gives some historical background of when they were made and when they came true.

When you calculate a total probability of a variety of events you multiply the individual probabilities of each of these events together. The odds of drawing an ace of spades out of a desk of cards is 1 in 52. The odds of doing it twice in a row back to back are 1 in 52 times 1 in 52 or 1 in 2,704. Bauer does this with his 40 prophecies and gets

a total probability of 1 in 10^{136} or a 1 with 136 zeros after it. After reviewing some other prophecies Bauer jumps into “Future Events in Bible Prophecy” in which he presents a totally dispensational millennial approach including a weak and misleading presentation of the plan of salvation.

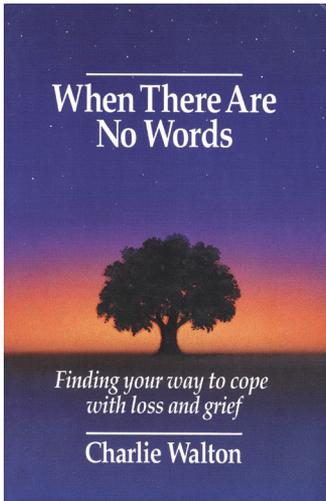
If Bauer had stuck to his basic premise, the book would have some value, because all that can be argued about is the value of his assigned probabilities to each prophesied event. By promoting his denominational views the basic premise is weakened. The book is a different approach and is something many people have been looking for, but unfortunately the audience that will be most receptive to the message is bypassed by the needless and erroneous journey into dispensational millennial theology.

**When There Are No Words:
Finding Your Way to Cope with Loss and Grief**

by Charlie Walton

Pathfinder Publishing, 1996, 112 pages, \$14.95 (paperback),

ISBN-10: 0-934793-57-3



Reviewed by Phillip Eichman

This little book was written primarily for those who are experiencing grief due to the loss of a loved one. It would also be helpful for anyone trying to understand the grief process or those seeking to help others who are grieving.

The author is a professional writer so the book is well written. The most obvious thing about the book is that it was written from the heart. It was based on experiences of the author and his family in the loss of two sons in an accident.

In writing the book, the author was very transparent, laying open his innermost thoughts and feelings. In doing so, he painted a very graphic picture of grief and how it affects an individual.

I found the book to be very helpful for me personally in understanding some of my own feelings and emotions in the loss of my parents. More importantly, I found it useful in terms of understanding grief and interacting with others who are grieving.

The book was originally written in 1996. Since death, loss, and grief are still with us, however, the book continues to be relevant and useful.

DANDY DESIGNS

GREEN SPOONWORMS

One of the interesting things that you can see in nature is how different the males are from the females. In some cases males are larger than females, usually for protection purposes. In other cases the females may be larger and may actually be more dominant. When you start studying small animals you find remarkable exceptions.



Bonellia viridis

Wikipedia: *Bonellia viridis*: Bonélie (Bonellia viridis) PC301461.JPG, Sylvain Ledoyen (CC BY-SA 3.0 license)

On the ocean floor there is an organism called the green spoonworm (*Bonellia viridis*) where the male is 200,000 times smaller than its mate. He spends his life inside the female's reproductive tract and regurgitates sperm through his mouth to fertilize the female's eggs. When they were first discovered, scientists thought the male was a parasite.

How the males come into existence is another one of those things which are so remarkable it is hard to believe. A green spoonworm larva has no sex when it hatches. It becomes a male or a female depending upon what it encounters during its first three weeks of life. If the larva encounters a female, it turns into a male and takes its position in the female's reproductive tract. If it does not find a female, it turns into a female itself. Its sex is determined by environmental factors rather than genetic factors (chromosomes) as in most creatures.

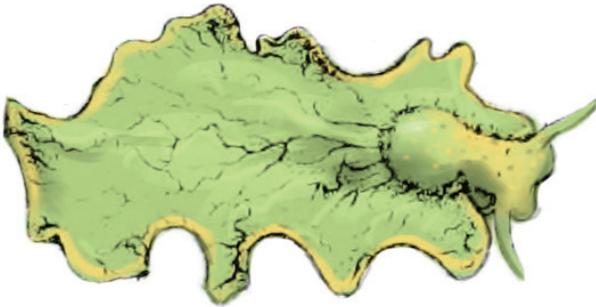
God has designed life with a wide variety of methods of propagating itself. All living things have a great capacity to produce offspring, and that is why we continue to have life on the planet. The green spoonworm lives in crevices on the ocean floor, and having a mate in her body makes reproduction easy and prolific. Being at the bottom of the food chain, this provides for an ecosystem that needs a wide base of food sources. As we learn more about how ecosystems function, we see a wonder-working hand has gone before and provides in remarkable ways for all living things.

Source: *Seed* magazine 2009, and http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Bonellia_viridis&oldid=396808901

HALF PLANT - HALF ANIMAL

I have often kidded my biologist friends that the only rule that ever works in biology is “for every situation that exists in biology, there is always an exception.” Another example of that concept has shown up as researchers have discovered a sea slug that can make its own chlorophyll and turn light into energy.

The animal’s scientific name is *Elysia chlorotica* and its common name is the eastern emerald elysia. It is found along the east coast of the United States.



Wikipedia: *Elysia chlorotica*: Elysia chlorotica.jpg, Augustus A. Gould

This slug is able to manufacture the most common form of chlorophyll, the green pigment in plants that captures energy from

sunlight. The chloroplasts the slug uses come from green algae called *Vaucheria litorea*. Once the slug eats enough of the algae the chloroplasts from the algae generate energy for the slug for the rest of its life—so it never has to eat again! The slug is then able to capture energy from the sun by the process of photosynthesis as plants do.

Scientists studying the process have found that there are at least 15 chemical reactions and the cooperation of multiple cell components to make this happen. The slug actually holds the chloroplasts within its cells and they work in light, but not in dark environments. The slug’s life is greatly simplified by this plant-like nature. Since it only has to eat once in its life, the condition of the algae is only critical during the first meal, and the lack of mobility is not an issue for the slug.

Gary Martin, one of the researchers studying the slug called the animal “Bizarre, ... Steps in evolution can be more creative than I ever imagined.” We would suggest that an intelligence is what was the creative force in this complex, simple animal. God’s designs continue to amaze us as we look at the wonder-working hand that has gone before us.

Source of data: *Science News*, February 13, 2010, page 10.

News and Notes

ANNOUNCING: DOES GOD EXIST? 2011 SEMINAR IN THE CANYONLANDS, SEPTEMBER 18-23

PURPOSE: To help Christians understand the history of the earth as seen in the rock record, and how that history correlates with a literal understanding of the Bible.

WHERE: Leave from Flagstaff, AZ, and visit Sunset Crater, Grand Canyon, Bryce Canyon, Zion Canyon, Lake Powell, Painted Desert, Petrified Forest, and Meteor Crater.

PARTICIPANTS: Anyone age eight or older who is willing to participate in lectures, devotionals, studies, and wholesome activity. No alcohol or smoking, please.

INCLUDED: Bus transportation, motels, field guides, boat trip, entry fees, breakfasts Tuesday-Friday.

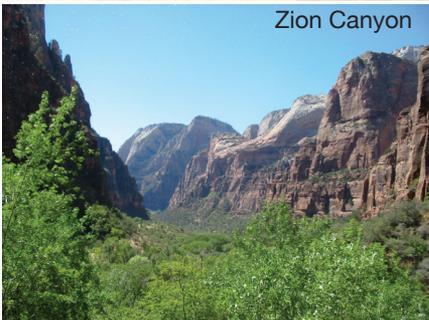
Grand Canyon Hiking



Bryce Canyon



Zion Canyon



Lake Powell Canyons

NOT INCLUDED: Other meals, gratuities, souvenirs, transportation to and from Flagstaff, Sunday or Friday motels.

COST: No money is paid to **Does God Exist?**, to your guides, or to John Clayton. The only cost is for the items described above.

Prices per person are singles: \$898, doubles: \$797, three or four to a room: \$549. Trip insurance available. To reserve space

or for more information contact: Mark Story at QueensLander Tours (Mark@QLTours.com) phone 877-865-6711 or John Clayton (jncdge@aol.com) phone 269-687-9426.



Beautiful Petrified Forest

Photos: Roland Earnst

VOLCANO BOOST FOR FISH. This past fall produced the largest salmon run in British Columbia's Fraser River in recent history. In 2009 1.5 million salmon were counted migrating up the river, but in 2010 the number jumped to a record 34 million salmon. Researchers say that the eruption of the Kasatochi volcano in the Aleutian Chain in 2008 is responsible. A 1,000 mile stretch of water had ash rain down on it fertilizing it. This led to one of the largest diatom blooms ever seen in the subarctic North Pacific. This is the base of the food chain the salmon depend on, and has had a beneficial effect on the whole area. Researches are now saying that this natural method of catalyzing the growth of life forms may be far greater than anyone imagined. We normally think of volcanoes as being destructive to living systems, but it is becoming obvious that this is not always the case. Source: *Alaska* magazine , February 2011, page 13.

ILLUSIONISTS. There are two basic different kinds of magicians. One is the person who uses illusions to claim supernatural powers and mystic abilities for themselves or someone else. The second is a person who says flat out that this is a trick or illusion, but just enjoy it because I am not going to explain it to you. Thanks to Harry Potter and other children's fiction some people are convinced that mystical powers are real and in the possession of certain individuals. The Bible has always warned man not to get involved with such things (see Exodus 22:18; 2 Kings 9:22; Galatians 5:20). Someone has said that if you do not have faith in something, you will believe anything, and that can be seen to be true. Harry Houdini was a magician who did incredible illusions, but did it for fun and entertainment and said outright that what he did was a trick. Those interested might want to read *The Secret Life of Houdini* by William Kalush and Larry Sloman, Atria Books.

SUPERCOLLIDER MYSTERIES. The Large Hadron Collider near Geneva is now operational. What it is doing is ramming protons into each other with such energies that essentially the protons are smashed so that scientists can determine what the protons are made of. So far over 110 new particles have been identified. One interesting thing that has been observed is that some of the particles appear to be synchronizing their flight patterns like flocks of birds, and so far no good explanation exists as to why this is happening. The more we study how the basic building blocks of matter have been designed, the more complex the picture becomes. Every layer of complexity that gets added to the picture speaks that much more eloquently about the intelligence that in the beginning created the heaven and the earth. Source: *Scientific American*, February 2011, page 30.

“MULTIPLE BIG BANGS” DEAD. In November 2010 a lot of attention was given to an announcement by prominent cosmologists that they had detected evidence there were many “big bangs” before the one that produced the universe as we know it. In January 2011 scientists announced that a technical misunderstanding had caused those claims, and that there is no evidence of previous singularities. This is not a religious issue, but it shows the positive nature of scientific research—that errors and misunderstandings are gradually rooted out as research continues. If religious people would research God’s word in the same way, similar corrections might come about. When there is a conflict between science and faith there is either bad science or bad theology and we have had a lot of both. Source: *Science News*, January 15, 2011, page 13.

“ANSWERS IN GENESIS” EXPANDS. Several years ago a denominational group headed by Ken Ham built a “Creation Museum” in Petersburg, Kentucky. The multimillion-dollar facility promotes a denominational dispensational view of history with a young earth interpretation. It shows dinosaurs and humans living together in harmony and espouses many of the claims of dispensational millennialists about the history of the earth. The museum has attracted 1.2 million visitors in its first three years and has moved the leadership of the museum to incorporate as a profit-making company that plans to build an “Ark Encounter” 45 miles south of the Creation Museum site. This will be a \$150 million theme park with an ark replica built by Amish builders using wooden pegs and framing. It will have miniature live animals on it, including miniature giraffes. The park will also have a 100 foot Tower of Babel, a Middle East village from the first century, a reenactment of the 10 plagues and parting of the Red Sea, and many other things. The state of Kentucky is planning to help fund the project with a \$37.5 million grant from the Tourism Development Act, because the

park plans to employ 900 people and attract 1.6 million visitors in its first year.

We have expressed concern in the past about the scientific and biblical errors involved in denominational traditions like this. Those who take children to such parks need to be sure to let their children know what is biblical fact and what is denominational teaching not supported by the Bible. We hope that the articles and materials we have available on these subjects will help parents and church leaders do that. Sources: *Houston Chronicle*, December 6, 2010, page A9 and http://www.nytimes.com/2010/12/06/us/06ark.html?_r=1&scp=1&sq=noah's+ark&st=nyt.

NEANDERTHAL RELATIVES. The human genome data has given anthropologists a new tool to help sort out the complex history of humanity. In the December 23, 2010 issue of *Nature* magazine there is a new report of a Siberian find of a girl who was closely related to the Neanderthals and yet part of ancient man's family tree. The Neanderthals were a race of man who interbred with other humans and are part of the blood line of all humans on the earth today. All of us are related, and as more and more studies are made of new fossils the varied nature of the human gene pool becomes obvious. Acts 17:26 (KJV) says God has "made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth", and that simple statement is being verified as more data comes to light. Source: *Science News*, January 15, 2011, page 21.

MORTIMER ADLER CONFESSION WORTH HEARING. Mortimer Adler is a famous 20th century ethics philosopher who is well known and frequently quoted by atheists. Adler was baptized when he was 81 and explained why he had rejected obeying God for most of his life in this way: "It would require a radical change in my way of life, a basic alteration in the direction of my day-to-day choices as well as in the ultimate objectives to be sought or hoped for The simple truth of the matter is that I did not wish to live up to being a genuinely religious person." Quote from Jim Spiegel's article "Unreasonable Doubt" in *Christianity Today*, January 2011, page 48.

MASSIVE KILLS OF BIRDS/FISH—NATURAL. Anytime something unusual happens, there are those who will attribute it to some world-ending disaster. In the past few months there have been reports of massive bird deaths and fish deaths causing some to suggest that the end of the earth is coming and matching predictions made from the Mayan calendar. The fact of the matter is that die-offs have always taken place. In the Bible there was a massive die-off of quail in the Exodus of the Israelites from Egypt. One of the plagues of Egypt was the frog plague which resulted in massive deaths of the frogs. In modern times we have had similar events. In March 1996, 2,000 sandhill cranes died

in Nebraska as they tried to outrun a late season blizzard. In 1976, 15 million drum fish died in Maryland due to a cold snap in the weather. In 2010, a large group of red-winged blackbirds died suddenly, probably from trauma produced by nighttime fireworks near their perching areas. People can cause animal deaths by machines, pollutants, and changes in the environment. There is nothing alien or mysterious about animal deaths. Source: *South Bend Tribune*, January 7, 2011, page A1, and January 8, 2011, page A6.

HAPPINESS IN THE CHURCH. There have been a number of studies that show that people who are religious have a higher level of happiness and satisfaction than those who are not. In *Science News* (January 1, 2011) there was an article by Bruce Bower reporting on happiness studies in the *American Sociological Review*. This was a study of 1,915 U.S. adults and showed that people who are religious but do not participate in a congregation are less satisfied than those who are active members. The bottom line is that sitting in a pew does not bring happiness. The whole New Testament concept of fellowship and how it addresses our needs is involved in this study.

JULY 2011 AND 2012. There has been much made of the idea that the earth will end in 2012, with everything from the Mayan calendar to planetary alignments being hyped as the cause. To show how much nonsense is involved in all of this, you might look at July 2011. This year July will have 5 Fridays, 5 Saturdays and 5 Sundays. That will not happen again for another 823 years. Also this year there are four dates that are all ones. (1/1/11, 1/11/11, 11/1/11 and 11/11/11). Now take the last two numbers of the year you were born and add the age you will be this year on your birthday. Try it and see if you think this year is so strange that everything will end this year. Remember God tells us no one knows when Jesus will come, so all of this is man created and fun, but not of religious significance.

DATA ON KISSING. A series of studies reported in *Discover* magazine (February 2011, page 96) shows that love is designed and chemically structured. The complexity of human sexual relationships is enormous, and far beyond the mechanical actions of animals. This is one reason why our culture's approach to casual sex is so destructive. God designed sex, love, and marriage to meet the deepest needs of men and women, and the more we learn of how it works the more amazing the design of the system is. Here are some of the newly discovered facts:

1. "Women prefer scents of men whose immunity-coding genes are different from their own." This would produce children with a stronger immune systems.

- 2). Love feelings trigger dopamine which “is produced in the ventral tegmental area of the brain, the same region affected by addictive drugs like cocaine.”
- 3). “Holding hands and kissing reduces levels of the stress hormone cortisol, thereby lowering blood pressure and optimizing immune response.”
- 4). The exchange of saliva passes a bit of testosterone from male to female. This increases her libido.
- 5). “One milliliter of saliva contains about 100,000,000 bacteria.”

ROCK STAR AND MARRIAGE. Ricky Gervais is a well known entertainer and activist. When asked why he did not marry Jane Fallon whom he has lived with for 28 years he said, “There’s no point in us having an actual ceremony before the eyes of God because there is no God.” The collapse of marriage as an institution in the western world can at least in part be linked to that belief. How such beliefs are impacting our culture in a negative way is easy to see. Faith remains the bedrock of stability and positive action in society. Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Ricky_Gervais&oldid=425354832 (accessed January 18, 2011)

POT AND PSYCHOTIC DISORDERS. Many states are legalizing marijuana for medical use. The problem with this action is that very little serious study has been done on many of the effects of marijuana. Researchers at the University of New South Wales report that pot advances psychotic disorders significantly, advancing the risk and speeding up the onset of the disease. Source: *Time*, February 21, 2011, page 21.

ANCIENT HUMAN REMAINS IN ISRAEL. The claim that humans originated in Africa was dealt a blow in December of 2010 by the announcement of the find of a human (*Homo sapiens*) in central Israel claimed to be 400,000 years old. The find was in Qesem cave discovered in 2000 and excavations began in 2004 by Avi Gopher. Modern theories of the origin of man have proposed a common ancestor that lived in Africa 700,000 years ago, with one group migrating to Europe and developing into Neanderthals and the other group staying in Africa and evolving into modern humans. There will be much debate among anthropologists on this claim, but the message is that all scientific proposals about the origin of man that are totally naturalistic in composition are poorly supported by evidence. The Bible indicates that civilization began in the Fertile Crescent—the present day nation of Iraq. Every time ancient human remains are found in the Middle East it stirs up a great deal of debate. Source: AP release by Daniel Estrin, December 27, 2010.

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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