



DOES GOD EXIST?

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

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE SEASON!

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In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. ... The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.

John 1:1-2, 14 (NIV)

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One of the ironies of the Christmas season is the fact that it is not attacked just by atheists and skeptics who view it as an attempt to force religion on the population, but it is also attacked by conservative Christians. Their attack has to do with the historical implications of celebrating the birth of Jesus on December 25. Their complaints revolve around the fact that Jesus almost certainly was not born in December, that the celebration is not taught in the Bible by command or example, and that the date almost certainly had something to do with pagan observations of the winter solstice. When you add to that the local unbiblical cultural activities and the commercialization of the holiday, there is a wealth of material to support negative sermons about the Christmas celebration.

All of these objections by both atheists and conservative Christians are inconsistent. I have never heard an atheist complain about the civil rights movement because it promoted religion. The leaders of the civil rights movement were, for the most part, religious leaders who invoked God in their speeches and actions. Most of the religious conservatives who oppose Christmas do not complain about church potluck dinners, which could be objected to the same basis as objections to Christmas.

I would suggest to the reader that Christmas is important, and in no way compromises faith in God or the Bible as his Word. It is difficult to read Paul's writings in Romans 14 and not see that this is what Paul would say about the issue of Christmas. Paul writes "One man considers some days to be more sacred than others while another considers all days to be alike. On questions of this kind, everyone must decide for himself. The man who values a particular day does it in the Lord's honor and he that does not regard the day, to the Lord he does not regard it" (verses 5–6). Later in the

chapter, Paul gives a general principle of our conduct. “Do not let what is right for you become a matter of reproach, for the Kingdom of God does not consist in eating and drinking, but of righteousness and peace and gladness through the presence of the Holy Spirit. He who serves Christ in this way pleases God, and wins the approval of his fellow man. Let us, therefore, keep before us whatever will contribute to peace and the things which belong to the upbuilding one of another” (verses 16–19).

Let us consider on an intuitive level why the Christmas season is important to us. We all know that the season allows commercialization and greed to be expressed in bizarre ways, but consider the following positive things about the season.

THE CHRISTMAS SEASON IS A CATALYST FOR ARTISTIC EXPRESSION.

The Christmas season has brought to all of human culture wonderful artistic, and musical expressions. *The Last Supper* by Leonardo da Vinci painted in 1495 is based on John 13:21. Mi-



chelangelo's *The Creation of Adam* painted between 1508 and 1512 brings us a unique display of a talent inspired by his faith. *The Messiah* and especially the “Hallelujah Chorus” composed in 1741 by George Frideric Handel is unquestionably one of the greatest compositions ever made by anyone. Johann Se-

bastian Bach in 1734 composed the *Christmas Oratorio* including *Epiphany* which certainly was one of his greatest compositions. Charles Dickens wrote *A Christmas Carol* in 1843 which is one of the great Christmas stories of all time. In modern times we have had literally hundreds of great songs, great stories, and great artworks inspired by the season.

THE CHRISTMAS SEASON MOVES US TO GIVE, WHICH BRINGS US JOY.

As an adult, what brings me the most joy in the holiday season? Is it some gift that I get from someone? I can promise you that my greatest joy is being able to bring gifts to my grandchildren that excites them and which I can see them enjoying through the year. It is an emotional time for me when I see someone in my community get a gift that comes when they have had a terrible year. Our local radio



stations and civic groups regularly seek out opportunities during the holiday season to give to a person who has had a string of bad luck or has been victimized by things beyond their control. Paul in Acts 20:35 tells us of a statement of Christ that is not in the gospels, “There is a greater blessing in giving than receiving.” While it is true that we should be giving all year long, Christmas brings people together regardless of their belief or lack of belief to meet real

needs and enjoy the blessing that Jesus was speaking about.

THE CHRISTMAS SEASON IS A CATALYST FOR UNITY.

The unity brought about by giving to meet needs is also promoted by the Christmas season. Jesus prayed for unity (John 17:11 – 23), and Christmas can be a time for forgiveness and giving that brings the unity for which Jesus prayed. One of the great stories of the past involves a Christmas when from the German lines during combat there came the singing of “Silent Night.” On the Allied side, the song was picked up and soon both sides were singing the great Christmas carol. The story says that soldiers on both sides stood up without their guns and walked towards each other sharing their common beliefs about the season. The spirit of unity became so strong that the military leaders on both sides panicked and broke up the meeting. Whether the story is true or not, there is no question that followers of Jesus are more likely to be united when celebrating an event which emphasizes God’s love for us, and those things that we have in common.

THE CHRISTMAS SEASON IS A REMINDER OF THE IMPORTANCE OF FAMILY.

We all know Christmas songs that emphasize the value of family. “I’ll Be Home for Christmas” probably tops the list. Most of us have some melancholy about Christmases in the past. Christmas is a time of security and love.



In our world of chaos and change, Christmas brings back a memory of more peaceful times. Christmas reminds us that our roots give us a recognition of who we are and what our lives have been built on.

THE CHRISTMAS SEASON IS A CURE FOR MIDWINTER DEPRESSION.

Critics of the celebration of Christmas have correctly pointed out that pagans before Christ had a celebration of the shortest day of the year. They celebrated by feasting, giving gifts, and meeting



with friends and family to give encouragement during the long winter. Living here in Michigan where the winter can seem to go on forever, it is easy to understand “mid-winter depression.” The fact that pagans combated that with a special celebration on the shortest day of the year does not mean it was wrong

or destructive. To remember a special spiritual event at a time of feasting and celebrating adds a spiritual dimension to combating depression. Our society has invented special days to meet the needs of society, including Memorial Day, Mother’s Day, Father’s Day, Grandparents Day, Valentines Day, Veterans Day, etc. If Christmas carols, stories, and giving can encourage and uplift us, as Paul says in Romans 13, “do it to the Lord.”

THE CHRISTMAS SEASON IS A CATALYST FOR GRATITUDE.

Christians are instructed to have an attitude of gratitude. We are told, “... in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God” (Philippians 4:6). “Devote yourselves to prayer and be both alert and thankful as you pray” (Colossians 4:2). “I am urging that supplications, prayers, petitions and thanksgivings should be offered for all mankind” (1 Timothy 2:1).

The Christmas season seems to be the time when more prayers are offered for humanity than any other time of year. Perhaps we better realize our own affluence when we see what we and



others can buy and then turn on our televisions and see what people in other parts of the world are having to deal with. We have to be overwhelmed with the question of why we are so blessed. It should be easy to realize this at any time of year, but the celebration of the birth of Christ seems to bring us face to face with the source of our blessings.

THE CHRISTMAS SEASON REMINDS US THAT GOD CARES ENOUGH ABOUT US TO BECOME A MAN.

John 1 reminds us that God came to Earth. Verse 14 tells us plainly, “The Word became flesh and came to dwell among us in the splendor as of a father’s only Son, full of grace and truth.” The first ten verses of John 1 remind us that

Jesus was involved in the creation, and Colossians

1:12–17 reinforces that concept. John

3:16 tells us that God’s love is what

prompted this act which blessed us in

such an incredible way. The emphasis

on manger scenes and stories about Mary and

Joseph remind us of the miraculous conception and birth

of Jesus in humble surroundings. The

really incredible part of the story is that

“God became flesh and dwelt among us.”



THE CHRISTMAS SEASON REMINDS US OF WHY WE EXIST.

The purpose of human existence is a question that the secular world likes to debate over and over. Atheism has no answer, and man-made religions give answers that do not make sense, such as suggesting that God was lonely or bored. The Christmas story should remind us that God does not do anything in vain. “For the Lord who created the heavens says that God himself created the earth and made it; he established it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited” (Isaiah 45:18). Ephesians 3:9–11 tells us, “From the beginning of the world this mystery has been hidden away in God who created all things, so that the archangels and to all the powers

on high should now see the complex wisdom of God’s plan being worked out through the church in accordance with that purpose which runs through all the ages and which he has now accomplished in Jesus Christ.” Ephesians 6:12 tells us that this purpose is not involved with flesh and blood “but against all the various powers of evil that hold sway in the darkness around us, and against huge numbers of wicked spirits in the spirit world.”

There is a war going on and the enemy uses spiritual terrorism. We were created to be participants in that war. Job 1 and 2 give us a quick glance at that war. We are Job (or Jobette) in the twenty-first century. Our lives are full of purpose and meaning because we are part of an eternal struggle that makes anything Stephen King dreamed up fade into insignificance. The Christmas season reminds us that evil is real and that we have a role in defeating it. As we immerse ourselves in the Christmas holiday, we should be able to understand Job’s conclusion of all that happened to him, “I have heard of you by the hearing of the ear: but now my eye sees you” (Job 42:5).

—John N. Clayton

Biblical quotes from *The New Testament From 26 Translations*, Curtis Vaughn Editor, Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, Michigan.



Ephesians 6:12 tells us that this purpose is not involved with flesh and blood “but against all the various powers of evil that hold sway in the darkness around us, and against huge numbers of wicked spirits in the spirit world.”

DECADENT AMERICA AND 21ST CENTURY EVANGELISM



We live in a very unusual time. It is not unusual regarding what is taking place, because war, political upheaval, and immorality have always been a part of human existence on Earth. It is also not unusual regarding goodness, because no matter how bad things have gotten in the past, there have always been those who did the right thing and maintained a positive relationship with God. One is reminded of the ancient prophet Elijah who told God that he was the only faithful person left. God's response was, "Yet I reserve seven thousand in Israel—all whose knees have not bowed down to Baal ..." (1 Kings 19:14–18). Even in the account of Sodom and Gomorrah, there was Lot trying to maintain his relationship with God in a culture that seemed to have hit the moral bottom.

What is unique about the time in which we live are the tools available to God's people to meet the disintegration of our culture. When I was a new Christian, I was blessed to be brought into a congregation of God's people that had great elders who truly shepherded us as a body. Charles Hoggatt was one of those men, and one of his favorite motivational tools was to take a white sheet of paper and put a small red dot on the page. He would then hold it up and ask you what you saw. The response was usually, "I see a red dot." He would then ask, "Why did you not see a white sheet of paper?" The point, of course, was that when you look different from what is around you, you can become "this little light" of God.

Last winter (2016) we had the opportunity to get away from Michigan's ice and snow in January and spend ten days in the Florida

panhandle. This is an area of white beaches and beautiful water teeming with waterfowl, porpoises, and all kinds of fish. It is a wonderful place for a family vacation. There are also twenty-five-story hotels, lavish restaurants, lots of bars, huge swimming pools, and stores such as “King Condom” that flash all kinds of invitations for immersion into sin. One of the locals told me that they were gearing up for “Sodom Week” when spring break occurs at many colleges and massive numbers of college students descend on the beach front for what can only be described as a “wide-open orgy.” It is also a financial re-



prieve for local merchants from the “winter crowd” that is dominated by snowbirds like us.

What response can we as Christians make to all of this? I come back to Charles Hoggatt’s red dot on the white paper. One of the good experiences we had while in Panama City Beach was meeting believers who were not a part of “Sodom Week.” These folks were offering alternatives to the sin activities that dominate the commercial establishment. One couple had opened a Christian Retreat Resort which did not cater to those with money, but to those with a desire to enjoy the beauty of the area around them and spend time in prayer, devotion, and reflection. Another family had opened a very unusual miniature golf complex which did not allow liquor or profanity on the course. These were individuals offering alternatives to people in the world. While they were very quiet and not flashy, the people who live in the area knew what they were doing, and it spoke loudly for Jesus Christ.

We were especially encouraged by the fact that some Christian college students were making arrangements to open a booth to offer alternatives to “Sodom Week.” They had purchased a space in the middle of the activity center and were providing counseling personnel and free materials on matters relevant to college-age young people. These included a section on God’s view of sex and marriage, what is your purpose in being alive, finding a career, dealing with depression, and dealing with homosexuality. They also offered materials in apologetics ranging from how we know God exists to which God and which holy book is true. This reminded me of the

beach evangelism that took place in the 1970s when many of us spent spring break talking to college students on the beaches about Christianity and faith in God.

When I offered to help publicize their work, I was refused because they already had more than they could handle, and because they did not want to be identified with what one young man called “stagnant,



introverted Christianity.” I have spent a lot of time mulling over that phrase. On Sunday we visited a local congregation that meets in a very nice building and has elders, a full-time preacher, and about 140 in attendance. The Bible study was biblical (which is not always the case), and

a good lecture was given. The sermon was biblical and was on how pain disciplines Christians. The announced topic for future classes was “Everything You Wanted to Know About the Church,” and the outline of the subject matter was about “us.”

It is so easy for me to want to be a part of looking at me—at “us.” It is so easy for me to want to hear only what I have heard before. It is so easy to want my emotional and spiritual back to be scratched by listening to topics that do not require me to think or study or apply in a practical way what God teaches. It is so easy for me to stagnate and only to look inward.

Twenty-first-century evangelism involves breaking away from that. Going to a building three times a week is not likely to be evangelistically fruitful. We need to do it because we need

The Does God Exist? ministry has hit a gold mine of opportunities on the web.

the fellowship, learning, and encouragement it gives, but it is not evangelism. When Paul spoke evangelistically, it was not in a church building, and his topics were not subjects designed to placate the brethren. I am persuaded that the church in Laodicea was a “stagnant, introverted” congregation, and Jesus said they made him sick (see Revelation 3:14–21).

It is so easy to be the “red dot” in today’s world. We can be a booth at the local fair, on the beach, at the mall, in the university commons, or at the local street carnival that speaks to the relevant

issues of our day. We can speak in forums and assemblies on topics people care about. A special tool available to us in the twenty-first century is the internet. The **Does God Exist?** ministry has hit a gold mine of opportunities on the web. In the 46 years that we have done lectureships on college and university campuses and in public town-hall meetings, having 1,000 people show up for a presentation was a really large crowd. Today on our websites the number of people we are talking with is well over 100,000 and up to a quarter of a million every week. On our Facebook page the vast majority are on mobile devices such as tablets and phones, and they are all over the world. Over half are under age 24. We urge our readers to spend some time on our websites and Facebook page. The web addresses are on the next page. We have done this with a minimum of advertising, but we have been doing it for a very long time. Our doesgodexist.org website is one of the oldest sites on the web.

Local congregations can prepare websites and Facebook page outreaches. They can develop relevant materials on their own or link to our sites or others. You may have a teenager or college student in your congregation who can handle the technical part of setting up the sites. Business cards, newspaper ads, billboards, and mass mailings can greatly increase the outreach. Be prepared to have lots of inquiries and lots of questions to answer on the web. The “fields are ripe unto harvest” but we need to use the tools God has given us and strive not be a part of “stagnant, introverted” congregations like the one at Laodicea. The red dot we represent is the blood of Christ, the one answer to the problems of a lost and a dying world.

—JNC



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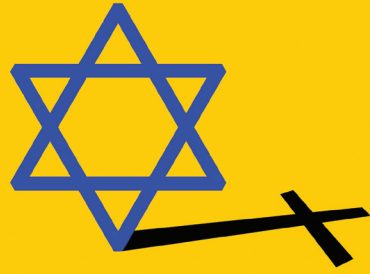
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Every day we post an example of design in nature or some other evidence of God.

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FROM JUDAISM TO CHRISTIANITY



by Stephen D. Eckstein, Jr.

Editor's Note

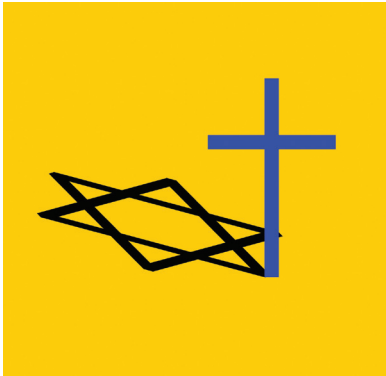
It is always encouraging to hear the conversion stories of others. Over the years Dr. Stephen Eckstein, Jr. has written articles for this journal. Dr. Eckstein was head of the Bible Department at Michigan Christian College (now called Rochester College) in Rochester, Michigan. Dr. Eckstein's father was raised as an Orthodox Jew but came to Christ in 1920 and for 55 years was an effective minister to modern Jews. We hope you will enjoy and learn from both his conversion story and his teaching about Judaism.

My father was born into an Orthodox Jewish home of three brothers and one sister in Latvia in 1893. After his Bar Mitzvah at age 13, he attended Rabbinical School but had to withdraw for financial reasons. He was sent to an uncle in Cleveland, Ohio, in 1912. To his chagrin and horror, he was plunged into a Reformed Jewish home where the Sabbath and other laws were never observed. After a short time on a job which desecrated the Sacred Sabbath, he turned away in utter disillusionment to become a vagabond—hopping freight cars and wandering from one part-time job to another. For several years he wandered aimlessly throughout the country. He finally tired of that life and decided to commit suicide.

Just before carrying out his plan in Pittsburgh, a rain storm drove him momentarily under the awning of a Jewish Christian mission. Horrified, he was ready to curse the director when the man came out with SHALOM (PEACE) and he asked him to come in to dry his clothes. After a gracious introduction, a warm meal, and the promise of a job, a friendship began. Slowly friendship deepened until the director introduced my father to the New Testament—a-once-in-a-

lifetime experience. As he read through the Gospel of Matthew with a vivid recall of the Old Testament scriptures from rabbinical school, my father became convinced Jesus was the Messiah. However when the director explained he had been baptized in the Seine River in Paris and baptism was necessary to become a Christian, my father rebelled with all his might.

With bitterness and sorrow, he went to Denver where he obtained a job in a bakery. There, C. A. McDonald of the Highland Church came to buy bread and befriended my father. Using a Hebrew New Testament and patiently teaching the novice, he explained that loyalty to the Lord must preempt all other loyalties (Matthew 10:35–38).



Eventually, the overwhelming evidence of the gospel led my father to descend into the liquid grave and arise a new creature in his blessed Lord on April 9, 1920.

For the next fifty-five years, he endeavored to proclaim the unsearchable riches of the Messiah to his kinsmen in the flesh. He was privileged to witness twenty-four of them immersed into Christ before he fell asleep in Jesus in 1975. He, together with a host of saints, awaits the glorious resurrection when Jesus will come to raise his own (1 Corinthians 15:42–50; 1 Thessalonians 4:13–17). Until then, the gospel calls for all who will come to Jesus.





O, JERUSALEM, JERUSALEM!

by Stephen D. Eckstein, Sr.
Published in *20th Century Christian*
in 1963

Judaism “O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments! then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea” (Isaiah 48:18 KJV).

In the beginning, God ordained for his chosen people, the Jews, a way of life. If the teachings and prophecies of that life had been accepted and followed, they would have been led to the better and Living Way, which appeared when the “fulness of time was come” (Galatians 4:4). Instead, there arose doctors of the law (Rabbis) who set about to establish a righteousness of their own. They compiled a voluminous work of laws—613 precepts which take in every branch of Jewish lore recorded in the Talmud. The Talmud is the record of the oral law and the commentaries of numerous rabbis. Thus, the Jews en masse left the Old Testament with its law, teaching, and prophecy. As a result, most Jews had no knowledge of the Scriptures and followed these leaders into spiritual darkness. Paul described their state in the first century in Romans 10:3, “For they being ignorant of God’s righteousness and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.” Unfortunately, this condition still exists for most of them.

JUDAISM IS BUT A TALMUDIC SYSTEM

Today, Judaism is but a Talmudic system built by the Rabbis. There are three observances which bind Jews together—“the rite of circumcision,” the “Sabbath,” and “Jahrzeit” (memorial prayers on the anniversary of the death of their father and mother). Generally, Jews will attend synagogue on three Jewish holidays—New Year, Day of Atonement, and Passover.

Let us examine more closely Jahrzeit. In large Jewish communities, there are bureaus where a Jew who is apt to let the observance pass may register in order to be reminded at the approach of the anniversary. Strange as it may seem to us, this day of remembrance takes on a different significance to a Jew even though he may not have observed the three holidays. As he enters the synagogue on Jahrzeit, the ground becomes holy to him. He is overwhelmed. Standing before the symbolic ark where the candles are lighted, he reverently recites the sacred prayer, "Kaddish" (a prayer recited in intercession for the dead). His emotions are unmingled as he pours out his heart to God. The effect upon him is incomprehensible to the non-Jew and is proof of the power of the traditions of men.

TRADITIONS

To a Jew, all in the western world who are not Jews are Christians. Therefore, Christianity is charged with being responsible for the atrocities and calamities which they have suffered. Throughout their existence, Jews have been denied a place upon the earth and have been driven from pillar to post. Millions of innocent men, women, and children have been tortured and burned alive. Through many centuries, the traditional concepts and customs which they have observed, they believe, have



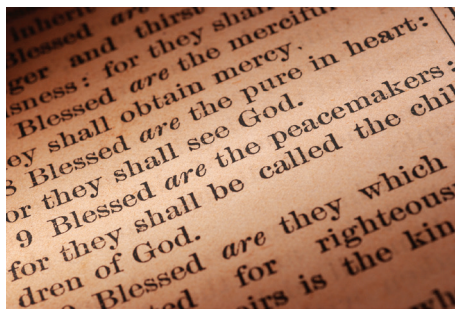
helped them to survive. The countless traditions of men are so interwoven into Jewish life that they are inseparable. One without the other is unthinkable. This has tremendous significance in creating the

animosity that prevails against Christians. Instinctively, the subject of Jesus as the Messiah arouses in them contempt and hatred. (The Jewish prejudices against Christians are only from a religious aspect, and should not be taken in any other way. This must be stressed.)

The countless traditions of men are so interwoven into Jewish life that they are inseparable.

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

It is vitally important that Jews see genuine Christianity lived before them. They long for the portrayal of the substance and principle set forth in the Sermon on the Mount. The Sermon on the Mount is



extremely important. It is a classic, praised and eulogized even by Jews as a pearl of literature. The manifestation of its teaching would be as ground work in leading them to him who is sinless, compassionate, and always ready to forgive. Even when he was upon the cross, he not only forgave them himself

but also asked the Father to forgive. No finer or nobler attribute can be imagined. This gracious attitude, blending in an expression of love and mercy, has a telling effect upon the Jew and helps to melt away the barriers of deep-seated enmity.

THE GOSPEL AND THE JEW

Truth crystallized! That “Hebrew of the Hebrews,” Saul, who adhered to the Jewish religion with sincere conviction and blameless good faith, became Paul, the apostle. And even Paul lived no longer, but Christ lived in him. Jesus had become his source of faith, courage, and fortitude, even when he faced the Roman executioner. There was no insincerity in his fearlessness. His decisions were motivated by real valor. He was willing to give his uttermost so that his kinsmen might accept Jesus as the Sin-Bearer, the Messiah. Paul says, “the gospel is the power (*duna-mis*) of God unto salvation” (Romans 1:16). Paul knew Jews, perhaps including his classmates, who had sat at the feet of Rabbi Gamaliel, drunk deeply at the fountain of knowledge, and picked up the grains of wisdom, who too had been converted. Their conversion, as well as Paul’s, demonstrated that Christianity is divine and should have weight with the Jews. May the Lord open their eyes that more and more Jews may accept Jesus as Messiah and Lord of Lords!

MOTIVATED BY LOVE

As Christians, love must be the controlling element of our every action. Our ambitions and desires must be to fulfill our privilege to bring all the Good News. It is an eternal responsibility. It is indisputable that hundreds of references in the Old Testament foretold of Jesus the Messiah in the most minute details. Having been fulfilled, these Messianic prophecies as recorded in the New Testament de-

serve unbiased investigation! The Jew is ignorant: he simply does not understand. Saul, prior to his conversion, ignorantly, energetically persecuted the church. By kindness, prudence, and patience, it can be proved from their own Scripture that Jesus is the promised Messiah. Nicodemus, a strict rabbi, a man of great learning, politically and socially prominent, sought an interview with Jesus. He recognized him as a man from God. Jesus said to him, “Except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.” Nicodemus was greatly surprised. The Savior continued, “Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things.” What a stern and yet loving rebuke! Error must be corrected, or else truth cannot be imparted. In like manner, with firmness and love, let us emulate our Lord in telling the good news of our Savior.

BAPTISM

The Jew associates baptism only with Christians. Any Jew who is baptized is cut off from other Jews. He may suffer persecution for his submission to the divine command. Therefore, the mere mention of baptism is loathsome and revolting to the Jew. It throws him into shock! To the Jew, it is the crux, the acid test, Christianity in the nutshell. It is hard to explain to a non-Jew.



CHRISTIANITY STANDS OUT

As Jesus reflected the glory of the Father, so “Christianity stands out” as his followers reflect the glory of the Son. Being animated by invisible and boundless forces of spiritual light, the Christ-life radiates from us. As the Jew sees it, he will be overwhelmingly affected. The Jews can be reached by personal contact as we carry to them the consuming truth, the gospel of Christ.

Many years ago I was held by the traditions of Judaism but came to know the vanity of all this. Christ has borne all our sins in his body on the tree. Therefore, these voluminous traditions with their terrifying power now have been forgotten. What is true with the writer, is true, and can be true with any other. With love and devotion put into action, our example becomes a powerful teacher to precious souls all-around us. “Christianity stands out!” What a challenge to Judaism! Stephen D. Eckstein, Sr. also wrote *From Sinai to Calvary: An Autobiography*.

Look us up at www.doesgodexist.org

SCIENTISTS AND GOD

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

D. H. R. BARTON
(1918 – 1998)

English Organic Chemist and 1969
Nobel Prize winner for development of
the concept of conformation in Chemistry.



“There is no incompatibility between science and religion. Both are seeking the same truth. Science shows that God exists.” “Our universe is infinitely large and infinitely small. It is infinite in time past and time future. We can never understand infinity. It is the ultimate truth, which is God.” “When scientists can make numerous repeatable experiments or observations, they establish truth. Religion seldom wishes to make experiments and the truth that is accepted is often divine intervention of God in the affairs of man. However, what is written is written by man, with the liability of human frailty. The observations and

experiments of science are so wonderful that the truth they establish can surely be accepted as another manifestation of God. God shows himself by allowing man to establish truth.”

“There have frequently been occasions when I was able to imagine truth that seems to have been hidden from others. Was I an instrument, of modest dimensions, chosen by God? I, of course, do not know. Also, I have no understanding of life after death. Man has always wanted to believe that there is another form of life, a place where the soul would find a welcome. There is room for this hope, but it surely will not be in a form that we can, in our human frailty, imagine or understand.”

Cynthia's Corner



THE IMPORTANCE OF THE SEASON

Unfortunately, as with all holidays, we may overlook the reason for the holiday and just be thankful for the time off. Kids get off school and adults get a break from work. Our hope with this issue is to encourage each one of us to think about what the holiday stands for and what that means for each one of us personally.

Thanksgiving, traditionally, was a day to celebrate the abundance of the harvest with family and close friends. Most of us living in this country have abundant material blessings, and all of us have the opportunity to better our lives and the lives of our children. We have free public schools and free libraries, and technology allows most of us access to free information. With education comes opportunities to enrich our lives. The fact that we live in a country where we are free to do what we want, within the constraints of our laws, is an amazing blessing we often take for granted. I hope each one of us counts our many blessings, not only on Thanksgiving but every day we are alive.

Christmas is a Christian holiday focused on the birth of Jesus Christ. The reason we give gifts on Christmas is because God, the Creator, “loved us so much that he gave us his only Son” (John 3:16). John 1:1, 14 says, “The Word [God] became flesh.” Jesus Christ, the man and the Son of God, “laid down his life for us” (1 John 3:16). Jesus willingly gave his life so that we could be “reconciled to God” (2 Corinthians 5:18–21).

Christmas is a time of gift-giving and love. “Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another” (1 John 4:11). I cannot think of a more timely or needed message in our world today. But it is a message that must be internalized and acted upon individually in each of our lives. Maybe, if each one of us takes that message to heart and starts to show more kindness, patience, and compassion for others, we can make this world a little better.

All of us at the **Does God Exist?** ministry wish all of you a joyous and peaceful holiday season full of love and gratitude.

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.

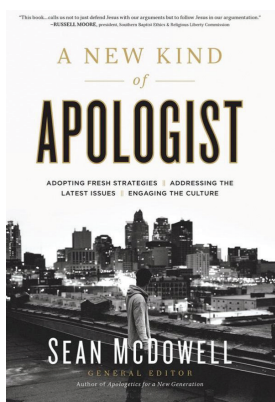
John 3:16-17 NIV



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.

A New Kind of Apologist

by Sean McDowell, Harvest House Publishers, ©2016,
304 pages, \$17.99 (paperback), ISBN-13: 978-0-7369-6605-4



This book is unique in its approach to apologetics. It was edited by Sean McDowell but contains many short essays by many (often young) apologists. A theme of this book is that we should approach the process of arguing for the truth of the Christian faith in a non-argumentative way. McDowell writes, “If we have the best argument but not love, our arguments will often fall on deaf ears (1 Corinthians 13:1–3).” He also says, “If you want to be a new kind of apologist, it is vital to build relationships with people of varying faiths so you can speak from a heart

of genuine care.”

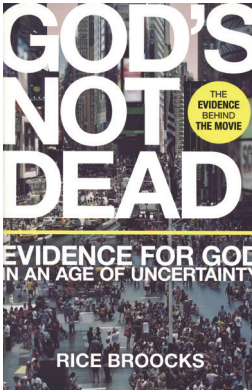
With that approach to apologetics, the essays in this book give strategies for sharing your faith with young people, multi-ethnics, urban liberals, sexually confused, homosexuals, transgenders, Muslims, and people of other religions. The essays were written by Christians who are experienced in working with those people groups. That includes the story of a former Muslim telling how he shared his Christian faith with a congregation of more than a thousand Muslims in a large Islamic center in Canada—and lived to tell about it. The writer of that essay was Abdu Murray, president of Embrace the Truth International. He said he prayed that night to “emulate the apostle Paul’s attitude toward non-Christians: ‘Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time. Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each *person*’ (Colossians 4:5–6, emphasis added).” He pointed out that Paul is not telling us we need to know

how to answer *each question*, he is telling us to answer *each person*. To do that we need to know them and care about them.

This book deals with how to respond to young people who have seen the anti-faith websites and how we can use new technologies such as internet blogs, Youtube videos, and social media to present apologetic arguments. However, the strong emphasis is on “Servant Apologetics.” As is often said, “People don’t care how much we know until they know how much we care.” This book will challenge your thinking on how to present the gospel in a world hostile to its message.

God’s Not Dead

by Rice Brooks, W Publishing Group, ©2013,
279 pages, \$15.99 (paperback), ISBN 978-0-7180-3701-7



The subtitle of this book is “Evidence for God in an Age of Uncertainty.” Rice Brooks does a good job of presenting that evidence in a way that is easy for anyone to understand. Brooks was the apologetics consultant for the excellent movie *God’s Not Dead*.

Brooks uses illustrations from his own experience, quotes from unbelievers, and quotes from outstanding apologists such as William Lane Craig, Hugh Ross, and Ravi Zacharias. After dealing with the fact that “Real Faith Isn’t Blind” and “Good and Evil Are No Illusions” he goes into a discussion of the now proven scientific fact that “There Was a Beginning.” He starts that chapter with what sounds like a joke, “What did Moses know about the universe that Einstein didn’t?” The answer is, “That it began.” He brings out the fact (as the movie did) that from Aristotle to Einstein (over 2000 years) science believed that the universe was eternal. Moses tells us in verse one of Genesis that it had a beginning—something that science has learned only in recent years.

Brooks then goes on to present the evidence for the fact that “Life Is No Accident.” The complexity of “DNA: The Language of Life” indicates design. Anthony Flew, the leading atheist of his day, came to believe in the existence of God “almost entirely because of the DNA investigations.” Since life was designed, “Life Has Meaning and Purpose.”

Brooks continues by showing the evidence for “Jesus and Resurrection” and the veracity of “The Witness of Scripture.” He concludes by showing “The Grace Effect” in our world and how Christians today are “Living Proof” of God. We highly recommend this book.

Both reviews by Roland Earnst

DANDY DESIGNS



During the Christmas season when Santa Claus is making his yearly appearance in a wide variety of commercial appeals, there is frequently a group of reindeer surrounding Santa and perhaps even pulling a sleigh. I recently heard an exchange between a heckler and a department store Santa in which Santa was asked why he did not use Michigan whitetail deer instead of reindeer. The response was that the reindeer union was weaker at the North Pole so he could get them cheaper. Actually, reindeer are highly specialized animals that function beautifully in an environment where our Michigan deer would not stand a chance. While they are not at the earth's North Pole, reindeer live in a brutal climate with extreme conditions.

One obvious problem in a polar environment is the cold temperatures. Just inhaling when the air is 20 degrees below zero can be a destructive action. The reindeer nose has a long, narrow, bone structure called a turbinate bone which increases the surface area allowing air to be warmed before it enters the lungs. Water in the air is condensed and captured as the reindeer breathe. This allows the moisture to be absorbed into the blood through mucous membranes.

Daytime and nighttime are strange in the Arctic Circle since the sun is up for a matter of minutes in the winter and virtually all day in the summer. Most animals, and people, have a circadian rhythm that is based on changes in light during the day. This internal clock tells

us when to sleep, when to wake, and directs other body functions. Reindeer have no circadian rhythm, so they do not function on a 24-hour clock. Their activity during daytime or nighttime is determined by other factors, not by an internal clock. The long days and long nights are not an issue for reindeer as it would be for other animals. Reindeer have eyes that are specially designed to be sensitive in the ultraviolet range. This allows sharp vision in the harsh light on the snow, and it allows the reindeer to see things critical to its survival. A white wolf in the snow is readily visible to a reindeer even though its color is ideal for camouflage.

Traveling in the tundra is a special challenge. I have personally tried to walk on the tundra at different times of the year, and I can tell you how difficult it is. Tundra is soft, and you sink into it in summer. In the winter it is hard with crusty snow and ice making it very

slippery. Reindeer have footpads in summer that are soft and spongy. This gives them traction in the tundra. In winter the pads of the reindeer shrink exposing the rim of the hoof which will cut into ice and crusted snow to give traction. The reindeer dig into the snow to find lichen (called reindeer moss) leaving a depression—a process called “cratering” by the people who live in the area. Reindeer can run up to 40 mph and at one-day old they can outrun a human. If threatened, they can swim from 4 to 6 miles per hour.

As reindeer walk, their knees click due to tendons slipping, and the size of the knee determines the loudness of the

click. Reindeer use this to determine dominance, and the social structure of the herd is uncontested because of this. Animals this specialized are designed for a very specific environment. The reindeer design features allow them to exist in a place that requires an intelligent system planned to meet specific needs. God’s wisdom is displayed in a special way in the reindeer.

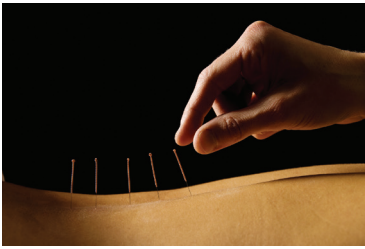


Look us up at www.doesgodexist.org

News and Notes

ATLANTIS BUILT BY MICROBES? For many decades there have been stories about a city built by aliens or advanced civilizations in the Mediterranean. In 2013 archaeologists found what appeared to be ancient stonework off the coast of Zakynthos, a Greek island. Recent studies by geochemists have shown that the structures were formed by microbes which take in methane and excrete carbonate minerals that form hollow structures and columns. There is no evidence of alien visitation to Earth, and attempts to explain away the biblical stories on that basis have no factual support. Source: *Science News*, August 6, 2016, page 5.

THE ACUPUNCTURE MYTH. Acupuncture is based on the concept of “qi,” a life-force that advocates say flows through the body along 20 distinct meridians. Blocked meridians are said to cause disease and pain. Putting a needle at specific points along the meridians are said to clear the blockages. Hundreds of thousands of Americans undergo acupuncture every year, and the U.S. government has poured over 100 million dollars into acupuncture programs since 2008.



Acupuncture was identified as a superstition in the 1600s and abandoned by Chinese scholars in the 1800s. Mao Zedong revived it in the 1950s, and it has since been incorporated into many eastern religions. Several new scientific studies are reported in *Scientific American*, August 2016, page 24. Their conclusion is that there “is no evidence that acupuncture is anything more than a theatrical placebo.” Eastern religions and medical treatments may be interesting, but they are not good alternatives to modern American medicine.

NEW CANDLE USEFUL TO ASTRONOMERS. Measuring huge distances in space is a difficult business. The triangulation methods we are all familiar with do not work because the triangle of galaxies far out in space is so narrow that the angles cannot be measured. For many years a method of measuring distance was used

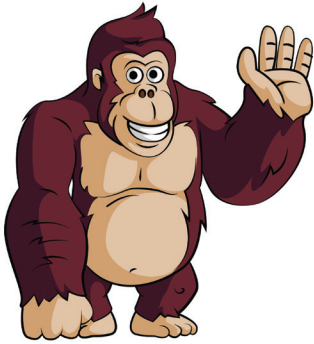
that depended on brightness. The farther away you get from a light source, the dimmer it becomes. The illumination an object gives is equal to its brightness divided by the distance squared. If you measure the illumination and know the brightness, you can calculate the distance. Astronomers now know that when a Type 1a supernova is produced by the explosion of a white dwarf star, the amount of energy produced is always the same. This gives a method of measuring distances vastly greater than what was possible by triangulation. Using this technique it has now been proven that the cosmos is accelerating in its expansion. That tells us that the cosmos had a specific beginning, and it will never collapse back into itself. It also tells us that when we witnessed what we call Supernova 1987A we saw an event that happened 168,000 years ago and the light from that event finally reached Earth in 1987. This information has significant value in discussions about God and the creation of space/time and matter/energy. Source: *Astronomy*, September 2016, page 63.

NOAH'S ARK EXHIBIT OFF AND RUNNING. July 7, 2016, was the opening day of Ark Encounter in Williamstown, Kentucky.

The replica of Noah's Ark is billed as "the largest timber frame structure in the world." It is 51 feet tall and longer than a football field (actually 1½ fields). The cost of building this structure was 102 million dollars, but the state of Kentucky granted a fourth of that in sales tax rebates. Admission to the ark costs \$28.00 for children and \$40 for adults, but some of the money is coming from a forced two-percent tax on employees gross wages. The creator of this project is Ken Ham who built the Creation Museum in northern Kentucky in 2007. Ham and his associates are promoters of dispensationalism, and the museum and the replica strongly promote their denominational views. Humans and dinosaurs are shown living together 6,000 years ago. Many of the claims of young-earth creationists are promoted. During the first six days, the Ark Encounter had about 30,000 visitors and expects to have two-million visitors during the first year. Ham has plans to build a Tower of Babel next. The denominational foundation of this exhibit causes a lot of bad theology and a great deal of bad science to be pushed on visitors. Taking youth groups to such a project raises some real questions about whether kids are being given information that will ultimately damage their faith in God and in the Bible as his Word. Source: NBC News broadcast by Erik Ortiz, July 16, 2016, at 6:27 PM.



UPDATE ON KOKO. In our presentation on the evidence that humans have a soul and were created in the image of God (Program 10 in our DVD series available free on doesgodexist.tv), we have a discussion of comparisons made between humans and a gorilla named Koko. In 1972, Koko learned sign language from a researcher named Penny Patterson. Patterson and animal rights groups have maintained that Koko communicates thoughts and feelings and thus is essentially human. In an article by Erin Wayman in *Science News*



(July 23, 2016, page 32), Patterson is said to have “morphed from researcher and study subject to mother and child.” Many have noted that Koko mimics to receive rewards and no evidence exists that the things Koko says are spontaneous behavioral characteristics. Wayman says that all of this shows “our infinite capacity for empathy.” Human uniqueness as the only beings created in the image of God is not compromised by experiments of this type.

ANIMAL INTELLIGENCE. We maintain that humans are unique because we were created in the image of God. No other living things can claim such a distinction. We see human uniqueness displayed in our capacity to worship, to create artistically, and in emotional responses such as guilt, sympathy, and compassion. One characteristic we do not claim for humans is superior intelligence. Humans are not necessarily intelligent, and some animals are. Some sources have repeated the story of “Inky,” an octopus who escaped his tank at the National Aquarium of New Zealand. Inky demonstrated great intelligence in his escape. Late one night Inky squeezed through a narrow gap at the top of the tank, flopped to the floor and scooted across the room to the opening of a drain pipe. He got into the pipe and dropped 164 feet to where the pipe entered the sea where he escaped his captors. There are many stories about octopuses opening jars and using tools. Intelligence is not peculiar to humans, and not all humans demonstrate intelligence. Source: One of many reports is in *The Week*, April 29, 2016, page 17.

HARVARD AND ATHEIST MORALITY. One of the hottest debate topics between believers and atheists is whether atheism promotes immorality and Christianity opposes immorality. Atheists claim academic reasons to be moral and point out that people who claim to be Christians are frequently immoral. Harvard University has been at the center of this controversy because of its reputation and

its emphasis on secularism and naturalism. Starting with the class of 2021 Harvard will deny students leadership positions and the right to apply for Rhodes and Fulbright scholarships if they are members of single-sex fraternities or sororities. Harvard has semisecret societies called “final clubs.” Final club parties are “lavish affairs in which alcohol, cocaine, and freshman girls are brought in for the entertainment of privileged male members.” Harvard has been held up as an intellectual haven for free thinkers, but the morality demonstrated by the institution belies its claims. Source: *The Week*, May 27, 2016, page 19.

SKEPTICS CHILDREN’S CAMP CANCELLED. Several years ago the Committee for Skeptical Inquiry (CSI) began a summer camp for children to “have children walk away applying critical thinking skills.” The camp was considered by many skeptics to be an alternative to Christian camps, and a significant amount of energy was spent bashing religion. This past summer the camp was canceled because it was losing money and CSI considered it to be “no longer sustainable.” Those of us who have worked in summer camps know how difficult and demanding the camps are. It is no surprise that atheists and skeptics have found it to be more than they can tolerate, both in work and in finances.

WHEN YOU DO NOT BELIEVE IN GOD, YOU WILL BELIEVE ANYTHING. The “2015 Chapman University Survey of American Fears” reports that 41.4% of all Americans believe that places can be haunted by spirits, 26.5% believe the living and the dead can communicate with each other, 20.3% believe in alien visitation, and 13.9% believe that astrologers, fortune tellers, and psychics can foresee the future. When God is removed from people’s thinking, their realization that they do not have a moral or secure guide in their lives leads them to accept alternatives that can be enormously destructive. This is why God warns his people to avoid these things (see Exodus 22:18; Galatians 5:20).

HOMESCHOOL MATERIAL. One of the problems with homeschool science material is that the market is dominated by dispensational teachings and the bad science that goes with it. We have discussed this problem frequently in this journal. Some other science writers who are believers have written material that is free of this bias. If you are interested, take a look at Kevin Nelstead’s earth science textbook which is available on <http://novarescienceandmath.com/catalog/es/es/>.



RTB SUGGESTION. A program that we have found to be quite useful and accurate is called Reasons to Believe (RTB) directed by Dr. Hugh Ross. Ross aims his work at mostly well-educated readers. He is an astrophysicist, and his science material is quite useful. Recently in their weekly digest, RTB made three suggestions for Christians dealing with atheists who propose what atheists call “non-empirical arguments.” (1) Question assumptions — if you assume the right properties of something, you can prove about anything. (2) Focus on practical proof. Absolute proof of anything is beyond us. (3) Do an absurdity test. Many atheist and creationist claims are too absurd to consider.

SO WHAT ARE THE REAL ODDS? Our DNA contains instructions for building proteins out of sequences of amino acids.



There are 500 or so known amino acids, but life uses only 23. The average protein in a cell is about 450 amino acids long so there are 23^{450} or 10^{613} different proteins our DNA might construct. Life uses about 10 million proteins. If we took those 10^{613} possible proteins and split them into planet-proportioned groups of 10 million each, there would

be 10^{606} groups. Astronomers tell us there are 10^{23} habitable planets at a maximum in the creation, so you could spread those groups of proteins over the planets in 10^{583} universes without having a single duplication of a single protein on any two planets. These numbers come from an interesting article by Dr. Jeff Hester in *Astronomy* magazine (September 2016, page 10). Planet Earth and the life on it is special, unique, and not an accident. “The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands” (Psalm 19:1).

NO FOOD PROBLEM. We have made the statement in this journal that starvation in the world is unnecessary and inexcusable. It is not just the massive amount of resources spent on military actions caused by human refusal to live as Christ called us to live. An even easier solution to the food problem is to cut the waste. An article in *Scientific American* (August 2016, page 22), says cutting food waste would enable us to feed the projected world population of nine billion people in 2050 with no changes in agricultural productivity. Research in Germany shows that the average amount of food wasted by each person each day in 2010 was 510 kilocalories and by 2050 that number would be 850 kilocalories — enough to feed another person. God gave us plenty to eat. Our problem is waste and war.

At 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 Merry Christmas and
 the blessings of God in the New Year.

John and Cynthia Clayton
 Roland Earnst
 Linda Glover
 Karl Marcussen



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Signature—Karl H. Marcussen, Managing Editor, October 19, 2016

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*It's scientists vs. preachers,
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