

DOES GOD EXIST?

November/December 2015

Volume 42 Number 6

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



WHEN
NOTHING MAKES SENSE:
THERE'S STILL HOPE

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**WHAT DOES NOT
MAKE SENSE? REJECT-
ING GOD AND ABAN-
DONING YOUR FAITH
WHEN THE STRUGGLES
OF LIFE HAPPEN.**

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DOES GOD EXIST. ORG

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WHEN NOTHING MAKES SENSE: THERE'S STILL HOPE



Have you ever had anything happen in your life that was so awful and destructive that it did not make any sense at all for God to allow that to happen? Unless you are a child, I suspect that the answer to that question lies in a knowing nod. In every aspect of our lives, we see things taking place that just should not be, and we frequently cry out to God in our pain, anguish, and heartbreak about these things. The Bible is full of examples of this.

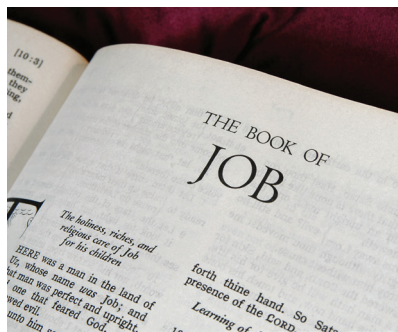
Job in Job 3:1 – 11 curses the day he was born and wishes out loud that he had never been born.

Habakkuk in Habakkuk 1:2–4, 13 (NIV, 1984) cries out, “How long, O Lord, must I call for help, but you do not listen. Or cry out to you ‘violence!’ but you do not save? Why do you make me look at injustice? Why do you tolerate wrong? Destruction and violence are before me: there is strife, and conflict abounds. Therefore the law is paralyzed, and justice never prevails. . . . Your eyes are too pure to look on evil; you cannot tolerate wrong. Why then do you tolerate the treacherous? Why are you silent while the wicked swallow up those more righteous than themselves?”

David anguishes in Psalm 6:1–7, “O Lord, do not rebuke me in your anger, or discipline me in your wrath. Be merciful to me, Lord, for I am faint. O Lord, heal me, for my bones are in agony. My soul is in anguish. How long, O Lord, how long? . . . I am worn out from groaning; all night long I flood my bed with weeping and drench my couch with tears.”

Jesus Christ in Luke 22:42–44 pleads, “‘Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me’ . . . being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground.”

Atheists chide Christians in this area saying that if there were a God, things like this would not happen. This is especially true if you claim God is loving and looking out for our welfare as many of our songs, especially the songs of childhood, claim. Atheists may be repulsed by our singing “God Will Take Care of You,” and yet atheists



suffer just like the rest of us. Their non-belief in God does not make any of the hurt go away.

Your author makes no claim to have all the answers to this issue. I have stood by the bed of my dead wife, and held my son as his body endured seizures, blindness, and brain damage. I have uttered the same cries as Habakkuk, Job, and David during those times.

May I make five suggestions to those of you who are people of faith or people who desire to have faith? These suggestions come from over 75 years of fighting through the agony of nothing making sense. I hope they will be helpful to you and perhaps will ease a small part of your pain.

SUGGESTION 1 **DO NOT DEMAND TO UNDERSTAND.**

We have all heard quotations of Isaiah 55:8–11, “‘For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,’ declares the Lord. ‘As the heavens are higher

than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making

it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It

will not return to me empty but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.’”

We all know the song “Farther Along,” which tells us that in the future we will understand why God allows these things to happen. The point of the song is that we cannot see the future, and even a problem may bring about something fruitful beyond our wildest dreams.

I apologize for all the personal references in this discussion, but that is all I know as a base for my teaching. When my son was born blind, mentally challenged, schizophrenic, and with cerebral palsy and a form of muscular dystrophy, I did a lot of yelling at God. Nothing made sense. Now, 53 years later as I look at my son who is happy, stable, joyous, and full of spirit, I see it differently. I have been made stronger by my son and by my wife who was taken from me after 49 years of marriage. The good that has been done is far beyond what would have been possible had these tragedies not have happened. The story of our struggles with raising Tim is in a book titled *Timothy—My*



Son and Teacher. Now that I am “farther along,” I understand why God did not stop the pain I was having at the time.

Proverbs 3:5–6 tells us, “Trust the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him and he will make your paths straight.” Following God’s word for making life’s decisions works, but our selfish desires can so easily get in the way. Job tells us this in Job 42:1–6, “Then Job replied to the LORD, I know that you can do all things, no plan of yours can be thwarted. You asked ‘Who is this that obscures my counsel without knowledge?’ Surely I spoke of things I did not understand, things too wonderful for me to know. You said ‘listen now and I will speak; I will question you, and you shall answer me.’ My ears had heard of you, but now my eyes have seen you. Therefore, I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes.” We cannot demand understanding in this life because we do not know the future. Our eternal future is far more important than what happens now.

SUGGESTION 2

DO NOT BE A FAIR-WEATHER CHRISTIAN.

Going to church and going through the motions of being a Christian is easy when everything is going well for us. Unfortunately everything does not ever go well our entire lives.

Revelation 2:10 warns us, “Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution . . . Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life.” This was written to the church in Smyrna, but it is happening in rapid acceleration today throughout the world.

Hebrews 3:12–13 warns us, “See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. But encourage one another daily as long as it is called today, so that none of you will be hardened by sin’s deceitfulness.” Problems, suffering, and disappointment are the agents Satan uses to harden our hearts. Remaining an active Christian when things get difficult is a challenge. We need each other’s encouragement and support not to give up.



SUGGESTION 3 DO NOT BOW TO BITTERNESS.

When problems come upon us, it is easy to sink into the darkness of bitterness. In the song “Farther Along” there is a line that says, “Tempted and tried we’re oft made to wonder why it should be thus all the day long, while there are others living about us, never molested tho’ in the wrong.” I have seen bitterness and understand why people get bitter, and the darkness bitterness brings is terrifying. Isaiah 50:10 warns us, “Who among you fears the LORD and obeys the word of his servant? Let him who walks in the dark, who has no light, trust in the name of the LORD and rely on his God.”

First John 1:5–7 tells us, “This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son, purifies us from all sin.” In this passage, the darkness is the Greek word *skotia*, not the word *zophos* which mean blackness. *Skotia* is the darkness that ignorance produces—the hopelessness. We are to be people of hope, optimism, and positiveness—not angry, bitter people who repulse and are repulsed by their pain.



SUGGESTION 4 DO NOT BE UNWILLING TO WAIT.

Genesis 39–41 tells us the story of Joseph, a man who had a promise and a vision from God. He did everything right but was mistreated by his brothers and then by the people he was trying to help and serve. He endured years of slavery and oppression. He waited in prison for years before a fellow prisoner fulfilled a promise. This was followed by many more years in a foreign land working for a dictator. When many years had gone by, he had an opportunity to retaliate against those who had sold him into slavery. His response was, “I am your brother Joseph, the one you sold into Egypt! And now, do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you” (Genesis 45:4–5). He had not



demanded to understand in the past, and now he was “Farther Along” because he had waited out God’s action.

SUGGESTION 5 **DO NOT LET GO OF YOUR DREAM.**

The story of Joseph is a story of a life of dreams. He had no idea what the dreams meant at the time. He was heavily pressured to reject the dreams (see Genesis 39:10.) He suffered because of his dreams, but he never gave up on them. Do you have dreams, hopes, goals, plans, or ideals? The difference is that God’s Spirit helps you with your



dreams. Jesus promises us that our spirit dreams will happen. Jesus said in Matthew 7:7–8, “Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks, finds; and to him who knocks the door will be opened.” This does not

mean that selfish dreams will happen. James 4:2–3 tells us, “You do not have, because you do not ask God. When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with the wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.”

God will answer those good and constructive dreams and plans we have in ways we could never dream could happen. Accept the fact that you will never understand all that happens in this life. Do not be a fair-weather Christian. Stick with God and engage in encouragement and support with your brothers and sisters in Christ. Do not allow yourself to sink into the darkness of bitterness. Be patient. Understand that God sometimes operates over long time periods and do not give up.

What DOES NOT make sense? Rejecting God and abandoning your faith when the struggles of life happen. You do not gain wisdom or understanding by turning to the atheist’s guiding principle of “survival of the fittest.” Rejecting God’s message of hope and patience leads to isolation and despair and frequently suicide. None of those things makes any sense—not now or in eternity.



—John N. Clayton

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FEARFULLY AND WONDERFULLY MADE

I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderfully made, ..." (Psalm 139:14).

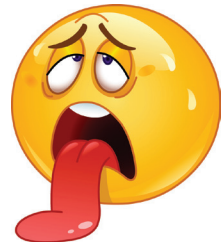
You may wonder why it takes so many years of schooling for a person to become a medical doctor, but that is because most of us do not understand what an incredibly complex machine the human body is. Here are some facts you might not be aware of about your own body that speak to the truth of Psalm 139:14.

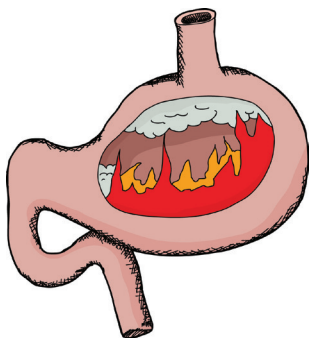
In your lifetime you will produce enough saliva to fill two Olympic-sized swimming pools.



Human feet have 52 bones making up roughly one-fourth of the bones in your body.

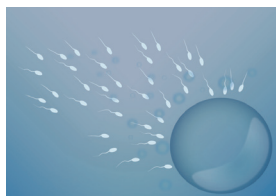
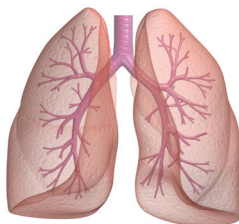
You have 500,000 sweat glands and can produce more than a pint of sweat a day. Your body gives off enough heat in 30 minutes to bring a half a gallon of water to a boil.



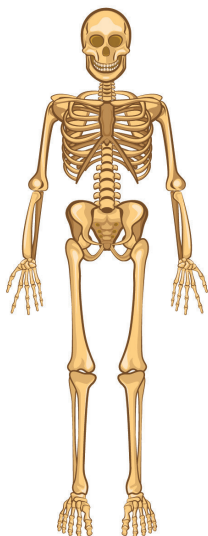


The cells in your stomach wall are replaced every three to four days, in part because the acid in your stomach is strong enough to dissolve iron.

Human lungs have approximately 1,500 miles of airways and up to 500 million hollow cavities giving a total surface area of about 1,500 square feet. If the capillaries that surround these cavities were unwound and laid end to end they would extend for about 620 miles.



The largest cell in the human body is the female egg, and the smallest is the male sperm. The egg is the only cell in the body which is visible to the naked eye.

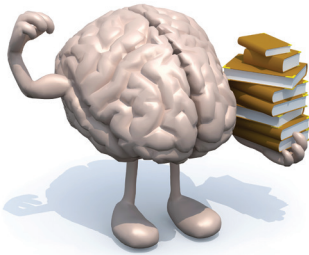


Babies are born with 300 bones, but by adulthood that number is reduced to 206—mostly by bones fusing together.

Your nose can detect 50,000 different scents.



Sneezes regularly reach 100 miles per hour.



The human brain can hold five times as much information as an encyclopedia. The brain operates on the same amount of power as a 10 watt light bulb. Nerve impulses travel at different speeds depending on the type of neuron, but some travel as fast as 170 mph.

Three months after conception a baby has a fingerprint.



The tooth is the only part of the human body that cannot repair itself.

The human heart creates enough pressure to squirt blood 30 feet into the air. Our bodies have roughly 60,000 miles of blood vessels.



It would seem to this writer that to believe that all of this is a product of blind accidental processes selected by natural causes demands faith beyond that of any religion.

—JNC

Data collected by Paul Mitchell.

WHY DOES THIS MINISTRY EXIST?

DOES GOD EXIST?

From time to time we get messages from detractors suggesting that a ministry titled **Does God Exist?** should not exist. Sometimes such a message comes from atheists who feel that religion is so destructive and violent and so free of reasonable evidence that no support should be given to it. Sometimes the message comes from traditional religionists who believe that there is no such thing as a real atheist and that trying to defend belief in God is an admission that there is a problem and thus should not be mentioned publicly. Sometimes the message comes from people who want to be politically correct and do not want to tolerate any message that claims an absolute Truth—especially when that Truth has an effect on other humans. We also hear from people who just do not want to be told to think and investigate and learn something new.

The fact of the matter is that there are logical reasons for this ministry to exist. In 1968 when we began this work, the world was a very different place than it is now. Even then there were many of us who saw the chasm of disbelief that lay in front of the passage of human civilization. Mankind now has to deal with the crossing of the chasm of atheism, agnosticism, secularism, naturalism, pluralism, and religious extremism. No one living today would deny that these areas and issues exist, but why would we spend a lifetime attempting to convince men and women that God is real, that he is the God of the Bible, and that the Christian way of life is the way all people should live?



REASON 1: BECAUSE GOD COMMANDS US TO.

When Jesus gave his last message to his followers, he told them “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 28:18–19). Teaching people the message of Christ is to show people how to live successfully. Christians are told to “always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect” (1 Peter 3:15).

Even a superficial reading of the message of Christ tells us that the message was not about politics or man-made religious issues. The message of Christ was about serving one another, loving one another, peace, kindness, and living in a way that brings us close to God and in obedience to his instructions.

REASON 2: BECAUSE OF THE DESTRUCTIVE NATURE OF THE ALTERNATIVES.

What happens when we do not follow those instructions? The whole message of the Old Testament is that when we live God’s way, good things come our way. When we reject God’s ways, pain and death and suffering result. One of the best summaries of this is Deuteronomy 28 where God lays it out before ancient Israel. In verses 1–13 God tells Israel that living God’s way will bring them prosperity, health, peace, and long life. He then picks it up in verse 15 through 68 and for 53 verses tells them all the bad things that will happen if they do not live as God has called them to live. The rest of the Old Testament is one sordid story after another of humans living selfishly and immorally and the result of that behavior.

In today’s world, the same scenario is being played out. God has given us a plan for life. In the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5–7, Jesus spells out how to live life successfully. In Galatians 5:18–26 specific behaviors are listed showing the contrast between living as Jesus taught us to live, and living as human philosophies would dictate.

There is an incredible need for people today to be confronted with the cold hard evidence of where a life based on politics, secularism, man-made religious systems, and modern moral compromise leads.



This is not just a mental exercise. This is the cold, hard reality of where we end up in life when we do not do things God's way—not to mention the loss of hope for a better existence when we die.

REASON 3: BECAUSE OF OUR NEED TO EQUIP CHILDREN TO LIVE LIFE SUCCESSFULLY.

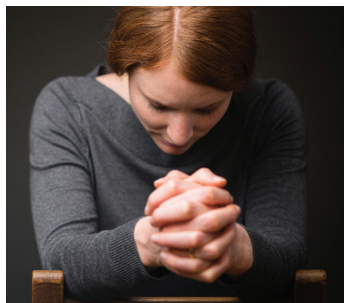
None of us wants to see our child in pain. I have had a parent collapse in my arms sobbing hysterically as his child is escorted off to prison or carted off to a morgue because it lived by the rules of the world instead of by the Word of God. Sometimes the parent is overcome with the realization that his failure to “train up a child in the way they should go” (Proverbs 22:6; Ephesians 6:4; and Colossians 3:21) has been the cause.

Sometimes we do our best and still fail because Satan is strong. Sometimes we fail because we did not try. Sometimes we fail because we just did not have answers to our children's questions and never took the time to find someone who did. No one has all the answers, and as parents it is not our job to know everything. We do need to know where to find answers. Having a place to go that can help us have reasonable answers is important. For nearly half a century we have tried to provide such a place. In the twenty-first century, our websites have become a place of help. Where answers and references are provided free of charge and personal contact can be made with Christians who have the training and expertise to help. This is an important aspect of this ministry, and our work in prisons and workshops continues to consume a large part of our energy and resources.



REASON 4: BECAUSE OF THE NEED TO STRENGTHEN OUR OWN FAITH.

No matter who we are, there are times in life when our faith is strained. Anyone who denies that is asking for Satan to come in and take over. Even the Apostle Paul expressed concern about this when he said “so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize” (1 Corinthians 9:27). I have had events in my life that shook my faith. When my son was born blind,



mentally handicapped with cerebral palsy and muscular dystrophy, I struggled with my faith. When my wife of 49 years died, I struggled. When our faith is challenged and we weaken and have doubts there is a need to have our faith strengthened. We need to push our unbelief down and re-affirm why we believe what we believe.

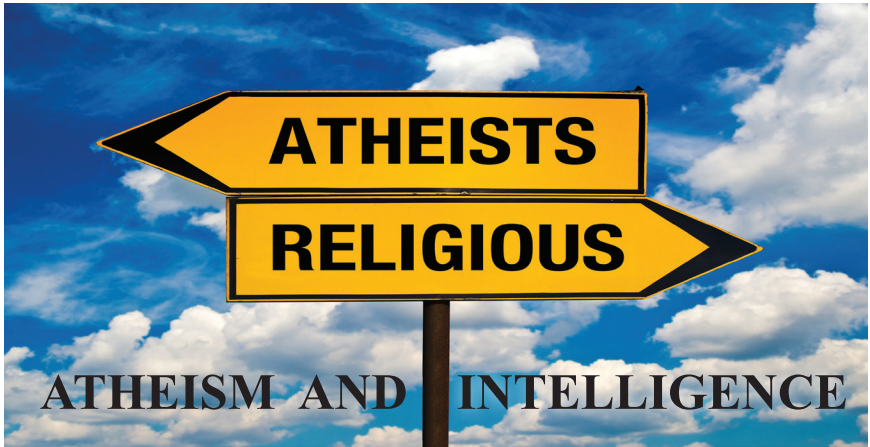
Every once in a while I read someone else's book in apologetics or watch his DVD. Sometimes I look again at my own arguments to see if they still ring true with me. I go back to Paul's statement mentioned above and realize that if Paul could have his time of doubt and concern I will too. We need to keep reaffirming and strengthening what we believe to keep our own faith healthy and alive. This can be done in many ways. Sometimes I just have to sit still alone in a woods or on a lake and talk to God. But sometimes I need to be taught once again the primary evidence for God and Christ and the Christian way of life.

REASON 5: BECAUSE ETERNAL LIFE IS INVOLVED.

This is not just about good things here on earth. This is not just making up a philosophy that sustains me in a debate or in class. This is about the fact that one day I will stand before God and give an answer to how I have used all he has given me. I need all the help I can get, and sometimes I feel like the father of old who said to Jesus "I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief" (Mark 9:24).

—JNC





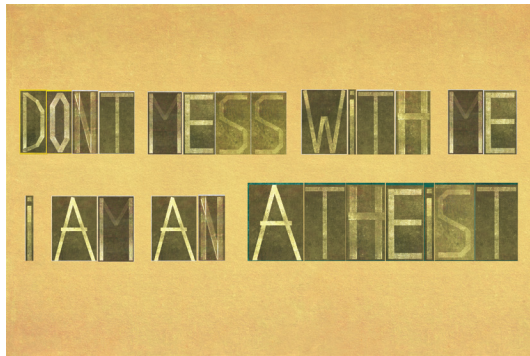
by Dick DiTullio

A recent study was interpreted to imply that there is a “significant negative association between intelligence and religiosity.” In the opinion of three psychiatrists “intelligent” people: are less likely to conform, and more likely to resist religious dogma, and tend to adopt an analytic thinking style (which undermines religious beliefs).

This, of course, birthed their opinion that intelligent people have “... less need for religious beliefs and practices.” If true then obviously all intelligent people must be atheists.

Okay.

Let’s grant the pre-suppositions for the moment. And we will also ignore the difference between “religion” and Christianity. How does the presumed atheist “intelligence advantage” play out in the real world? How better “fit” are atheists for survival given their purported intellectual edge?



Well, maybe the research needs to be reevaluated, but the mountain of evidence currently available shows that it is both physically and psychologically advantageous to hold “religious beliefs.” In fact, it’s not even close.

Sean Thomas, a writer for *The Telegraph*, did his own research on this and fell upon some interesting facts:



In 2004, UCLA scholars conducted a study and concluded that college students who were involved in religious activities had a distinct advantage when it came to mental health.

In 2006 researchers at the University of Texas informed us that regular church attendance correlates to longer life spans.

A 2006 study by Duke University determined that “religious people have stronger immune systems” and tend to have “lower blood pressure.”

Over the last few years, scientists have uncovered many more benefits derived from a person’s faith. Believers have “better outcomes from breast cancer, coronary disease, mental illness, AIDS, and rheumatoid arthritis.” When it comes to lifestyles believers have “greater levels of happiness, are less likely to commit suicide, and cope with stressful events much better.” They also tend to have more kids.

What’s more, the benefits derived from faith are still there to a large degree even if you adjust the studies to compensate for the believers tendencies to avoid smoking, drinking, and drug use.

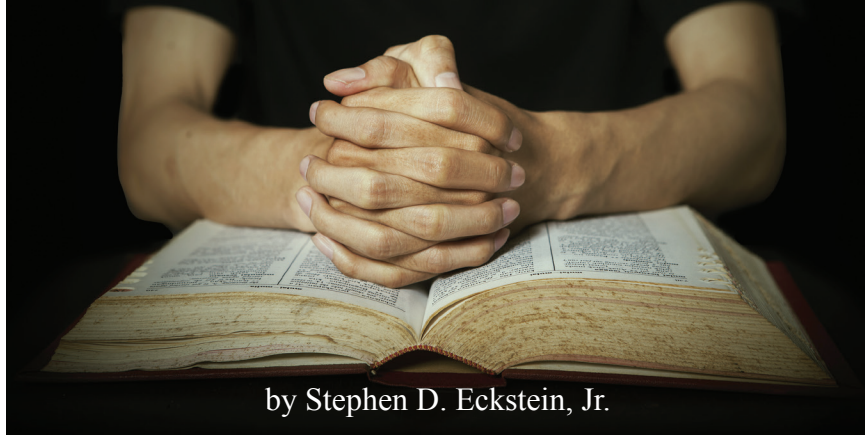
Christians also tend to be nicer, especially in stressful situations, and they give much more money to charity than non-believers.

Ask yourself, which worldview allows its followers to live longer, to enjoy life more, to be the most generous, to avoid deep despair, and to bring the most children into the world? I would suggest that the real measure of intelligence is indicated by happy, healthy, meaningful lives.



Top: © flipppo; bottom: © Aletia. Both images from BigStockPhoto.com.

A LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS



by Stephen D. Eckstein, Jr.

Paul's admonition to the Christians in Philippi, "... be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, ..." (Philippians 2:15, RSV), is extremely appropriate in our day for college-age youth. I suggest we look at this in one respect, specifically in dormitory life in a state school.

Increasingly, the old standard of separate dorms for college students is being replaced by co-ed dorms where men and women live together. Often, universities and colleges have lifted most restrictions on visitation hours, etc. As a result, the single men and women have often replaced the dating experience with what is called "living together," or "trial experiences prior to marriage." Many contend that the dating process is no longer valid and that the present generation is too sophisticated and mature to do this. They simply begin living together, even though not married, to see if they are compatible (whatever that means).

PROPER IDENTIFICATION

This is an outgrowth of the present, so-called situation ethics fad. Situation ethics is not new (read about David in 2 Samuel 11ff); it is simply an effort to use new terms to cover up sin, not a popular word in our day. However, sexual relationships outside of marriage are acts of fornication—SIN. No Christian can get around this if he accepts the Bible as a revelation from God. Fornicators are sinners just like liars and jealous people. Fornication is a work of the flesh (Galatians 5:19–21; Colossians 3:5–6). Unless one repents of this sin and begins a new way of life, he will not enter the kingdom of heaven (1 Corinthians 6:9; Revelation 21:8).

WHAT CAN A CHRISTIAN DO?

If you are a Christian young person who attends a state school and lives in a dorm where this is practiced, what can you do? Here are some suggestions that may be helpful:

EXAMPLE: Set an example in physical purity in the midst of your fellow students (1 Timothy 4:12). Although they may not agree with you, they will respect you for your exemplary conduct.

NOT SELF-RIGHTEOUS: Do not be self-righteous and condemn the sinners. Rather try to create opportunities where you can talk with them in love and kindness. Yet with firmness point out sin. Explain it is such because you accept the Bible as God's word.

BE PREPARED: Try to set up times for Bible study with those who may be interested. Take a course at a Bible Chair or Student Center in your school if such is available. Be as faithful and active a Christian as possible in the local congregation. Try to equip yourself to meet the situations you will face on campus.

SHOW CONCERN: Tell these fellow students that you are really concerned about them. Tell them that Christ loves them and died on a cross for them, you also love them, and you are praying for them.

While visiting a campus, I told a student I would pray for him. Later he told someone that if anyone was interested enough to pray for him, he wanted to investigate. He enrolled in a Bible course at another university student center.

SHARE EXPERIENCES: Share with them your wholesome dating experiences. Tell about the kinds and varieties of activities. At the outset, you may be ridiculed and mocked, but do not despair. This is usually a reaction to cover up respect and admiration that they have for you.

BE PERSISTENT: Persist in your efforts. Do not give up because you cannot change everyone overnight. Do not be discouraged if only a few seem to respond. One soul is worth more than the whole world in the sight of God. Continue steadfastly in prayer, Bible study, and example. Be the agent through whom God may work to bring a precious soul out of sin and into Christ.

TRUST IN THE LORD: Sow the seed regardless of what the results may be. Paul said, "I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase" (1 Corinthians 3:6). Serve faithfully and trust in the Lord to accomplish his purpose.

LET YOUR LIGHT SHINE: At retreats or other gatherings of college students, exchange with each other your experiences. Encourage one another. Pray for one another. Continue to shine as lights in the midst of a corrupt and perverse generation. Let your light so shine that two wonderful things may happen: (1) others may see your good works, (2) as a result, may they glorify God who is in heaven (Matthew 5:16). Jesus was in the world but not of it. **BE LIKE JESUS!**

Announcing a New Book from DOES GOD EXIST?

THE RATIONAL GOD: DOES GOD MAKE SENSE?

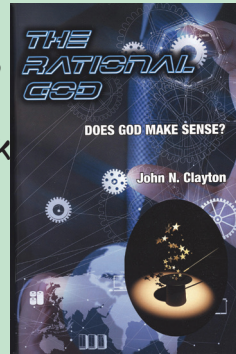
John N. Clayton has written a new book
examining questions like:

"Is the Church a Rational Creation of
God?"

"Do Miracles Discredit the Bible?"

"Is Biblical Morality Relevant?"

"Do Heaven and Hell Make Sense?"



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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.

OWEN GINGERICH

1930~

Professor Emeritus of Astronomy and
History of Science at Harvard University
Senior Astronomer Emeritus
at Smithsonian Astrophysical Observatory
Chair of the International Astronomical
Planet Identification Committee



“It doesn't disturb me that the universe could be designed for life, superstitious as that might be. I must warn you that I'm psychologically incapable of believing that the universe is purposeless ... Perhaps the universe is designed to be understandable, and we as human beings are at work trying to understand the universe and its laws. The human brain is the single most complex thing we know about in the entire universe. What better instrument to contemplate the universe? Ironically, our brains are complex enough to contemplate the possibility that our brains might not be the most complex things in the universe.”

“If we regard God's world as a site of purpose and intention and accept that we, as contemplative surveyors of the universe, are included in that intention, then the vision is incomplete without a role for divine communication — a place for God both as Creator-Sustainer and as Redeemer”

“Within the framework of Christianity, Jesus is the supreme example of personal communication from God, an exemplary life of service, of forgiveness, of sacrifice.” “Let me simply say that the sheer beauty of the heavens declare the glory of God.”

(For more on Dr. Gingerich see our May/June 2015 issue, page 9, from where this is quoted.)

Cynthia's Corner



WHAT LIFE TEACHES US ABOUT GOD

Unbelievers and cynics tell us that all the evil in the world and all the pain, suffering, and injustice that exist teach us that there is no God; or, if he does exist, he does not care about us. But that view ignores everything in the world and in us that comes from God and is good.

For example, what about love? None of us would want to live in a world without love. Where does love come from? The Bible tells us that love comes from God, that God is love, and that we love because God first loved us (1 John 4: 7, 8, 19). We were created in God's image with the ability to love and the need to be loved. The Greek language had a special word, *agape*, to describe this kind of love.

God also gave us the capacity to enjoy life, to laugh, to cry, to be curious, to be creative, to have sympathy and compassion, and to have the intelligence and deductive abilities to seek and find meaning and purpose in life. All of these abilities and characteristics are God-given and reflect the image of God within us (Genesis 1:26–27).

It is evident that we are no longer living in the garden. This world is full of evil, disease, and suffering. Yet, all around us is goodness, beauty, and love because of our Creator. There is no paradise on this earth. However, if we choose to seek what is good and to find the Source of the goodness, which is God, then he promises to help us “overcome the world” (John 16:33) and to be united with him in an eternal paradise after this physical life is over.



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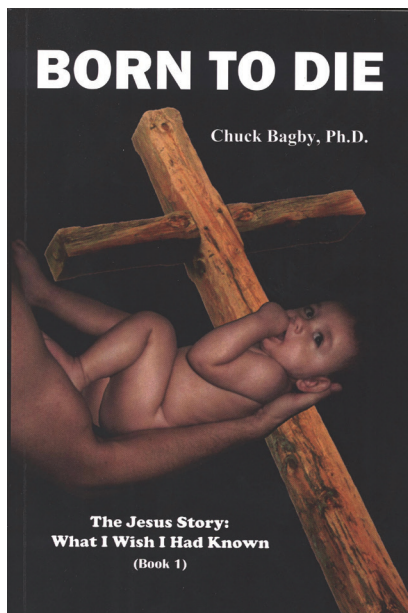




The books that are reviewed in the Book Reviews section are not available through us, but can be obtained from a local bookstore or through many online bookstores.

Born to Die

by Chuck Bagby, BurningHeartBibleStudies.com, © 2014,
229 pages, \$10.99 (paperback), ISBN-13: 978-0-9911520-0-1



Have you ever wondered what happened during the first 30 years of the life of Jesus? The Bible is very silent about that period of time, and yet much is known from secular history and from secular writers that lived during that period. What Dr. Bagby has done is to research these writings, and build a good background of what the New Testament does reveal.

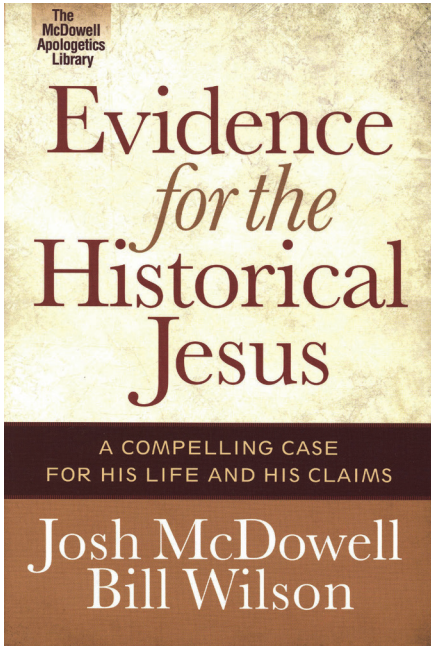
The book is broken down into ten chapters that deal with the role of Christ, the ancestors of Jesus (good and bad), the birth of Jesus, The role of the Magi, the trip into Egypt and back, the role of John the Baptist, and the background of the Pharisees and Sadducees and how Jesus addressed their challenges.

There are eight additions to the book including a glossary, a discussion of 12-year-old Jesus in the temple, translation and pronunciation helps, and references and autobiographical material.

This book is well written, easy to read, and very informative. Scholars and Christians I respect have endorsed the accuracy of Bagby's writings, and there are numerous black and white pictures and charts and diagrams that would be useful for teachers and preachers. It also answers some of the challenges that atheists and skeptics give to the accuracy of the Bible. We recommend this book highly.

Evidence for the Historical Jesus

by Josh McDowell & Bill Wilson, Harvest House Pub., © 1993,
357 pages, \$17.99 (paperback), ISBN-13: 978-0-7369-2871-7



Long-time students of apologetics know Josh McDowell from his best-selling books *More than a Carpenter*, *Evidence that Demands a Verdict*, and *New Evidence that Demands a Verdict*. McDowell is a frequent speaker at college symposiums and workshops and has participated in numerous debates. This book focuses on the debate that has gone on with increasing intensity over whether Jesus did, in fact, live, and whether he was what he claimed to be.

This is a very academic book. Exhaustive studies have been done not only of those who offer positive evidence for the validity of Christ, but also the atheists, skeptics, and biblical minimalists

who have tried to argue against Christianity. A good percentage of the book contains quotes from the enemies of Christ and rebuttals of their claims. The book is heavily documented, has a huge bibliography and a useful index.

The co-author, Bill Wilson, was the director of research and part of the McDowell ministry for 13 years. This book is the product of massive research and is exhaustive in nature. It is broken down into three parts. The first contains extra-biblical evidence for Jesus, including secular writers, rabbinical writings, early church leaders and martyrs, and agrapha, apocryphal, and pseudepigraphic support. The second section deals with the historical reliability of the Bible and responses to higher criticism. The last section has resources and discussions of popularizers of the life of Christ.

This book is an excellent resource for those concerned not with the existence of God, but with the validity of the claims of Jesus Christ. It is a useful resource for college students and those dealing with atheists and skeptics. For lay readers it would be a useful way to look up claims against Christianity, but would be difficult for armchair, superficial reading.

DANDY DESIGNS



Most of us have encountered fish scales at one time or another, either when cleaning fish or when eating them. Those who work in the fish industry are aware that scales tell a lot about a fish and how it lives and what its past has been. There are growth rings on scales that are like the rings in the trunk of a tree. Counting the rings can tell us the age of the fish. There are four main types of fish scales, and each type is carefully designed for the lifestyle of the fish.

Cycloid scales are quite small and produce a very smooth surface that does not allow things to stick to it very well. Fish that inhabit areas with lots of plants, roots, or other structure need to be able to slide through those areas without things getting attached to them. Salmon and trout have this type of scales.

Ganoid scales are shiny and very hard. They are diamond shaped and resist any kind of impact. Gars are a good example of a fish with this type of scales.

Placoid scales are found on sharks and most rays and are like tiny teeth or thorns. This type of scale is very tough and very flexible and allows rapid changes in direction.

The most familiar type of scale for most of us is the **ctenoid scales**. These scales have comb-like edges that provide some protection and can secrete a mucous coating that not only lubricates the body surface but is also an antiseptic warding off bacteria and fungal infections.



Just as our skin is wonderfully designed to allow us to live, heal, and function in a variety of ways, so also does the fish whose scales are beautifully fashioned to allow life to exist in a variety of water conditions.

THE INCREDIBLE FLOWER THAT CALLS BATS



One of the most amazing examples of symbiosis, where two organisms work together to benefit both of them, is the relationship between the nectar-drinking bat *Glossophaga commissarisi* and the flower *Mucuna holtonii*. This central American bat is the size of your thumbnail and pollinates this plant that in turn supplies the bat with nectar. Since the bat is nocturnal, there has to be a very special design involved in getting

the two together because sight and color are not available. The way this is done is for the flower to be very carefully designed to fit the bat's senses and body structure.

At dusk, the mucuna's buds open vertically above the blossom. Two tiny side petals spread like wings revealing a crack at the top of the pod (like a pea pod). From this slit, a scent is emitted which the bat can smell. This draws the bat near the plant, but connecting is still an issue. The plant's petals are cup-shaped, so the bat's sonar signal is bounced back with greater strength from the petals than anywhere else on the plant or surrounding material. This allows the bat to fly straight into the blossom where the nectar is.

The bat crams its head into the cup-shaped opening, and its hooks clamp onto the blossom's base. The bat then tucks its tail and whips its hind feet up. At the same time, the bat's snout has gone into the scent's source where it hits a hidden switch exploding the keel of the pod. As the bat laps up the nectar, spring-loaded anthers burst from the keel of the pod dusting the bat's rump with pollen. As the bat visits other plants, it will pollinate them. This process only takes .2 seconds per plant, the bat can visit several hundred flowers every night.



Explaining the origin of such a complex system on the basis of chance requires a great deal of faith. It would be simpler to recognize that an intelligence has built a system that allows the efficient pollination of a group of plants so that pollination can occur only at night when predation and competition are minimized. We can really know God exists by looking at what God has made, and this is a great example. Source: *National Geographic*, March 2014, page 129.

News and Notes

THE ASSISTED SUICIDE ISSUE HEATS UP. On November 1, 2014, Brittany Maynard killed herself to avoid the prolonged pain of terminal brain cancer. Several other brain cancer victims have made the news since that time with a broad range of issues coming to light. In 2008, two Oregon patients were about to try a promising new therapy designed to save their lives. They were stopped from treatment because the state Medicaid program refused to fund it. The Medicaid program offered to underwrite suicide for each of them. There are many helpful websites related to this difficult area of concern. Here are two of them:

patientsrightscouncil.org



notdeadyet.org



COSMOPOLITAN = PORN? Victoria Hearst, who is the granddaughter of William Randolph Hearst, has started a campaign to get the magazine labeled “adult material.” The problem is that *Cosmopolitan* is in most grocery checkout lines and the content of the magazine has drifted to explicit sexual material. The National Center on Sexual Exploitation has supported Hearst in this matter and the battle cry is that we need to “keep pornography out of the hands of children.” Source: *Citizen*, August 2015, page 9.

DEFAMING CHRIST. Atheists and skeptics are claiming that the hidden message of the life and teachings of Christ has been discovered. One called *The Real Gospel of St. Thomas* claims to contain 114 sayings of Jesus. Another document called *The Infancy Gospel of Thomas* is an account of periods in the childhood of Jesus. These writings have gotten attention because complete copies have been found in Egypt and are in the Coptic Museum in Cairo. The messages of these documents contradict the Bible at about every turn. Scholars know that these documents are Gnostic writings. The word Gnostic comes from the Greek *gnostikos*, meaning “learned.” Gnostics believed in hidden meanings called “secret wisdom” which led to a oneness of God by personal poverty and deprivation. They taught that all matter

is evil. Early Christians knew about Gnosticism and fought against it. There is no evidence that “The Real Thomas” had any part in writing the *Gospel of Thomas*. Source: *Biblical Archeology Review*, page 50.

PROVE THERE’S A GOD! Atheists are fond of claiming God cannot be proven, but what they are insisting on is empirical proof. Douglas Jacoby in his July 15, 2015, blog gave an excellent summary of why such a demand is unreasonable:

- The axioms of logic, as of geometry, must be assumed. They cannot be proven. Using logic to prove logic would be circular. Some element of faith is therefore at the fundamental level.
- Numbers, whether integers or fractions or those special numbers like e and i and π , are well known to all of us. Mathematics is the “language” of physics (formulas, ratios, coefficients ...), and numbers make up the “words.” Yet, though useful to scientists, their existence cannot be proven by them.
- Justice and love are real—and all of us demand or seek them, yet they cannot be quantified. Whoever heard of 2 kg of justice, or 12 cc of love?
- Aesthetics, whether artistic or musical, speaks powerfully to every person. Even though we cannot always define beauty, we experience it as real.
- Like logic, science is not self-verifying. There are always assumptions. Thus we see that many things in our world are real, even though they cannot be proved empirically.

Doug has a wealth of material, and you can read much of it on douglasjacoby.com.



SAVE THE MOSQUITOES. In May 2015 *Discover* magazine ran an article about efforts to genetically engineer mosquitoes to eliminate the diseases they carry. There have been some interesting responses from scientists who work with mosquitoes. Their basic message is that mosquitoes are an important part of the food chain, and that eliminating them would also eliminate bats, some amphibians, and threaten other species who depend on the mosquito and their larvae for food. Source: *Discover*, September 2015, page 15.



AARP BLASTED FOR ARTICLE ON PRAYER. In the February/March 2015 issue of *AARP The Magazine*, there was an article titled “The Paradox of Prayer” in which it was suggested that many older Americans are prayerful and what implications that has for seniors. The editors have received a number of letters from nonbelievers chastising the magazine for running such an article and demanding it not do so again. It appears that freedom of the press is no longer acceptable in America.

GAY MARRIAGE OPENS THE DOOR. Now that the biblical definition of marriage has been voided, the door is open for a variety of new definitions, all of which seem to be equally valid. In Helena, Montana, Nathan Collier went to the Yellowstone County Courthouse to seek a second marriage to his new partner Christine. Collier quoted Chief Justice John Roberts “the gay marriage ruling would apply with equal force to the claim of a fundamental right to plural marriage.” In Coeur d’Alene, Idaho, city officials have told Christian pastors in their community that they will go to jail if they refuse to marry homosexuals. Christian colleges are threatened with losing their accreditation as well as their tax exempt status if they teach biblical material about marriage. It will be interesting to see how this whole question works out, because the implications of the Supreme Court ruling go far beyond the simple question of gay marriage. Source: *The Week*, July 17, 2015, pages 16, 17, 32.

EARTH-LIKE PLANETS AND REALITY. The newspapers and pop science magazines are full of statements about how many earth-like planets are in our galaxy. The main criteria is that the planet must be in a possible “Goldilocks Zone.” That is a position relative to the star the planet is orbiting that would allow water to exist in a liquid state. The problem with all of this is that there are a host of other parameters that also have to be carefully designed. Kathryn Volk and Brett Gladman have shown that if multiple earth-sized planets formed reasonably close to their stars, they would destroy each other. Studies have also shown that the internal make-up of a planet is critical for the formation of life. Carbon cycling, magnetic field production, and maintenance of oceans by mantle movement are also critical. There may be another planet somewhere that is enough like our earth to support life, but the claims of thousands of such planets within our own galaxy is misleading. Sources: *Discover* magazine, September 2015, pages 38, *Science News*, March 21, 2015, page 14.



THE CLAYTON MUSEUM OF ANCIENT HISTORY OPENS!

A new museum has opened on the campus of York College in York, Nebraska.



Foster Stanback, John Clayton, and York College President Steve Eckman

It features the Foster Stanback collection of rare artifacts from New Testament times.

There are many items depicting the history of ancient Rome. Mr. Stanback chose to donate his valuable collection to York College and name the museum in honor of his mentor, John Clayton. We will have much more

information about this historical and biblical museum in our next issue. You can call the college at 402-363-5640.

NEW FOSSIL BACKS UP BIBLE'S ORIGIN OF BIRDS.

One of the many places where the Genesis account and the fossil evidence agree is in the discussion of the emergence of the birds. Genesis 1:20a indicates that birds began as flying creatures, and tells us the birds came after marine life and before the appearance of the “beasts of the earth, cattle ...” and also before man. Evolutionary models have typically maintained that walking birds came first and that flight gradually evolved as natural selection removed birds that could not fly. A new find in China named *Archaeornithura meemannae* is significant because it is built like modern birds. *Smithsonian* magazine (July/August 2015, page 10) has a good picture of the specimen and a list of six of its characteristics which are found in modern birds.

MARIJUANA BENEFITS OVERBLOWN? Drs. Deepak Cyril D'Souza and Mohini Ranganathan of Yale University have reported that after studying 6,500 cases they could find no reliable evidence that marijuana could help treat depression, anxiety, glaucoma, post chemotherapy nausea, or symptoms of Tourette's syndrome. According to their study the claims that marijuana could help all of these things was based on “low quality scientific evidence” anecdotal reports, and public opinion. Medical marijuana has yet to be approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and this may be part of the reason. Sources: *Los Angeles Times* and *The Week*, July 10, 2015, page 19.

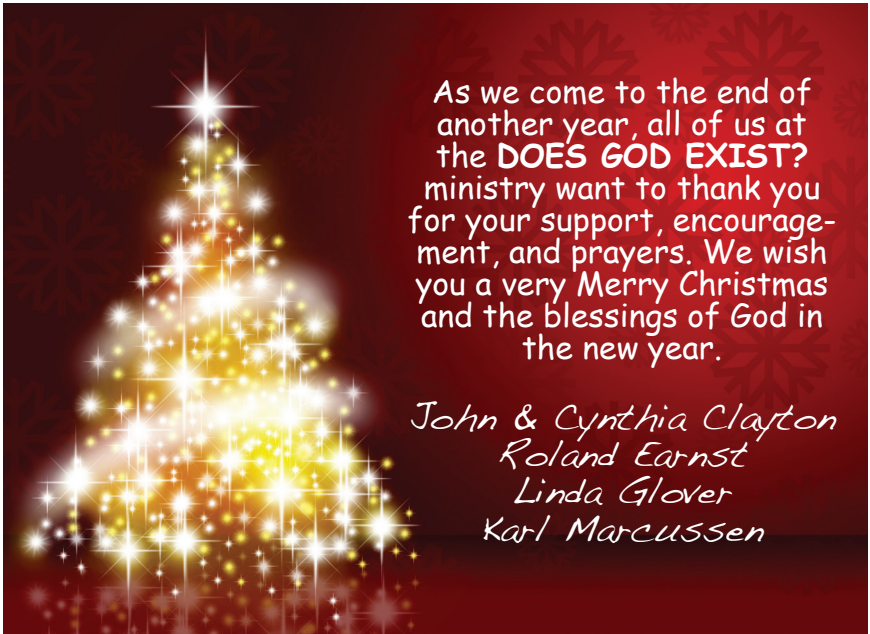
DEADLIEST DRUGS ARE LEGAL. The two deadliest drugs in America are tobacco and alcohol, and both are legal. Tobacco kills 500,000 Americans a year and alcohol is linked to 88,000 deaths a year. In addition more than 4.6 million emergency room visits are linked to alcohol. Source: Vox.com and *The Week*, June 26, 2015, page 14.

“‘MULTIVERSE’ NEEDS TO BE RETIRED.” Those are the words of Dr. Paul Steinhardt, Princeton University’s Albert Einstein Professor in Science. We have pointed out in this journal for a long time that many of the creative theories being batted around in cosmology and astronomy are not falsifiable. Since they cannot be tested, they are not useful. Bob Berman writing in *Astronomy* magazine raises the question of “why the multiverse idea always seems exempt from science’s normally strict standards and is allowed to tiptoe along the shorelines of mere conjecture.” He concludes his article by saying “we’ve got to toss the multiverse if we care about physics.” Source: *Astronomy* magazine, September 2015, page 28.

PLANNED PARENTHOOD DEFECTOR. Unethical practices of Planned Parenthood have been in the news recently. The Alliance Defending Freedom has published an article by Sue Thayer who worked as an office manager for Planned Parenthood for 17 years. Thayer details abuses and ethical issues she saw in her work with the organization. This article is available at www.adflegal.org/detail-pages/faith-and-justice-details/why-i-left-planned-parenthood, or use the QR code.



ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE—A THREAT? Some big names like Stephen Hawking and Elon Musk have recently warned that artificial intelligence (AI) is a greater threat to humanity than nuclear war. They say super-intelligent machines will outsmart and enslave people and eventually slaughter them. People who work with AI say that Hawking, Musk, and others like them just do not have a good understanding of AI. It is easy to fall into specious assumptions drawn more from science fiction than from the real world. AI can do calculations beyond the reach of humans in much shorter time, but there are many kinds of intelligence, such as creativity and emotions, that machines will never even attempt. Dileep George, cofounder of Vicarious, a prominent AI firm says, “As researchers we have an obligation to educate the public about the difference between Hollywood and reality.” Our creation in the image of God will never be attempted by any machine, and that is what really makes us human. Source: *Popular Science*, March 2015, page 36.



As we come to the end of another year, all of us at the **DOES GOD EXIST?** ministry want to thank you for your support, encouragement, and prayers. We wish you a very Merry Christmas and the blessings of God in the new year.

*John & Cynthia Clayton
Roland Earnst
Linda Glover
Karl Marcussen*

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Signature—Karl H. Marcussen, Managing Editor, October 14, 2015

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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