

Does God Exist? Lectureships

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- Apr. 11-13 Burlington, IA
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- May 2-4 Conneaut, OH
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- July 7-11 Mid-Ohio Youth
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Does God Exist? websites: <http://www.doesgodexist.org>;
dandydesigns.org; scienceterrific.com;
whypain.org; doesgodexist.tv; and grandpajohn.tv

Send subscription requests, orders, or address changes to:

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DOES GOD EXIST? (USPS 011-010) is published bimonthly in January/February, March/April, May/June, July/August, September/October, and November/December by **Does God Exist?**, 814 S. Main St., South Bend, IN 46601-3008. Subscription is free upon request. Periodicals postage paid at South Bend, IN. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to: **DOES GOD EXIST?**, PO Box 2704, South Bend, IN 46680-2704.

FUNDAMENTALISM

fun·da·men·tal·ism

“... a movement or attitude stressing strict and literal adherence to a set of basic principles.”

Merriam-Webster

The problem with this word in the twenty-first century is that the term has been associated with extremism—in Islam, in politics, and in the evolution/creation controversy. Like most labels, the term is misleading in all of the applications in which we find it used. I recently witnessed a debate between two evolutionists both of whom were atheists. One of the charges leveled against a man who advocated Darwin’s work was that he was a fundamentalist and was not applying new discoveries to his understanding of evolution. The response was that the other evolutionist was a modernist who did not understand Darwin’s work properly. He was accused of grasping at modern understandings that were poorly supported scientifically and thus corrupted science.



That exchange sounded very familiar to me. I have heard the same wording used by religious people who had the same kind of disagreement between them. There are those Bible believers who call themselves fundamentalists or who embrace a fundamentalist position. They feel that anyone who attempts to bring the Bible and evolutionary evidence together does not understand the Bible properly. The fundamentalists accuse those people of grasping at compromise indicating a weak faith in the Bible. On the other side are Bible believers who feel that those who embrace fundamentalism are discrediting the Bible by taking an ignorant position that was not what the author intended.

It is important to avoid these two extremes and be able to take a position that has credibility both scientifically and biblically. For most of us who are not experts in either science or theology, the issue is to be able to answer some of the hard questions that come from our children and our friends. Peter tells us we must “be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope

that you have” (1 Peter 3:15, NIV). In our age of skepticism, pluralism, and doubt that challenge is formidable. One of the objectives of this journal is to aid in the process of finding answers to those who ask us. While we cannot answer every question that is out there, perhaps we can provide help with some of the questions.

SCIENCE BY ITS NATURE CANNOT BE FUNDAMENTALISTIC.

The scientific method opposes fundamentalism. When approaching a problem, a scientist will propose a solution. That proposal has to be able to be tested in some way. On a simple level, we try to conduct an experiment that will show the proposal to be either true or false. If the experiment shows the proposal to work, we devise another experiment to test the proposal. This process never ends. Even when an existing scientific law has passed every experiment, it is still tested. The work of Albert Einstein is constantly being tested. There have been times when researchers have thought they had found a failure in his work, only to discover a glitch in their experiment. Part of Einstein’s work showed that Newton’s laws needed to be modified to fit some situations. This is how science works. In the scientific field to hold on to a set of beliefs that cannot be altered or tested is to put the discussion out of science and into blind faith.



In the twentieth century we saw the advent of quantum mechanics in which fundamental laws of science had to be modified. Many in the media have assumed that these modifications disproved the science of the past. The claim that something can come from nothing invalidating the conservation laws of science is a good example. Scientists have come to realize that there are dimensions beyond our own three dimensional world. Our scientific understanding has to be expanded to incorporate those interactions with our own world.

Darwin made some huge contributions to our understanding of biology, but Darwin was not infallible nor was his work complete. As we gain new understanding of the genome and the processes of genetic change, we gain understanding of how life was designed and how it works at a genetic level. As this understanding has changed, there have also been new problems and new limits to biological change. This is how science works, and why it cannot be fundamentalistic.

JESUS WAS NOT A FUNDAMENTALIST. JESUS & PAUL OPPOSED FUNDAMENTALISM.

Those who opposed Jesus Christ the most vehemently when he walked in the flesh on earth were not the marginal Jews and Gentiles. Those most opposed to him were the Jewish fundamentalists. The scribes and Pharisees were people who took the Law of Moses literally and in a fundamentalistic way. In Matthew chapters 5 through 7 Jesus states a fundamentalist position and then gives a modern alternative to that position. Telling people they should not murder is fundamental. Telling them not to speak

hatefully toward someone (Matthew 5:22) is radical and is a challenge to accomplish. Saying to

someone he should not commit adultery is fundamental. Telling him to avoid lustful desires is a radically bigger challenge. The Pharisees

took a very fundamentalistic position on the Sabbath. In Matthew 12:1–12 we see the exchange in which Pharisees castigated Jesus because his

disciples plucked grain on the Sabbath. He points out to his accusers that their fundamentalistic attack was inconsistent with their own actions. “If any of you has a sheep and it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will you not take hold of it and lift it out?” Jesus healed on the Sabbath. When the Pharisees complained, Jesus pointed out to them that their objection was inconsistent with the purpose of the Sabbath and of God’s establishment of the law. His summary of the Sabbath was “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath” (Mark 2:27).

Paul and Peter frequently found themselves at odds with the fundamentalists of their day. The whole question of whether the gospel should be preached to the Gentiles was a battle over fundamentalism. Peter had to grow out of his fundamentalism, and was even chastised by Paul for his failure to do so (see Galatians 2:11–14). The change that took place in the church from the day of Pentecost in Acts 2 to congregations meeting in people’s homes (see Romans 16:5) was a growth process. Eventually there was the radical change from individuals meeting house to house in Jerusalem to people meeting throughout the world of that day.



REJECTING FUNDAMENTALISM DOES NOT MEAN BEING IMMORAL.

There are those who would claim that such a rejection of fundamentalism would lead automatically to compromise and immorality. There is no question that there is a risk in accepting new understandings and actions in the church. The church in Corinth went through some enormous challenges on a moral and spiritual level. There were those who claimed that the physical and the spiritual were separate, and that what one did physically had nothing to do with their spiritual existence. That had led some to believe they could engage the services of a prostitute and still be in good standing with the Lord (see 1 Corinthians 6:15–20). Paul devotes two long letters (1 and 2 Corinthians) to countering this and other moral and spiritual corruptions that the rejection of fundamentalism brought. All of Paul's letters to congregations have roots in this issue, but in all cases the things Paul taught made the church relevant and practical to the people of his day. Romans 13 is a wonderful study of how the church handled issues of fundamentalism. Instead of taking a rigid fundamentalistic approach to special religious days and food restrictions, Paul urges the church to focus on unity and service, reflecting Jesus' teaching in John 13.

If you read the history of the church both in the Bible and in secular writings, you will not find fundamentalists being more moral than others. Hypocrisy is not confined to any one segment of the population. To suggest that rejecting fundamentalism means being immoral is not supported biblically, or from the record of history.

FUNDAMENTALISTS DO NOT TAKE THE BIBLE LITERALLY.

One universal characteristic of fundamentalists is that they accuse their detractors of not taking the rules in question literally. Muslim fundamentalists accuse their non-fundamental fellow Muslims of being infidels. Biblical fundamentalists accuse those who do not embrace fundamentalism of being "false teachers." Interestingly enough, the Bible refers to false teachers in a very different way. Passages like Titus 1:11; 2 Timothy 4:3; 1 Timothy 1:7; 4:2; 6:3; and 2 Peter 2:1 refer to false teachers as being after dishonest gain, denying the existence of Christ, and making disciples after themselves. It is most unfortunate to apply the label of "false teacher" to someone who has studied scripture intensively and feels that fundamentalism is incorrect.

The fact is that fundamentalists do not take the Bible literally. To take the Bible literally means that you look at who wrote the passage in question, why he wrote it, to whom he wrote it, and how the people

to whom it was written would have understood it. It does not mean taking a particular translation of the Bible without looking at the original language or asking what the meaning of the passage would have been for the people to whom it was written. Many people who read the word “church” in the New Testament interpret that word in a fundamentalistic way. They believe it refers to a physical structure in which people meet. We say “I’m going to church” as we journey to that structure, and that is a failure to take the Bible literally. The church is people, not structures. Jesus said, “For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them.” (Matthew 18:20). In 1 Corinthians 3:16 we as individuals are called “the temple of God.” This is a trivial example, but for many people in the western world the word “church” has very negative connotations because of the fundamentalistic application of the word.

In the Genesis account we have a very similar misunderstanding which has created enormous problems for many young people struggling with whether or not the Bible is true. The phrase “creation week” for example, is not biblically accurate or consistent with the original language of Genesis. We are not talking about whether or not the week was a literal seven day week. What we are talking about is when creation took place. The Hebrew word for create (*bara*) is not used after verse 1 in Genesis 1 until verse 20. *Bara* is the Hebrew word that was used to refer to something only God can do. In the week described in Genesis the Hebrew word *asah* is used. *Asah* is not confined to what God does, but can refer to something that happens naturally, or even something that humans can do (make war, make a feast, make me laugh, etc.). The verse that describes actual creation miraculously done by God is verse 1. The things created in that verse refer to all that is in space (the heaven) and all that we see on this planet (earth.) This may sound like a minor difference, but when the account is taken that literally, virtually all of the scientific objections raised to the Genesis account are removed.

Another example of problems caused by fundamentalistic understandings of Genesis can be seen in the use of the word “kind.” Most fundamentalists equate the word “kind” in the Bible with the word “species” in science. This has caused some to make some rather bizarre interpretations of how Noah got the animals in the ark. There have been some 26 million different species of animals on this planet. Proposing baby animals or other imaginative solutions stretches credibility rather thin. The fact is that the word “kind” in Genesis comes from the Hebrew word *min* which



would have been understood by the Hebrews in a much broader sense. In 1 Corinthians 15:39 Paul tells his readers that there are four “kinds” of flesh—the flesh of birds, beasts, fish, and man. In Genesis 1 and Genesis 6 the same categories are used.

This discussion raises another issue that fundamentalists have promoted—that all animals present today were created by God in the same form in which they are seen today. The idea that animals could change so that they are different today is seen by some as a compromise to evolutionary theory. However, the fact that animals can vary in what is sometimes called micro-evolution is not contested by most rational people. The word “kind” as applied to “fowl,” for example, would suggest an early ancestor to all modern birds.

I must inject a personal note here. When I was an atheist I was attempting to write a book designed to prove that the Bible was a bunch of silly myths that no thinking person could believe. I taught myself Hebrew and studied the Genesis account to prove it wrong. When I did a careful word study I found myself constantly being impressed with the integrity of the biblical account. If I had been introduced to the fundamentalism that dominates the thinking of many creationists today, I doubt if I would ever have developed a faith in the Bible as the inspired Word of God.

REAL CHRISTIANITY IS RELEVANT TO ALL CULTURES AND ALL GENERATIONS BECAUSE IT IS NOT FUNDAMENTALISTIC.

I would hope that my experience would be what all young people considering Christianity could experience. Christianity is not an American institution, and it is not an ancient faith that is irrelevant to the world of today. Many people say we live in the “post-Christian era,” but that is due to a fundamentalistic understanding of both the Bible and Christianity. Christianity is a living, dynamic faith because it is based on the living, dynamic word of God. We never stop learning what God has for us in his word. The Bible continually looks to the distant future. Peter said, as recorded in Acts 2:38, “This promise is for you and your children and for all who are afar off” The prospect of life after death never changes. Let us not lock God into a man-made box of legalism, but let the Bible speak to us with the freedom and relevance that God intended for all people and at all times.

—John N. Clayton



An Atheist's View on Life

I will live my life according to these beliefs

God does not exist

It is just foolish to think

That there is a God with a cosmic plan

*That an all-powerful God brings purpose to the
pain and suffering in the world*

Is a comforting thought, however

It

Is only wishful thinking

*People can do as they please without eternal con-
sequences*

The idea that

I am deserving of hell

Because of sin

Is a lie meant to make me a slave to those in power

The more you have, the happier you will be

Our existence has no grand meaning or purpose

In a world with no God

There is freedom to be who I want to be

Without God

Everything is fine

It is ridiculous to think

I am lost and in need of saving

A Christians's View On Life

*(Read each line, one at a time,
from the bottom up.)*

Editor's Note: This very clever bi-directional summary of views has been posted a number of times on the Web and has been circulating in e-mails. We have not been able to find where it began or who wrote it, but we wanted to share it with our readers. If you know who wrote it, please let us know so we can give credit where credit is due.

— Roland Earnst

REALITY AND THE WILL OF GOD



Life can be incredibly hard. We all struggle with situations that are grossly unfair and tragic. When a drug addict rapes and murders an innocent child, all of us have to deal in some way or another with the question of where God was while this was happening. An atheist will respond to a situation like this with the claim that this is simply a proof that God does not exist, or he would not allow such a thing to take place. There is no question that the history of humanity is full of atrocities, abuses, and great injustices. Man's inhumanity to his fellow human beings is hard to comprehend and even harder to justify.

Atheism will turn to evolution to explain these things. Survival of the fittest and chance drive all experiences of human beings according to atheism. Evolutionists like E. O. Wilson have maintained that war is a product of our evolution, and would have us believe that war is inevitable. Richard Dawkins gives the atheist position very clearly: "The universe we observe has precisely the properties we should expect if there is, at bottom, no design, no purpose, no evil and no good, nothing but blind pitiless indifference ... DNA neither knows nor cares. DNA just is. And we dance to its music" (Dawkins 1995).

Huxley long ago equated man's existence "to the falling of a stone to earth or the ebb and flow of the tides.' We have just happened, and flesh was made man by a long series of singularly beneficial accidents" (Smith 1976).

For Christians such mechanical views of human origins are not only unsupported by evidence, but are also inconsistent with our own nature. There are too many things that humans do that are not DNA-driven to accept the notion that all we see is void of design, purpose, and intelligence. By the same token we struggle with the view that God controls each drop of water and where it will land or that God preordains every tragedy that we experience in life. We know that Matthew 10:30 tells us that God knows how many hairs there are on our heads. Acts 17:26–28 expresses the fact that God knows our habitation and that we live and move and have our being in him. In

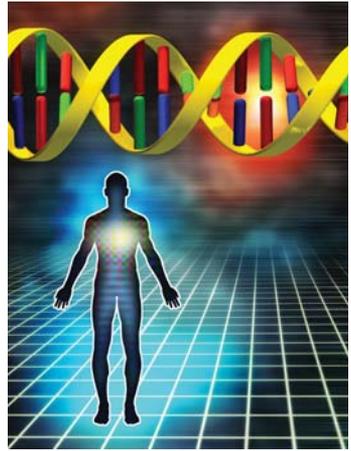
spite of knowing all of that, we share the frustration of the psalmist as we see things happen that we do not understand. Psalm 10:1–12 (ERV) says it well, “Lord, why do you stay so far away? Why do you hide from people in times of trouble? The wicked are proud and make evil plans to hurt the poor, ... these greedy people brag about the things they want to get. ... They succeed in everything they do. ... They make fun of all their enemies. ... Again and again they hurt people who are already weak and suffering. ... Lord get up and do something.”

Anyone who claims to have all the answers for the reality of life and all the bad things that happen should not be taken very seriously — be it an atheist view or a theist view. By the same token, there are some facts that are logical, biblical, and practical in this area of discussion. Here are a few ideas for your consideration.

ANSWER 1: OUR PURPOSE IN EXISTING IS NOT TO PERPETUATE OUR GENES.

Ultimately the question of why things happen as they do has to be interpreted in the context of what we believe is the purpose of our existence. The person who rejects the existence of God can only answer that question in biological terms. That is what Richard Dawkins does when he makes reference to DNA. Sociobiologists tend to propose that survival of the fittest demands that if we cannot survive, we will do whatever it takes to promote our genes. The males of animals such as lions and bears will kill some of the young of their own species apparently to force the females to mate again sooner. The suggestion is that this will give them the opportunity to infuse more of their genes into the population. There are so many cases where this is contradicted by evidence, that this proposal of a totally genetic purpose does not make sense scientifically. But for the atheist, purpose in life is a difficult issue.

From a Christian standpoint our purpose is rooted in the struggle between good and evil. Ephesians 6:12 (ERV) says it well, “Our fight is not against people on earth. We are fighting against the rulers and authorities and the powers of this world’s darkness. We are fighting against the spiritual powers of evil in the heavenly places.” Ephesians 3:11 (ERV) tells us, “This agrees with the plan God had since the beginning of time. He did what he planned, and he did it



through Christ Jesus our Lord.” We can read the book of Job and see him come to an understanding of God and a realization of his own purpose. At the end of all of his troubles Job says, “Lord, before all of this happened to me I had heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you” (Job 42:5, Clayton paraphrase).

If we understand this purpose and realize it is a spiritual battle that we are in, then we understand why God does not step in and fix it. He would be defeating his purpose in creating us. Heaven is when evil no longer will have access to us; but for us to be able to choose between good and evil, God cannot step in and prevent the logical consequences of our choices.

Understanding this makes it possible for me to look beyond the tragedies and losses in life. It gives me hope and makes me realize that the horrible consequences of human choices are temporary and something better lies ahead. It also gives me purpose in life. I want to be on God’s side. My life has purpose and direction because I know why I exist.

ANSWER 2: EVIL IS REAL AND PERSONAL.

The Bible is full of cases where Satan deals personally with an individual. In Luke 22:3 we are told, “Then Satan entered Judas, ...” To maintain that Judas’ treachery in betraying Christ for 30 pieces of silver was not evil would be difficult for most rational human beings. In 2 Corinthians 12:7, 8 Paul says, “To keep me from becoming conceited, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me.”



There are countless other cases where Satan afflicts or recruits someone for an evil purpose or to do harm. In the two cases above we see several answers.

What was the purpose of Jesus Christ coming to earth? “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. ... Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil” (John 3:16–19). Ephesians 3:10–11 tells us that this was so that “the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in heavenly realms, according to his eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

The death of Jesus was cruel and violent beyond comprehension. Why did God allow it? When Jesus was arrested Peter took out his sword to put a stop to the evil that was about to take place. Jesus told Peter to put away his sword, and he said that he could have called twelve legions of angels to stop what was happening. Jesus said that if he did that, how would the Scriptures be fulfilled that said it must happen this way? There was a personal purpose that Jesus had in allowing Satan to enter Judas, and such actions on Satan's part can cause tragedy. If you believe that all you have is this life, that makes no sense. If you believe that there is a purpose in our existence then you can understand there is a purpose, even in the bad things. God's purpose in allowing Jesus to be crucified and the impact on the struggle between good and evil should be obvious. The nature of human beings who have the capacity to choose allows rejection of God, but also makes love possible.

Paul's situation brings up a different dimension to this discussion. We do not know what the affliction was that Paul endured, but he referred to it as coming from Satan's angel or messenger (2 Corinthians 12:7). He also says it happened to keep him from becoming conceited. The Bible is full of statements and examples of the value of suffering. James 1:2-4 says, "Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything."

Let me make this personal. I have had some things in my life that have been very difficult. Having a child born with multiple birth defects including blindness, mental retardation, cerebral palsy, schizophrenia, and a form of muscular dystrophy has been "a messenger from Satan." It was not a sin of my son's, or of mine, that caused congenital birth defects. God allowed it just as he allowed Paul to have something from Satan that afflicted him. I do not like it or the pain it has brought into my life. I have had my moments when I have cried out as the psalmist did in Psalm 10. My wife of 49 years died in 2008 due to the evil of 60 years of insulin-dependent diabetes. I felt so helpless and frustrated that I was begging God to take my life. Why did God allow me, a man trying to serve God, to endure all of this?

It is difficult to be arrogant or conceited in situations like these. I am a long way from being what I want to be, but I have learned to be patient and compassionate because of what I have been through. The story of John 9 is something I can really relate to. Here a man was born blind, and Jesus states clearly in verse 3 that it had nothing to do with sin. The event was used by God so that "the work of God might be displayed in his life." Romans 8:28 tells Christians that "in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose." Evil is personal and real, but

God can take whatever evil comes into our lives and make good things come from it. If you are an atheist and believe that life has no purpose and that there is nothing beyond our physical existence, then this makes no sense at all. Trying to make yourself believe that there is no such thing as evil and that chance is the only thing that governs your existence is a bigger leap of faith than believing in a personal God—and it is a blind, destructive leap.

ANSWER 3: THE CONSEQUENCES OF OUR BELIEFS ARE EVIDENCE.

All of us, whether atheists or believers have to contend with natural tragedy. Dealing with man-made tragedy and cruelty is a different issue, because it is firmly rooted in what a person believes. What are the logical consequences of being an atheist? What does the atheist belief system logically lead to? The same question can be asked of any religion, because there are religions that teach things which are evil. Galatians 6:7–8 says, “Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit will reap eternal life.”

Atheists must base their view of evil and its consequences on the chance functioning of DNA. As Dawkins wrote, “DNA neither knows nor cares. DNA just is, and we dance to its music.” His statement that there “is, at bottom, no design, no purpose, no evil and no good” accurately sums up what an atheist must believe. So what guides a person in moral decisions and how does he or she deal with tragedy in life? How would my son born with multiple handicaps fit into such a belief system? Peter Singer, the head of the ethics department at Princeton University would



ethanize my son. As an atheist he has to believe that my son is simply unfit in a world run by survival of the fittest. Singer would empty the care centers for the mentally ill and handicapped by simply euthanizing all who do not measure up to his definition of “fitness.” (For more

on Singer see our bimonthly issue November/December 2010, page 26.) What prevents that definition from including the elimination of people based on racial characteristics? What kind of society would that be? To deny that evil exists, opens the door to horrors most of us can only imagine.

The consequences of a belief system also help us know what is from God and what is from man. Jesus said, “I am the way and the

truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6). When you look at what Jesus taught and how he dealt with life and evil, you see perfection. Matthew 5–7 provides a way to eliminate or at least mitigate most evil. Nowhere did Jesus encourage his followers to embrace or do anything that was evil or that would promote evil. If you read the Koran, you see a very different approach to the problems of this world. Much violence is encouraged (see Sura 47:3–5; 2:216; 5:37–39; 8:37–41; 9:4–7.) There have been those who called themselves Christians and engaged in evil acts such as religious wars, but the teachings of Jesus are void of evil. If followed, they will bring love, peace, harmony, and dignity to all human beings. How can anyone look at what happens daily in the world as shown on TV, on the Internet, and in our newspapers and magazines and still deny the existence of evil? God has a purpose for each one of us, and this world is not the total of our existence. If we understand our purpose, realize that God has provided answers and help to us, and comprehend the consequences of following and not fighting evil, we can live through hard times. They are only temporary.

—JNC

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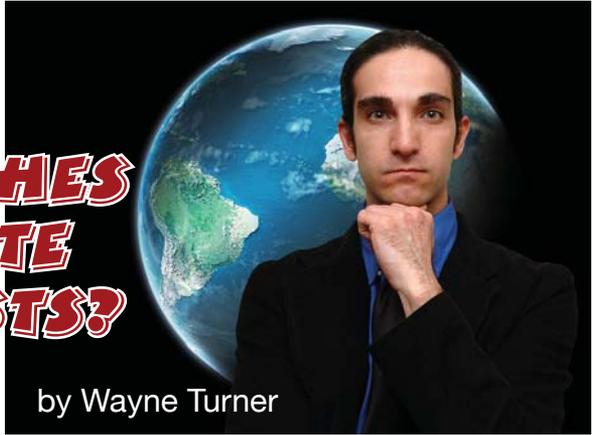
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**Trust in the Lord forever,
for the Lord, the Lord,
is the Rock eternal.
*Isaiah 26:4 NIV***

DO CHURCHES CREATE ATHEISTS?

by Wayne Turner



Do churches create atheists? It may seem like a strange question, yet it is one we should ask. In a time where church membership and influence are declining, and non-belief is increasing, we must ask if there is any correlation between the two trends.

In the past, in North America, it was assumed that everyone had some kind of religious affiliation, however nominal that might be. Today, an ever increasing segment of the population does not even admit to having any faith. As well, we have seen the rise of a new, very militant, and aggressive atheism spearheaded by people like Christopher Hitchens, Richard Dawkins, and others. It is interesting to note that both Hitchens and Dawkins came out of religious backgrounds. When he was young, Hitchens attended religious schools. Dawkins was raised in an Anglican family. Both, while relatively young, eschewed whatever religious ideas that they might have been taught, instead favoring ideas that were more secular and, in their view, scientific.

Many of us have had some experience with people who have moved away from belief. Often they have been disillusioned or disappointed, either by their expectations of God or the behavior of those who professed to be believers. Some may have been very marginal in their belief to begin with, basing their involvement more on church or family culture, rather than personal conviction. Some, like the Laodiceans (Revelation 3:14–16) or even the Ephesians (Revelation 2:4), may have just become lukewarm and lost their first love.

However, today there is a new generation of young atheists who have abandoned their faith and church. They are more militant and active. On countless university and college campuses, they have come together in organizations for association, encouragement, and even to work together to promote atheism. It has been suggested that these groups are the atheist equivalent to Campus Crusade for Christ. Many of these young adults came from religious backgrounds, and like

Hitchens and Dawkins, have chosen not to believe in God. Why? Were they influenced by the atheist apologeticists or was there something in their backgrounds that led (or pushed) them away from faith?

The Fixed Point Foundation decided to find out how and why these young adults left. They decided to seek out students involved in these on-campus atheist organizations. They asked the young people to “tell us your journey to unbelief.” The goal was not to engage in debate, but rather to listen. While each person had his own story, a “composite sketch of American college-aged atheists began to emerge.” In June, 2013, an article, “Listening to Young Atheists: Lessons for a Stronger Christianity” published on *The Atlantic* website*, written by Larry Alex Taunton, director of Fixed Point, summarized the results. Of the atheist young people they sought for the survey, Taunton notes, “They are people who are not merely irreligious; they are actively, determinedly irreligious.”

Generally, the results came down to specific points. First, most (if not all) had attended church. Their atheistic views were a “reaction to Christianity.” (In this case, Christianity refers to the broad spectrum of religious groups under that umbrella.) Second, the “mission and message of their churches was vague.” In particular, through the article, Taunton tells the story of one young man’s experience. The key moment in his life was when the church he was attending made a major change in direction away from biblical content to a “teach less and play more” strategy to attract more young people. Throughout the study results, many noted that the “connection between Jesus and a person’s life was not clear.” Third, not surprisingly, the respondents felt that “their churches offered superficial answers to life’s difficult questions.” Further, they felt that church services were “largely shallow, harmless, and ultimately irrelevant.” Fourth, despite their negative responses to what was becoming increasingly irrelevant and watered-down, they “expressed their respect for those ministers who took the Bible seriously.” Taunton notes that among the militant atheists, there is a surprising respect for believers who take the Bible seriously enough to attempt to share its message with others. One student from Dartmouth stated, “I really can’t consider a Christian a good, moral person if he isn’t trying to convert me.” Taunton shares similar comments from Hitchens and well-known entertainer (illusionist/comedian) Penn Jillette. Taunton notes, “Comments like these should cause every Christian to examine his conscience to see if he truly



believes that Jesus is, as he claimed, ‘the way, the truth, and the life.’” Fifth, the high school years were “decisive.” Sixth, while the students generally stated that their transition to unbelief was for “exclusively rational reasons” many indicated it was “deeply emotional as well.” This was sometimes coupled with disappointments with people and/or their expectations of God. Finally, Taunton includes the role of the Internet. When asked about what may have influenced their move to atheism, instead of citing the writings of the new generation of atheist apologists, the students mentioned online videos and forums.

Perhaps of greatest value is Taunton’s summary, that these young people were “idealists who longed for authenticity, and having failed to find it in their churches, they settled for a non-belief that, while less grand in its promises, felt more genuine and attainable.”

It would appear, at least in some cases, churches have created atheists. It is a sobering thought, but one we need to take seriously. Sometimes, the only time when people appear to be passionate about their faith is when arguing, often behaving in ways that are inconsistent with their profession. People,



especially young people — our young people — are looking for faith that is real. The words Taunton used were “authentic” and “genuine.” That is, that a person’s faith is expressed not only in that they believe the Bible, but that they live it — in character, attitude, purpose, and activities. We not only quote the Golden Rule, the chapters on love and faith and the Great Commission, we also live them in our daily lives. We need to show our conviction and passion that Jesus is our Lord.

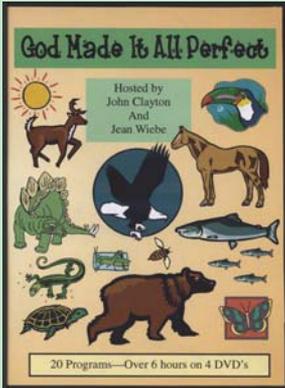
(Reprinted with permission from *Gospel Herald*, July 2013.)

*<http://www.theatlantic.com/national/archive/2013/06/listening-to-young-atheists-lessons-for-a-stronger-christianity/276584/>

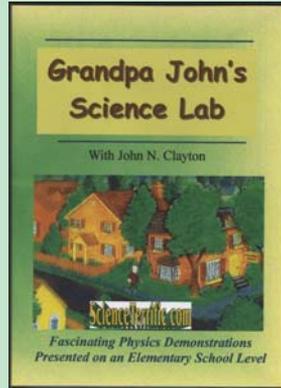
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GREAT SCIENTISTS AND GOD

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

WALTER KOHN

1923-

1998 Nobel Price in Chemistry for
Density Functional Theory

“I see myself as religious simultaneously in two ways. One is that I have found that religion ... has enriched my own life and is something that I have

conveyed to my children and feel that their lives also have been enriched.”

“Secondly, I am very much of a scientist, and so I naturally have thought about religion also through the eyes of a scientist. When I do that, I see religion not denominationally, but in more, let us say, deistic sense. I have been influenced in my thinking by the writings of Einstein who has made remarks to the effect that when he contemplated the world he sensed an underlying

Force much greater than any human force. I feel very much the same. There is a sense of awe, a sense of reverence, and a sense of great mystery.”

“The relationship of science and religion should be one of ‘mutual respect. They are complementary important parts of the human experience.’”



Cynthia's Corner



UNDERSTANDING THE BIBLE

God's Word was written by human hands divinely guided and inspired by the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 3:5; 1 Peter 1:12; 2 Peter 1:20–21).

“All scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:16–17). God gave us his Word to teach us who he is and what his will for us is, and to train us to be righteous and to do his work. God wants us to understand and to respond to his Word. So, he gave us a book we can understand. It is written with great clarity, brevity, and on a level that even the least educated of us can understand. However, understanding God's Word is NOT just a function of the clarity of the writing and the message. Nor is it merely a function of the intellect of the reader. It is dependent on the spiritual condition of the reader's heart.

The parable of the sower in Matthew 13, Mark 4, and Luke 8 makes this clear. The seed sown is the Word of God. The different soils (hardened path, rocky places, thorns, and good soil) the seed falls on represents the different conditions of our heart, which directly affects how we receive God's Word and how it impacts us. In the same parable (Matthew 13:14–15), the heart that cannot understand God's Word is described as “callous” (hard soil).

Understanding the Word of God is not just a mental exercise but a spiritual one. God's Word is NOT a man-made book, but a spiritual one written by God (Galatians 1:11–12; 1 Thessalonians 2:13). It is “living and active, sharper than a double-edged sword, penetrating to dividing bone and marrow, soul and spirit. It judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart” (Hebrews 4:12). Our heart determines how we understand and respond to the Bible, not just our minds. God warns us throughout the Bible to “guard our heart above all else” (Proverbs 4:23). The condition of the heart is reflected in our attitude toward God's Word. A stubborn heart refuses to listen to the word (Jeremiah 13:10). A good heart delights in God's Word, meditates on it, craves it, and obeys it. God responds to a good heart by giving insight, understanding, wisdom, and knowledge (Proverbs 1:1–6 and Psalm 119).

—Cynthia Clayton

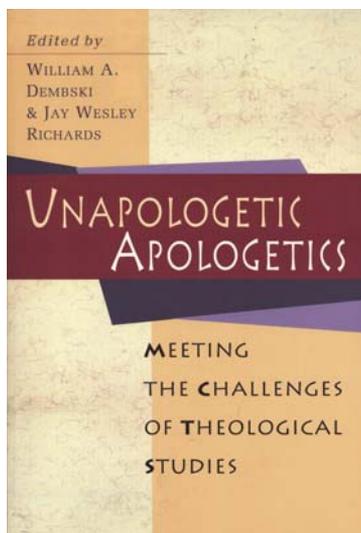


The books that are reviewed in the Book Reviews section are not available through us, but can be obtained from a local bookstore or through many online bookstores.

Unapologetic Apologetics

edited by William Dembski and Jay Wesley Richards,
InterVarsity Press, © 2001,

280 pages, \$27.00 (paperback), ISBN-13: 0-8308-1563-5



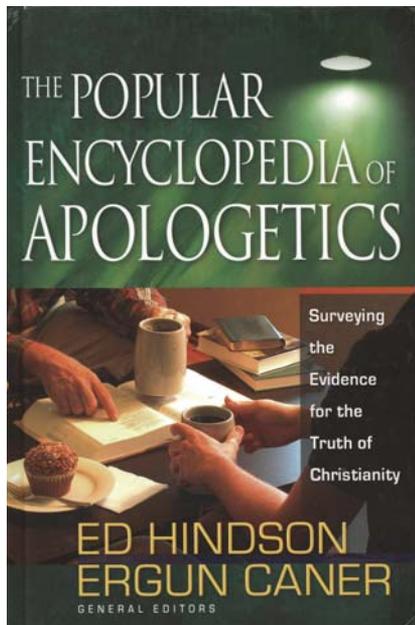
This is a book aimed primarily at Princeton Theological Seminary, from where the writers graduated. The book begins by pointing out that in 1943 Christian Apologetics was a required course at the seminary, and in 1944 this course was not even offered as an elective. They go on to say that it would be difficult to find an apologetic course at any denominational seminary today—that “for post-Enlightenment liberalism the very idea of rational argument on behalf of the Christian faith is offensive.” The book then provides 16 essays by a group of seminary students who are part of the Charles Hodge Society at Princeton, affiliated with the IntersVarsity Christian Fellowship.

Nine of the 16 essays are by Dembski and Richards and respond to theologians who decry the use of apologetics. They deal with things like claims of errors in scripture, naturalism in theology, challenges to the incarnation, feminism and Christianity, universalism, and challenges to design. The essays are well written, academic in nature, and deal with modern theological debates.

The objections to apologetics that are happening in the church today have their roots in the denominational seminaries. Preachers and teachers in preacher training schools will profit by reading this book.

The Popular Encyclopedia of Apologetics

by Ed Hindson and Ergun Caner, Harvest House Publishers, ©2008,
502 pages, \$26.99 (hardcover), ISBN-13: 978-0-7369-2084-1.



If you want a book that enables you to look up something quickly when you are at a loss for the meaning of a word related to apologetics, this book is for you. The contents section at the front of the book lists over two hundred subjects in alphabetical order. The subjects have some kind of connection to apologetics, although the connection is sometimes distant. The subjects include philosophies, religions, issues, key personalities, and theology. A sampling of the subjects in alphabetical order as listed in the contents are: Abortion, Bahá'í, Creation theories, Deism, Euthanasia, Fideism, Gnosticism, Islam, Jesus Seminar, Kabbalah, Lost Gospels, Monism, Occult,

Pantheism, Relativism, Sin, Tertullian, Universalism, Van Til, Wicca, Zoroastrianism.

That sampling shows you how broad the subjects are. The editors are professors at Liberty University, and the subjects are flavored by their immersion in Jerry Falwell's teaching and the views of the denominations that support that school. There are fifty-five contributors to the book including some well-known apologists like Norman Geisler, John Morrison, and Ron Rhodes. The subjects covered in this work are treated well, and for the most part are academically solid. The pros and cons of each subject from a conservative Christian viewpoint are given. The weaknesses of the book are because of the huge variety of subjects making it difficult to cover all of them with the conciseness that an encyclopedia demands.

This is not the kind of book you would just sit down and read, but as a reference book or a resource for people writing articles or teaching classes it would be very useful.

>> CORRECTIONS

January/February 2014

Page 15, 16: Hydraulic cycle was used instead of hydrologic cycle referring to the water cycle.

DANDY DESIGNS

DOING THE PENGUIN BUBBLE SLIDE

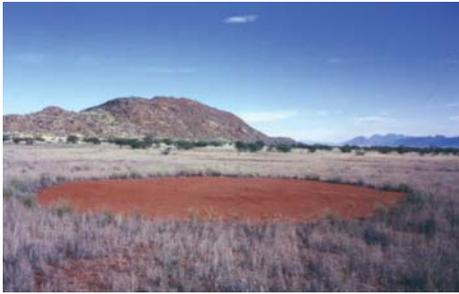


Penguins have gotten a lot of attention recently. Most of us have seen the wildlife pictures of emperor penguins rocketing out of the sea to the safety of an ice floe to avoid being eaten by a leopard seal. The problem is that when the speed of the penguin through the water is measured, it cannot go any faster than nine feet a second or about six miles an hour. There is no way at such a slow speed that the emperor penguins could come rocketing out the water as they do. The question is then, “How do the penguins do this when they would have to triple their fastest measured speed to come completely out of the water in the jump to safety.”

The answer to this mystery is that the penguins build a bubble slide. Penguins have a dense uniform coat of feathers, and like any bird they can fluff the feathers up to insulate their body with trapped air. In the case of the penguins, the base of their feathers includes tiny filaments just 20 microns in diameter—less than half the diameter of a human hair. Air trapped in the fine mesh of this hair can be released as microbubbles which form a lubricating coat on the feather surface. These bubbles reduce the density and viscosity of the water and lubricate the penguins body. This cuts drag and enables the penguin to reach the speeds that let it escape from the sea and on to the ice floe.

The military and the ship builders are trying to mimic this air lubrication system. In 2010 a Dutch company began selling systems that lubricate ships with bubbles. Romans 1:20 tells us that we can know there is a God through the things he has made. Apparently we can also know how to build better ships that travel more cheaply by imitating God’s methods. Source: *National Geographic*, November 2012, page 60.

FAIRY CIRCLES ARE DESIGN FEATURES



For countless years, mysterious rings up to ten feet in diameter have appeared by the thousands in the south African desert. Local mystics had ascribed the rings to supernatural fairies which were said to be providing cures and curses to the people of the area.

Research into the rings has now revealed that they are actually produced by termites, and the efforts of the termites are the mainstay of the fragile ecosystem of these deserts. In the spring, heavy rains fall in the area and cause small patches of grass to grow. Termites have nests deep underground and they eat the grass above their nests. This leaves a barren basin surrounded by grass. Since there is no vegetation in these barren areas and they are surrounded by a ridge of grass and dirt, water is trapped and the underground area around the termite nest is very wet. The grass on the edges sends down roots into this moist area growing so high that grass will sometimes be as much as three feet tall around the barren area.

Because of the protection the plants give them, the termites do not eat the plants surrounding the barren area—just the plants that start within the barren area. These large grass hedges provide wind-breaks and food for ants, bees, and mammals. They also stop erosion and stabilize the desert floor.

There are many insects, animals, and plants that allow desert areas to be filled with life. All of them are exquisitely designed for the dry and difficult conditions that the desert brings. Desert rings are just another evidence of God's design. God calls us to look beyond paranormal explanations for the world in which we live, and recognize the wisdom, beauty, and design which speak eloquently of the wisdom of his creation (Psalm 19). Source: *National Geographic*, September 2013, page 20.



News and Notes

JURASSIC PARK METHOD FAILS. The popular movie *Jurassic Park* presented the scenario where dinosaurs were cloned from DNA found in ancient mosquitoes trapped in amber. Studies of insects just 10,000 years old have shown that the DNA in these insects has degraded so much that it could not be recognized, much less used for something like cloning. Source: *Science News*, October 19, 2013, page 5.



IRAN HIV SKYROCKETS. The Associated Press (December 1, 2013) has released a report from Iranian State television saying that the number of HIV positive citizens registered with the government is 27,000, although that is likely to be five times lower than the actual figure. The endorsement of polygamy and the use of recreational drugs are contributing factors to this huge number, but claims that Islam’s teachings reduce the danger of infection with HIV are not supported by the evidence.

ARIEL CASTRO AND PORNOGRAPHY. Most of us were appalled at the discovery that three women had been kidnapped and held as sex slaves in a Cleveland, Ohio, home for nearly ten years. Before his suicide death by hanging in his cell, Ariel Castro talked about what led him to rape, beat, and imprison the women. Castro not only was sexually abused as a child, but was addicted to pornography. The claim that the viewing of pornography is a private matter is simply not supported by the evidence. Dr. Victor Cline, a clinical psychologist at the University of Utah wrote in a paper titled “Pornography’s Effect on Adults and Children,” “The major consequence of being addicted to pornography is not the probability or possibility of committing a serious sex crime (though this can and does occur), but rather the disturbance of the fragile bonds of intimate family and marital relationships. This is where the most grievous pain, damage, and sorrow occur.” Source: *Citizen*, December 2013, page 20.

MAN'S FOSSIL LINEAGE SIMPLIFIED. One of the areas of great interest to scientists and Bible readers is the meaning of various hominid fossils (*Homo*) found throughout Africa and western Asia. In the past, the major fossils have been divided into four species: *Homo habilis*, *Homo rudolfensis*, *Homo ergaster*, and *Homo erectus*. We have suggested in this journal, that not enough attention was being paid to race in labeling these fossils. The fact that a Pygmy and a Swede are the same species even though they look very different, should be an indicator that instead of being separate species these might be racial variations of the same species. A recent find at a site called Dmanisi in the nation of Georgia shows that “the shape and size of the skulls found there don’t exceed those found in modern populations of people ... supporting the idea that all five [skulls found at Dmanisi] represent a single species.” This will be debated among professional anthropologists for some time, but the new finds seem to bring the evidence closer to what the Bible tells us about ancient humans. Source: *Science News*, November 16, 2013, page 6 and *Discover*, January/February 2014, page 38.



Dmanisi, Georgia

TEXTBOOK BATTLES CONTINUE IN TEXAS. As a retired public school science teacher, I am amused at the battles that take place over textbook adoption. In Texas, which is one of the largest textbook purchasers in the nation, the subject is one of great concern. In the fall of 2013, the state textbook review panels had to sort through 14 biology books and give a recommendation to the State Board of Education. Creationist and former State Board of Education Chairwoman Gail Lowe recommended nearly a third of the 28 biology book reviewers, who seem to share her views. The Freethought Oasis, a local atheist and skeptic group has weighed in on this as well as a variety of college professors.

As a former teacher, I see this as a political football. Do fundamentalists really want atheist biology teachers teaching their version of creationism? There are at least a dozen different creationist views out there. Which one should be selected? The various views are examined in an article titled “What is Creationism?” by Mark Isaak on The TalkOrigins Archive. You can find it at www.talkorigins.org/faqs/wic.html or use the QR code. Presenting evidence and talking about possible solutions to the evidence can be done without dragging religion or anti-religion into the picture. Getting kids to read and think is what concerns most of us as classroom teachers. Source: the *Dallas Morning News*, page 3A, September 20, 2013.



GLOBAL WARMING AND ICE-CAP COOLING. It does not make the front page, but while the North Pole is losing about 30,000 square miles of sea ice per year the South Pole is gaining sea ice. In the December 2013 issue of *Smithsonian* magazine (page 20) we are told that at the South Pole sea ice hit a 35 year record of 19 million square miles. Researchers believe that the winds around the South Pole are doing this, but much more needs to be learned.

ATHEIST “MEGA-CHURCHES” STARTING. It began in Great Britain earlier this year. Now mega-churches for atheists have sprung up in Los Angeles, San Diego, Nashville, and New York, with hundreds of people in attendance. The service is boisterous, filled with live music, some stand up comedy, moments of reflection, and “inspirational talks.” Songs like “Lean on Me” and “Here Comes the Sun” replace gospel songs, and community service projects are encouraged. Source: Associated Press and Foxnews.com November 11, 2013. Well known atheist Ian O’Doherty in Ireland responded to this by saying, “What utter rot. ‘Organizing an atheist church is the spiritual equivalent of a vegetarian eating Quorn [a meat substitute popular in the UK] that has been shaped and colored to look like meat.’ Either worship or don’t: You can’t have it both ways. Nor can you unite people around a shared sense of unbelief.” Source: *The Week*, November 15, 2013, page 12.

BABIES IN WOMB SHOW HUMAN CHARACTERISTICS. Researchers at Durham and Lancaster universities have been tracking movements in scans of healthy fetuses between 24 and 36 weeks gestation. Babies are able to open their mouths as they move their hands toward their mouths, and move their lips to form a smile or pain expression during this time of gestation. The claim that babies are not humans and do not do human things until after birth is not supported by the evidence. Source: Carolyn Buchanan, posted on www.whattoexpect.com. October 8, 2013.



COMET ISON HIGHLIGHTS OUR IGNORANCE. Many of us were looking forward to a spectacular appearance of comet ISON at the end of 2013. There had been predictions that the comet would fill most of the sky in North America making it the brightest and most visible comet in modern times. These predictions were based on the position of the comet relative to the earth. ISON passed less than 750,000 miles from the Sun, and that close approach took

its temperature to over 3,600 degrees Fahrenheit. That temperature boiled off layer after layer of the comet.

The problem with all observations of comets is that we do not know how they will react when they come close to the Sun. In October 2007 a periodic comet named 17P/Holmes, which regularly is seen from the earth, suddenly brightened by a factor of half-a-million, with its coma inflating to a diameter greater than that of the Sun.

In spite of the failure of the comet ISON to put on a good show for us casual observers, scientists did get an incredible volume of data which will help us understand the solar system better. There are plans some day to land on a comet so we can learn even more. We are still just beginning to understand how these remains from the creation of the solar system work. Source: *Astronomy*, January 2014, page 9 and *Discover*, November 2013, page 32.

FREEDOM FROM RELIGION FOUNDATION (FFRF) IN FUND-RAISING BLITZ. One of the more active atheist groups in the United States today was started by a former Baptist preacher in 1978. They are running full-page ads in *Scientific American* asking for donations. Their main thrust has been “to keep state and church separate.” That is a goal we certainly support, and which is supported by a majority of Christians. By confusing a valid plea with their atheism, the FFRF has gained many followers and now claims to be “the nation’s largest association of freethinkers (atheists and agnostics).” Their history has been one of opposing all expression of belief in anything supernatural. Recently they filed a federal lawsuit claiming that “In God We Trust” should be erased from our currency. They claim that “93% of elite scientists reject belief in a personal god or human immortality.” That statistic is based on a study made in 1998 and reported in *Nature* magazine (vol. 394, no. 669). The study used a poorly designed questionnaire which led the responders to the desired answer. We have followed the FFRF from the early days (our program began in 1968) and know that it has considerable influence.

DARK ENERGY COMPLICATIONS. Dark energy first made the news in 1998 when researchers found that light from a faraway supernova was dimmer than predicted, suggesting that the universe expansion is accelerating. The traditional explanation has been that dark energy is exerting a negative pressure, pushing space outwards. It was assumed that the pushing was constant. New measurements from distant supernovas shows an increase in acceleration. This suggests an eventual tearing apart of the universe — sometimes referred to as “the big rip.” The complexity of the process of creation is huge, and the more data we get the more complexity we see. Source: *Science News*, November 30, 2013, page 8.

LANGUAGE AND LOCATION. An interesting study of speech patterns by Joshua Katz at North Carolina State University is reported in *Science News* (July 13, 2013, page 4). It shows how words, even in American culture, mean different things in different regions of the country. An example is a sweetened carbonated drink, which is referred to as “soda” in New England and California, “Coke” in Louisiana and Mississippi, and “pop” in the north. Another example is a thing from which you might drink water in a school, which is a “water fountain” in the southeast, a “drinking fountain” in the west, and a “bubbler” in eastern Wisconsin. When we read the Bible the same problem exists. Both the original writers and translators were affected by where they lived. An example is that the Hebrew word *nephilim*, in Genesis 6:4 meant a gigantic person to the Vulgate translators, but to the ancient Hebrews it referred to “fallen ones.” In America some have taken this to mean spirit creatures with an angelic reference involved. We have said that to take the Bible literally means to look at who wrote it, to whom, why they wrote it, and how people of the time would have understood it. When you do that, most of the “difficult” passages in the Bible become easy to understand.

NEHEMIAH FOUND IN QUMRAN. A recent discovery of the Book of Nehemiah among some previously unknown Dead Sea Scroll fragments has brought all of the books in the Hebrew Bible except the Book of Esther into the collection of scrolls at Qumran. There are some 900 scrolls involved in the Dead Sea community’s remains and the canonicity of the Hebrew Bible is strongly supported by this collection. In the case of Esther, it is likely that this story of a Jewish female protagonist, marrying a gentile Persian king was unpopular with the powers that be in this Essene population and that is why Esther is left out. Source: *Biblical Archeological Review*, November/December 2013, page 82, referring to an article in the May/June 2012 issue.

CHINA FOSSIL PROBLEMS. One of the more publicized fossils found in recent years was a specimen known as *Aurornis* (or dawn bird). This fossil and a number of others like it have come from the Liaoning area of China. This is also the area from which the Archaeoraptor fossil came. You may remember that fossil was called the “missing link between dinosaurs and birds” by *National Geographic* in 1999. It was later found to be a fake. It turns out that the *Aurornis* fossil was not found in the field, but was purchased from a fossil dealer who may have been involved in illegal and unscientific collecting. The Chinese dealers have learned how to make composite fossils, putting two specimens together to make a previously unseen specimen. They have also been good at making convincing fakes. It is

important not to jump to conclusions when a find is announced. The *National Geographic* fake was only discovered when high resolution x-ray CT revealed the specimen was a mosaic of 88 separate pieces mounted onto a shale slab and glued into place with builder's grout. Source: *Science*, June 7, 2013, page 1153.

NEW DATA ON AUTISM. One of the growing problems for parents in America is that one in 50 U.S. schoolchildren is affected with autism. The Harvard University School of Public Health has released a study showing that women living in areas with high levels of diesel exhaust and airborne mercury were twice as likely to have a child born with autism as those in places with low levels of these compounds. The presence of other pollutants including lead, manganese, and methyl chloride increases the odds by 50%. Another study by scientists sequencing the genome of humans has been able to show genetic underpinnings to the autism disorder. These two may be related as pollutants can cause mutations, and all of this should eventually lead to medical approaches to reducing the effects of autism. Source: *Discover*, January/February 2014, page 43 and *The Week*, July 5–13, 2013, page 22.

PLANETS SHOW QUIRKS. As we get more and more data on the planets in our solar system, their unusual natures and features come out. Here are some recently announced strange features. Mercury is blacker than the darkest asphalt road on earth. Its brightness as seen from earth varies immensely, going from magnitude 5.3, which would be invisible from earth, to a dazzling -2.4 which is brighter than Jupiter. The planet slowly spins three times while it orbits the Sun twice. This means that sunrise on Mercury occurs once every 177 earth days. Mercury has a huge basin called the Caloris Basin caused by a meteor impact. It extends half-way around the planet. As Jupiter is pulling on it, Mercury's orbit is being extended making it an eventual threat to hit Venus in the next 5 billion years. Venus has "snow" that covers its highest mountains, except the temperature on Venus is a steady 850 degrees F. Scientists think the snow is white lead (like galena). These are just the first two planets, but the beauty and strangeness of our planetary neighbors is impressive. Source: *Astronomy*, August 2013, page 11.



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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