

DOES GOD EXIST?

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

**Fourth Quarter 2021
Volume 48 Number 4**

Faith and Methods
in Science, Politics,
and the Church

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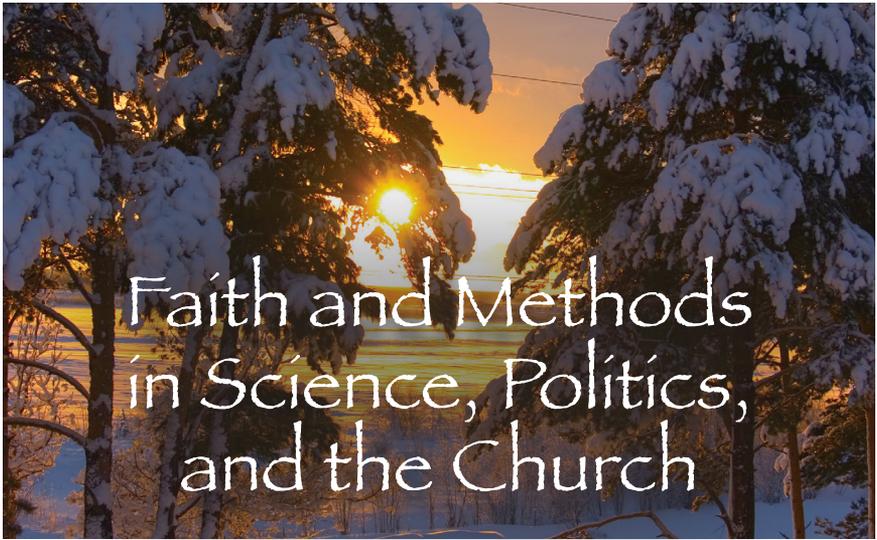
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Faith and Methods in Science, Politics, and the Church

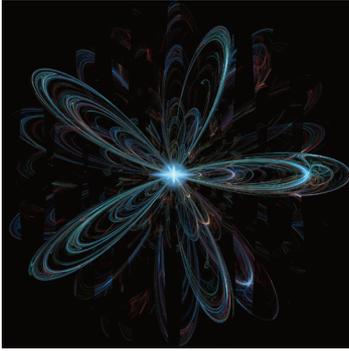
The secular world tends to think of faith as a blind religious belief, but faith is never blind. People always have a basis for what they believe. That is true whether we speak of a scientific faith, a political faith, or a religious faith.

The faith chapter in the Bible is Hebrews 11. You will notice that all of the examples given in that chapter are men and women who had received a basis of their faith. God gave promises to Abraham, and he got into trouble only when he doubted those promises. Moses received early training as a Hebrew, and he rejected the pleasures of Egypt and became a leader of Israel based on what he learned as a child. Noah operated on instructions directly from God. Rahab had seen what happened to those who opposed God's people. None of these were blind or devoid of evidence.

Science is hugely dependent on faith. The difference between scientific and religious faith is that scientific faith is constantly changing. That is because scientists find new evidence that modifies what they believe to be true. When I started teaching chemistry, the faith of the scientific community said that matter is composed of three subatomic particles — electrons, protons, and neutrons. Science told us that those three particles were the smallest units of matter that could exist in a stable arrangement — and that those



particles were stable. The newest scientific data suggests that even those particles eventually decay. Now we know that quantum particles produce electric charge and that all matter eventually returns



to the energy from which it came. We used to teach that electrons orbit the atomic nucleus in ellipses, but now we know that electrons in some materials orbit in dumbbell-shaped orbits and others in clover-leaf types of orbits. Our faith in what matter is made of and how it produces the properties that we observe is constantly changing.

Faith is not and cannot be a static, unchanging thing. We have faith in the fundamental laws of science. For example, we scientifically trust that gravity can never fail, but scientists once believed that the law of parity was 100% universally true. Recently, they have found exceptions to the law. One of the things that makes quantum mechanics difficult is that it is easy to understand but very hard to believe because it challenges our scientific faith. A century ago, many did not accept Einstein's postulates because they violated everyday experiences and fundamental Newtonian beliefs.

As scientific faith is constantly changing because of new evidence, political faith has also changed. One of the problems facing politicians in the last twenty-five years has been changing social issues. As a result, political parties have been challenged to address those new issues. They include: the definition of marriage, the role of women, the role of police, the use of natural resources, how to deal with immigration, the way to overcome racial prejudice, how to handle medical costs, pollution, drugs, marijuana, and many others. Social changes force politicians to realize that what worked in the past must change to allow us to face the future.



When it comes to religious faith, we are not talking about changes in the fundamentals. The basic facts of Jesus as the Son of God, the Bible as God's Word, and the church's role in sharing that faith are not open to change. How we share our faith does need to change. The construction of massive religious structures to supply us with recreation and entertainment cannot continue when people around

us do not have enough to eat. We cannot expect to hire one man to do the work that the church should be doing. Expecting the hired preacher to do it all takes away some of the most rewarding things individual Christians can do. Bringing food to starving people,



giving shelter to a person living on the street, providing clothing to someone who is cold, or getting medical help to someone who is sick, are rewarding things we can all do. How we care for abused women, how we handle the victims of divorce, and what we expect the elders of the

church to do must change. No longer can we consider church elders to be business managers. Instead, they need to serve as shepherds, returning to the model we see in the Bible.

The church has to use the tools of our time to accomplish our acts of faith. People in nursing homes, hospitals, or homebound can now join us in worship using the Internet. We can distribute food and basic household needs like soap and cleaning supplies by tapping into organizations like Feeding America which collects and distributes those supplies at a reduced price. Congregations can employ specialists as a tool to supply the needs of those we serve. This may even involve hiring an electrician, auto mechanic, or counselor to help others beyond what individuals in the local congregation can do.

Some people are disturbed by this change in how we do things because we have done things a certain way for many years. As a result, some people find it hard to accept that there is a better way to express our faith using modern tools.

When thousands of people immigrated to the United States 150 years ago, the church took them in and addressed their needs until they could become self-sufficient. The volume of immigrants continued to grow until some were not being served. That led to a government welfare system taking over benevolence. The welfare system is often abused and incredibly wasteful. Churches became satisfied with entertaining themselves while neglecting service to others. How the Lord looks at this is described in Matthew 25:31–46.

Let us hold on to our biblical faith and increase what we do by using all that God has given us. In the twenty-first-century, twentieth-century methods are insufficient to preach the gospel to all creation (Mark 16:15).

—John N. Clayton



Making the Right Assumptions

In my first college course in statistics, the professor made the following statement: “You can prove anything by statistics as long as you make the right assumptions.” I did not understand what he meant at the time, but I have seen the truth of that statement over the years. People decide what they believe, and then they manipulate statistics to prove that they are correct. Another way of saying it is, “Figures don’t lie, but liars figure.” This is true of religious people and atheists alike, and it is a difficult mistake to avoid. Making the right assumptions to prove your point is usually possible.

There are some things we need to know about any statistical claim. The first is whether there are unconsidered variables in the calculations. For example, recent COVID death statistics failed to include other conditions that affected the mortality of people with the disease. Mortality rates for terminally ill people in nursing homes are not the same as those for college students.



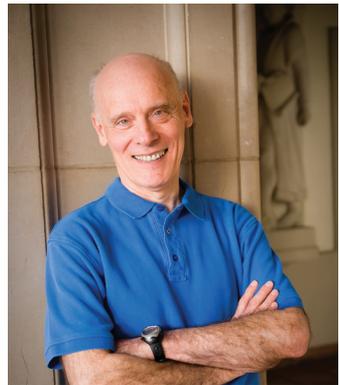
Drake speaking in 2017

People who claim that statistics indicate there must be inhabited planets with people like us base their claim on limited variables. In 1961, astronomer Frank Drake formulated what is known as the Drake Equation to compute the probability of life on other planets. Drake used seven variables, with each assigned a probability factor. They are:

R_* = the average rate of star formation in our galaxy
 f_p = the fraction of those stars that have planets
 n_e = the average number of planets that can potentially support life per star that has planets
 f_l = the fraction of planets that could support life that actually develop life at some point
 f_i = the fraction of planets with life that actually go on to develop intelligent life (civilizations)
 f_c = the fraction of civilizations that develop a technology that releases detectable signs of their existence into space
 L = the length of time for which such civilizations release detectable signals into space

It should be evident that none of these variables are based on observations but on making the right assumptions. In addition, since 1961, science has added a vast number of new variables. For example, we need to consider black holes, star distribution, planetary chemical makeup, and asteroid bombardment. Added to that list are a host of physical constants and geologic processes we have learned through space exploration.

Astronomer Dr. Hugh Ross has refined and expanded the list to include 322 variables. Even assigning modest values for each of those parameters would mean that the probability of all 322 occurring together (as they have on Earth) would be 10^{-388} . That number is beyond impossible. Making the right assumptions involves considering all of the variables. Whether life exists on any other planet is not a biblical question and has nothing to do with the existence of God.



Dr. Hugh Ross

We see that one problem with statistical arguments is that they often do not include all the variables. A second problem is that they do not ensure that all of their variables are independent. Therefore, we must consider the interdependent factors.

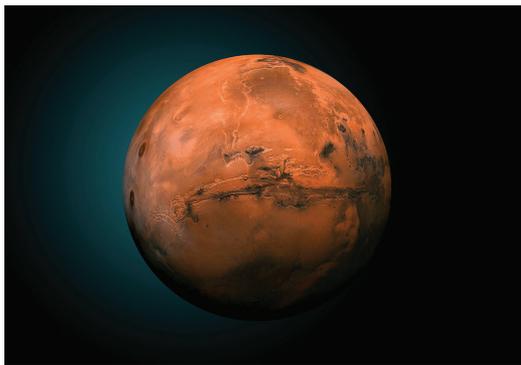
For a trivial example, let us suppose I ask, “What are the odds that I will buy my grandson a BMW for his birthday?” The first question we should ask is, “Is he old enough to drive?” A second question might be, “Can he get insurance?” A third variable would be, “Do I have enough money to buy the car?” Finally, a fourth variable might be, “Would he be happy with a used BMW?”



Since I love my grandson, I might say that the odds of me buying a car for him are 100%. However, as we consider each of those variables (plus many more), the probability becomes less. Are these variables independent, or are they interdependent factors? If he is not old enough to drive, he is also not old enough to get insurance. The probability of him being able to drive and being able to get insurance are not independent because both depend on his age. His being happy with a used BMW is not independent of my having enough money to buy a new one.

If we look at the question of life on Mars, we might be inclined to say that the odds are very high that life does exist on that planet. It has a mass similar to Earth.

Mars has an atmosphere, volcanic eruptions, and water. Mars is tilted on its axis, it has a magnetic field, and the length of a day is roughly 24 hours. Are all of these variables independent? The answer is no because if the planet has volcanic eruptions, it will have an atmosphere,



and volcanic eruptions always involve some amount of water. Both the water and the atmosphere are interdependent factors that depend upon volcanic eruptions. Despite all that, life on Mars is highly doubtful.



The tricky part of this subject for both believers and atheists is knowing what is dependent and what is independent. As our knowledge of a topic improves, we are likely to find more dependent



factors. For example, we recently discussed the importance of hydroxyl radicals in cleaning Earth's atmosphere of pollutants. What are the odds of hydroxyl radicals being in a planet's atmosphere? What may appear to be a separate and independent variable is the presence of lightning. Science has known

for a long time that lightning helps produce nitrates which are essential for plant growth. In June 2021, scientists announced a recent discovery that lightning produces hydroxyl radicals. Any planet that has lightning will have hydroxyl radicals, so the presence of hydroxyl radicals is not independent but is dependent on lightning.

Considering the millions of interdependent factors that must be in place to allow us to exist, could they all have come together by chance? Consider it on various levels—the creation of a universe from nothing—the creation of a life-supporting planet—the



creation of the first life from inert matter—the creation of advanced life. We could go on. But considering all of the interdependent factors at each level, is it more logical to assume they came together by mere chance or guided by an intelligent Designer?

—JNC

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We have had some discussions with Chinese writers who claim that their culture is superior to all others because of its history. These discussions remind us of the Nazis in Germany who claimed racial exceptionalism for political purposes.

It is essential to understand that racial differences are at least to some degree a function of the environment in which people live. It is a physical fact that black objects radiate heat better than white objects. It is a biological fact that some diseases like sickle cell anemia and Tay-Sachs are more common in certain populations, and there is a genetic factor in those disorders. Some populations have a greater sensitivity to alcohol than others. Nose shape and size can offer sensitivity to humidity and temperature in extreme climates like deserts and polar areas. Another biological fact is hybridization. When two dissimilar living things combine, the product of that combination is different and sometimes physically superior to either of the two original sources.



have access to have a relationship with him through Christ. Peter’s conclusion in Acts 10:34–35 was, “Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation, he who reverences him and does what is right is acceptable to him.” Galatians 3:28 says, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for [we] are all one in Christ Jesus.”

God created the human genome with characteristics that would allow us to live anywhere on planet Earth. While this design allowed us to have physical features that make us look different from one another, there is no biblical reason to use any of those physical traits to do violence to someone else. There is no room for racism in any teaching of the Bible.



Racism is from Satan. It is a political, selfish, arrogant, violent, hateful, exploitive behavior by people who are ignorant of the teachings of Jesus Christ and all that Christianity stands for. Everyone on this planet should study and apply Matthew 5–7. The only hope we have for peace on Earth is to convince all people that the teachings of Jesus make sense and hold the key to the kind of life we all want to have.

—JNC

**Visit the Clayton Museum
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York College, York, Neb.**

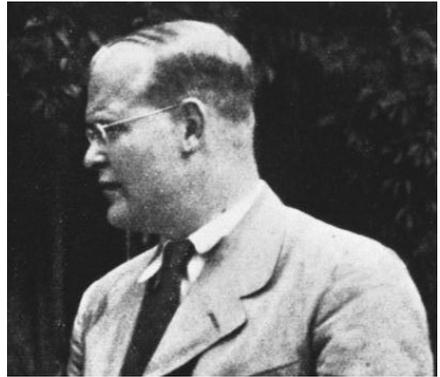


Who Really Believes?

by Thayer Salisbury

About thirty years ago, a co-worker complained that he did not understand why anyone would hold up Dietrich Bonhoeffer as a good example or refer to him as a martyr. “The man was a screaming liberal,” he said. I am not sure what screaming had to do with it, but no doubt Bonhoeffer’s view of scripture was not what I understand to be required by the scriptures themselves. We are not talking about liberal politics here. My co-worker was suggesting that Bonhoeffer did not really believe in the inspiration of scripture, and he was probably correct in that accusation.

But I had read *The Cost of Discipleship* and saw no reason why I should not quote some of its profound statements. Of course, quoting a true statement does not imply that we agree with the person being quoted on every point. I also saw no reason why I should not read other things that Bonhoeffer had written. So, in the spring of 1998, I purchased and read a copy of *Life Together*. I marked a few passages that I thought would be worth revisiting and set the book aside.



Dietrich Bonhoeffer in 1939

Frustrated that I could not do what I had planned to do one morning recently, I picked that book up again and began rereading the passages I had marked twenty-three years ago. As I did so, I was struck by a strange paradox.

On page 51 of *Life Together*, Bonhoeffer, who perhaps did not believe in the inspiration of scripture, expresses the opinion that every Christian family should read together at least an entire chapter of the Old Testament and at least half a chapter of the New Testament every day (in addition to praying together and singing some hymns). He makes it clear that church leaders should, of course, be doing more than this.

DO WE LIVE LIKE WE BELIEVE IT?

I could not help but think, “Here is a person with what might be called a ‘low’ view of scripture insisting that Christians ought to read a significant amount of scripture every day. Yet many who claim to hold firmly to a ‘high’ view of inspiration do not read that much in a week.” It occurred to me that if a person’s or a church’s view of scripture were judged by actions rather than claims, many individuals and churches that claim to believe in inspiration might be judged to not really believe. That thought led to another.

DO WE WORSHIP AND PREACH LIKE WE BELIEVE IT?

I have often been in Sunday services that were almost devoid of scripture. Some had no scripture reading at all. Others had only a

very brief reading. What does this indicate about our view of scripture?

I have often heard sermons (and perhaps preached a few) where a text was read but was then ignored. A few days ago, a brother mentioned hearing a sermon that

began with a reading from scripture but then proceeded for more than thirty minutes on a topic not even mentioned in the text that had just been read. What does this indicate about our view of scripture?



I have heard many sermons that jumped from text to text, making a pretext of all, ignoring the context, and pretending that the passages cited proved something the inspired writer was not even considering.

Who really believes in the inspiration of scripture? Is it the one who proclaims that he does, although he may not read scripture? Is it the one who claims that he believes but then uses the Bible as a jumping-off point so that he can proclaim his own opinions? Is it the one that claims to believe in the Bible, but who then engages in activities that he knows God has condemned?

The scriptures themselves effectively answer these questions:

“Why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do what I tell you?” (Luke 6:46)

“God says: ‘What right have you to recite my statutes or take my covenant on your lips? For you hate discipline, and you cast my words behind you.’” (Psalm 50:16–17)

IF ANY PREACHERS ARE READING THIS, LET ME HAVE A WORD WITH YOU.

Do you ever ask yourself, “Might I be part of the reason my congregation does not honor the scriptures as they should? Is it possible that my use of scripture leads people away from the scriptures? If I do catch-word preaching that uses the scripture as a jumping-off point from which to speak on a subject not actually covered in my text, will this not lead to the misuse of scripture by the ordinary member?” Consider these words from David Murray:

“A major reason for seeking the purpose of the author is, therefore, consciously to shift attention away from ourselves to the Scriptures, away from our concerns to the author’s concerns, away from our own purposes to the author’s purpose.”

—David Murray in *How Sermons Work*

It is not wrong to verbally affirm the inspiration of the scriptures. However, it is far better to preach and live as ones who really believe the scriptures.

**Visit the Clayton Museum
of Ancient History at
York College, York, Neb.**



Ultimate Meaning, Purpose, and Morality

by Roland Earnst



I enjoy watching BBC's video programs *Planet Earth* and *The Blue Planet* written and narrated by David Attenborough. Those programs display the fantastic beauty and design of this planet and its many living creatures. Seeing the way planet Earth's systems work together like a well-designed machine fills me with awe. However, I find it amazing that Attenborough believes that this incredible beauty and structure came about by mere chance and natural selection without any design, purpose, or meaning. How can he not realize that ultimate meaning, purpose, and morality come from God who created these wonders?



In his book *Miracles*, Christian philosopher C. S. Lewis refers to unbelievers as "naturalists." He wrote, "A moment after they have admitted that good and evil are il-

lusions, you will find them exhorting us to work for posterity, to educate, revolutionise, liquidate, live and die for the good of the human race." Lewis called that "very odd." Attenborough teaches us about the beautiful design of our planet without a Designer. He advocates for the environment, even though that environment may have no



ultimate purpose or meaning. A BBC interviewer once asked Attenborough if he ever had any religious faith, and he replied “no.” He said, “It never really occurred to me to believe in God.”

When asked why he does not believe in a creator, Attenborough will point out what he considers an evil creature, such as the parasitic worm *Onchocerca volvulus* that infects children’s eyes in tropical climates. He said creationists believe that God created each individual species, so why would “an all-merciful God who cares for each of us individually” make a creature like that. However, as John Clayton has pointed out many times, the Bible says God created “kinds” of animals, not each individual species (see Genesis 1:11, 12, 21, 24, and 25). But then he specially created the first humans in his image (Genesis 1:27).



Attenborough strongly advocates for various environmentalist causes telling us what we ought or ought not to do. C. S. Lewis said that those who do not believe in God often tell us what we ought to do, but their natural impulses can say nothing about objective right or wrong. Lewis wrote, “Do they remember while they are writing thus that when they tell us we ‘ought to make a better world’ the words

‘ought’ and ‘better’ must, on their own showing, refer to an irrationally conditioned impulse which cannot be true or false any more than a vomit or a yawn?”



Lewis goes on to say that if we make moral judgments, “then we must believe that the conscience of man is not a product of

Nature.” He writes that it “can be valid only if it is an offshoot of some absolute moral wisdom” In other words, ultimate meaning, purpose, and morality come from God, not evolution.

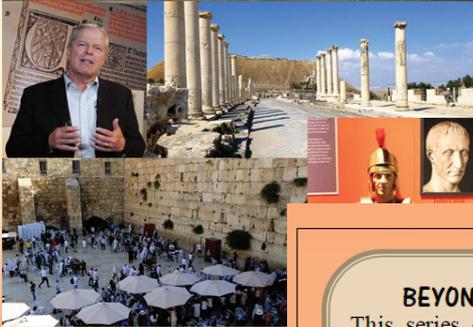
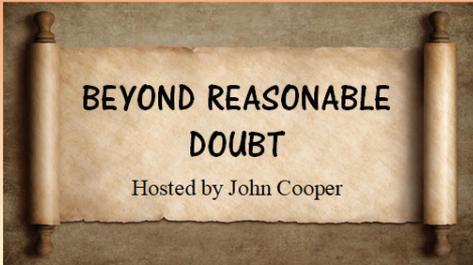
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Succinct Song of Science

by Don Betts

God's voice was the dominant sound
As He moved the elements around.
Material He needed was there at His command
As He proceeded to prepare sky, sea, and land.
Each phase of His plan was done in *His* day.
He said all was good, even man formed from clay.
All that exists was made for us to behold
A spiritual relationship more precious than gold.
You will know Me, He said, by the things I've made.
Feel the warmth of sunlight?
See the tree for shade?
God's voice resounds from mountain high or low
Echoing in the valley, where whispering water's flow.
From the beauty of the universe, a glow celestial
To a lowly clod of earth, infinitesimal.
His handiwork exists for all to see
Dandy designs of His Majesty!

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Or you can watch it online for free at DoesGodExist.TV.

BEYOND REASONABLE DOUBT

This series of lectures deals with biblical archaeology, the reliability of the Scriptures, and the divinity of Jesus. Your speaker is John Cooper, a Christian minister whose study and travels have given him a broad knowledge of the subject matter. The series uses video and photographs of important archaeological sites and artifacts. It was recorded in the Clayton Museum of Ancient History at York College in York, Nebraska.



- 1-Introduction (26 minutes)
- 2-The Textual Reliability of the Bible (25 minutes)
- 3-Old Testament Archaeology Part 1 (29 minutes)
- 4-Old Testament Archaeology Part 2 (28 minutes)
- 5-New Testament Archaeology Part 1 (23 minutes)
- 6-New Testament Archaeology Part 2 (28 minutes)
- 7-The Inspiration of the Bible (37 minutes)
- 8-The Historicity of Jesus (31 minutes)
- 9-The Divinity of Jesus (32 minutes)

SCIENTISTS AND GOD

Editor's note: Atheists attempt to suggest that scientists are intelligent people who have rejected faith and do not believe in God. The fact is that some of the most productive scientists who have ever lived were believers in God. We share some of their thoughts with you in this column.

Arthur Peacocke (1924-2006)

British biochemist

University of Birmingham 1948-1959

University of Oxford 1959-1971

Lecomte du Nouy Prize in 1983

*Member of the Most Excellent Order of the
British Empire in 1993*

Templeton Prize in 2001

Known as the founder of theistic evolution



“I argue rigorously that evolution and Christianity need not be at odds. Evolution is the disguised friend of faith. Evolution is entirely consistent with an all-knowing, all-powerful God who exists throughout time, sets initial conditions and natural laws, and knows what the results will be. God continuously creates the world and sustains it in its general order and structure. He makes things make themselves. God is the Immanent Creator creating in and through the process of natural order. Evolution is the continuous action of God in the world. All the processes revealed by the sciences are in themselves God acting as Creator.

The role of chance in biological evolution can be reconciled with a purposive creator because there is a creative interplay of chance and law apparent in the evolution of living matter by natural selection.”

Although we do not agree with all that Peacocke says, we include this excerpt from his essays because his method of resolving science and faith is shared by other believers, such as Francis Collins, whom we have quoted before. Peacocke was an ordained deacon and priest and a lay reader for the Diocese of Oxford until 1971. This quote was from MIT Press in 2001.

Cynthia's Corner



WHAT IS THE BASIS OF GODLY FAITH?

Godly faith is based on evidence, provable facts. God never expects or wants blind faith. He has given us proof of his existence by what he has made (Romans 1:20). Jesus confirmed his deity by miracles (John 10:25; 14:11; 20:30–31; Acts 2:22). The words of Jesus and the writers of the New Testament were confirmed by miracles (Mark 16:20; Hebrews 2:3, 4). This is why godly faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. Without faith, it is impossible to please God. First, we must believe that God exists and rewards those who earnestly seek him (Hebrews 11:1, 6). We must believe that his Son became human (Jesus), taught us about God, and then died for our sins. We must believe the Bible was inspired by God so that humans wrote only what God wanted them to. Many scriptures attest to this (Galatians 1:11–12; 1 Thessalonians 2:13; 2 Timothy 3:16; 1 Peter 1:12; 2 Peter 1:20–21).

Hebrews 11 is called “the faith chapter” and it gives us many examples of Godly faith in action. First, we must believe God’s promises and act on them, like Abraham did when he drew his knife to sacrifice Isaac. Godly faith is always obedient and active. Second, we act on what we know to be God’s will according to the Bible. Our biblical convictions should affect how we act and use our time at home, with our family, on the job, and socially. We should always base our choices and decisions on God’s will according to his Word, but sometimes choosing between what is good and what is best takes wisdom and godly advice.

We must remember that credible science is provable and fact-based. Science gives us the knowledge to help us survive. God has blessed humans with the mental capacity to solve problems and find solutions to our needs. Science achieves medical breakthroughs that allow us to overcome disease and illness. We should thank and praise God that science could make safe and effective vaccines to combat COVID during the global pandemic. We should listen to sound medical advice but avoid “religious” people who use “faith” as a reason not to listen to medical experts. God has never promised to keep us safe and well if we foolishly reject credible, proven medical treatments designed to keep us safe and well. “Faith over fear” is a false “faith” and, in reality, creates fear and confusion, causing great harm to those encouraged to reject sound medical advice.

—Cynthia Clayton

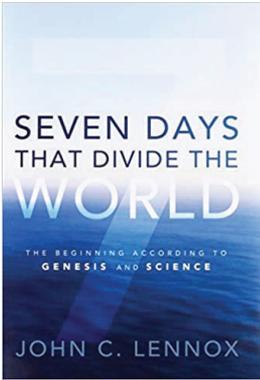


The books that are reviewed in the Book Reviews section are not available through us, but can be obtained from a local bookstore or through many online bookstores.

Seven Days That Divide the World

by Dr. John Lennox, Zondervan, © 2011,

192 pages, (Kindle) \$9.99, (hardcover) \$16.99, A[mazon]SIN 0310492173



John Lennox is a Professor of Mathematics at the University of Oxford. In this book, he explores the language of the Bible and does a marvelous job of showing the erroneous beliefs of past giants of science and theology. Chapter one discusses the debate over whether Earth is fixed in space, with Aristotle saying it is fixed and Copernicus saying the Earth moves. However, the Catholic church, Martin Luther, and John Calvin rejected the heliocentric theory and vigorously defended the Earth as fixed.

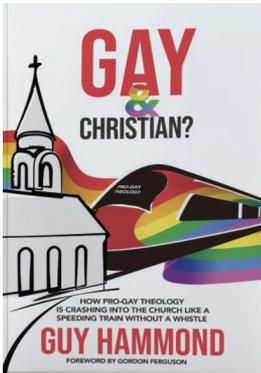
Lennox presents proof that the Bible does not say the Earth is fixed. He has an excellent discussion of the use of metaphors in the Bible and everyday speech. Those who say that science deals with reality and religion with fantasy will find in this book devastating proof that is not the case.

Lennox discusses the question of the Earth's age from a theological rather than a scientific viewpoint, examining the word "day" and the message of the creation week. Lennox discusses human beings as a special creation of God and has a chapter on the message of Genesis 1. Again, the discussion is from a biblical and theological standpoint, focusing on the linguistic difficulties in describing God's activity. This book presents a unique, scholarly approach to the Bible and its description of God's creative action. Five appendices deal with evolution and popular views of Genesis.

We recommend this book to college students and theologians. It is a positive academic discussion of the biblical account with respect for God's Word and a good understanding of science.

Gay and Christian

by Guy Hammond © Illumination Pub. (www.ipibooks.com)
\$14.99 (paperback), 191 pages, ISBN 9781953623126



Guy Hammond is the Executive Director of “Strength in Weakness Ministries,” designed to help same-sex attracted Christians and their families deal with the gay agenda. The program is working in 70 countries and has involved over 200,000 people through workshops and classes. Guy Hammond is uniquely qualified to deal with this subject because he is a homosexually-attracted man, and from age 12 to 24, he was a practicing homosexual.

The first point to understand from this book is that being a person who has same-sex attraction does not mean you are a practicing homosexual. Just as a married person can have heterosexual attractions outside of marriage, so can a person have same-sex attractions. Hammond points out, “attraction is not sinful. It is what we do with our temptations and attractions that determines whether they will become sinful or not.”

The first two chapters deal with the challenges we all face in life. Next, Hammond gives a personal explanation of the unique challenges of homosexuality. The remainder of the book explains pro-gay arguments and responds to attempts to use the Bible to promote the gay agenda. This is a scholarly discussion with a study of the Hebrew and Greek. Hammond shows that a careful analysis of God’s Word does not support religious attempts to accept the homosexual lifestyle.

This book gives an exhaustive and logical study with responses to leading promoters of pro-gay theology. Passages like Genesis 18–19 dealing with Sodom and Gomorrah and Romans 1:24–27 are given a verse by verse explanation. Chapters 9–10 deal with the transgender issue, and chapter 11 answers specific questions related to homosexuality and the church. Hammond relies on scholars for critical sections of the book. For example, he quotes Dr. Douglas Jacoby for biblical questions related to translations and the meaning of words in the original manuscripts. Ellen Radcliff, a licensed family therapist dealing with transgender issues, is the author of chapters 9 and 10.

We highly recommend this book for parents, preachers, and church leaders. It is a biblical, scholarly study, but it is compassionate, full of empathy for same-sex attraction while offering solid spiritual advice. The subtitle of the book is “How pro-gay theology is crashing into the church like a speeding train without a whistle.” Hopefully, this book will sound an alarm we can all hear.

DANDY DESIGNS

BEARDED VULTURE



The bearded vulture is a large bird found in mountainous areas of southern Europe, Africa, and Tibet. It is known in some areas as the lammergeier or ossifrage. However, it is also known for the fact that it deliberately uses mineral-rich dust and mud to dye its

feathers red for reasons still unknown.

Our interest in this bird is centered around its diet. This bird eats bones. When it finds a dead animal, the bearded vulture will drag out a large bone and carry it several hundred feet in the air and drop it on some rocks, smashing the bone into smaller pieces. The bird will then pick up the pieces, one at a time, and swallow them. The bearded vulture apparently has the strongest stomach acid in the animal kingdom. The bones they digest supply all the minerals and vitamins the bird needs to survive.

A program called *Snow Wolf* on the BBC included a section on bearded vultures because they follow wolves in the mountains. When the wolves make a kill, the bearded vulture will wait until the wolves have eaten all of the meat. Then they will start picking up the remaining bones to eat them.

The BBC broadcasts various programs on the unique living things that exist on planet Earth. While the BBC is not sympathetic to any kind of religious concept, many of the stories they present show evidence of design in the creation. One fact about the world in which we live is that in the natural world, nothing goes to waste. Even hard materials like bones are disposed of in some way. The bearded vulture provides one way bones are recycled. We need to learn how to return human-created waste materials to the environment from which they came without polluting it. Ultimately our survival will depend on doing that.

Visit: [Facebook.com/evidence4god](https://www.facebook.com/evidence4god)

DAMSELFISH FARMERS

We generally think of farming as a human enterprise, but there are cases in the natural world of animals growing crops. In most cases, the crop they are raising could not survive without the animal tending it. Some good examples are living things that eat fungi or algae.



Researchers at Kyoto University in Japan studied red algae called *Polysiphonia*. These algae have a symbiotic relationship with a species of damselfish (*Stegastes nigricans*). Red algae look like a brown carpet, and the damselfish make sure that the carpet is not disturbed. If any other species of algae shows up among the red algae, the damselfish will nip it off and take it out of the fish's territory. If the damselfish is removed from the area, the red algae can't survive. So it appears that the damselfish are critical to the survival of the red algae and vice versa.

There have been other studies of certain species of ants, termites, and ambrosia beetles that grow fungi for food. Some of these "farmers" even use bacteria to produce pesticides to protect their fungus crops. How do such symbiotic relationships happen? Evolutionists suggest that initially, the animal had a varied diet but becoming dependent on one thing offered such an advantage that the animal gave up any other foods.

The difficulties with the evolutionary explanation are many and quite complex. The nutritional issues are a problem because a single source of nutrition must have a balanced collection of minerals. Going from a varied diet to a single food does not seem to be an evolutionary advantage. Defending the food source is also an issue. For example, when the researchers removed the damselfish, other fish and sea urchins ate all red algae within days.

Another explanation is that symbiotic relationships are part of the design of every animal's genome. The earliest fossil remains of many animals show that a symbiotic relationship was already in place. We suggest that animals growing crops is part of God's design. He gave them the genetic messaging and instinctive drive necessary to survive.

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News and Notes

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CCL CENTER: On October 9–10, 2021, we attended a seminar on archaeology presented by Dr. Rick Bullard at the new Christian Church Leadership Center (CCLC) in Florence, Kentucky, and toured the Elliott Library and museum located there. Suppose you are interested in historical books dating back to the early 17th century, original Bibles, archaeological finds, and a library with books and artifacts related to the Restoration Movement, in that case, this is a learning center you should visit.



The Christian Church Leadership Center is unique in that it houses rare items not found in any other museum. The library’s curator is Jim Lloyd, and he has a thorough understanding of the books and the issues relating to the history of religion in America. Dr. David Fincher, president of Central Christian College of the Bible in Moberly, Missouri, was our host and the man behind the CCLC project. In addition, he has connections with David Lipscomb University in Nashville and York College in Nebraska, home of the Clayton Museum of Ancient History.

We also enjoyed talking at length with Dr. William Custer, an expert in apologetics and the philosophy of religion. Custer is a graduate of the University of Chicago and an associate of Norman Geissler. These men and the CCLC are interested in working

with **Does God Exist?** to provide apologetics training to leaders in Churches of Christ and Christian Churches. We will have more to say on that as plans develop.

The CCLC is offering monthly Saturday presentations by respected scholars on apologetics and topics related to the Restoration Movement. For information about upcoming sessions, visit their website at cclleadership.org/events/. The library's website is elliottlibrary.org. We recommend the CCLC as a new opportunity for solid biblical learning in the Cincinnati area.



BENEFIT OF VACCINES: Health policy columnist Dr. Richard Feldman compiled the data in the graphic to show the benefit of vaccines. Using available public health data, he researched the prevalence of those diseases before science developed vaccines against them. He then adjusted for population growth and projected what the numbers could be today without a vaccine. Then, he listed the recent number of reported cases.

The Benefit of Vaccines

Disease	Projected Cases	Actual Cases
Tetanus	2,500	30
Mumps	353,000	142
Diphtheria	618,000	3
Paralytic Polio	33,000	0
Rubella	77,000	10
Meningitis	20,000	14
Smallpox	90,000	0

Data from Dr. Richard Felman, Sept. 17, 2021, *Indiana Business Journal*

The COVID virus is going to add another set of numbers. Because medical science understands some of the design in God's creation, we benefit from vaccines. God can provide us with the tools to improve our lives, but he will not force us to use what he gives us. That is true of every teaching of Jesus, and it is true of COVID.



MURMURATIONS: One of the most incredible sights we frequently see in the fall of the year is the flocking behavior of birds, with thousands forming massive clouds of flapping wings called a murmuration. That term comes from the fact that produce a murmur-like sound.

Possible purposes for murmurations are to avoid predators or gain a feeding advantage. A bigger question is how they avoid hitting each other. It seems that built into every bird is a genetically imprinted, drive to synchronize their wing beat, reducing the chance of a collision. How do they navigate? I have seen a whole flock make a

quick 90-degree turn as if they received instructions of when and how far.

It is clear that, at least in some situations, the grouping of animals presents advantages. One has to be amazed at the design and complexity God put into all of his creatures. Romans 1:20 says that “the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, ... so [the unbelievers] are without excuse.”



GENDER CHANGE: Human rights advocates frequently demand social changes without understanding the consequences of the choices they promote. An example of that is the current transgender craze among teenagers. It is relatively easy for teenagers to change their names, but the medical treatment of transgender people has become a significant challenge for all concerned. Unfortunately, politicians have advanced transgender legislation without understanding the implications. There are many areas of gender change problems.

Having surgery and taking hormones is a whole different issue compared to participation in sports or sharing bathrooms. But even



beyond the physical gender change problems, the mental and psychological issues are also highly complex. Transgender youth are three to four times as likely as their peers to have depression or anxiety.

Among 13,600 transgender and nonbinary youth surveyed in 2020, 52% had considered suicide in the previous year, and 21% had attempted it.

The causes of transgenderism are still being debated, and they seem to be very complex. Gender change problems are an issue that is not going away. We would suggest that the move away from nuclear families and the increased use of drugs are involved. When we discard God’s plan and design, the issues become very complicated. Playing God with human sexuality has always produced unfortunate results.



INTOXICANTS: The dictionary defines an intoxicant as “that which produces feelings of pleasure or happiness in a person.” Unfortunately, America is becoming a land of intoxicants. In the meantime, our culture is rejecting the words of Ephesians 5:15–18 despite the evidence that they are true: “Look carefully how you walk. Do not

act thoughtlessly, but like sensible men. Make the most of your time, despite all the difficulties of these days. You cannot afford to be reckless but understand what the will of the Lord is. Don't get your stimulus from wine but let the Spirit stimulate your souls" (Vaughan, Curtis, ed. *The New Testament from 26 Translations*).

The American entertainment industry pushes alcohol. Even country music, which used to emphasize the negative effects of alcohol, is now saturated with promoting it as a way to pleasure and happiness. Yet, the destructive nature of alcohol is astounding. *Biotech Investor's Journal* (September 2021) published a research report on the harm caused by alcohol compared to 20 other recreational drugs. Alcohol ranks number 1 in harmful effects, far beyond LSD, meth[amphetamine], crack cocaine, and heroin.

In America, the maximum blood alcohol content allowed for a motorist is 80 mg of alcohol per 100 ml of blood or .08%. In Scotland, the limit is .05%, with penalties of the automatic loss of license, fines up to \$7,000, a criminal record, and possibly a prison sentence. In Sweden, the limit is .02%. Alcohol's impact on humans is well documented. Adverse effects on reaction time, perception, and balance are outward products of alcohol use, as are inhibition and impaired decision-making. Now the accepted use of marijuana is adding more pain to the human experience.

As America is becoming a land of intoxicants, people learn that using intoxication to find pleasure and happiness does not work. However, being a light in a dark world (Matthew 5:14; Philippians 2:14–15) brings contentment and satisfaction that not only leads to a meaningful existence on Earth but ultimately to eternal joy and happiness with our Lord.



LIFE ANYWHERE? We read the media reports about efforts to find life on Mars, on various moons in our solar system, or planets orbiting other stars in our galaxy. On Earth, we find life in sea vents on the ocean floor and geysers in Yellowstone National Park, leading people to suggest that some form of life can exist anywhere. Add to that the presence of organic molecules in asteroids, and they say that life is out there if we just look in the right places and in the right way.

Journal of Geophysical Research Biogeosciences published a study of 204 soil samples taken from mountains near the Shackleton Glacier in Antarctica. Scientists had predicted that this soil would contain microbes, as is true of soil samples all over the Earth. Instead, they found that 20% of the soil samples, those taken from the higher and dryer locations, had no detectable microbial life. The study seems to indicate that extreme cold and dry conditions can render an area devoid of life.

Mount Shackleton, Antarctica



The idea that some form of life can exist anywhere in every kind of environment is an evolutionary assumption that is apparently incorrect. We know that extreme cold and dry conditions exist on Mars and

many moons in our solar system. Assuming there is life elsewhere because it is so abundant on Earth does not mean there is no limit to where life can exist.

We have said many times that there might be life elsewhere in the cosmos, but if there is, God created it. This is not a biblical or apologetic issue, but these new discoveries indicate that there are limits to the environments where life can survive.



UNBORN BABIES CAN HEAR: Unborn babies can hear the world around them. Recently Dianne Neal Matthews wrote in *Guidepost's Mornings with Jesus* about an experience with the birth of her grandchild.

She traveled to the daughter's home for the birth of her fourth child. After the little girl was born, each family member got to hold her. As the newborn passed between the parents and each sibling, Mrs. Matthews was amazed at how calm, alert, and content she was. The baby had just left a warm and cozy environment inside her mother, and now she was experiencing a cool world with bright lights and new sensations on her skin. Yet, as each family member talked to the baby, she calmly responded.

When Mrs. Matthews held her, the baby was not calm. However, when returned to her mother, she became quiet and peaceful. Mrs. Matthews realized that the baby had been hearing familiar voices of the family for months, making her feel safe. Because Mrs. Matthews lived far away, her voice was unfamiliar.

A baby inside its mother's womb is a baby — not an extension of the mother's body. Unborn babies can hear the world around them. Unfortunately, our nation has now decided that killing a baby is acceptable if it inconveniences the mother. This amounts to infanticide, similar to the ancient Roman practice of throwing unwanted babies into the street. That disregard for life was a part of what destroyed the Roman empire. How long will God tolerate infanticide by our nation?





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 We pray that 2022 will be a great year for you and your family.

John and Cynthia Clayton
 Roland Earnst
 Linda Glover
 Karl Marcussen

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