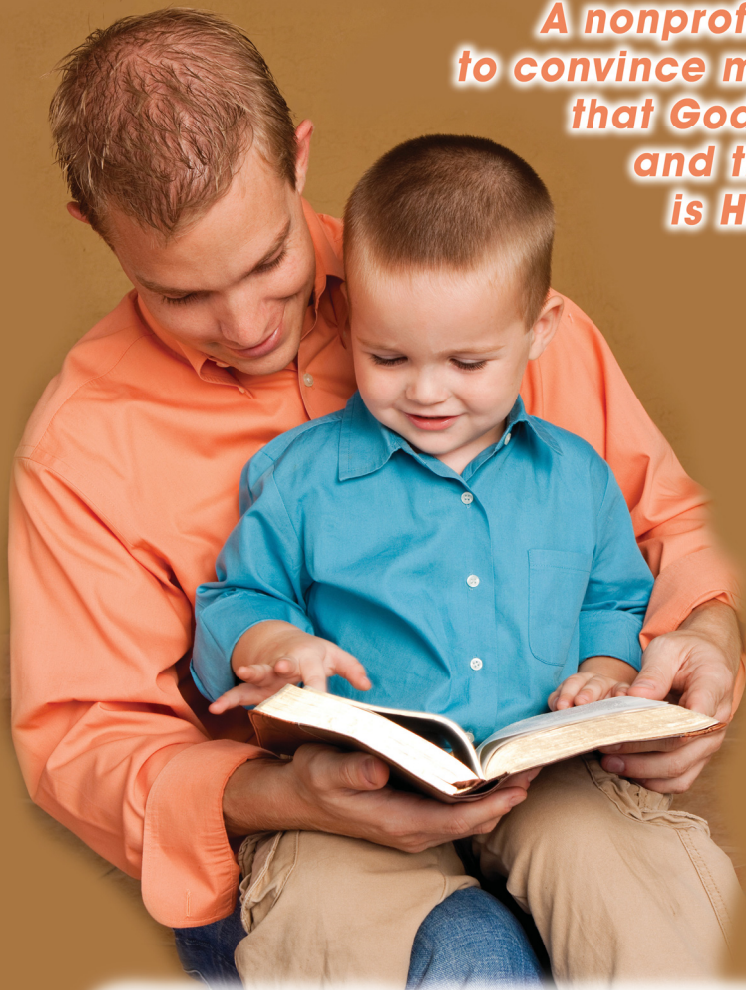


DOES GOD EXIST?

3rd Quarter 2017
Volume 44 Number 3

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



**BIBLICAL EVIDENCE FOR
THE CLAIMS OF JESUS**

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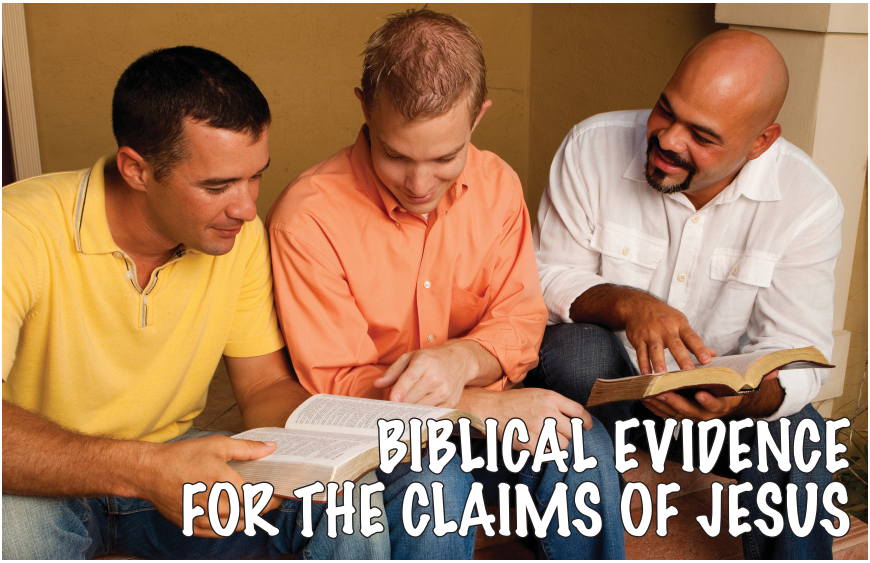
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A large percentage of the articles that we have in this journal is devoted to twenty-first century challenges to the existence of God. The reason is that science deals with things which help us know there is “something out there.” We have discussed cosmology, quantum mechanics, and evidence from the wisdom and design that we can see in the physical world around us. That evidence is massive and grows with every passing day. But science cannot directly help us with the question of “Which God?”

Our present-day culture embraces pluralism saying that all approaches to religion are of equal value. The evidence shows that this is not true. Jesus said, “I am the way and the truth and the life: no one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6). Other religious figures have made similar statements. We need to ask what evidence they have to support their claims. Romans 10:17 tells us that “faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ.” Earlier in that chapter, Paul asks “How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?” (Romans 10:14). Verse 16 tells us that this is about the gospel, the good news of Jesus Christ, not the existence of God.

There are at least five lines of evidence to show that we can believe these verses. This discussion focuses on the Bible because the Bible claims that, “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the [man or woman] of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:16–17).

REASON 1 SECULAR RECORDS SUPPORT THE BIBLICAL CLAIMS.

By secular records, we mean writings from biblical times that were not produced by the church and had nothing to gain by the history they recorded. Historians from shortly after the time of Jesus tell us much about Christ and the early Christians. Examples are Thallus (AD 50), Phlegon (AD 140) with his *Chronicles*, and Origen (around AD 200) who wrote over 6,000 books backing Phlegon. Roman rulers and writers such as Pliny the Younger in AD 112, Cornelius Tacitus, Hadrian in AD 117, Suetonius in AD 120, Lucian of Samosata a Greek in AD 170, and Mara Bar-Serapion a Syrian in AD 70. Josephus, who was a Jew recognized by the Romans for scholarship, backs up the Bible in many details telling in book 18 (chapter 5) about John the Baptist and giving a record of James in book 20 (chapter 9), including a record of Ananus having James stoned.

In addition to Roman sources, there are Jewish Rabbis who verify the biblical record of Christ: Rabbi Eliezer in AD 40, Ulla in AD 276 and Records from the Sanhedrin 43a which name Jesus and five disciples. Early church writers were so prolific in their production of manuscripts that very few modern scholars, even the most skeptical would deny their validity. Tertullian in AD 160 quoted the New Testament 7,000 times with 3,800 quotations coming from the gospels. Polycarp in AD 69 quoted the New Testament 60 times. Papias, the Didache, Barnabas, Quadratus, and Hegesippus all contribute documentary support for the validity of Christ and the Christian system.

There are only eight secular sources that support the existence of Plato and his teachings. There are only 12 secular sources that support the existence of Socrates and his teachings. Very few people deny the existence or the teachings of either of these two philosophers. The number of secular sources that support the existence of Christ and his teachings and followers is well over 1,000. A good source for this information is *The New Bible Dictionary* (Eerdmans Publishing, ISBN 0-8028-2282-7).

REASON 2 ARCHAEOLOGICAL DISCOVERIES.

Archaeology is the study of the artifacts and remains of people who have lived in the past. A good example of this is Luke 2:1–4 where we are told some details connected with the birth of Christ. We are told that the decree was made by Caesar Augustus and that people were required to go back to their home city. We are also told that this happened when Quirinius (Cyrenius in KJV) was governor of Syria. For many years skeptics ridiculed the Bible because Jesus was born



somewhere around 3 BC and Quirinius was governor in AD 33–38. Later archaeological finds, however, showed that he was governor twice, the first time from 2–5 BC well within the time when Jesus was born.

Numerous other details have been

verified by archaeology. In recent years archaeological evidence has told us more about Simon the Tanner who is mentioned in Acts 10:6. Whole books have been written about archaeological discoveries, and we have reviewed these in past issues of this journal. Bibliographies are available on request which will give you references of available material on this subject.

REASON 3 PROPHECY AND FULFILLMENT.

Every attempt by skeptics over the centuries to explain away the prophecies about Christ in the Old Testament and their fulfillment more than 400 years later have failed. The Dead Sea Scrolls including the scroll of Isaiah 53 now displayed in the Shrine of the Book at the Israel Museum are modern finds that verify the long list of fulfilled prophecies. Consider these prophecies about Christ which have been verified by being fulfilled:

He would come when the temple was standing.

Malachi 3:1; Haggai 2:7

In the last days of the Roman Empire.

Isaiah 2:2; Joel 2:28; Daniel 2:44

From the tribe of Judah when Judah was a ruling tribe.

Micah 5:2

That one would come to prepare the way.

Malachi 3:1; Isaiah 40:3

That his message would be confirmed with miracles.

Isaiah 35:5–7

He would be rejected by the Jews and his brethren.

Psalms 69:8; Zechariah 13:7

He would be sold for 30 pieces of silver.

Zechariah 11:12

He would be crucified.

Isaiah 53:8; Psalm 22:16

He would be scourged.

Isaiah 50:6

Soldiers would gamble for his clothing.

Psalms 22:18

His birthplace would be Bethlehem, Ephrathah.

Micah 5:2

(Note: At the time Micah was written the only Bethlehem was Bethlehem Zebulun — Joshua 19:15).

There are numerous books that detail this information. Our bibliography available upon request is the source of this data.

REASON 4 THE UNIQUENESS OF HIS TEACHINGS.

C.S. Lewis (*Mere Christianity*) once wrote: “A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic — on the level with the man who says he is a poached egg — or else he would be a Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse. You can shut him up for a fool, you can spit at him and kill him as a demon or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God, but let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about his being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.” Jesus claimed deity (John 1:14). Jesus repeatedly spoke on his own authority. Jesus confirmed his message with miracles.

From a personal standpoint, I would challenge you to read the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5–7 and suggest that all of that material is the product of a lunatic or an uneducated carpenter’s son. When you read other great religious leaders, you do not see the uniqueness that you do in the teachings of Christ. They may have had good things to say, but human frailty and weakness ultimately come out of their writings and teachings. Matthew 5–7 and the messages that build upon that great sermon are beyond the reach of the common man and show that Jesus as more than a great teacher.

REASON 5 THE CHRISTIAN SYSTEM WORKS – IT CHANGES LIVES.

What has been the effect of men and women following the teachings of Jesus Christ? I want to emphasize that I am talking about what Jesus taught and did, not what a denomination or religious order teaches or does. Things like the Crusades, the Ku Klux Klan, or the Mormon wars are in diametric opposition to what Jesus taught and did.

It is because of the teachings of Jesus Christ that we have major help available to alcoholics, prostitutes, drug addicts, the uneducated, and poor people all over the globe. It is the followers of Jesus who run the homeless shelters, the hospitals, the women's shelters, and all the programs to help women exercise their rights as human beings. Compare the treatment of women in the United States with those in countries where militant Islam is the dominant religion and you will see the uniqueness of Christianity. It is the teachings of Jesus that have caused schools to be opened all over the world for kids enslaved by adult abuse, child labor exploitation, and government apathy. You can look around in your own community and see the influence of Jesus Christ all around you. When there have been social experiments to exclude Christianity (such as in the town of Liberal, Missouri), the result has always been catastrophic for the participants.

Alvin Schmidt wrote a book titled *Under the Influence* which details the positive things that Christianity has brought to people all over the world throughout Christianity's history. You cannot read that and not see Christ's words shining through from Matthew 11:28–30,



“Come unto me all of you who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

I grew up in an atheist home and lived as an atheist for many years. It was science that forced me to realize that there is more to our existence than the physical world in which we live. It was the wisdom of Christ revealed in the Scriptures that caused me to become a Christian and not something else. We can see God's wisdom, love, power, and design shining through in the Bible. You do not have to put your brain in park to be a Christian. You do need to be willing to apply the clear teachings of Jesus to everyday life and act on your convictions that Jesus really is “the way the truth and the life.” We can only come to the Father and find our place in life and in eternity through him.

—John N. Clayton



IS CHRISTIANITY A RELIGION OF BIGOTS?

Sometimes ideas for articles in this journal come in ways that seem almost mystic in nature. In a class study recently, I used the word “bigot” in discussing a challenge that Christians sometimes face. One of our members responded energetically to that comment saying she had been accused of being a bigot just because she believed in Christ. That experience led me to prepare a presentation on the subject, and several people responded to the lesson saying that they had been accused of bigotry just because they had a habit of going to church on Sunday. A few days later I had a vitriolic e-mail in response to our ministry accusing me of being a bigot. Apparently, the culture of pluralism we live in has led people outside of Christianity to feel that Christians are good targets for the use of this label.

The fact is that most religions teach that they have the right answer to the challenges of life. Islam teaches clearly that only the followers of Muhammad have paradise after death. There are passages in the Koran clearly teaching that “people of the book” [Christians and Jews] are enemies of Islam and are lost. Jesus did say “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6). Does this make his followers bigots?

Webster’s dictionary says that the word “bigot [is] from ‘hombre de bigote’ meaning a man with a mustache.” This is rooted in the South American gaucho masculine viewpoint of what a real man is all about. The dictionary goes on to say that it “refers to a person of spirit, firm character, and conviction.” My college slang dictionary defines bigot as “a person who holds blindly and intolerantly to a particular creed, opinion, etc.” The second use is “a narrow-minded inflexible, intolerant person.” Most reasonable people will agree that

believing something does not automatically make you a bigot. Refusing to hear another view, being unwilling to concede that you have something to learn from someone else, and/or denigrating someone else because they do not share your view does. We would suggest four reasons why the Christian system does not validate the charge that Christians are bigots.

1. Bigots refuse to reason together to share views and get an answer to a question.

From cover to cover the Bible encourages all people to come together and reason. In Isaiah 1:18 we read “‘Come now, and let us settle the matter,’ says the LORD. ‘Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be like wool.’” God has always called people to think and not respond as robots. When Jesus was in the temple as a twelve year old, he was “listening to them and asking them questions” (Luke 2:46). Paul’s approach was to reason with people. Acts 17:2 says, “As was



his custom, Paul went into the synagogue, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures.” This statement is repeated in Acts 18:4 and 18:19. When Paul is talking to Felix in Acts 24:25 “... Paul talked about righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come.” This went on

for two years. Paul did not just chew out Felix in a bigoted, self-righteous way but reasoned about the things that were destructive in the society in which they lived.

Individuals who claim to be Christians may not always act as Christians should, but the Christian system is one of reasoning and logical approaches to solving the problems we all face.

2. Bigots do not tolerate or see good in opposing views.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus set the standard for Christian conduct when a Christian is involved in a discussion with someone holding an opposing view. Christ told his followers to turn the other cheek, love your enemy, do good to those who hate you, do not be judgmental (Matthew 5:39, 44, and 7:1). Paul demonstrated the Christian approach to those with opposing views in Acts 17:16–30.

He was speaking at the Areopagus in Athens to a group of belligerent philosophers. He began by complimenting their devotions and in verse 28 refers to some of the good teachings of their local poets and leaders. Christians can believe that there is only one true path to God, but they also believe that there is value in other religions. Islam’s view of morality is in most points shared by Christ. The Hindu view of the environment values the creation as the Bible does. Buddha’s teaching about personal relationships is very close to the perspective of Christ. Bahá'u'lláh’s understanding of the importance of unity is shared by Christ. The charge of intolerance cannot be substantiated against the Christian.

3. Bigots wish harm to those who oppose them.

In Matthew 7:12 and Luke 6:31 Jesus says, “In everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.” Buddha made a similar declaration, but in the Sermon on the Mount Jesus gave specific help as to how to do this:

Matthew 5:21 — You have heard ... don’t murder ... but I tell you don’t get angry.

Matthew 5:27 — You have heard ... don’t commit adultery ... but I say don’t look with lust.

Matthew 5:38 — You have heard ... eye for eye, and tooth for tooth ... but I say turn the other cheek.

Matthew 5:43 — You have heard ... “Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.” ... but I say, love your enemies and pray for them.

Matthew 5:22 — But I tell you anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to his brother “Raca” [a term of contempt] is answerable to the court. And anyone who says “you fool” [which in modern slang is “go to hell”—condemning someone else] will be in danger of the fire of hell.

It is difficult if not impossible to read through this discussion and suggest that this is a bigot speaking. There was no physical harm intended in the teachings of Jesus Christ.



4. Bigots cannot disagree without being disagreeable.

In 1 Peter 3:15 Christians are told to “be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. . . . WITH GENTLENESS AND respect” (emphasis mine). I can tell you from personal experience that this is a challenge. When you know you have the right answer to give someone, and you also know that you must be kind and gentle, there is a real challenge to being the Christian Jesus calls you to be. I have a dear friend who was a missionary in Italy. The local people in the town where he served had a nickname for him — “the sweet one.” This man was so kind and gentle, that even though he was an American who had an opposing view to their traditions, he expressed that view with so much kindness and gentleness that they labeled him accordingly. That is what real Christianity is about.

In Luke 23:9–12 we see Jesus living out a response to any charge of bigotry that anyone could bring against him. The Roman ruler “plied him with many questions, but Jesus gave him no answer. The chief priests and the teachers of the law were standing there, vehemently accusing him. Then Herod and his soldiers ridiculed and mocked him. Dressing him in an elegant robe, they sent him back to Pilate.” I have had the experience of being publicly mocked and ridiculed in my presentations throughout the years. I know how hard it is not to respond in kind. That hot burning sensation up the back of your neck is hard to ignore, but Christians are constrained to follow the example of Christ. While we may fail at it, the cause is not bigotry but human weakness.



The Christian response to charges of bigotry is laid out in Galatians 5:22 when characteristics of a real Christian are listed — “love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.” These are not

characteristics of a bigot. Jesus said that the way people would know that we are his disciples was the opposite of bigotry. “By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another” (John 13:35).

—JNC

THE PRACTICAL EVIDENCE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT



This journal and this ministry deal with evidence. We are not primarily theological in our approach, but rather calling twenty-first-century men and women to look at the evidence and respond logically in a practical way to where the evidence leads. Most of our discussions have revolved around the massive evidence for the existence of God. Recognizing that there is evidence, the most basic question that might follow is why it matters. Many of us might say, “OK, there is something out there” but want to stop at that point. Why does belief make any difference in how I live or what I do? Even people who claim to be Christians may not be able to tell you how being a Christian gives them any special help or makes any difference in how they live. In Acts 2:38–39, Peter explained to the people of his day what they needed to do to be forgiven of their sins. He also made a promise of special help to all who make the decision to become Christians. He said, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. **AND YOU SHALL RECEIVE THE GIFT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.** The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call” (emphasis mine).

Many years ago when I was in the army, I was driving a truck as part of a survey section because our usual driver was on KP. I had to drive because everyone else was doing their jobs, and as the Sargent who supervised everyone, I was the only one available. It was late in the day, and I was 20 miles from the nearest road. Suddenly the truck died, and I suspected it was out of gas. (There was no gas gauge in those trucks.) The can of gas on the back of the truck was

empty. I called for a mechanic on the radio and was told that none was available until morning. I spent a very cold, mosquito bitten, hungry, frustrated night trying to sleep in the cab of the truck with no springs in the seat and only a canteen of water. Finally, about 9:00 the next morning, a mechanic arrived. He reached under the dash of the truck, grabbed a handle and turned it so the auxiliary gas tank would kick in. He then started the truck, made a few dicey comments about the stupidity of non-coms. Then he drove away yelling at me to be sure to fill both gas tanks and turn the handle back when I got to the base. I would suggest to you that most Christians have not accessed all of the help that is available to us as we fight the battles of life.

To many people, the Holy Spirit is like a genie in a bottle — totally mystical and unknowable. That is in contrast to many statements in the New Testament telling us that as Christians we have that help available. In Acts 7:48–51 Stephen spoke to his religious peers about their relationship to God. First, he addressed their attempts to do things their own way. “The Most High does not live in houses made by human hands. As the prophet says, ‘Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. What kind of a house will you build for me? says the Lord. Or where will my resting place be? Has not my hand made all these things?’ ... You are just like your ancestors: you always resist the Holy Spirit.” I would suggest that challenge is valid against us today. We build huge houses of worship, and yet God tells us our bodies are the temple of God (1 Corinthians 3:16).

In Romans 7:24–8:6 Paul talks about what should be true of all Christians: “... through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death. ... [we] do not live according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. ... those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires.” It is important to understand that we are not made into robots by the help the Spirit gives. First Thessalonians 5:16–22 warns Christians not to put out the Spirit’s fire. It was up to me to turn the supplementary fuel tank lever in the truck. I chose not to through ignorance, and I would suggest that is true of many of us regarding the help offered to us by God’s Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is mentioned in the Bible over 800 times. In the Old Testament, the Hebrew word *ruach* was used to designate the Spirit working in a situation. The Spirit came upon a person and then left. In the New Testament, the Greek word *pneuma* is used. The difference is that the Spirit comes upon a person and stays. That is what Peter referred to in his message on the day of Pentecost. For the seeker, the Spirit gives power, laying the groundwork for God’s use of us. People without God’s Spirit are incomplete, insecure, and usually frustrated. Jesus referred to this frequently. In Matthew 7:7–12

he told his followers, “Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened.” In John 14:15–17 we read, “If you love me, keep my commands. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever—the Spirit of Truth. The world cannot accept him because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him for he lives with you and will be in you.” All of this is in the context of “another Counselor [advocate]”—one like Jesus. Christ did not bring people riches or fame, but something far more important. The way the Spirit helps us is something far more important than money or politics.

Is all of this just a bunch of religious gobbledygook? In Ephesians 3:16–20 Paul suggests that we can see this in practical ways. “I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love may have power, together with all the Lord’s holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of the fullness of God.” Here is a list of things we can see happening in our lives when we become Christians and receive the gift of the Holy Spirit:

(1) The Holy Spirit helps our prayer life. Romans 8:26–28



tells us that no matter how weak we are, the Spirit will intercede for us. When my son was born with multiple handicaps, I did not know what to pray for. When my wife was at death’s door and was in pain, I did not know what to ask. The prayers that I found coming from my heart were mysteries to my non-believing friends. The Spirit helps us in those times when the problem is

beyond us. Ephesians 3 ends with, “Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we can ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations.”

(2) The Holy Spirit helps us to be patient. Galatians 5:22–23 lists things the Spirit helps us with, and patience is one of those. That is a challenge in life—even in how we drive our cars. I was a borderline road-rage addict before I became a Christian. Now I am much more patient (not perfect), but it has been a product of the Spirit helping me and answering my prayers.

Patience



(3) The Holy Spirit helps us find the joy of giving. In 2 Corinthians 8:1–7 Paul refers to the ability to give willingly as a grace—as a product of the Spirit (see 1 Corinthians 12.) I was



raised in an atheist home where survival of the fittest was the basis of everything that we did. Giving was done to maintain one's social standing, but it was done with resentment and with a social profit motive. Acts 20:35 tells us it is more blessed to give than to receive. Second Corinthians 9:7 says

that God loves a cheerful giver. Those seemed like alien commands I would never achieve. It took time and help beyond description, but I have learned how to enjoy giving. I do not mean just money, but time and love and everything that matters in life. Intellectually I could never do this, but with God's help through the Spirit, I have seen the grace of giving grow in my life. The evidence that this is beyond my education, history, and family upbringing is obvious. Mature Christians find the strength to give with joy that the world cannot comprehend.

(4) The Holy Spirit gives Christians the power to resist temptation. Romans 6, Galatians 5:16–26, Colossians 3:1–19, and Romans 8:1–17 are just a sampling of biblical advice and support for resisting the temptations that we all face. In today's society, sexual purity is

generally viewed as an impossible and unreasonable choice. We are all saturated with movies, TV programs, advertisements, and literature which advocate expressing one's sexuality with anyone or anything that is available and willing. The Bible promises Christians help in resisting the pressure to engage in sex with someone other than their wife or husband. This is not just a young person's struggle. To lose your wife to death after being married for 49 years and enjoying a fulfilling and secure sexual relationship leaves you with needs as strong or stronger than when you were 21 years old. Asking God's help and being open to the Spirit's leadership in resisting the biological urges you feel, is a war you can win. I know that from personal experience.



(5) The Holy Spirit gives us the ability to find the gifts God has given us and opens the doors to allow us to use and enjoy those gifts. First Corinthians 12:1–3 makes the promise to Christians

that they will be able to do what the world might say is impossible. When I was taking F-100 at Indiana University, the course was titled “Introduction to Education,” and all prospective teachers had to take the course. We were sent to the speech department where they had us do some tests to make sure we could speak well enough to be a classroom teacher. The head of the department was a friend of my father. He took me aside and told me I had some severe problems in articulating and organizing my thoughts. He said that I should give up the idea of being a classroom teacher and go into some kind of administration. He told me, “You should never speak publicly,



and stay out of the classroom because the children won’t be able to understand you.” That was the world’s view of my abilities — or lack of ability. I had become a Christian by that time, and I really felt God had called me to teach science in a public high school, so I rejected the world’s wisdom. After 41 years of teaching sci-

ence in a public high school, and having a great experience in both teaching and public speaking, I have to say that what I have done is not because of my abilities or strength. God’s Spirit has given me the power to overcome my own inabilities.

The skeptic will look at all of this and say, “That is all coincidental and emotional.” Even though these things cannot be weighed or measured with a yardstick, if you look carefully at what has been accomplished in the life of a strong Christian you will see evidence that it was not a product of his strength, upbringing, or education. Some of the most productive lives have been people who came from poor backgrounds with little education or obvious talent. Late in life most active Christians can look back and realize that what seemed impossible actually happened. The Spirit works in mysterious ways, and the Spirit is active in today’s world.

In Acts 26 a situation developed where Paul talked to a leader named Agrippa about the reasons why he should become a Christian and allow the Spirit to work within him. Agrippa seemed to have felt the nudge of the Spirit, but he blows it off by saying to Paul, Do you think in such a short time I can make such a change? Paul indicated he could, but the world was challenging Agrippa, and so he resisted the Spirit. Many of us resist the Spirit in the same way. God never forces us to change, to become the “new person.” God’s Spirit will not come to a place to which he is not invited.

—JNC

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EDITOR'S NOTE: The following appeared on the editorial page of the *Phoenix Republic* in December 1991. We do not know who wrote it, but we thought it was worth sharing again.

Now it came to pass that a group existed who called themselves fishermen.

And, lo, there were many fish in the waters all around. In fact, the whole area was surrounded by streams and lakes filled with fish, and the fish were hungry.

Week after week, month after month, and year after year, those who called themselves fishermen met in meetings and talked about their call to go fishing.

Continually they searched for new and better methods of fishing and for new and better definitions of fishing. They sponsored costly nationwide and worldwide congresses to discuss fishing and hear about all the ways of fishing, such as the new fishing equipment, fish calls, and whether any new bait was discovered.

But the teachers did not fish; they only taught fishing. Some spent much time in study and travel to learn the history of fishing and to see faraway places where the Founding Fathers did great fishing in centuries past. They lauded the faithful fishermen of years earlier who handed down the idea of fishing.

Many who felt the call to be fishermen responded. They were commissioned and sent to fish. And they went off to foreign lands ... to teach fishing.

Now it's true that many of the fishermen sacrificed and put up with all kinds of difficulties. Some lived near the water and bore the smell of dead fish every day. They received the ridicule of some who made fun of their fishermen clubs. They anguished over those who were not committed enough to attend the weekly meetings to talk about fishing.

These fishermen built large and beautiful buildings called Fishing Headquarters. The plea was that everyone should be a fisherman and every fisherman should fish.

One thing they didn't do, however: they didn't fish. All of the fishermen seemed to agree that what was needed was a board that could challenge fishermen to be faithful in fishing.

The board was formed by those who had the great vision and courage to speak about fishing, to define fishing, and to promote the idea of fishing in faraway streams and lakes where many other fish of different colors lived. Large, elaborate, and expensive training centers were built whose purpose was to teach fishermen how to fish. Those who taught had doctorates in fishology.

After all, were they not following the one who said, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men"?

Imagine how hurt some were when one day a person suggested that those who don't catch fish were really not fishermen, no matter how much they claimed to be. Yet, it did sound correct.



Is a person a fisherman if year after year he never catches a fish? Is one following if he isn't fishing? If Christ were to return to this Earth today in physical form, would he find us fishing, or would he find us organizing, talking about fishing, and making plans to build the best Fishing Headquarters anywhere?

—Anonymous

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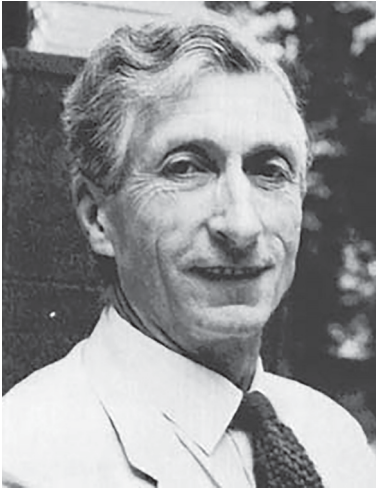
DOES GOD EXIST?

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.

CHARLES ALFRED COULSON (1910-1974)

Applied Mathematician and Theoretical Chemist
Pioneer of the quantum theory of valency,
Oxford Fellow, a leader in research on valency in
atomic structure, and chairman of Oxfam.



Coulson maintained that “religious faith is essential for the responsible use of science.” He is credited with coining the term “God of the Gaps” in which it is claimed that God is something man invented to explain what he did not understand. Coulson was adamantly opposed to this concept and said:

“There is no ‘God of the gaps’ to take over at those strategic places where science fails. The reason for that is that gaps of this sort have the unpreventable habit of shrinking.”
“Either God is in the whole of Nature

with no gaps or He’s not there at all.”

Coulson went on to show that his faith in God had been strengthened by his research.

Reference: *Scientists and Their Gods* by Henry F. Schaefer III.

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Cynthia's Corner

EVIDENCE FOR GOD IN THE BIBLE



My husband's ministry is all about evidence for God's existence. As a non-scientific layperson who is a believer, I can tell you why I think the Bible gives proof of God's existence. Even though the Bible is not a science book, any information in the Bible about the creation of the heavens or the earth has been found to be true and accurate. It has taken scientists many years to discover these facts for themselves that God revealed in his Word centuries prior.

The same is true for archaeology and history. Whenever the Bible has made statements about historical events, places, or people, many years later archaeologists and historians have provided proof that these biblical events, places, and persons are accurate and true. So far, no biblical statements have been proven false or inaccurate; nor will they because their author is the One who created everything.

The inspired writers of the Bible many times revealed future events that have taken place many years later. The Old Testament has many such prophecies, about the life and death of Jesus who lived many centuries after the prophecies were made. Also, prophecies about kings and kingdoms have proven to be true. Biblical prophecies fulfilled are another proof that the Bible was written by godly inspiration given to chosen people. Only God knows the future.

Lastly, another proof/evidence for God in the Bible is all the miracles done in both the Old and New Testaments. Examples are the ten plagues on Egypt, the parting of the Red Sea, and the many miracles done by Jesus and his apostles which are beyond human explanation and natural laws. Jesus made the lame to walk, the blind to see, healing all manner of illnesses, and even resurrecting the dead! These biblical miracles cannot be explained or reasoned away or even duplicated by other humans. They were witnessed by people whose records we have. These are miracles done by the power of God given to his chosen people for the express purpose of confirming his deity. "God also testified to it by signs, wonders and various miracles ..." (Hebrews 2:4).

The evidence for God in the Bible and in his creation are many and varied. If one is truly seeking to find and know God, his Word is one of those ways. "You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart" (Jeremiah 29:13).

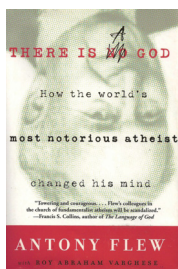
—Cynthia Clayton



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

There Is a God

by Antony Flew, Harper Collins Publishers, © 2007,
222 pages, \$19.00 (hardcover), ISBN-13: 978-0-06-133529-7



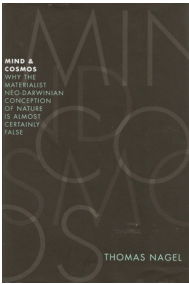
Most scholars would suggest that Antony Flew was the leading atheist of the twentieth century. Flew published over 30 books with many of them such as *God and Philosophy* and *The Presumption of Atheism* were hailed as the main support for atheistic thinking. Educated at Oxford, Flew held positions of professor of philosophy at several universities in England. In 2004 Flew broke with atheism and announced that he accepted the existence of God. The most meaningful quote that he has given us is “you have to go where the evidence leads you.” This book presents the philosophical arguments and scientific discoveries that turned him from a staunch atheist into a believer.

This book is divided into five sections. The first is an introduction including a preface that discusses Flew’s role in atheism and gives some history. Appendix A is a critical review of modern day atheists, including Richard Dawkins, Daniel Dennett, Lewis Wolpert, Sam Harris, and Victor Stenger. It does a good job of explaining these modern atheist’s positions and weaknesses. Appendix B is a discussion of Jesus Christ with N.T. Wright who is an Oxford New Testament scholar. Flew never embraced Christianity, but this discussion is very positive.

The remainder of the book is the real body of Flew’s faith. The first part is an explanation of how he became an atheist. The second part is subtitled “My Discovery of the Divine” and traces his journey to becoming a believer. The book does not primarily deal with any new evidence, but rather with how the evidence we have is incorporated into faith. It will be useful to those working through philosophy, especially college students who are influenced by atheistic philosophy professors.

Mind and Cosmos

by Thomas Nagel, Oxford University Press, © 2012,
130 pages, \$24.95 (hardcover), ISBN-13: 978-0-19-991975-8



The subtitle of this book is “Why the Materialist Neo-Darwinian Conception of Nature Is Almost Certainly False.” Nagel is not a religious writer using a religious viewpoint. He is a university professor in the Department of Philosophy and the School of Law at New York University. His book accepts the evolution of biological systems, but he argues philosophically that the standard model of evolutionary biology is fundamentally incomplete.

The book is divided into six chapters which involve philosophical problems with anti-reductionism, consciousness, cognition, and value. Nagel attacks scientific naturalism which he says is based on “speculative Darwinism explanations of practically everything, and armed to the teeth against attacks from religion.” He says that there has been a triumph of ideological theory over common sense.

This is an academic attack on the weaknesses of evolutionists like Richard Dawkins in his attempts to explain the human eye. Nagel points out that defenders of intelligent design like Behe, Meyer, and Berlinski have raised valid points and that “they do not deserve the scorn with which they are commonly met. It is manifestly unfair.” The chief value of the book is that it reduces the validity of the attacks that have been made on the suggestions that design in the cosmos speaks of a designer. Nagel discusses the issue of cognition. One of his main thrusts is how consciousness fits into Darwinian theory. He also examines how value fits into consciousness in Darwinism. These are not arguments from physical or biological science, but logical and philosophical problems that Neo-Darwinists and naturalists have ignored.

We recommend this book to people interested in philosophy. It is beyond the reach of most general readers, but college students and college graduates who have had some background in philosophy will find the book unique, interesting, and compelling.

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DANDY DESIGNS

ANTS WITH PRISM COOLING



Several times in this column we have discussed the problems of survival for living things in extreme conditions. There are some places on Earth where the temperature on the ground can soar to 120 degrees Fahrenheit. Even in that extreme heat there are living things functioning very well in conditions that would be lethal

to most forms of life. Recently some attention has been paid to the Saharan silver ant. This native of the Sahara Desert thrives in extreme heat. They avoid predators by coming out of their underground lairs into the full sun and intense heat to scavenge animal carcasses. The picture shows them devouring an engorged camel tick.

Belgian scientists studying the Saharan silver ant with electron microscopes have found the ant's secret weapon. They are covered with hairs of the right density, size, and shape to reflect the light and heat of the sun. When you look at the ant, you see a metallic shine to the insect. We do not see this form of reflection in any other desert creature. The ant stays cool by reflecting a high percentage of the solar energy away from its body.

Like many things seen in nature, engineers are now looking into how this discovery could be used to protect humans from the dangers of extreme heat. Designing something efficient enough to do this would require a deep understanding of optics and the nature of light. Proverbs 8:22 finds wisdom talking about the necessity of God using his wisdom in the creation. Designing the features life needs to survive in the diverse areas of planet Earth tests that wisdom. God's wisdom shines brightly in the reflected light coming from the Saharan silver ant.



One of the interesting areas of forest management is understanding how plants and fire function in relation to each other. Some of us were brought up in the “Smokey the Bear” tradition when forest fires were regarded as the ultimate evil. We saw horrific pictures of forests being burned up, and of what the forest looked like a week after the fire decimated the area. I do not ever recall seeing what the forest looked like five years after the fire, even if humans were not involved in planting new trees. The fact is that there are many ways fires can start naturally, but lightning is probably the main cause. Fire is not an evil thing, and there are designs in nature that require it.

Fire can allow sunlight to reach seedling plants so they can grow. A good example is the giant sequoia. Sequoias are shade-intolerant, and their seedlings cannot compete with vegetation that thrives in the shade. When a fire goes through a grove of giant sequoias, it burns up the shade-loving plants and opens the canopy so that the sequoia seedlings can get sunlight. Without fire, the sequoias would die out.

Even more sophisticated are plants that are fire or smoke activated. The cones of the lodgepole pine are sealed with a resin that can only be melted by the heat of a fire. The seeds are released during a fire, and thus a burned-over area is rapidly reseeded. Plants of this type are called “obligate seeders.” They contain a receptor protein which is activated by the growth hormone karrikin which is released by the fire.

In chaparral communities in Southern California, some plants have leaves coated in flammable oils that encourage an intense fire. The heat causes their fire-activated seeds to germinate, and recovery of the area happens rapidly. Some plants such as the ponderosa pine grow in such a way that rapidly-moving fires do no damage to their crown which is above the fire. These pines shed their lower branches as they mature.

All of this planning and design speaks of intelligence and purpose. This design prevents fire from making an area empty of vegetation and selects specially-designed plants that thrive under the conditions of forest fires. As science has come to understand this design, we have learned how to better protect our natural areas. Source: *Fire Ecology Journal*. Available on fireecology.net/

News and Notes

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ALCOHOL AND BREAST CANCER. For the past several years studies have suggested that drinking reduces the risk of cancer.



The flavonoids in grape-derived drinks were said to boost the immune system. A new study connects alcohol and breast cancer risk.

The American Institute for Cancer Research and the World Cancer Research Fund have announced the analysis of 119 previous studies involving 12 million women and 260,000 cases of breast cancer. The study shows that even one small glass of wine or an eight-ounce beer a day causes a 5% greater risk of breast cancer for premenopausal women and a 9% increase for postmenopausal women. Alcohol triggers DNA mutations and raises estrogen levels which are linked to increased risk for breast cancer.

Alcohol is the most destructive recreational drug ever created by man. The damage it causes brings enormous pain and suffering not only to those who use alcohol but to innocent people who are victimized by its effect. Source: *The Washington Post*, quoted in *The Week*, June 9, 2017, page 19.

GRAVITATIONAL GLUE. As scientists study the motions of things in space, a great mystery continues to grow. The fact that everything spins at very fast rates allows stability in the cosmos. Galaxies, which are island universes containing billions of stars, spin fast enough that they do not collapse into their cores and yet they do not fly apart. Scientists call the force that makes this possible “gravitational glue.”

Adding to the mystery, we see light bending as it travels through space and we call that “gravitational lensing.” There is not enough visible mass in the cosmos to bend the light as much as we observe. Massive filaments of gas connect groups of galaxies, and they are controlled by something invisible.

There are two proposals of subatomic particles that could be the cause of these mysteries. One is Weakly Interacting Massive Particles (WIMPs). These particles would have to be heavier than protons and neutrons. The other proposal is Axions. They would be “ghost particles” that have a low mass but are super-abundant. So far all attempts to detect either of these possible explanations have failed. To find the answer will require a very complicated detection system.

This is just one more example of why the creation of the cosmos cannot be explained by naturalistic chance. The complexity of such simple things as having a planet in a solar system within a galaxy defies any chance explanation. The gravitational glue that holds everything together is just another wonderful creation of God that allows us to exist. Source: *Discover*, July/August 2017, page 76.

APOLOGETICS COURSE HAS 3,700 STUDENTS. We now have 3,700 students taking our Christian apologetics course. We began that ministry in 1960 working with prisoners in Indiana. We wrote a three-lesson apologetics course because a large percentage of the incarcerated people we talked to had lost or were struggling with their faith.

That basic correspondence course kept growing, being updated and revised to the point where we now have 13 lessons. We quickly found that the course was too basic for many of our prisoner students, so we began a 13-lesson college-level course. We have offered that course for 20 years, and it is also on our Website (doesgodexist.org).

We offer students who complete either one or both of our apologetics courses nine other courses that are Bible-study programs taught by other teachers. There are also contact opportunities with congregations geographically close to the students. All of these courses are free and postage-paid both ways. Whether online or by mail, our courses are always free of charge. We send a completion certificate to those students who finish either apologetics course. We will also

send a copy of our primary book *The Source* to those completing the advanced course and requesting it.

“DEMONS AND REALITY” BRINGS REACTIONS. In our last issue we published an article titled “Demons and Reality.” In it, we discussed the question of what demon possession is about, and whether it happens in today’s world. We gave seven reasons why demon possession does not happen today, based on the Bible and the evidence. You can read the article online at <http://www.doesgodexist.org/Journals--2017/2ndQtr17/DemonsandReality.html>



One of the points we made was that Jesus was tempted in every way we are (see Hebrews 4:15). We said, “No one has ever suggested that Jesus was demon possessed.” We received an objection to that statement because in Matthew 12:24 the Pharisees claimed that Jesus was casting out demons “by Beelzebub.” Beelzebub is a Hebrew word that means “lord of the flies.” Beelzebub was a heathen deity to which the Jews ascribed supremacy among evil spirits. First, the accusation was false. Then, notice that the statement is not that Jesus was possessed and had to have an exorcism to cast a demon out of him. What the Pharisees accused Jesus of was using the power of the heathen deity to do demon exorcisms. That is a far cry from having a demon overtake a person and, against their will, cause them to do things they would not do otherwise.

We heard from some others who claimed to have witnessed everything from voodoo to ghost habitations to spirit murders. In our world, violence is equated with entertainment and technology can place us in unreal environments. Almost anything can be invented and carried out by the human mind. People can produce illusions that are convincing. Do not buy into these claims and scams. Rely on God and his Word. We would repeat the conclusion of the “Demons and Reality” article:

“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.” The Bible tells us, “‘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; Philippians 2:12; and Joshua 24:15).

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE FOR “LUKEWARM” LAODICEA. Jesus addressed lukewarm Laodicea in a letter recorded in Revelation 3:14–22. In verses 15 and 16, Jesus told the congregation in that city that they make him sick because of their

lukewarmness. There are many reasons for this lukewarmness. One of them appears to have been their compromise with religious pluralism.

An article in the *Biblical Archaeology Review* (March/April 2017) describes the apparent history of the church in that city. The archaeological artifacts found there give evidence of great financial prosperity in the city. There are also columns and tablets showing a collection of religious symbols from different faiths. One column has a menorah, a *lulav* (palm branch), a *shofar* (ram's horn), and a cross. The Christian cross extends from the Jewish menorah and seems to connect the Laodicean church to the synagogue.

In the apostle Paul's letter to the Galatians, he addressed all of the churches in that region, including Laodicea. Paul primarily argued against the way many Christians were returning to following the laws and restrictions of the Old Testament. He wrote these rebuking words:

I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ, and are turning to a different gospel—which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ.

Galatians 1:6, 7 NIV 1984

While we as Christians are to love and support others of a different faith, we are not to meld our faith into theirs. Lukewarmness is one of the products of such compromise. Religious pluralism did not work for lukewarm Laodicea, and it does not work today.

TRANSGENDER BULLYING. As our society continues to accept any kind of behavior for the sake of tolerance, equal rights, and personal freedom, are we going to accept transgender bullying? The problem is that sometimes “personal rights” for one violates someone else's rights.

In *Citizen* magazine (June/July 2017, page 11), there is a story about a “progressive” blogger by the name of Kristen Quintrall Lavin who had an experience that apparently has caused her to have concerns about the muddled atmosphere of sexual identity. Ms. Quintrall was in the women's restroom at the Disney theme park when a “big burly guy” walked in. The room was full of a dozen women with kids, and in her words, “Everyone was visibly uncomfortable.” The man simply hung around watching. He knew no one would say anything because they knew the man would identify himself as a woman. She said, “We had been culturally bullied into silence.”



This woman calls herself a “progressive” and says, “I am totally cool with transgender people.” But she also says, “Gender just can’t be a feeling. Gender must be clearly defined to keep women safe. We cannot tell women they don’t know what a man is anymore.” The Bible clearly defines what it means to be a man or a woman. When those definitions and roles are destroyed, the result is abuse and chaos.

ARCHAEOLOGY AND THE BIBLE. The *Biblical Archaeological Review* (May/June 2017) carried an article by Dr. William G. Dever with the inflammatory title “Who Tells the Truth: The Bible or Archaeology.” The title is somewhat misleading, because Dever is actually a historical maximalist when it comes to bringing the archaeology and the Bible together. Dr. Dever is the Professor of Near Eastern Archaeology and Anthropology at the University of Arizona, and his proposal is that biblical texts and archaeological data should be studied separately and then students should look for convergences.

There are two approaches to the relationship of archaeology and the Bible. In addition to the “maximalist” position, there are also “minimalists.” Biblical minimalism is the view that assumes that archaeology and the Bible are necessarily in conflict because the biblical account is viewed as a myth. Minimalism is the approach of the “Jesus Seminar” group which says if a statement in the Bible is hard to believe or is a miracle, then it can be discarded. Archaeological minimalists assume that things like David and Goliath, Saul and David, Moses and the Exodus, David’s palace, and Solomon’s riches cannot be true and cannot be supported by archaeology. When a find is made that seems to support some of these biblical stories, that interpretation is automatically discarded.



The problem for biblical minimalists is that there is too much evidence that the Bible is true to reasonably discard it. Hershel Shanks, who is the editor of *Biblical Archaeological Review* wrote about this. The article he wrote was in the July/August 1997 issue titled “Face to Face: Biblical Minimalists Meet Their Challengers.” Christians do not need to be intimidated by claims made that archaeology discredits the Bible. Christians should follow 1 Peter 3:15 and know how to answer these claims. We would encourage our readers to read an article by Lydia Evdoxiadi Verniory that we published in our May/June 2010 issue page 15. Ms. Verniory is a practicing archaeologist, and the article is titled “Noisy Books On The Historicity of the Bible: ‘Take Them With A Grain of Salt.’”



TOMOGRAPHY OPENS OLD BIBLICAL DOCUMENTS.

Tomography is a way of imaging something in sections or “slices” without actually cutting it. It is often used in hospitals today in computed tomography (CT), also called “CAT scans.” Our most basic theme in this ministry is that science and faith support each other one-hundred percent. This scientific technique of tomography is going to provide a way of verifying biblical documents as never before. Dr. Brent Seales is using CT to “open” documents that could not previously be opened.

In 1970 a scroll was discovered in an ancient synagogue in En-Gedi, Israel. The document was badly damaged when a fire destroyed the synagogue in the sixth century. The scroll was a lump so charred that it would crumble when touched. When Seales applied his analysis technique to the scroll without unrolling it or touching it in any way, it turned out to be two chapters from the book of Leviticus.

It will be exciting to see what can be found when other charred or brittle remains of documents from the past can be brought out using tomography so that scholars can study them. Science is opening doors that were previously unavailable to us. Questions about the accuracy of our biblical texts can be answered. The future is very bright in the area of canonicity, knowing that we have the “right books” in our modern Bibles. Source: *Discover*, June 2017, page 12.

MORE ON CLIMATE CHANGE. Climate change is a fact, as we have noted before. However, we have also noted before, that climate change has taken place in the past, and that humans are not the sole cause. Much of the media hype about climate change has been based on reports from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. The problem is that the general public has no way of checking the alarmist claims of that group. Some of the dire predictions of what climate change would bring seem to be unjustified. The problem has been that because of limited data or no access to unbiased information most people had no choice but to believe what they were told.

Some scientists have formed an organization called the Non-governmental International Panel on Climate Change. This group maintains that the reports of what climate change will bring are grossly exaggerated and based on bad data and shoddy science. They have released a book titled *Why Scientists Disagree About Global Warming*.

This is not a biblical authority issue, but the design of the Earth and its capacity to withstand environmental challenges is important to all of us. We believe that God designed the Earth with us in mind and we have a duty to take care of it. If you are interested in further reading, you can find the book and other information on the website www.heartland.org.

This journal is a part of a program of service titled Does God Exist? The purpose of the program is to provide thinking, seeking people with scientific evidence that God does exist and that the Bible is his Word. It is our conviction that all men can logically and rationally believe in God. In addition to this quarterly journal, the Does God Exist? program offers DVDs, CDs, courses, books, and other materials. These materials are offered on a loan basis or at our cost. We also are more than willing to correspond with you and answer any specific question(s) you might have. If you would like further information on borrowing or purchasing these materials, we would be glad to send it to you. Check the boxes below to describe what you would like and mail it to us. We will get it right out to you.

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