

DOES GOD EXIST?

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



**THE HAYSTACKS
AND THE CHRISTIAN**

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Articles in this Issue:

- The Haystacks and the Christian 3
Apathy: The Tool of Satan 7
Demons and Reality 11

Guest Articles:

- Steel Axes and the Refugee
Problem 16

Special Features:

- Scientists and God 20
Cynthia's Corner 21
Book Reviews:
The Grand Canyon: Monument
to an Ancient Earth 22
Mere Apologetics 23
Dandy Designs:
The Incredible Spider 24
Eye Design and Survival 25
News and Notes 26

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THE HAYSTACKS AND THE CHRISTIAN



In May 2016, my wife and I were privileged to have a few days to drive around the Olympic Peninsula on the ocean side of the state of Washington. Olympic National Park is there and it is the location of a unique temperate rainforest which has an unusual ecology. Equally interesting is the rugged Washington coast. Over long periods of time, the ocean has carved out unique features on that coast. One of these can be easily seen at Ruby Beach where there are some features called “haystacks.”

Haystacks are caused when rock layers have soft rock under hard rock, and the ocean erodes the soft rock. Eventually, the undercut area will collapse leaving a cliff. Sometimes a geologic disturbance such as a lava flow or a compression fracture will isolate a section leaving a small island which looks like a Nebraska haystack. Orig-



Once a congregation loses its focus on Christ and his teachings, the benefit of worship is severely reduced.

nally these islands were very much like the mainland, but through the years a whole new ecology has developed on the haystacks.

As I studied the haystacks at Ruby Beach, I could see that the flora and fauna were very different from what was present on the

mainland. Dogs, cats, foxes, wolves and humans found it virtually impossible to get on top of the islands due to the cliffs and rough weather. The steep walls protected the island from human pollution, graffiti, vandalism, and interference. I have since read studies showing that insect populations on the haystacks are unique.

The blessing of isolation appeals to me and reflects what I believe God had in mind for the church. When I am in the presence of



my brothers and sisters in Christ, I am free from the predators that I face at work or on the street. I am also free from the pollution of sin and all the material things that come at me when I am struggling with life in the secular world.

God intended for the worship hour to be a time when his children could focus on things that give separation from the stress and strain of daily life. Material things, politics, sexual issues, power struggles, family issues, financial concerns, medical needs, etc., are all left

It is important to have a refuge to flee to when life gets rough.

behind. They are replaced with focusing on the things we have to be thankful for as well as the blessing of being promised something better in the future.

For most of us, this idealized discussion is not reality. Congregations have allowed the challenges of the world and daily living to invade the worship hour. We saw one haystack where someone had built a walkway to the top of the haystack, so there was a path from the mainland to the haystack summit. This haystack looked





just like the mainland. It had very few birds, and lots of beer cans, waste paper and plastic were everywhere. I could see a cat stalking a seagull and a dog chasing a ground squirrel. The haystack had lost its isolation and the world flooded in. There was even a sign nailed to a tree advertising a local restaurant. Once a congregation loses its focus on Christ and his teachings, the benefit of worship is severely reduced. The world floods in, issues cause division, and conflict arises. Worship is no longer a time of retreat and a place of freedom from the pressures of the world. Sermons dealing with the issues of the modern world dominate.

The above discussion is not to say that issues of human needs and the struggles of life have no place in the church. What we are discussing is the object of the worship assembly. Benevolence, church discipline, resolving personal conflicts, how to deal with sexual temptation, and developing families that bring stability and right living to all family members are all things to study and teach; but it is important to have a refuge





to flee to when life gets rough. In the first century church, there were times for teaching and correcting—usually in a small group setting. When Paul wrote to Timothy he dealt with the challenges that come to us in evangelism. He concludes the letter by

telling Timothy to “do the work of an evangelist” (2 Timothy 4:5). All Christians need to read and act on the things Paul wrote about in his letter to Timothy. Still, we need a place we can go to where we do not have to deal with Satan’s pollution. Hebrews 10:23–25 tells us “Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.”

—John N. Clayton





One of the most difficult battles that I have had as a former atheist trying to find and maintain faith in the God of the Bible has been the apathy of those who claim to be followers of that God. If I REALLY believe that God created me and all that I see around me, and if that same God came to Earth as John 1:1 – 14 says, and that he lived among men to show them and teach them how to live; what effect will all of that have on my life? We are not just talking about a pop culture icon here. We are talking about God! We are not just talking about something that entertains us or provides us sensual pleasure. The church is not a country club substitute. We are talking about eternity. We are talking about our choices in life and how we make those choices. We are talking about what works!

I find myself in a world drowning in apathy. One of our fellow workers had an experience that is so typical of people in the world today. He was with a family who were all standing around the deathbed of a family member. The dying man took one last breath and then fell silent. The hospice nurse listening to his heart with a stethoscope stood up and informed the family that he was dead and then excused herself from the room. The family stood in silence for several minutes looking back and forth at other family members. Finally one of the family members said: “I guess we ought to pray.” There was another long period of silence, and then one of the family members said: “Does anyone know how to pray?” My friend, who is an active Christian, then led the family in prayer. If you think this is an extreme case, let me assure you that it is not. Faith in God and in Jesus Christ is not considered to be important in our culture today. For a person to be biblically literate is to be relegated to second-class citizenship in the minds of many people.

As a person who was raised in a non-religious home and never attended a church of any kind until I became an adult, I can testify

as to why this situation exists. The people I knew when I was a teenager who went to church were no different from those of us who never went to church. They were even less committed to what they believed than those of us who were involved in organized atheism. Sexual misconduct was common, even sometimes after youth group meetings or Sunday night services. When I did go to a church service, what I saw was a lot of bored people who frequently were writing letters, reading novels, or in recent years texting or doing Facebook. All of this convinced me that my atheism was justified and that all religious activity was a destructive scam.

So what changed me from that mind-set to being a believer who is not content to be inactive in my faith? The answer to that in a word is



“evidence!” Not only did evidence lead me to become a Christian, but evidence has sustained me when hardships have come upon me because of my faith. When my son was born with severe birth defects, I had to question why. The evidence that good could come

to me and to others became clear. When Romans 8:28 told me that good could come from my bad situation because God would make it happen, I doubted that such a thing was possible. As I watched my atheist associates try to deal with similar situations, I saw how futile their efforts were, and how I could help them. I found satisfaction in

Watching friends who had no faith and were filled with non-belief or with religious apathy deal with the same losses I experienced, gave a dramatic contrast to the result of my active Christian faith.

being able to offer answers which no human could provide. Pain and suffering brought me to deal with the evidence that there is a purpose to human life. Even I, a weak human being, had a major role to play in the struggle between good and evil. My atheist friends and family had no such purpose and no capacity to deal with the reality of life. When my wife of 49 years died, I was once again forced to deal with evidence. I became aware of forces beyond our physical abilities that

become active in the duress of loss, and that open a future catalyzed by such an incredible loss. Watching friends who had no faith and were filled with non-belief or with religious apathy deal with the same losses I experienced, gave a dramatic contrast to the result of my active Christian faith.

It was evidence that enabled me to survive when forces within religion and even my fellowship attempted to destroy me and my ministry. For many years I reached out as a young Christian to people who had faith issues. In the 1960s very little was being done to help people know that God exists and that the Bible is his word. I was functioning in a vacuum, and God blessed our efforts in incredible ways and with incredible fruit beyond anything I could have imagined.

Eventually, I discovered that some of the threats and attacks on me, my family, and my ministry were coming from men who claimed to be Christians and



who were leaders in some churches. There were false charges against me. In most cases my accusers were defending traditions that were not what the Bible actually teaches. The campaign became increasingly aggressive, and many Christians accepted what was said about me without checking it out to see if it was true or biblically accurate. I had to make a choice as to what I was going to do. I considered many options— withdrawing from my ministry, embracing beliefs that I knew were unbiblical and unscientific, or even renouncing my connection to the church.

A man who was very well-known in the church at that time sensed what was happening to me and gave me two pieces of advice. His first advice was to focus on Jesus Christ and lean on my relationship with him. “Don’t let your faith be damaged by Satan’s success within the church,” he said. He reminded me that Jesus was strongly opposed by the religious powers within Judaism—the very people who should have been his strongest supporters. He asked me, “What makes you think that you are immune to this kind of persecution? Jesus experienced it, and so will you.” His second advice was given in the words of a Tennessee backwoods teacher, “You can’t out puke a buzzard.”

We cannot let apathy and the unchristian behavior of those who claim to be religiously correct, drag us down to their level. Jesus never stooped to the level of the Pharisees and “turning the other cheek” is important in dealing with personal attacks, even from people who claim to be religiously correct. I will always be thankful to Ira North for his timely intrusion into my struggling world. We best deal with apathy by doing what Jesus told his followers to do and what Paul and Barnabas did in Acts 13:49–51:

The word of the Lord spread through the whole region. But the Jews incited God-fearing women of high standing and the leading men of the city. They stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas So they shook the dust from their feet in protest against them and went to [the next city].

I wish I had a good answer to the problem of apathy in the church. It is an effective tool of Satan, and it would seem that all we can do is to beg our brothers and sisters to renew their faith. Look at the evidence and act on it. Our ministry has shifted some in recent years as we find more and more members of the church wanting to know how to support what they believe. Our material is available, and we will continue to try to assist people with faith problems. We all need to be ready to help when life crashes in for folks. It is up to fellow Christians to help them re-establish their understanding of why they exist, what God has planned for them, and how God can make good come from the worst of situations.

— JNC



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One of the most abused concepts in the Bible is the role of demons, exorcisms, and Satan and how they apply to humans living in the twenty-first century. The abuse comes from two sources. One is atheists who claim that the whole thing is a throwback to mystic thinking from ancient times and results from false religious indoctrination. The other is from people in the religious world who feel that demon possession is a real threat to us today, and needs to be dealt with by religious leaders. Both of these views are rooted in misunderstanding the Bible and the spiritual world. We hope to clarify some of these misunderstandings in this discussion.

THE CREATION INVOLVES BOTH THE PHYSICAL AND THE SPIRITUAL.

We all know Genesis 1:1, and we know it says that God created everything. What seems to escape most of us is that the Bible tells us that the physical creation was not all that was involved. Colossians 1:16–17 tells us, “For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.”

***We all know Genesis 1:1, and we know it says
that God created everything.***

Ephesians 6:12 tells us that our struggle is not against flesh and blood or any physical enemy; but “against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world.” Ephesians 3:9–11

tells us that the “administration of this mystery, ... was kept hidden in God, who created all things. His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, according to his eternal purpose that he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

What is important to understand is that the powers and authorities these verses refer to and which we call angels were created outside of space/time. They are not limited to the physical world, they do not age or die, and they have the freedom to choose between good and evil. Whatever their choice is, they make that choice into eternity. Passages like Isaiah 14:11–19; 1 Timothy 3:6; 2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6; and Revelation 12:7–9 all support this. Atheists have to dismiss all of this as religious myth. In doing so, they logically end up denying that evil even exists as Richard Dawkins does in his book *River Out of Eden*¹. How anyone can live on planet Earth for very long and still deny that evil exists is difficult for most of us to comprehend, but it is the only way around the question of evil if you embrace naturalism.

THERE IS A WAR GOING ON BETWEEN GOOD AND EVIL.

Ephesians 6:12 makes it clear that there is a war going on and that we humans are involved in the conflict. The forces of evil use



spiritual terrorism as a weapon against those who embrace good. Job 1 and 2 give us a picture of the battle that is taking place. Ephesians 3:9–11 and 6:12 spell out the conflict we are involved in. Revelation chapters 20 to 22 end the Bible with the victory picture of this battle. We live in a culture that is immersed in every form of literature in existence using this

conflict to make up story after story, movie after movie, and video game after video game. Why is it that we can embrace Stephen King,

1. Richard Dawkins, *River Out of Eden* [New York: BasicBooks, 1995], page 133.

Harry Potter, and literally dozens of superheroes who fight evil and deny that such a struggle does really exist?

One of the lessons we can see as we read through the Bible is that God always allows humans to choose whether they will embrace good or evil. From the Pharaoh to Judas we see villains who chose to reject God and went to great lengths to do so. When “God became flesh and lived among us” (John 1:14) there was a need to show that God had control over the spiritual. People were amazed that even spiritual beings obeyed Jesus (Mark 1:27). Demons were a tool of Satan used as a spiritual weapon to attack the power of Christ.

DEMONS WERE REAL IN THE DAYS OF CHRIST.

Demons are a New Testament phenomenon. The Hebrew word for a demon is *shaidim*, and it is only used twice in the entire Old Testament. In Deuteronomy 32:17 we read that Jews sacrificed to demons, but the context is that it was idols they sacrificed to. In Psalm 106:37 a similar use is made. In the time of Jesus, demons were very common, but they were varied in what they did. Notice how varied these demon possessions were:

CHILDREN WERE POSSESSED

Matthew 17:18; Mark 7:25; and 9:24

SOME COULD NOT SPEAK OR SEE

Matthew 12:22

SOME HAD CONVULSIONS

Mark 1:23–26

SOME WERE MENTALLY AFFLICTED

Matthew 17:14–18; Luke 8:26–33

SOME WERE VIOLENT AND DANGEROUS

Matthew 8:28; Mark 5:1–5; Acts 19:13–16

SOME WERE MILD AND HAD SPECIAL GIFTS

Acts 16:16–19

SOME COULD BE IMPARTED TO ANIMALS

Luke 8:26–33

To get rid of a demon, a simple command authorized by Christ was all that was required. There was no ritual or drawn out procedure. In Acts 16:18 we read, “Paul turned and said to the spirit, ‘I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her.’” When people tried to get rid of a demon without the authority of Christ, the result was disastrous (see Acts 19:13–16). Luke 9:1 tells us that Jesus gave authority to the twelve disciples and Mark 16:17 makes it clear that

the purpose was to establish the authority of those who spoke for Jesus.

DEMON POSSESSION DOES NOT HAPPEN TODAY.

Here are seven reasons why demon possession is not a risk in the twenty-first century.

1 Demon possession violates the biblical concept of free moral choice. If an innocent age child can be possessed today, then demons can take over someone and separate him from God without them choosing to do so. That violates the whole concept of sin and God's redemption of sinners.

2 The Bible makes it clear we are saved or lost by our choices. Philippians 2:12 tells us to "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." Countless passages tell us to choose to obey God, not to pray that we will not get taken over by a demon depriving us of choice.

3 Prophecies indicated that demons would stop and exorcisms would no longer function. Zechariah 13:1, 2 tell us that when the Messiah would come that God "would cause the unclean spirits to pass out of the land." First Corinthians 13:8–10 makes it clear that all the special gifts that were present in the days of the apostles would be done away when "that which is complete has come." Second Timothy 3:16–17 tells us that what was complete was the Word of God, unavailable when demons were a factor.

4 Modern demon possessions and exorcisms have almost no resemblance to what we read in the Bible. I have been involved in two exorcisms, both of which lasted over two hours and both of which involved abuse of the possessed person before the desired response called "the demon coming out" was accomplished. The purpose of the exorcism was not the same as in the Bible, the methodology was completely different, and it did not last.

5 Nowhere are there any warnings to the early church that demon possession would be a risk to the salvation of their souls. Many other things are warned against (see Acts 20:27; Acts 20:31; 1 Corinthians 4:14; Colossians 1:28; and 2 Peter 1:3). Surely if demon possession were a risk for us, we would be warned about it.

6 The cures we are given for resisting Satan are not consistent with demon possession. James 4:7 tells us to resist Satan, and he will flee. Ephesians 6:12–18 talks about the armor God has given us to resist Satan.

7 Jesus was tempted in EVERY WAY as are we, and no one has ever suggested that Jesus was demon possessed. Hebrews 4:15 lets us know Jesus faced everything we face, and demon possession is not one of those things. In 1 Corinthians 10:13 God tells us that he will provide a way to escape any temptation. Romans 8:28 tells us that God will take anything Satan does to us and make something good come out of it. None of God's promises to us match up with the threat of demon possession.

God is a rational God, and he wants us to come to him out of love and with feelings of gratitude and thanksgiving.

God is a rational God, and he wants us to come to him out of love and with feelings of gratitude and thanksgiving. We are to be new creatures, not just creatures purged of a perceived problem by a human not authorized by God to do so. We are told, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation" and "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." God allows you to choose "this day whom you will serve, ... But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" (Acts 2:36–41; and Philippians 2:12; and Joshua 24:15).

—JNC



There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.

1 John 4:18 (NIV)

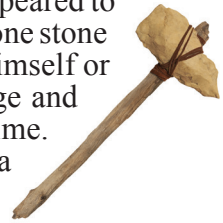
STEEL AXES AND THE REFUGEE PROBLEM

by Thayer Salisbury

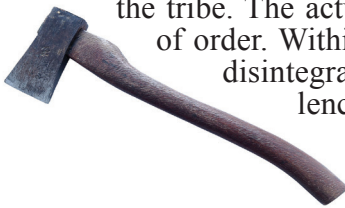


One of the classic case studies in anthropology is the story of the introduction of steel axes to the aborigines of Australia. It seems that there was a certain tribe of aborigines that was constantly living on the brink of starvation. Their problem appeared to be a lack of tools. In most villages, there was only one stone ax. Before a young man could cut firewood for himself or his family, he had to go to the elder of the village and borrow the ax. This, it appeared, wasted a lot of time.

So, some well-meaning outsider brought in a truckload of good sharp steel axes and distributed one to each able-bodied man in the tribe. The



expected result was greater prosperity for the tribe. The actual result was a complete breakdown of order. Within a few years, the tribe had virtually disintegrated. Lawlessness, disrespect, and violence (especially against women) became common—in what had previously been a pretty peaceful tribe.



A study of this case revealed that the commonly held village ax had been more than a tool for cutting wood. It had also been a means of social control. The stone ax was always in the keeping of one of the village elders. A young man wishing to use it would have to request it. This gave the elder a chance to speak to the young man.

If the one requesting the ax had been observed behaving well, if he treated his parents with respect and was giving proper care to

his wife, he would be complimented for this, and the ax would be handed over readily. But if the one requesting the ax was known to have been lazy, disrespectful, or unkind to his wife, the elder might give him a lecture rather than handing over the ax. In passing out axes to everyone, the well-meaning outsiders removed the tribe's best means of mentoring the young men. The result was the tragic and catastrophic disintegration of a society.

RECENT EVENTS IN EUROPE

In recent months something similar may have been taking place in Europe, but the problem has been variously diagnosed. Refugees



from Syria and conflict zones have poured into Europe. At first, they were welcomed. But now a dramatic spike in sexual assaults, much of the increase coming from these refugees, has changed public opinion.

Some have suggested that Muslim extremists are tak-

ing advantage of the refugee crisis to infiltrate and destabilize Europe. That could be part of the problem. Certainly, a government's first responsibility is to protect its citizens from wrongdoers (Romans 13:3–4). So it is appropriate for governments to make certain that this kind of infiltration does not take place. But I doubt very much that this is the heart of the assault problem in Europe.

FROM THEIR POINT OF VIEW

Let us try to see the situation through the eyes of a young Syrian who has reached Europe.

Back home in Syria, before the war turned everything upside down, a young man's life was carefully controlled. He was not expected to exercise much self-control with regard to the opposite sex, or with regard to liquor. Liquor was simply unavailable, totally forbidden, and the whole social structure was designed to punish any young man caught drinking. Women were expected to keep themselves out of sight as much as possible and to cover themselves almost completely when they must go about in public. Within his home village, the average Syrian young man would have been carefully counseled



and quickly punished by his elders if he violated any of the social norms.

Now, over the course of just a few months, young men from a situation of such careful control have been dropped down in a society that is almost the reverse of everything they have known.

Most of the elders are dead or left behind. Even the few elders who may have managed to make the trip have no authority in this strange new land where youth are encouraged to do as they please, and their elders are told that they must never lift a hand to discipline the youth.

Young women go about on the streets wearing clothing that only a prostitute would have worn in Syria (if even a prostitute would have dared to reveal so much). Liquor is readily available across Europe, and society seems to encourage rather than discourage its use.

I am not excusing the terrible things some of these young men have done. Those guilty of assault should certainly be punished. But it should be borne in mind that being locked up in a warm, comfortable room and fed three meals a day may not seem like punishment to young men who have often been without food or shelter.

SO WHAT IS THE POINT?

The point is that the means of social control has been broken down for these young men. It is going to be very difficult to repair this situation. They must be punished, but the punishment needs to come from those who have understood what went wrong.

And we need to have a new look at our own permissiveness. Is it fair to expect our youth to exercise so much self-control? Do our societal elders have a responsibility to give more direction to the youth?

Confiscating the steel axes, once they had done their harm, would probably not have reintegrated the aboriginal tribe. Allowing Muslim law for the refugees in Europe is neither possible nor desirable. One might hope, and pray, that Western leaders, and even church leaders, would take a serious look at the results of the breakdown of our traditional social controls. Are we bringing up our youth in the nurture of the Lord, or leaving them too much to their own devices?

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DOES GOD EXIST?

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.

ERNST BORIS CHAIN

(1906-1979)

Nobel Prize Winner for His Work on Penicillin
Considered to be the Founder of Antibiotics



“The principle of [divine] purpose stares ... the biologist in the face wherever he looks The probability for such an event as the origin of DNA molecules to have occurred by sheer chance is just too small to be seriously considered.”

“There are many ways in which people are made aware of their power to believe in the supremacy of Divine guidance and power: through music or visual art, some event or experience decisively influencing their life, looking through a microscope or telescope, or just by looking at the miraculous manifestations of purposefulness of nature.”

“Any speculation and conclusions pertaining to human behavior drawn on the basis of Darwinian evolutionary theories ... must be treated with the greatest caution and reserve.” “A less discriminating section of the public may enjoy reading about comparisons between the behavior of apes and man, but this approach — which by the way is neither new nor original — does not really lead us very far.” “Apes after all, unlike man, have not produced great prophets, philosophers, mathematicians, writers, poets, composers, painters, and scientists. They are not inspired by the divine spark which manifests itself so evidently in the spiritual creation of man and which differentiates man from animals.”

Sources: Ernst Boris Chain. AZQuotes.com, Wind and Fly LTD, 2017. http://www.azquotes.com/author/50541-Ernst_Boris_Chain, accessed March 20, 2017, and <http://nobelists.net>, page 37.

Cynthia's Corner



THE BLESSING OF FORGIVENESS

One of the most effective and powerful blessings is the act of forgiving. All human beings are sinful, and we do things that hurt each other, even if the hurt is unintentional. Sometimes we just do not understand or recognize how our actions, non-actions, words, tone of voice, and nonverbal communications affect others. It is difficult to “walk in someone’s shoes” when we are NOT that someone. Communication is essential to relationships, and it is not easy to effectively communicate with empathy, sympathy, compassion, and understanding. That is why we all need forgiveness throughout our lives and in our closest relationships.

Forgiveness allows us to start over, to let go of past mistakes and the heartaches that go with them. Real forgiveness acknowledges our human inadequacies and failures and covers them over with a blanket of love. The perfect example of this is God’s love for us. God requires repentance (recognition and sorrow for our sins and shortcomings) to have his forgiveness and fellowship. The Bible is clear, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the FORGIVENESS of sins” (Acts 2:38, *emphasis mine*). The forgiveness and love God gives us is complete and total, without reservations. He remembers our sins no more (Hebrews 10:17). God’s love and fellowship with us are maintained and unbroken as long as we continue to follow him with a spirit of repentance for our sins and forgiveness for others’ sins (1 John 1:7).

This profoundly affects our human relationships. If we do not recognize our own sins and weaknesses, it is hard, in fact nearly impossible, to forgive others. This is one of the reasons God says that we MUST forgive others AS he has forgiven US (Ephesians 4:32). In fact, we MUST forgive others if we want to receive God’s forgiveness (Matthew 6:14–15). Forgiveness requires humility on our part. We must first recognize how much God has forgiven us in order to give forgiveness to others. True forgiveness reconciles and repairs relationships. It allows us to love each other again and to start anew (Colossians 3:12–14).

—Cynthia Clayton

**Be kind and compassionate to one another,
forgiving each other, just as in Christ God
forgave you.**

Ephesians 4:32



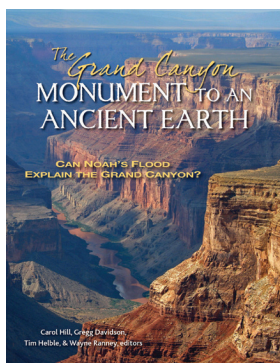
BOOK REVIEWS

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.

The Grand Canyon: Monument to an Ancient Earth

Carol Hill, Gregg Davidson, Wayne Ranney & Tim Helble, editors,
KregelPublications, © 2016,

240 pages, \$19.00 (paperback), ISBN-13: 978-0-8254-4421-0



For the past 40 years, we have periodically conducted a week-long tour of the Grand Canyon area to show that the Grand Canyon is a great demonstration of God’s wisdom and design, but is not a product of Noah’s flood. Some dispensational denominational teachers have attempted to use the Grand Canyon as a support of their denominational beliefs, and the museums and the Noah’s Ark construction in Kentucky have been major tools of this denominational teaching. We have been urged to write a book explaining why this den-

ominational teaching is incorrect, but we have not had the resources to do so. Now a book has been written that does this. The subtitle of the book is “Can Noah’s Flood Explain the Grand Canyon?”

This book is part of a series of lectures called “Solid Rock Lectures — Earth as God’s Creation.” The authors are believers, but they also are scientists, most with degrees in geology. The book was supported by the American Scientific Affiliation which is an organization of people with science degrees who are believers in God. The book is large (8 ½ x 11 ½ inches) with many four-color pictures and charts. It is attractive enough to be a good coffee-table book.

The book is divided into five parts with each part having many chapters. The first part introduces the readers to flood geology and explains the biblical problems associated with that view. The contrast between flood geology and modern geology is also presented. Part two is titled “How Geology Works” and is a description of how geologists reach their conclusions. This includes dating and the

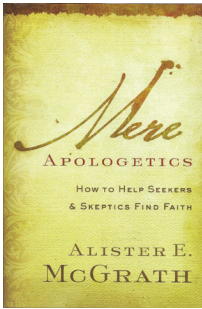
assumptions involved by both modern geology and flood geology. Part three discusses fossils, and part four deals with the carving of the canyon. Throughout the book, the weaknesses of flood geology are presented with the last part delivering a conclusion about flood geology and why it cannot be accepted biblically or scientifically.

Those who have been with us on our Canyonlands trips will find this book a great review of what we tried to present. The book avoids denominational names and thus will not be offensive to those who are part of denominations that espouse flood geology to back their creeds. We recommend this book.

Mere Apologetics

by Alister McGrath, Baker Books, © 2012,

197 pages. \$17.99 (paperback). ISBN-13: 978-0-8010-1416-1



Alister McGrath is one of today's most effective defenders of faith in God and the Bible. He is the president of the Oxford Center for Christian Apologetics and has written several excellent books including *The Dawkins Delusion*. This book is subtitled "How to Engage Unbelievers with Intelligence and Imagination." McGrath says "Apologetics is not to be seen as a defensive and hostile reaction against the world, but as a welcome opportunity to exhibit, celebrate, and display the treasure chest of the Christian faith."

McGrath points out that the word "apologetics" comes from the Greek *apologia* meaning "a reasoned case proving the innocence of an accused person in court, or a demonstration of the correctness of an argument or belief." The Greek word *apologia* is used in 1 Peter 3:15 and this book is written to equip believers to do what that verse calls us to do.

This book is a gold mine of definitions and quotes of reputable participants in debates over the existence of God. The first three chapters deal with the basis of apologetics with attention to modern culture, theology, and history. Chapter four is a biblical study of how Peter and Paul tailored their speeches to their audience, and how we should do the same. Chapters five and six discuss the reasonableness of the Christian faith and present ways to prove the validity of faith in the twenty-first century. The last three chapters give practical suggestions to build your own apologetic approach.

McGrath was an atheist and understands atheist arguments very well. He is widely read and has a background in philosophy as well as a good understanding of Scripture. This book would be a great book for any preacher, personal worker, church leader, or a person building their own apologetics ministry.

DANDY DESIGNS



In previous issues of this periodical, we have had some discussion of the properties of spider webs and how the material is designed for specific jobs. Studies of spider webs have led to miracle fabrics and a variety of modern materials that have been useful in industrial applications. Experts say that the silk of an orb spider is so strong that a strand of it, if it were as thick as a pencil, could stop a jumbo jet in flight.

Most of us have a form of arachnophobia (fear of spiders), and yet these creatures do wonderful things for humans. The most obvious is the removal of insects from our homes and gardens. All spiders are meat eaters, and they are equipped in a unique ways to find and destroy massive numbers of insects. Most spiders have eight eyes that are arranged in a way to detect the primary insects they are programmed to remove from the population on Earth. Spiders taste and smell through sensory organs on their legs. This enables them to identify their prey without having to bite into it. Spiders hear by sensing vibrations through the hairs that cover much of their body. Spiders are so sensitive to vibrations that they can tell the difference between a moth and a honeybee hitting their web. Spiders can regrow a lost leg. They have bristled hooks on the ends of their feet that allow them to grasp their webs without getting stuck.

There are 38,000 species of spiders in the world. They range from the size of a basketball to the size of the dot at the end of this sentence. After they hatch, spiderlings drift away from the mother spider on a silk filament. We all know that spider bites can be nasty, but these creatures were created by God to control the insect populations on Earth. The technical knowledge needed to design such a creature is beyond human ability. Source: *Animal Encyclopedia* published by National Geographic, © 2014, page 62.



Our eyes are like a camera with a lens that focuses an image on a collection of specialized cells called the retina at the back of the eye. The retina converts the energy of the light into electrical signals that are sent to the brain which gives us an image. The complexity of this system certainly speaks of design and is difficult to explain by any chance process. It is fascinating that there are many other eye designs in the animal kingdom, and each of them has a common purpose—to enable the animal to survive.

The box jellyfish is a great example of a completely different kind of eye. This animal is simply a gelatinous, pulsating blob with bundles of stinging tentacles hanging underneath. It does not have a brain—just a ring of neurons running around its bell. The box jellyfish has 24 eyes which are grouped into four clusters called rhopalia. Some of the eyes look ahead to spot obstacles. The jellyfish has upper eyes that have weights attached to them so that the eyes are always looking up, even if the jellyfish swims upside down. If the jellyfish is swimming under mangroves where its primary food source of crustaceans is found, the other eyes function. If the upper eyes detect bright light, the jellyfish has strayed into open water where there is no food, and it will change its direction of travel.

Another example of specialized eyes that aid in survival is the mantis shrimp. This animal has three sets of eyes which can all focus on a single object. The information coming to the eyes gives perfect depth perception allowing the animal to know exactly how far away the prey or an enemy is. Scallops have rows of eyes along their mantles, and sea stars have eyes on the tips of their arms. A common house fly has a compound eye that divides light into thousands of separate units with each unit having its own lens and receptor. Some eyes have mirrors in them to aid in the control of light. Some animals see only in black and white while others can see colors that our eyes cannot see. There is no single thread of evolution in the design of the eye, but each eye is tailored to the survival needs of the organism. Truly “we can know there is a God through the things he has made” (Romans 1:20). Source: *The Week*, March 4, 2016, page 40.

News and Notes

THIS IS OUR SECOND QUARTERLY ISSUE FOR 2017. As we explained in our last issue, this journal is now being published quarterly rather than bimonthly. In order to be more up-to-date, we have a new website with daily features. You can find it at www.DoesGodExist.today.



MAMMOTH DINOSAUR FOOTPRINT. How big can an animal get? Science fiction frequently shows animals of enormous size, and yet the reality is that land mammals can only get so big. The amount of oxygen in the air, the type of muscle development needed to run, the limitations of reproduction by live birth, and a host of other technical problems limit the size of land mammals. Besides mammals, this is true of birds which are also warm-blooded. Reptiles, on the other hand, never stop growing. An 80-year-old *T. Rex* was still growing, but I can tell you from personal experience that an 80-year-old human is not. This issue has a lot to do with whether the dinosaurs were birds, and whether dinosaurs and humans could have lived at the same time.

In the Gobi Desert in Mongolia there have been over 20,000 footprints of dinosaurs discovered and in late 2016 one was found that was 42 inches long and 30 inches wide. In an American shoe size, that would be a size 104. Researchers are interested in how the dinosaur was able to stand and walk with such enormous size. One thing that seems certain is that the conditions on Earth were different than they are today. There was almost certainly a higher oxygen content in the atmosphere. God was preparing Earth for humans, and the conditions required to form the materials we would need were different from those of Earth today. “In the beginning, God created the earth” just says that God did it. How he did it may have involved far more than we can understand, even today. Source: *The Week*, October 21, 2016, page 19.

Another article about dinosaurs concerns dinosaur eggs and has drawn some attention from the scientific community. Scientists from Florida State University have been studying the teeth of dinosaurs that are still in the egg. Reptiles produce teeth from a substance

called dentin. Every day a reptile will add a layer of calcium on the tooth root, making something that is similar to tree rings. Count the number of calcium layers on the tooth, and you can tell how long it took for the egg to hatch. The dinosaurs studied, which included a *Protoceratops* and a *Hypacrosaurus* (duck-billed), took three months and six months respectively. For these animals to reproduce, a great deal of time would have been required compared to birds or modern reptiles. Again, the environmental conditions necessary to allow that would be considerably different from Earth today. Source: *The Week*, January 20, 2017, page 19.

FOSSILIZED DINOSAUR BRAIN CLAIMS. The media has taken great delight in statements like “Dinosaur Brain Unearthed.” “A chunk of petrified brain tissue” is a common statement which even appeared in some scientific journals (like *Science News*, November 26, 2016, page 9). Knowing the nature of brain tissue, most scientifically trained people immediately raised flags stating that this was probably an exaggeration at best and at worst, a hoax. The actual fossil includes bits of skull bones and pieces of the cortex, the brain’s tough outer layers. There are tiny tubes in dendritic patterns on the surface of these outer layers which in modern animals allows oxygen to get into the brain material. Learning something about the brain of a dinosaur would be wonderful, but the notion that this is a complete brain which will tell us everything is a profound exaggeration. This is always a problem with fossil discoveries. Claims should not be accepted too quickly until we know what has really been found.



“MORE AMERICANS ARE DITCHING RELIGION.” A *U.S. News and World Report* article with that title has some interesting comments from a study done in 2016. What the study reports is the reason this ministry exists. In *Time* magazine (September 26, 2016, page 63) Susanna Schrobsdorff writes about her life with no religious connection. (People claiming no religion are referred to as “nones.”) She cites a Duke University study in which there are 19 million more “nones” than there were in 2007. This makes the total of people with no religious affiliations at 56 million, which is greater than any single religious group. The study also says that fewer than half of all young adults between the ages of 18 and 30 are sure that God exists.

What is important is the cause of this decline. The *US News and World Report* article said that 78% of Americans do not identify with the faith system in which they were raised, and the leading cause was “science and a lack of evidence.” The nature of the religion in which a person was raised may also be an issue. Some religious beliefs are not biblical, make no sense, and have no practical value. A good percentage of our “hate mail” comes from preachers or religious writers who are opposed to science and to any attempt to suggest that science and faith are compatible and supportive of one another. Young adults see that science has impacted their lives in many positive ways—from medical advances to all kinds of entertainment venues. When religious leaders make people believe they either have to accept science and reject religion or accept religion and reject science, the result is going to be a rejection of religion in a large number of cases. The data makes that clear. You can find the article mentioned above online at: www.aol.com/article/2016/08/25/more-americans-are-ditching-religion-pew-study-says/21458273/.



TIM LAHAYE PASSING EMPHASIZES THE DENOMINATIONAL ASPECT OF CREATIONISM. On July 25, 2016, Tim LaHaye passed away after suffering a stroke. With his passing comes the reminder that much of what is seen in creationism today is due to LaHaye’s work. In 1970 Henry Morris, Art Peters, and Tim LaHaye started Christian Heritage College with LaHaye as the president. Involved with the college was the Creation Research Science Center which stated that the school was “dedicated on restructuring all fields of learning and practice in the integrating framework of genuine creationism.” The Institute for Creation Research was born, and LaHaye was a board member until 2007.

The difficulty with all of this is that Tim LaHaye was also a leading proponent of dispensationalism along with Hal Lindsey, Charles Ryrie, John Walvoord, Eric Sauer, and others. Dispensationalism maintains that there is a permanent distinction between Israel, the Gentiles, and the church. When the Jewish nation was reestablished in Palestine in 1948, dispensationalists claimed that it was the beginning of the return of Christ to establish a political kingdom and re-establish David’s throne. Because they view the history of Earth as seven roughly 1000 year periods, they have to cling to the idea that Earth cannot be much older than 7000 years. (If you wish more on this belief system look at the article, “Destructive Dispensationalism” in our November/December 2008 journal, page 10, online at doesgodexist.org, or send us an address and we will mail you a copy of the article.)



The problem here is that the good work that is done by these creationist groups is undone by allowing a denominational belief to control their understanding of what the Bible teaches and what the scientific evidence supports. Because they do not take the Bible literally, these groups allow biblical words to cover things they do not apply to. The word “kind” in Genesis and other places in the Old Testament is not a synonym for species. The word *behemoth* in verses 24–26 does not include dinosaurs. The animals Moses describes in Genesis 1 were all animals Moses was familiar with, not animals like the duck-billed platypus. We have a more detailed treatment of this subject on our www.doesgodexist.org website in the booklet titled *God’s Revelation in His Rocks and His Word*.



Ken Ham is also a dispensationalist and many of the problems we have alluded to here show up in the Ark Encounter and the Creation Museum in Kentucky. Atheists and skeptics continue to attack the denominationally-driven material in these exhibits. The fundamental questions of how we know there is a God and that the Bible is his Word go unobserved by many people and by the media. Source: *Acts and Facts*, September 2016, page 21.

LIFE IN SPACE. The existence of life in other places in the universe seems to swing in popularity from one generation to the next. In 1966 Carl Sagan and a Russian scientist I. S. Shklovskii wrote a book titled *Intelligent Life in the Universe* in which they predicted there must be 10,000 inhabited planets in our Milk Way galaxy. About ten years later Shklovskii wrote another book titled *We Are Alone*, in which he pointed out that the complexity of life was poorly understood when he and Sagan wrote the first book. As more information became available the probability of life became more and more remote. In 1976, Jacques Monod wrote a book titled *Chance and Necessity* in which he said: “Man knows at last that he is alone in the indifferent immensity of the universe, whence he has emerged by chance.” Francis Crick was a little more honest with his conclusion when he said: “The origin of life appears at the moment to be almost a miracle.” We would suggest that God being the designer and creator eliminates



the guess work and confirms that his wisdom and intelligence is all it takes to form life. How many times he has chosen to do that is unknown to us at present.

TRAVEL IN SPACE. Popular movies portray travel in space as just being a matter of solving simple propulsion problems. The truth is that cosmic radiation is now better understood as a huge risk to space travel. In *Scientific American* (February 2017, page 54) Charles Limoli has written an excellent scientific discussion of the dangers of cosmic radiation. Galactic cosmic rays are charged atomic nuclei flying at nearly the speed of light, probably coming from the



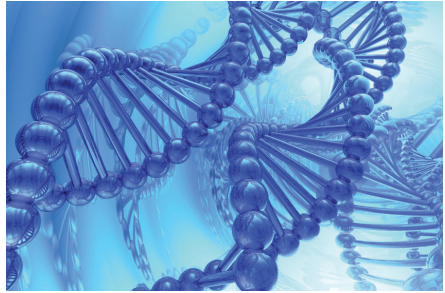
supernova remnants of dead stars. Our Sun generates a great amount of radiation, but the cosmic rays are much more of a hazard. When these atomic nuclei hit molecules in our body, they ionize atoms, knocking electrons off the atoms and causing the atoms to become charged. These charged atoms hit other atoms, and there is a domino effect that is greatly magnified because of the

extra energy involved. In human bodies, there are clusters of damage from such radiation, and just trying to duplicate the process in the laboratory has turned out to be incredibly difficult. Limoli has and his fellow researchers have shown that there is a much greater effect on brain tissue than anyone imagined. Earth is designed to handle this huge radiation by having two levels of shielding. Earth's magnetic field sweeps the galactic cosmic rays away from the areas of the planet where people live, and the atmosphere takes care of the rest. When you travel beyond Earth's magnetic field, you have virtually no protection, and that is going to be a huge challenge for space engineers to solve. The lesson we would bring from this is that God's design of Earth becomes more and more amazing as we learn of the complexities that have to be taken care of for you and me just to get up in the morning.

THE PHILISTINES ARE REAL. The Bible talks about the Philistines as a constant scourge and an enemy that Israel struggled with from one battle to the next. The problem with the Philistines was that they left no written records and no bodies of the Philistines had been found. In July 2016, researchers discovered more than 210 skeletons in a Philistine cemetery, the first ever found. Scientists believe the Philistines migrated from the Aegean around 1200 B.C. and thrived until they were demolished by the Babylonians around

600 B.C. These were iron-age people. As we learn more about them, the biblical account of David’s encounters and Sampson’s battles with them become increasingly clear and understandable. Source: *Discover*, September 2016, page 36.

RIGHT HANDED DNA. Chiral molecules are molecules that have two forms that are mirror images of one another. Scientists refer them as “right-handed” and “left-handed.” You cannot put your left hand on top of your right hand and have a congruency between your fingers. In life, the molecule that is most critical to this discussion is DNA. All DNA on Earth twists clockwise like the threads on a right-handed screw. If DNA came in both right and left handed versions, the strands would not fit together, and life would not exist. As scientists study the creation of life on Earth, they see that only one right-handed type of molecule was baked into Earth’s chemistry, and this would have happened long before life was created. Proverbs 8:1, 22–23 (NIV) says it well: “Does not wisdom call out? Does not understanding raise her voice? ... The Lord brought me forth as the first of his works, before his deeds of old; I was formed long ages ago, at the very beginning, when the world came to be.” Source: *Scientific American*, September 2016, page 13.



NEW DISCOVERIES DETAIL THE BABYLONIAN EXILE. In 586 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple. In 2 Kings 24:12–16 we are told that he deported Jehoiachin and 10,000 captives including craftsmen and smiths. Jeremiah indicates in 52:28–30 that there were three subsequent waves of deportation in Nebuchadnezzar’s seventh, eighteenth, and twenty-third years with 3,023, 832, and 745 people respectively being deported. A recently publicized copy of the Babylonian record is now housed in the British Museum including ration texts and receipts. Questions concerning the accuracy of the Bible as a historical source and of the reality of what took place seem to be answered by these new discoveries. If you are interested in this period of history and of the integrity of the Bible in matters of this kind, see *Biblical Archaeology Review* for September/October 2016, page 49, for an article titled “How Bad Was the Babylonian Exile” by Laurie Pearce.

Visit: doesgodexist.today

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