

DOES GOD EXIST?

September/October 2015

Volume 42 Number 5

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

*The Bible as Evidence
for God's Existence*

Does God Exist? Lectureships

Lectures for 2015

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Articles in this Issue:

The Bible as Evidence for God's Existence	3
Frames of Reference and Faith	10

Guest Article:

Why Not the Apocrypha?	15
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Special Features:

Great Scientists and God	20
Cynthia's Corner	21
Book Reviews:	
Caring Beyond the Margins	22
Who's Who in the Bible	23
Dandy Designs:	
The Design of Fall Color	24
Dung Beetles Walk the Line	25
News and Notes	26

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

2 Timothy 3:16-17 (NIV)

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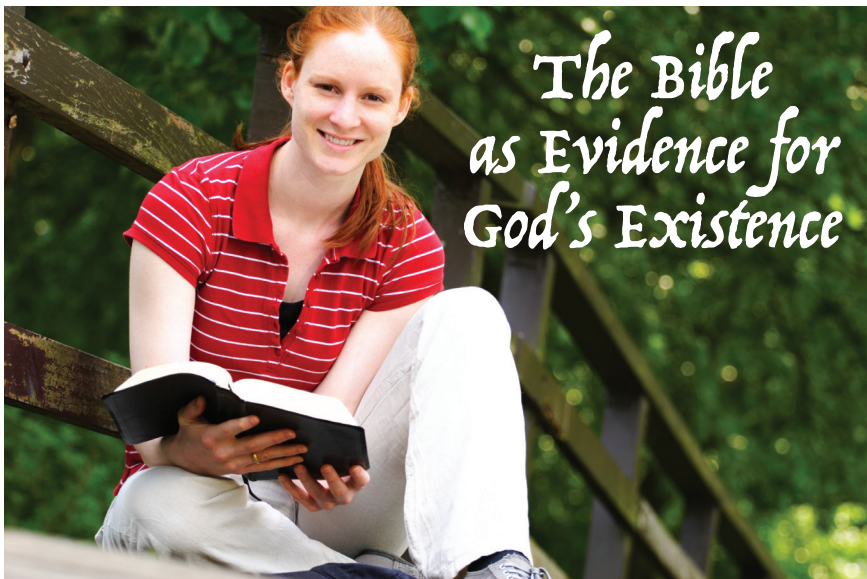
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The Bible as Evidence for God's Existence

As you read atheist challenges to the existence of God, one of the things that stands out is that they tend to avoid any primary evidence for God's existence. The cosmological evidence is brushed aside by deferring to Stephen Hawking or discussions about what "nothing" is. The teleological evidence is dismissed as being a product of ignorance of the mechanisms of evolution. The ontological evidence is viewed as a "god of the gaps" view of the human brain—and thus ignored. The philosophical evidence is dismissed as being theological in nature and thus biased and not worth discussing. What atheists tend to harp on is the Bible. They try to use it as a proof that faith is a creation of uneducated humans dependent on ancient writings that are mythological and full of contradictions and mistakes. In the past, we have dealt with these claims in this journal (see July/August 2009, page 13). What we would like to encourage our readers to do is to look at the positives—what the Bible is and what it shows us—rather than deal with the claims of people who have not researched the Bible thoroughly.

If it can be shown that the Bible contains facts and knowledge beyond the reach of the human authors at the time in which it was written, then the source of that information has to be non-human in nature. You would not necessarily have to attribute it to God. You could claim that aliens gave the information. That would imply that all knowledge contained in the Bible stopped at its most recent book and that none of its actions or information would be relevant beyond the date of that last book. Any factual statement beyond that date would have to be from something other than an alien earth visit some 2,000 years ago. Scholars have excellent proof that the 27 books that make

up the New Testament are the most recent books in the Bible, and that they were universally accepted by the church 1,600 years ago. This is supported by archeologists, historians, and anthropologists. We also know what science knew about the earth in those days, so we have a benchmark by which we can examine the Bible to ascertain its credibility. In this article we wish to suggest six evidences that the Bible is not of human origin, and that it shows not only that God exists, but that the God who exists is the God who gave us the Bible.

THE BIBLE CONTAINS MEDICAL FACTS BEYOND HUMAN KNOWLEDGE AT THE TIME IT WAS WRITTEN.

The medical practices of every culture are well understood. In some cultures the medical procedures were quite advanced. For example, there is excellent evidence that the Incas actually did brain surgery to relieve cranial pressure. Many primitive tribes around the world have materials from plants and animals that were used to relieve pain and bring healing to the infirm of their day. Even monkeys have been shown to use certain plants to address physical distress. It is easy to believe that much of this is a trial and error discovery that accidentally was connected to their pain.

At the same time, there were treatments which were horrendous. The *Papyrus Ebers* was a medical journal from Egypt which details treatments which we know today were highly destructive. Medical and hygienic practices in Europe in the middle ages are well known, and today we understand that these practices contributed to the plagues that ravaged people during that time period.

Even a superficial reading of the medical and hygienic laws for Israel has to impress a modern day reader with their wisdom. Leviticus 17:11 – 14 spoke of the essential nature of blood to a culture whose neighbors were practicing bleeding as a medical tool. Why humans should not drink animal blood is stated in Leviticus 17:12 and 14 to people who lived among cultures that used raw blood as a beverage. Leviticus 11 gave food restrictions including not eating pork or scavengers which, with their poor cooking facilities would have been hazardous to do.

Today no one questions the use of quarantine in cases where contagious diseases are involved. The book of Leviticus 13–15 spelled out valid medical quarantine procedures. In the recent problems with Ebola in Africa these practices were used. Deuteronomy 23:12–14 prescribed the burying of human waste, but in the Dark Ages



people were throwing their sewage into the street, which contributed to the Black Plague. Numbers 19:5–22 gave a series of hygienic rules which included washing one’s self and burning one’s clothes after having contact with a corpse. Today no medically trained person would question the wisdom of these rules. Virtually every public restroom in America displays signs telling users to wash their hands.

It is important to point out that these are not cases where we take a scripture and twist it to fit what we know to be true. These are cases where a practice was instituted that is still being carried on today, and which can be verified to have been prescribed in ancient times. All of this is unique to the biblical manuscripts, and the only source of its message is what Moses and the other inspired writers gave to the people of their day.

THE BIBLE SPEAKS ACCURATELY IN DESCRIBING THE PHYSICAL MAKE-UP AND GEOGRAPHY OF PLANET EARTH.

It is interesting to read what ancient people understood about how the earth is connected to celestial objects, what the surface of the earth is like, and how people can move on the earth. In *Natural History* magazine (January 1970, pages 30) Franklyn Branley of Princeton University wrote an interesting article illustrated by Helmut Wimmer on what ancient cultures believed about how the earth was suspended in space. Wimmer’s work has been reproduced in many planetariums around the world because it beautifully portrays how humans struggled to understand our place in space. He shows the Babylonian concept of the earth being in a large sphere with stars and planets hanging from the sphere and a giant beetle pushing the Sun across the sky every day. He shows Egyptian pictures of the sun god Ra driving the chariot of fire across the sky. Hinduism is shown with the earth being held on the back of an elephant that is standing on a giant turtle swimming in a sea of milk. Japanese cultures are shown with their view of the earth being suspended on the back of a giant catfish. The Greek concept of the earth being on the shoulders of Atlas is part of the article. Nowhere is there a picture of the biblical concept of what supports the earth. The reason is that the Bible does not present earth as being on an animal or suspended in any way. The only reference to this topic in the Bible is in a poetic passage in Job 26:7 where we are told that God “hangs the earth on nothing.”



It is easy to overwork this concept and force a meaning that is inconsistent with the passage, but there are a multiplicity of passages

that are so clear that such a charge cannot be leveled at them. The fact that the earth is round is conveyed in Bible passages such as Isaiah 40:22 and Proverbs 8:27. In Luke 17:30–36 a sudden event is described as happening when both daytime and nighttime are taking place. When the Bible mentions directions or distances, they always turn out to be correct as in Luke 10:30 and 24:13. Archeologists have used biblical references for the location of things for centuries. Ultimately those references turn out to be correct.

THE BIBLE IS UNIQUE IN TEACHING THE ONENESS AND EQUALITY OF ALL HUMANS.

Our planet is being decimated by religious warfare. Atheists are claiming that the only solution to war is to eliminate religion. Some atheists have even suggested force must be used to do that. Slavery was justified by maintaining that people who were of a different color or ethnicity were inferior and perhaps not even human. Hitler's belief in the superior race is a logical output of evolution and the guiding principle "survival of the fittest." The mixing of politics and religion has been the goal of many religions with the Islamic State (ISIS) being the most recent of these. We have to add here that people who claimed to be Christians have been guilty of this as well, beginning with the Crusades, the Catholic/Protestant conflicts, and the Ku Klux Klan. None of these actions is consistent with the teachings of Jesus Christ, but in the Koran we see Mohammed ordering an Islamic state (see Suras 8:37–41; 9:4–7; 9:122–125; 47:3–5).

In the Bible we see Jesus teaching us to be at peace and serve others (Matthew 5–7). We also see statements like, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28). Jesus not only taught that all people were of value and equal in God's sight, but he lived it. In John 13:4–17 Christ sets the example before his disciples by washing their feet and telling them to do likewise. In John 4:1–42 we read about Jesus violating one of the racial rules of his culture by not only talking to a Samaritan but talking to a woman and staying in a Samaritan town. Imagine what the world would be like if every human valued every other human as Jesus taught in the "Sermon on the Mount" in Matthew 5–7.



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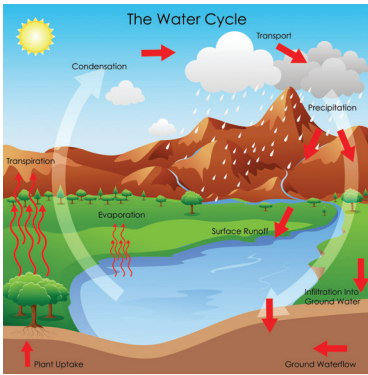
THE BIBLE PRESENTS USEFUL PSYCHOLOGICAL PRINCIPLES LEADING TO GOOD MENTAL HEALTH.

Christianity is a guilt-relieving religion. Any student of psychology knows the role of forgiveness. The admonition to have unlimited and unconditional forgiveness for others is a sure cure for feelings of guilt and conflict (see Matthew 6:12, the Lord's Prayer, and 18:21–35.) The wisdom of marriage and the role of husbands and wives in every part of the marriage relationship as described in the Bible works on a practical level. The notion that all humans have value because of their common creation in the image of God is very important. This is especially true in a society that has bought into the “survival of the fittest” watchword producing enormous self-image problems for people who are told that they are “less fit.” The help that the Bible has in dealing with the issues of sex, death, disease, and family turmoil is beyond what human minds have been able to achieve throughout history.

The mental health issues that are producing widespread problems in the world today are rooted in human resistance to God's instructions. All kinds of abuse, sexual misconduct, domestic violence, addiction, suicide, racial conflict, and crime in general are the product of not living as God has told us to live. It is interesting to see many “new” psychological treatment programs taking their recovery plans from biblical principles. Religion is frequently part of the cause of human mental illness, but that is caused by a dependency on man-made religious practice and not by what Jesus taught. Christ spoke eloquently about this in Matthew 15:8–9, “This people draws near to me with their mouth and honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. In vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.”

THE SCIENCE REVEALED IN THE BIBLE IS ACCURATE AND NOT A PRODUCT OF THE TIME IN WHICH IT WAS WRITTEN.

When you study what ancient people believed and their understanding of the world around them, you begin to understand why they were confused about their own existence. Atheists have long contended that “god” was invented by humans to explain what they did not understand. In the case of most ancient religious systems that is true. The religious views of the distant past explained lightning by a god who threw bolts in anger and thunder was explained as his voice. Rain, hail, snow, and volcanoes all had their own gods or goddesses who caused the weather. In the midst of all of these created deities, we find the Bible presenting God as a monotheistic deity, outside of



space/time and creating with purpose and intelligence.

There are countless examples of apparent scientific knowledge in the authors of the biblical manuscripts that was far beyond the day in which they were written. Some examples are Herbert Spencer's scientific principles which are formulated in the Genesis account; the water cycle being clearly shown in Ecclesiastes 1:7 and Job 36:27–28; and



the fact that animals can be managed to select certain characteristics in Genesis 30:29–43. It is difficult to write these instances off as coincidence or to suggest the writings were simply by gifted individuals. For a list of these examples go to our website doesgodexist.org/PDF-Files/Appendix_A.pdf, or send us \$1.00 for postage and we will mail it to you.

Perhaps the best example of accuracy that cannot be written off is the integrity of the Genesis 1 account. If that account is taken literally (not in a way that distorts it to fit denominational tradition or state something it is not addressing), the basic sequence of events given is too accurate to be assigned to luck or the knowledge of the author. After a creation event that is undated and untimed (and therefore outside of space/time), a series of events are given that have only been confirmed in recent times.

Changes in the hydrology of the earth so that the lithosphere, atmosphere, and hydrosphere all have water are mentioned in verses 6–7. The separation of the land masses and water basins are detailed in verses 9–10. The first life is mentioned as being plants in verse 11, and there is a sequence of plants given in these verses ending with flowering plants. The first animal life is mentioned as being in the oceans in verse 20, and the first warm-blooded creatures are mentioned later in that verse to have been birds. This is followed by mammals and ends with humans as the last form of life to appear.

There is an economy of language in these verses, which is typical of the Hebrew tongue, but the sequence is correct. You can argue about time if you are so inclined, and debate whether the days were continuous or separated by periods of time. You can argue about how long the days were if you like. There are many details that can be debated, but the sequence is correct and in opposition to just about every writing from the time period in which the Bible was written. For a detailed treatment of this discussion read *God's Revelation in His*



Rocks and His Word at doesgodexist.org/INDEX-Folders/Booklets.html, or send us \$1.00 for postage and we will mail it to you.

THE FINAL EVIDENCE FOR GOD'S AUTHORSHIP OF THE BIBLE IS ITS INFLUENCE.

Jesus said it best and frequently, “By their fruits you shall know them.” What would be the result of someone reading the teachings of Jesus Christ, and following them exclusively and completely? What has been the result when that has been done? When people do something in the name of Christ that is destructive and harmful, they are not using the Bible as the guide and are only wearing the name “Christian” for show or financial gain. Most soldiers serving in so called “Christian” wars were mercenaries who had no relationship with Christ at all, and did not follow the Bible.

In 2001 Alvin Schmidt wrote a book titled *Under the Influence* (Zondervan Publishing) in which he examined the Bible’s influence on the day-to-day life of people who choose to follow it. Women’s rights, the elimination of slavery, the increase in education, the development of schools in poverty-stricken areas, and the care of orphans and homeless people are all documented. Who is it that operates food kitchens where you live or has a homeless shelter for those who are out in the elements in bad weather? How many hospitals in your area were initiated by people who built the hospital because they felt it was what Jesus called them to do? How many of these things have been constructed, funded, and maintained by atheists? Who were the health workers in Africa that were on the front lines in battling Ebola? Who has successfully battled alcohol, drugs, prostitution, child abuse, and the like? It is easy to find someone who wears the name Christian for selfish, monetary purposes. To hold that person up as what Christians believe and do is not only irresponsible—it is ethically wrong. The track record of Christianity, when the teachings of Jesus have been followed, far overshadows the few but highly publicized charlatans who found the name “Christian” to be politically useful.

If the Bible speaks to us as a book that did not come from human intelligence and wisdom, then it must have come from an intelligence far beyond humans. Inspiration demands there be an “Inspirer,” and we would suggest to you that all scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for refuting error, for giving guidance,

for moral discipline and education in righteousness so that the man or woman of God may be complete (2 Timothy 3:16–17). God was and is revealed in his Holy Word.

—John N. Clayton



FRAMES OF REFERENCE AND FAITH

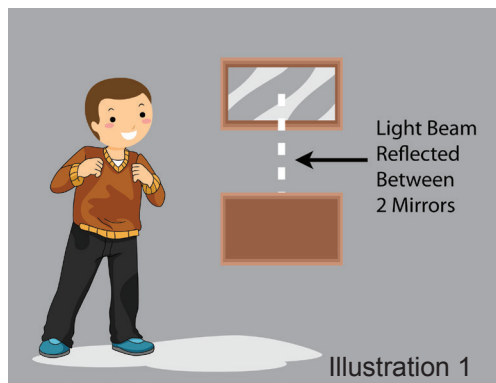
Many people react with dismay or disbelief to the mention of Albert Einstein's theory of relativity. When I started my unit on relativity in my high school physics classes, I found that students either wanted to make it a fantasy or they wanted to avoid it altogether. When I suggested that it was just common sense and that they already knew much of it, I got eye rolls of disbelief. I get the same reaction out of many people who believe in God, and yet Einstein gave us some valuable tools to use in a variety of spiritual and biblical applications. What Einstein did was to state two postulates that describe how God has created the creation.

The first is a statement of common sense. "The laws of physics are the same in all inertial frames of reference." In simple terms that means that whether you are in your car, in an airplane, or sitting at your desk, the laws of physics are going to work in a similar way. That has to be true for our survival. If gravity did not work anymore when you got in your car, what would be the result? Chaos would be a simple way of describing what the inside of your car would look like.

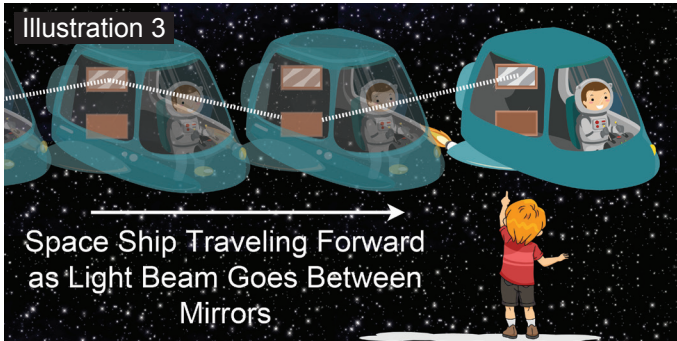
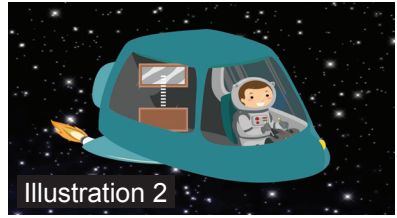
The second postulate is a little less obvious. It simply says, "the speed of light in free space has the same value in all inertial frames of reference." If you measured the speed of light (called c in scientific equations) at your desk, the value would be 186,284.6 miles per second. If you measured it in an airplane flying at twice the speed of sound you would get the same value.

These two postulates have been tested time and time again. They have proven to be absolutely true and describe how God has done things. What is interesting is the consequences of these two postulates.

Suppose you had a young man who had constructed a clock that consisted of two mirrors with a beam of light bouncing back and forth between the mirror (illustration 1). According to Einstein's postulate the speed of the light c would be 186,284.6 miles per second. The young man can measure how far apart the mirrors are, and he can calculate how long it takes for the beam of light to make the trip by just dividing the distance by the speed of light.



Now let us suppose the young man is flying by us in a space ship at a very high rate of speed. Einstein's first postulate tells us that he will not be able to tell anything has changed (illustration 2). When you are in a jet plane flying at 500 mph you cannot tell how fast you are going unless you look out the window. But if you are standing outside the spaceship and able to see the clock, you will see the light beam



traveling at a diagonal (illustration 3). The distance you measure along the diagonal will be greater than the distance the young man measures.

When you calculate the time, you will get a bigger number than you did when the spaceship was at rest. Time as you measure it is different from time as the young man measures it.

Thousands of experiments in all kinds of situations have shown that this is, in fact, the way the creation has been put together. Let us now shift the concept of frames of reference to biblical and spiritual applications.

OLD TESTAMENT AND NEW TESTAMENT

One of the areas where humans struggle with the biblical message is in the difference between the Old Testament and the New Testament. In the Old Testament, we see God being actively involved on a human level with laws and edicts that control every aspect of human behavior. Leviticus and Deuteronomy in particular seem to be endless rules about everything. In the New Testament, we see all of these laws and ordinances being done away with. Colossians 2:13–17 makes it clear that Christ did away with all of the Old Testament laws “nailing them to his cross” (verse 14). Unlike the Old Testament, the New Testament tells God’s people, “There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:28).

The question is, “Why are the Old and New Testaments so different?” The answer is the frame of reference that the people who read these testaments had available to them. The Old Testament was written to a very primitive group of people who had a constant

battle for survival. They were nomadic, had limited resources, and were especially vulnerable to disease. In the New Testament we see mankind with a different frame of reference. People are now living in cities. Resources are concentrated. Civil authority has been established to control law and order. For this reason Paul tells Christians in Romans 13 to submit to civil authority. Jesus tells his followers to “give back to Caesar what is Caesar’s, and to God what is God’s” (Matthew 22.21).

The teachings of Christ aim at attitudes, values, and ways of thinking. The frame of reference is completely different from the battle of ancient man to avoid conquest, protect his family, and find enough to eat.

MATTHEW AND LUKE

We have often said that we need to take the Bible literally. We define “literally” as the process of looking at who wrote the passage in question, to whom they wrote it, why they wrote it, and how the people for whom it was written would have understood it. A classic example of the frame of reference issue is the comparison of the genealogies in Matthew with those in Luke. Both genealogies deal with the family lineage from Abraham to Christ, but Matthew covers the family tree in 42 steps while Luke does it in 57 steps. Why are these genealogies different? The answer is the frame of reference of each author.

Matthew is a Jew writing for a Jewish audience. Because of that he uses the system of genealogies that Jews at that time used and understood. The passage begins by saying, “Jesus the Messiah the son of David, the son of Abraham” (Matthew 1:1, NIV). Any Jew would have known that this passage did not mean that Jesus was the grandson of Abraham. The frame of reference was the Jewish system of genealogies. This was done by using numerical symbols. The number 7 was the main symbol. It indicated perfection or completeness. Matthew uses this by saying, “There were fourteen generations (seven times two) in all from Abraham to David, fourteen from David to the exile to Babylon, and fourteen from the exile to the Messiah” (Matthew 1:17). This adds up to 42, and any Jew would have known that was a symbolic statement of the perfection of the genealogy of Christ.

Luke is a Greek and does not use Jewish symbols. His list of “begats” is different because his frame of reference is different. There is no error here; it is simply a matter of paying attention to the frame of reference of each author.”

QUANTUM MECHANICS AND NEWTONIAN PHYSICS

With the advent of quantum mechanics in the twenty-first century, there have been those who suggest that all of the facts of Newto-

nian physics and the laws of science from the past are invalid. The principles of simultaneity seem to invalidate much of what Newton said. How can two particles that are not connected in any way physically, still interact so that when one particle has something happen to it, the other particle is affected? Even Einstein expressed doubts about this calling it “spooky interaction at a distance.”

The fact is that nothing in quantum mechanics invalidates anything in classical physics. In this journal over the years we have had numerous articles about the evidence of design in classical physics. The reason that things in quantum mechanics seem so different from classical physics is that quantum mechanics deals with a different frame of reference. That frame of reference is the very small. In quantum mechanics we are dealing with the infinitesimally small entities that make up electric charge and gravitational mass. Words like quarks, superstrings, branes, mesons, bosons, etc., are the building blocks of the larger particles we work with in classical physics. How those larger particles respond to energy and force in the classical world has not been invalidated.

RESTORATION AND REFORMATION

This periodical is associated with what is called the “Restoration Movement.” That is different from the “Reformation.” The frame of reference for the Reformation begun by Martin Luther was to reform the Roman Catholic church. Luther had no intent of starting a new church or denomination. What he wanted to do was to correct what already existed, but had drifted into areas that put it in violation of the teachings of Jesus and the New Testament. The “95 Theses” that Luther wrote and nailed to the door were all reforming principles for the Catholic church. That was the frame of reference for what he wrote.

Those who talk about restoration have a different frame of reference. That frame of reference is the church described in the Bible. There is no attempt to correct something in Catholic theology that needed to be changed as Luther was doing. The idea is to start at the very beginning of Christianity. Restoring means jumping over history and not attempting to correct what has happened in history. Unfortunately, even those who have attempted restoration have drifted off into teachings and practices that were not a part of the first century church. The Reformation did not solve all the ills of Catholicism, and restoration has had its share of failures and instances of corruption. As young people are entering the Restoration Movement, they are sometimes amazed at how much sense restoration makes, and how poorly it has been done.

Can we reestablish a frame of reference that follows the first century church plan more closely? The answer has to be “yes”, and with

new ideas and new dedication to avoiding the traditions and theories of humans it will happen. Reformation is hopeless, but restoration makes sense and will work. The frame of reference is the first-century church and its response to sin and human weakness.

WALKING IN LIGHT AND WALKING IN DARKNESS

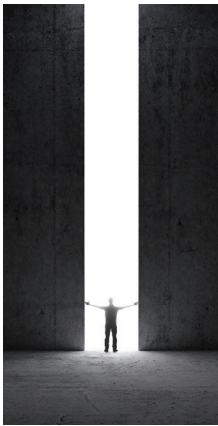
“This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another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

We all have the right to choose the frame of references for our lives. We can either “walk in the light” or we can “walk in the darkness.” Romans 6 spells out what happens when someone chooses to use God’s Word as his frame of reference for how to live. Baptism is a dying to the frame of reference that the world uses. The world’s frame of reference involves looking after number one, survival of the fittest, and pleasure as the main goal. The frame of reference for a Christian involves “dying to sin” (Romans 6:2) and considering other people’s welfare above our own (1 Corinthians 10:24). This means taking on a new frame of reference, and we call it “conversion.”

Galatians 5:16–25 spells out the two frames of reference. The author begins by pointing out that these two frames of reference are in conflict with each other (verse 17). The properties of these frames of reference are then given. The world’s frame of reference in verses 19–21 is all things that embrace looking after number one and pleasure. The Christian’s frame of reference is given in verses 22–26, and involves obeying the commands, example, and teachings of Christ.

The changing of one’s frame of reference can be very hard, but it is essential to being a Christian. Too many in our world want to wear the name Christian but still live in the world’s frame of reference. Romans 8:7 tells us that if we have accepted the world’s frame of reference our minds are hostile to God and that it is impossible for us to submit to God’s law. Romans 6:20 tells us that when we are in the world’s frame of reference we are free from the control of righteousness. It goes on to tell us that those things result in death. “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Choose God’s way and use the Christian frame of reference in your choices in life.

—JNC





WHY NOT THE APOCRYPHA?

BY THAYER SALISBURY

In 1924, M. R. James published *The Apocryphal New Testament*. This collection of the books rejected from the New Testament was published so that people could see why these books had been rejected. In 1924, James could write, “It is a matter of common knowledge that there exist such things as Apocryphal Gospels, Acts, Epistles, Revelations ...” (xi).

Somewhere between 1924 and 2000 people seem to have forgotten this fact. When they were reminded of it, by books like *The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail* and *The DaVinci Code*, it seemed as if a conspiracy had been uncovered.

There was no conspiracy to hide these books. If a person wanted them, they could be purchased. No effort was made to prevent their publication or distribution. Copies of the early manuscripts of these books were (and are) on public display at museums around the world, and were (and are) available for study by scholars. The conspiracy claim was a public relations hoax designed to increase the sale of the books that supposedly revealed the conspiracy.

What we need now is what existed in M. R. James’ day—more widespread knowledge of the nature of these books and the reasons why they have been consistently rejected by Christians.

NEW TESTAMENT APOCRYPHA

You may have heard that some churches have books in their New Testaments that others do not include. This is not true. All churches accept the same twenty-seven books in the New Testament canon. Some denominations might like to remove books that do not support their favorite doctrines. They cannot do so because the evidence for their inclusion is so strong. William Barclay has been quoted as saying, “the New Testament books became canonical because no one could stop them doing so” (Bruce 1988:282).

Some might like to insert another book to support their doctrines, but they cannot do so. There is no other book with the evidence to support its inclusion. These twenty-seven books speak with author-

ity, they speak in harmony, they were accepted by the early church. This cannot be said of any other book. Many divisions have plagued Christians, but all Christians use the same New Testament books.

“But wait,” you may say, “you said above that there are other books.” Yes, there are other books but they are not accepted by any church, and with good reason.



According to Dan Brown's fictional account, *The Da Vinci Code*, the apocryphal gospels present a fully human Jesus, who is not God incarnate. The truth is the reverse of

Brown's claim. The apocryphal gospels were rejected because their Jesus was not human enough. Whereas the canonical gospels present him as fully God and fully man, the apocryphal gospels present him as supernatural with few, if any, human characteristics.

According to Brown, the apocryphal gospels are pro-female and were rejected because of the chauvinistic bias of the early church. Again, this claim is contrary to the facts. Some of the apocryphal New Testament books, the Gospel of Thomas in particular, are extremely chauvinistic themselves.¹

Referring to the Gospel of Philip, one of Brown's fictional experts says, “Any Aramaic scholar will tell you, the word companion, in those days, literally meant spouse” (*Da Vinci Code*, 246). In fact, any Aramaic scholar would take one look at the Gospel of Philip and say, “Sorry, I cannot help you. This document is not written in Aramaic.” For the Gospel of Philip, contrary to Brown's claim, is in Coptic, not Aramaic, and the word for companion at that point is neither Aramaic nor Coptic, but Greek.

Dan Brown, and those of his ilk, are unreliable guides to the New Testament Apocrypha. Read it for yourself in the M. R. James edition of 1924, or the J. K. Elliott edition of 1993, and you will quickly agree with the judgment of the early church. These books are not Scripture.

Elliott gives this summary of the Infancy Gospel of Thomas. “The main thrust of the episodes is to stress in a crudely sensational way the miraculous powers of Jesus The miracles in Thomas are often capricious and even destructive. Jesus is an *enfant terrible* who seldom acts in a Christian way!” (68). As examples of the evil

miracles Elliott mentions, I will name three. The Jesus of Thomas strikes his playmates dead when they displease him. When the townspeople complain of this, they are struck with blindness. The Jesus of Thomas is so destructive that Joseph finally has to tell Mary, “Do not let him go outside the door, for all those who provoke him die” (Thomas 14:3). Is this a book we need in our Bible?

In keeping with the Gnostic’s negative attitude toward the human body and normal bodily functions, the Protoevangelium of James teaches that Mary did not give birth to Jesus in the normal way. Instead, he came out through her navel so that her hymen remained intact (chapters 19 and 20). Is this a book we need in our Bible? Can we reconcile this attitude with the known scriptures (Genesis 1:28; 1 Corinthians 7; Hebrews 13:4)?

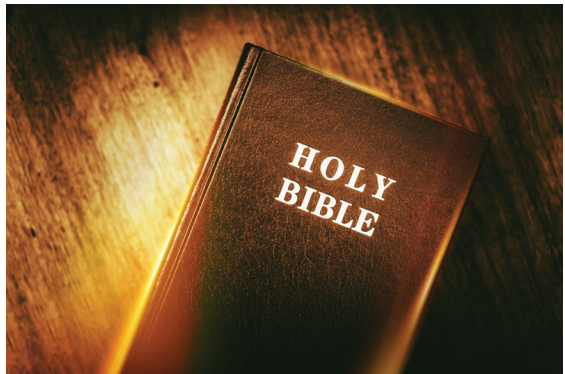
Not everything in the New Testament Apocrypha is as extreme as the examples given, of course, but the books of the New Testament Apocrypha do not measure up. Historically, they were not accepted by the early church, and doctrinally, they clearly are not in harmony with the known scriptures. To accept these books, we would have to reject our current canon. We would also have to re-envision Christ as a powerful but selfish miracle worker, with little in the way of a message.

OLD TESTAMENT APOCRYPHA

The situation is quite different with regard to the Old Testament. We are not all using the same Old Testament. There are several different views regarding the Old Testament canon.

Most churches accept only the thirty-nine books common to all Old Testaments. This might be called the “Protestant” canon. All Bibles have these, and no serious effort is being made to remove any of them. The Roman Catholic church accepts these same thirty-nine books and also additional works that Protestants refer to as Apocrypha. Anglicans also accept the thirty-nine and include the Apocrypha in their Bibles, but for Anglicans it is to be read only for “example of life.”

In the Anglican church, no doctrine may be established by appeal to the Apocrypha. The Orthodox churches accept all the books of the Protestant canon, the Roman Catholic canon, and a few additional works.



Most churches reject the apocryphal books for a variety of reasons. Some of them do not speak with authority. Others are not in harmony with the accepted books. Although the apocryphal books were accepted by some people in the early church, the evidence for their inclusion is weak.

Some of these books do not even claim to be from God. The book of Ecclesiasticus² begins with a statement that its author “had acquired considerable proficiency” in the study of the Law and the Prophets. Second Maccabees ends with the statement, “If it is well told and to the point that is what I myself desired; if it is poorly done and mediocre, that was the best I could do” (2 Maccabees 15:38 NRSV). These books are not even claiming to be from God. So there is no reason to accept them as a part of Scripture.

Some of the apocryphal books teach falsehoods. The book of Judith begins with the amazing words, “It was the twelfth year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, who ruled over the Assyrians in the great city of Nineveh.” The canonical books universally teach that Nebuchadnezzar was a Babylonian, not Assyrian. So this book is rejected for contradicting the rest of Scripture (Editor’s note: This also contradicts secular history).

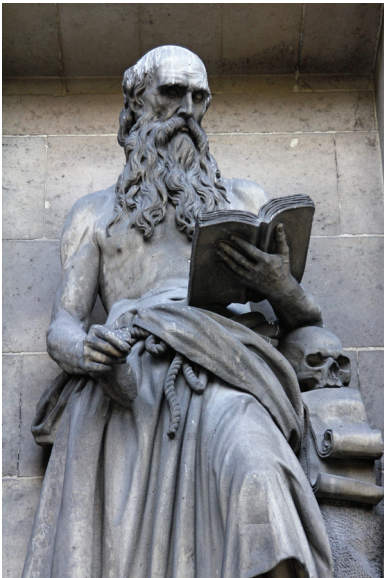
Some people may find these works to be edifying, but that is

not the point of including a book in the canon. We should not include every edifying book. Only those books that are from God should be included. Books that are from God are Scripture, even if we do not like them. Books not from God are not Scripture, even if we like them.

Jerome, a highly respected Catholic scholar, rejected the Apocrypha on the basis of his study of the original languages. Although Jerome included the Apocrypha in his translation of the Bible, he clearly did not consider it canonical (Bruce 1988: 87–93).

It seems clear that the rejection of the Apocrypha is correct. The thirty-nine books of the Protestant Old Testament canon are all that we should treat as Scripture.

The Old Testament provides essential background that helps us understand the work of Christ. It would be nearly impossible to understand the gospel without the Old Testament. But the Old Testament



Jerome A.D. 347-420

does not teach us the saving gospel. Knowing the exact limit of its canon is not essential to our faith in Christ.

CONCLUSION

All Christian denominations agree on the New Testament canon. There is some disagreement about the Old Testament canon. But there is no disagreement about the canon that affects our salvation. People can learn God's will from a Protestant, Anglican, or a Catholic Bible.

Concerning the Old Testament, we should concentrate our study



on those books that are accepted by all. There is no need to make a major issue of the extra books in the Catholic Bible. While the acceptance of the New Testament Apocrypha would necessitate a complete rewriting of Christianity, the use or non-use of the Old Testament Apocrypha does not have such a major effect.

NOTES:

1. The Gospel of Thomas closes with this interesting exchange. "Simon Peter said to them, 'Make Mary leave us, for females don't deserve life.' Jesus said, 'Look, I will guide her to make her male, so that she too may become a living spirit resembling you males. For every female who makes herself male will enter the kingdom of heaven.'"

2. Which is also known as The Wisdom of Jesus ben Sirach.

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**THIS IS THE MESSAGE WE HAVE HEARD FROM HIM
AND DECLARE TO YOU: GOD IS LIGHT; IN HIM THERE IS
NO DARKNESS AT ALL. 1 JOHN 1:5, NIV**

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



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.

JOHN RAY

1627-1705

Considered to be the Founder of
Modern Biology and Natural History



“We feed our Bodies; our Souls are also to be fed: The Food of the Soul is Knowledge, especially knowledge in the Things of God, and the Things that concern Eternal Peace and Happiness—the Doctrine of Christianity, the Word of God read and preached, 1 Peter 2:2 ‘As newborn Babies, desire the sincere Milk of the Word, that ye may grow thereby.’” “There is for a free man no occupation more worth and delightful than

to contemplate the beauteous works of nature and honor the infinite wisdom and goodness of God.”

“The life of a Christian is a continual Warfare, and we have potent and vigilant Enemies to encounter withal: the Devil, the World, and this corrupt Flesh we carry about with us.” “He that with his Christian Armor manfully fights against and repels the Temptations and Assaults of his Spiritual Enemies, he that keeps his Garments pure, and his Conscience void of Offense towards God and towards Man, shall enjoy perfect Peace here, and Assurance forever.”

Cynthia's Corner



John and I are both reviewing Guy Hammond's book, *Caring Beyond the Margins* because of its timely subject matter—homosexuality.

This book was written by a faithful, mature Christian man who had lived an active homosexual lifestyle until he was brought to the cross of Jesus. He came to understand that Jesus died for all of his sins and in order to follow Jesus, he had to give up anything and everything in his life that was contrary to God's will. Being convicted of that, he was baptized into Christ and left the homosexual lifestyle.

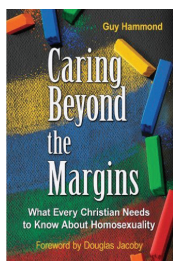
What is interesting to me (and most heterosexuals, I imagine) is that God did not take his homosexual tendencies away from him, nor has he outgrown his same-sex attraction. He very eloquently teaches us the difference between one who identifies himself as homosexual, and lives out that identity, as opposed to one who has unwanted same-sex attraction, but does not identify himself by his sexual orientation nor act on it. A baptized believer's identity is in Christ, not a sexual orientation. Christians with same-sex attraction do not identify themselves as homosexual and do not live as homosexuals because of their convictions about following God's standards.

He also makes it very clear that same-sex attraction is not something that one chooses and is not, in itself, sinful. But, he also makes it clear that, for the one who is following God and his Word, he must not act on his homosexual attractions. Those who have been baptized into Christ have been given God's Spirit to help them live as God desires. We can choose how to live our lives even though we may have no choice over our sexual orientation.

Guy Hammond has been happily married to a Christian woman for about 27 years, and they have four children. He very patiently and compassionately describes what it is like for a faithful Christian to live with same-sex attraction. He can overcome it, in that it no longer controls his thoughts and actions, but he cannot change it. God has not taken away his desires, even though he has begged God to do so. God has said, "My power is made perfect in weakness." Just like the apostle Paul, Guy has learned, "when I am weak, I am strong [in Christ]" (2 Corinthians 12:9–10). Thus, the name of his ministry is "Strength in Weakness." John and I both appreciate and admire Guy Hammond's courage, honesty, and vulnerability in writing this book. His "Strength in Weakness" ministry not only is helping other same-sex attracted disciples live godly lives, but is also helping all people to understand this important issue better. Most importantly, it is teaching us to treat all people with respect, kindness, and compassion.



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.



Caring Beyond the Margins

by Guy Hammond, Illumination Publishers, © 2012
176 pages, \$14.00 (paperback), ISBN-13: 978-0-9855749-5-6

The church has not done well in handling the issue of homosexuality. Recent court rulings on gay marriage and increased activity by gay activists have compounded the struggle Christians have with this issue. This is the most helpful book I have seen on the subject. It will challenge some of our perceptions, but it will give us direction and a better understanding to help us with this difficult subject.

A major point of this book is that same-sex-attracted people do not have to express that attraction in sinful, destructive lifestyles. Guy Hammond is a man with same-sex attraction, who has engaged in immoral homosexual activity. Upon his conversion to Christ, he left the sinful activity, but he still has the same-sex attraction. Many Christians will struggle with his repeated statement that he will never be a heterosexual. That does not mean he will engage in sinful sexual activity, but what attracts him physically will not be what attracts heterosexual men. With God's help he has not allowed his same-sex attraction to lead him into sinful activity. In fact, he is married to a woman and has four children.

The titles of the chapters in the book tell what the book contains: (1) Homosexuality versus same-sex attraction: which is it? (2) How homosexuality deceived me. (3) Practical help for same-sex-attracted Christians. (4) Practical help for husbands and wives. (5) Practical help for parents. (6) How to share your faith with LGBTQ people. (7) Answering the most often asked questions about homosexuality. (8) Letters for those who look for strength in weakness.

Guy Hammond has a ministry called "Strength in Weakness" which is designed to train Christian leaders and members of the church to work with those who are same-sex attracted. My personal opinion is

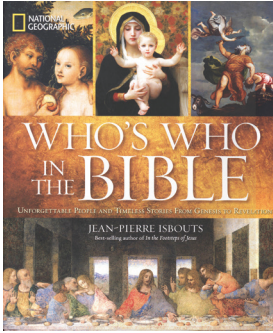
that this book should be required reading for every Christian living in the twenty-first century.

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Who's Who in the Bible

by Jean-Pierre Isbouts, National Geographic, © 2013

382 pages, \$40.00 (hardcover), ISBN-13: 978-1-4262-1159-1



We have reviewed several books published by *National Geographic* over the years. Like the other books we have reviewed, this book is a large volume (382 pages) and is full of famous paintings and works of art from all over the world. That makes the book attractive, but perhaps its greatest weakness is that the times when the artists lived affects how they portrayed the biblical events. Frequently the portrayals are not consistent with what is known by scholars today. The way the book

is arranged makes it a useful resource book when factual information is needed about biblical characters. Some 2,000 biblical characters are listed in the book with nearly 200 biographies of men and women described in the Bible.

The book has five chapters, with each chapter covering a section of the Bible. Chapter 1 is Genesis to Deuteronomy, and Chapter 2 is Joshua to Kings. Chapter 3 is Chronicles to Maccabees with a short section on the apocryphal books. Chapter 4 covers the four gospels, and chapter 5 covers Acts to Revelation. Each chapter gives a brief history of the chapter which is followed by an alphabetical listing of the major characters in that historical period. The Hebrew or Greek meaning of the name and what the person did is given as well as where that person is found in the Bible. It is brief and sometimes lacks detail you would like to have. Melchizedek, for example, is referenced as “king of righteousness” and Genesis 14:18–20 is given, but there is no reference to Hebrews 5:6–10.

Those who love art will like this book very much. Secular historians and archeology devotees will find it to give a summary of discoveries that are of interest to believers. Biblical scholars may find it incomplete and, in a few cases, controversial. For most of us, however, the book is a useful reference to add information to our lessons and enrich our understandings. As an example, I had never heard that Elijah’s name actually means “my God is YHWH.” As I was giving a lesson on God and Baal and choosing what God we should serve, I found this book to be useful in explaining why Israel had gone after Baal and what Elijah offered as a challenge. For that kind of reference work, the book will be very helpful.

DANDY DESIGNS



Fall is my favorite time of year. The fresh air, the reduction of the bug population, the improvement in fishing, and especially the color that is all around moves me to thank God for life and for the things he has done to make our lives beautiful and meaningful. Proverbs 8 talks about the wisdom in the design of all we see, and indeed why all of this happens IS a demonstration of God's wisdom.

When you look at a green leaf, the color you see comes from the chlorophyll which contains a green pigment. When sunlight strikes the leaf, the chlorophyll breaks down. Plants would not stay green if it were not for the fact that the tree continually produces chlorophyll during the growing season. Leaves have other compounds in them that contribute to the growth of the plant. Each of these compounds has a color. In aspens and birches that compound is yellow. When nights start growing long, the birches and aspens stop making chlorophyll. When the chlorophyll is burned out of the leaves, the remaining yellow compound is all that we see.

Maple trees have an energy-storing compound called anthocyanin which they make from sugar. Anthocyanin is red or purple, depending on the pH of the soil. When the green chlorophyll is burned out of the maples, what is left behind is the beautiful red and purple colors we see in so many areas of North America.

We sing a song titled *For the Beauty of the Earth*, and in that song we reflect on God's attention to what is beautiful in life. At this time of year we thank God for the beauty we see in the created things around us. The song goes on to remind us to be thankful for "the joy of human love" and for the church. If you are a Christian you can pause and thank God for all he has done to bless you with color, love, and spiritual peace. If you have not found that beauty and that peace we urge you to look at the wisdom in all God has done and embrace it as a guide to your choices in life.

DUNG BEETLES WALK THE LINE

One of the most complex design features seen in living things is their built-in navigation systems. How sea turtles can find the same tiny, isolated island beach to lay their eggs year after year is incredibly complex. The ability of a variety of migratory birds to go from wintering grounds to summering grounds and back is astounding. Even more amazing is that there are very simple forms of life that demonstrate an incredible navigating technique.



Researchers at Sweden's Lund University and South Africa's University of the Witwatersrand reported in *Scientific American* on studies of the navigation system of dung beetles. Dung beetles take the excrement of elephants and other large animals and roll it into dung balls. Then they roll the balls to their dwelling places to feed themselves and their offspring.

What researchers noticed was that the paths of the dung balls was always a straight line. The beetles use their back legs to roll the balls, so they are not looking where they are going. Try rolling a large ball along uneven ground in a straight line when you are blindfolded. It is virtually impossible to do. The explanation always given was that the beetle was using light from the sun and moon to keep it on target to follow the straight line to its nest. Researchers noticed, however, that on a moonless night that the beetles still rolled their balls in a straight line. When the scientists blindfolded the beetles, they wandered every direction with their balls. It was obvious that sight was involved.

The researchers then transported the beetles to the Johannesburg Planetarium and gave the beetles exposure to the night sky without the moon. The only time the beetles went in a perfectly straight line was when the entire Milky Way was shown to them. Picking the 18 brightest stars in the sky did not help the beetles navigate, but the presence of the Milky Way did. The researchers are saying that this is the first convincing demonstration that there are animals that use the Milky Way for orientation. Proverbs 6:6 advises us to, "Go to the ant, you sluggard; consider its ways and be wise." It goes on to encourage the reader to be active and do something with the life God has given. We would suggest that the dung beetle has a message for us as well—to look at the world around us and see God's hand in the design of even the simplest of his creatures. Source: *Scientific American*, April 2013, page 24.

News and Notes

ATHEIST CHAPLAINS DOMINATE. The U.S. Department of Defense reports that as of the end of 2014 there are 12,764 active duty chaplains who identify themselves as atheists. The second largest group of chaplains is Southern Baptists with 12,360. In theory, the chaplain is supposed to address all spiritual needs of all people under their influence, but in reality that does not happen. We know from our mail that military personnel and people in prisons with a chaplaincy do not find much help coming from the office of the chaplain. Your personal beliefs do affect how you minister. A person whose own faith lies in survival of the fittest and looking after number one is going to find it hard to appeal on any religious basis to a person in extreme spiritual duress. Source: *Christianity Today*, June 2015, page 17.

MORMON LEADERS AND POLYGAMY. According to the *New York Times* (November 11, 2014, page A1) Mormon leaders have acknowledged that Joseph Smith, the Mormon church's founder and prophet, had at least 40 wives. Some were already married to someone else and at least one was only 14 years old. Every aspect of the Mormon church leadership radiates a cult mentality. For a detailed treatment of this get the May 2015 issue of *Salt Lake City Messenger*, available from Utah Lighthouse Ministry, P. O. Box 1884, Salt Lake City, UT 84110 (www.utlm.org).

WHOSE FACE SHOULD BE ON YOUR \$20 BILL? There is a campaign to take Andrew Jackson's picture off of the American \$20 bill and replace it with a woman's picture. The founders of this effort call themselves "Women on \$20." We have no problem with putting a positive female icon on our currency. However, it would disturb us to see a person who espoused practices and beliefs contrary to the teachings of Christ honored in such a way. A leading contender for replacing Andrew Jackson is Margaret Sanger. Sanger founded



Planned Parenthood, sought to sterilize people she called “human weeds.” She published articles by Ernst Rubin, the head of Hitler’s eugenics program and spoke at a Ku Klux Klan rally. Surely most of us do not want to be reminded of that part of America’s past every time we get a \$20 bill. Source: *Citizen Magazine*, May 2015, page 9.

GAY PARENTING BOOK BACKFIRES. A heavily promoted children’s book by gays is titled *Heather Has Two Mommies*. The book is the story of Heather Barwick, who was raised by her mother and her mother’s lesbian partner. Ms. Barwick is now a wife and mother of four children herself and has written on The Federalist website about her past. “I ached every day for a dad,” she writes. She added that same-sex marriage “necessarily denies us something precious and foundational. It denies us something we need and long for, while at the same time tells us we don’t need what we naturally crave. That we will be okay. But we’re not.”

TAX STATUS BECOMING ATHEIST GOVERNMENT TOOL OF ATTACK. Churches and non-profits carry a 501(c)3 charity designation. This allows churches not to have to pay income tax, and donors can claim donations as deductions on their tax returns. Atheists are now using the courts to punish churches or action groups who promote positions the atheists oppose. By suing or even just bringing public attention to something controversial, an accusation of “discrimination” can be used to get the 501(c)3 charity designation revoked. In 1970, Bob Jones University had its tax-exempt status removed because the school had an interracial dating policy. In 2007, a United Methodist church/ministry had its tax-exempt status removed because it refused to allow a same-sex couple to perform a “commitment ceremony” in the church’s pavilion. Look for more attacks on churches and ministries brought by atheists through the IRS. It comes back to a famous historical quote, “I may not agree with what you say, but I will defend your right to say it.” That is apparently no longer true in the United States of America. Source: *Citizen Magazine*, June/July 2015, page 15.

CHRISTIANITY FADING? Pew Research Center has released a survey showing that those Americans identifying themselves as Christian has dropped nearly eight percent from seven years ago. The study reports that 23 percent indicate no religious affiliation but of this group only about a third call themselves atheists. The movement towards secularism in our world is very clear, and the need to bring evidence to all ages in our culture is huge. Source: *The Week*, May 29, 2015, page 17, and *Time*, May 25, 2015, page 15.

UFOS AND POLLUTION. For some 30 years there have been numerous claims of UFOs lighting up the sky in Hessdalen, Norway. Thousands of UFO enthusiasts converge on the town to see these strange, mysterious lights. Recent studies of the area by scientists have shown that metallic emanations from mines that are the basis of the town's economy are the cause of the lights. This is not to suggest that there is no possibility of life in outer space, but all UFO claims have turned out to have natural explanations, or are the work of humans. Sometimes they are deliberate hoaxes. In this case, they may be caused by pollution and human greed. Source: *Time Magazine*, June 1, 2015, page 4.

NEANDERTHALS—APES, HUMAN, OR SUBHUMAN. For well over 50 years, a debate has raged among scientists as to whether Neanderthals were a species of humans, apes, or some kind of link. As a kid, I remember Neanderthals portrayed as rather pathetic looking, hunched-over brutes. We have since found that those images were based on a specimen crippled by arthritis. The Bible indicates humans arrived on the scene uniquely human in every way. One question was whether Neanderthals created objects reflecting worship, art, and musical expression. In March, researchers announced the finding of eagle claws that have been fashioned into a necklace. Tool marks on the claws leave no doubt about the fashioning of the claws and string made of twisted fibers have also been found. Adam was primitive and ignorant, but he was creative and intelligent. The recent finds are from the earliest forms of the Neanderthals, and Adam's remains might be identified from that time or perhaps even earlier. The cultural evidence of the first humans being created in God's image and able to create symbolic objects and worship is strong. Source: *Science News*, April 15, 2015, page 7.

MORE ON NEANDERTHALS. A recent find in Romania of an ancient human jawbone reveals that the DNA of this ancient human was over 6% Neanderthal. This reinforces the view that Neanderthals were a race of humans, not an ape, or some kind of link. We continue to suggest that all of the finds of *Homo* that are made are races of humans, not some different species. Sources: *USA Today*, June 23, 2015, Page B-1 and *Nature*, June 2015.

MARIJUANA USE EXPANDS. In the June 2015 issue of *National Geographic* is a 25-page article on marijuana, primarily emphasizing the potential beneficial use of the drug. There is no question that there are chemicals in marijuana that can have positive use in some treatment programs. Cannabidiol (CBD) in various forms can be used to treat seizures and has no psychoactive effect

on humans. Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) has been studied in some detail and has been shown to treat many disorders including glaucoma, Crohn's disease, Tourette's syndrome, and asthma. What is unfortunate is that like all plant material, marijuana can be misused and is destructive when used as a recreational drug. THC has been shown to alter the growth of the brain in young people. It can produce anxiety attacks and trigger schizophrenia. The smoke from the plant can have devastating long-term effects on the lungs. AAA reports a 50% increase in the involvement of marijuana in weekend drivers since 2007. God has given mankind many materials that can be used to improve our lives. When we misuse these materials—be it alcohol, or marijuana, or other plant materials—they can bring tragic consequences.



GLOBAL WARMING AND THE BIBLE. It is distressing to see people connecting the Bible with issues tied to global warming and climate change. Articles in religious journals and apologetic material attacking scientific reports about climate issues are most unfortunate. God has not made belief about climate a condition of faithfulness. The integrity of the Bible does not rest with whether the earth warmed by 1.5 degrees since the industrial revolution began. Introducing issues that have no spiritual or biblical connection is to cloud the picture of the real issues. The data is clear that we are experiencing global warming, and climates are changing. That has happened in the past, and it is happening now. Whether human influences are significant or not can be debated, but not biblically. Science and faith are friends. Our faith should motivate us to do our part to preserve what God has given us. Arguing about causes and political issues is not a way to give an answer of the reason for the hope that is within us (1 Peter 3:15).

INTERESTING QUOTE BY FAMOUS EVOLUTIONIST. Jane Goodall is famous for her work with chimpanzees and has advocated chimp rights and a concern for all living things. In *Reader's Digest* (June 2015, page 29) Ms. Goodall said, "You may not believe in evolution, and that's all right. How we humans came to be the way we are is far less important than how we should act now to get out of the mess we have made for ourselves." We would suggest that the mess of sin is our most critical thing to clean up. "Survival of the fittest" does not seem to this writer to be a way to make a difference in cleaning up any mess.

NEW ATHEISM AUTHOR GETS REAL. Alex Rosenberg is a philosopher at Duke University and author of a book titled *The Atheist's Guide to Reality: Enjoying Life Without Illusions*. Instead of trying to portray the New Atheism as moral and altruistic and equal and/or superior to Christianity, Rosenberg comes to the real position that atheism ultimately has to take. He celebrates “scientism.” He says this means treating science as our exclusive guide to reality and nature. Rosenberg says atheists have to say there is no God, there is no purpose to the universe, there is no such thing as free-will, there is no difference between right and wrong or good and bad, and that anything goes in moral decisions. Rosenberg and Peter Singer, who we have mentioned previously in this journal, are atheists who take positions from which many atheists would like to distance themselves. In reality their view is where atheism ultimately takes you. Source: Rosenberg’s book is published by Norton, © 2011.

BEING CAREFUL ABOUT SCIENTIFIC CLAIMS. One of the problems that all of us have with scientific statements is knowing whether they are credible or not. A good example happened this past December when the *New York Times* reported on a study that showed that opponents of same-sex marriage often changed their minds “after talking for just 20 minutes to a gay person.” This study got worldwide attention. It has now been discovered that one of the authors faked the results. A study released in 1998 which related autism to childhood vaccines was based on falsified data. The problem is that journals tend to report hot topics, and funding tends to go to people who get results the public wants to hear. Both atheists and Christians need to avoid grabbing at something we want to believe without allowing confirmation of the data. Source: *The Week*, June 12, 2015, page 17.

CHIMP CONFINEMENT EQUAL TO SLAVERY? The Nonhuman Rights Project is a group opposing the confinement of chimpanzees. Steven Wise, president of the group, maintains that chimps have “personhood” and should be freed from all captivity. Wise pointed out that in the 1800s Native Americans and blacks were denied personhood. He insisted that chimps, elephants, dolphins, bonobos, and orangutans are also cognitively advanced beings and should be granted personhood status under the same laws that prohibited confinement of blacks and Native Americans. Wise and his cohorts want the chimps moved to a sanctuary in Florida. It would seem to this writer that doing so would still be confinement, and it would be in a hot, bug infested environment instead of an air conditioned medically secure home. Maybe the chimps will sue Wise and his cohorts for cruelty. Source: *Houston Chronicle*, May 28, 2015, page A4.

OVERBLOWN BLOOD CELL CLAIMS. There have been many creationist claims about the discovery of dinosaur red blood cells. The new *Jurassic Park* movie has brought a growing public interest in whether cloning of dinosaurs is about to happen. All of this is without merit. The claim about Gorgosaurus having red blood cells preserved in a toe claw is not true. What was found was some fibers that appear to be from red blood cells and collagen. Finding some fibers does not mean there were cells or that any DNA was found. No fossils have contained any evidence of intact DNA. In a similar way, there have been fibers found of feathers and muscles, and while these give enough evidence to say that there were feathers, it is not the original material. This is useful scientifically but is not a help in deciphering DNA or cloning a dinosaur. Source: *The Week*, June 26, 2015, page 18.

NEW SPECIES IN OCEANS. A four-year study of ocean samples from the Arctic to Antarctica has revealed 35,000 organisms previously unknown to science. This gives us some idea of how little we know about life in the sea. These tiny forms of life are vital to the food chains and produce many resources such as oxygen that we depend on. Source: *The Week*, June 19, 2015, page 18.

NEW AMAZING DETAILS ON FETAL DEVELOPMENT.

The more amazing things we learn about how the baby develops in the mother's womb, the more of God's wisdom and planning we see being expressed. In *Scientific American* (July 2015, page 24) there is some new data we found interesting. The baby opens its eyes during the 28th week, and light filtering through the womb is critical for neuron and blood vessel development. Smell and taste have developed by the 15th week, and the baby's tastes are affected by what their mothers ate and what was close to the womb. Hearing develops by the 27th week, and features of their native language such as rhythm



9 weeks after conception

and intonation are acquired. Touch develops as early as seven weeks and babies move swinging their umbilical cords, climbing the wall of the amniotic sac, and putting limbs into their mouths. It is difficult how anyone can deny these humans are human when they do so many things that have meaning. Source: *Houston Chronicle*, May 28, 2015, page A4.

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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