

Inside Life

Issue 29
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Does God Exist?
Probably.

An eternity of surprises

The love note from space

Becoming your thoughts

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Inside Life

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Inside Life is a magazine of understanding. Rather than just reporting on life, **Inside Life** seeks to delve inside the marvellous mystery that is life, to discover what it is all about. What does life mean? Where did it come from? How can we make the most of it?

Inside Life provides insight and answers to life's deep questions and challenges, and aims to provide articles of lasting hope, help, and encouragement for successful living in today's fast-moving world.

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Our Cover: An upbeat-looking galaxy cluster appears to smile at us in a newly released image from the NASA/ESA Hubble Space Telescope. The cluster—designated as SDSS J1038+4849—appears to have two eyes and a nose as part of a happy face.

Those eyes are actually very bright galaxies, and the smile lines are, in reality, arcs caused by an effect known as strong gravitational lensing, a phenomenon that can be explained by Einstein's theory of general relativity.

In this case an "Einstein Ring" is produced from the bending of light, a result of the exact and symmetrical alignment of the source, lens, and observer. That's why we see the ring-like structure.

Hubble has provided astronomers with tools to study these massive galaxies and model their lensing effects. Because of this, scientists can peer further into the early universe than ever before. But can they find out whether or not God exists?

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Does God exist? Probably.

By John Halford

‘Can you prove to me that God exists?’ For many people it’s a challenging question. Where do you start?

The obvious place would seem to be the creation: the marvels of the universe, and the miracle of life itself. It couldn’t have just happened, could it? Surely the fact of a creation proves there is a Creator?

The surprising answer is, not necessarily. What creation shows is that God probably exists.

‘Probably’ means ‘having more evidence for than against, giving ground for belief’. But ‘probably’ is not—or at least should not be—enough to convince an unbeliever to believe in God.

In my career as a journalist, I have interviewed many eminent scientists who are committed Christians—there are more of them than you might think—and they have all said the same thing. What we see around us provides evidence, but not proof, of the Creator’s existence.

These men and women have no personal doubts. But they are careful

to explain that the basis of their faith is not scientific evidence. What they have discovered, in often brilliant careers in the natural sciences, may have reinforced their belief and reverence for the Creator. But no amount of scientific discovery will ever prove God exists.

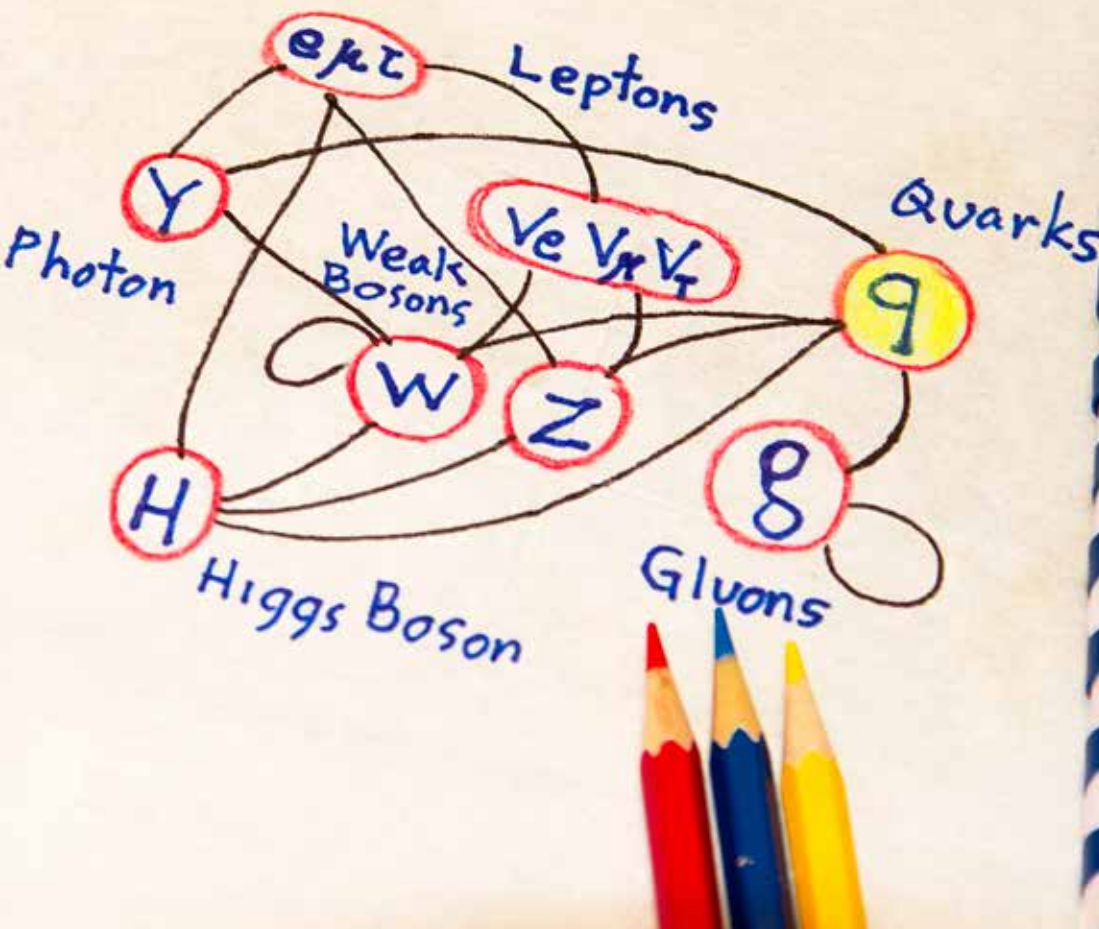
Here’s why.

The scientific method

Most scientists work carefully and methodically. They are reluctant to say something is a proven fact until they are sure.



The Crab Nebula is one of the visible wonders of the universe, first seen by Chinese and other astronomers in the year 1054. At its centre, 6,500 light-years from Earth, is a super-dense neutron star, rotating once every 33 milliseconds. The nebula and the pulsar, the bright dot at the centre of the image, may be evidence of God’s existence, but they do not prove that God exists.



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6. LEPTONS
7. GLUONS
8. UP DOWN

They make sure by proceeding step-by-step through what is known as the scientific method. It works like this: first you gather relevant data by experiment and observation; then you systematically analyse it; eventually, you suggest a hypothesis (in other words, 'this might be the way it is'); and eventually a theory ('this certainly seems to be the way it is').

Other scientists must then test your theory, and this may result in it being adjusted, adapted, or even rejected. But this is the way scientists discipline themselves to arrive at an understanding of the facts and laws of the natural world.

In real life it isn't quite as dispassionate or objective as this, because scientists have emotions,

opinions, and pride like the rest of us. But by using the scientific method, science has become very good at answering the kind of questions science can answer. It hasn't always been this way.

Ancient beliefs

Until a few hundred years ago most scientists believed everything was made up of four elements: fire, wind, water, and air. Most accepted without question that the earth was the centre of the universe, with the sun, moon, and planets revolving around it.

But even though the ancients had a very incomplete picture of the natural world, what they knew filled them with awe. To some it was evidence of the greatness of the Creator. 'The

heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands',¹ exclaimed an ancient writer.

Even with the limited knowledge of the times, believers marvelled how anyone could doubt the cosmos was anything but the work of a master Creator. 'God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse',² wrote the apostle Paul in the early years after Christ.

New perspectives

Today we have discovered so much more. We know we are just one small planet circling a medium-sized star that is one of 100,000 million stars in one galaxy. And we know there are thousands of millions of other

galaxies, all with millions, billions, and even trillions of stars.

To the believer, it is striking evidence of the Creator. But an increased understanding of the heavens has not necessarily caused modern man to grow in awe and knowledge of God. Other explanations for the origin and development of the natural world have been advanced. And from a scientific point of view these must be considered possible until they have been proved wrong.

At the other end of the cosmic scale we have probed deeper and deeper into inner space. Particle physicists have given us an incredible new understanding of the ultimate components of physical matter. It seems that our 'real world', at its most fundamental level, seems to dissolve into a shimmering latticework of pure energy.

Odds against

But this unimaginably big, acutely balanced universe, and the intricacy of its smallest components still do not, beyond doubt, prove it is all the work of a master Designer/Creator. It is possible to believe all this is the product of random chance. The odds against this make it unlikely. But it is possible.

Even the apparent miracle of life has been explained without the need for a Creator. The more we understand about genetics, the more improbable this has seemed. The chances of the right things just happening in sequence are extraordinarily unlikely, but not utterly impossible.

So, however convincing the wonders of creation are to a believer, it is important for Christians to remember that they are not incontrovertible proof of God's existence.

Even the Bible reminds us that it is not the weight of scientific evidence, but 'by faith that we understand the universe was formed at God's command'.³ Other explanations are improbable, but they are, from a strictly scientific point of view,

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possible. And the improbable can happen.

My grandson, when he was eight months old, realised a lifetime ambition by getting hold of the cordless telephone. He hid behind the sofa and blissfully began hitting the keys. He randomly dialled a sequence that just happened to be the number of a police station, which reacted quickly to the incoherent gurgles coming down the line. My daughter found a policeman at her door asking if someone was choking!

The odds on the little boy hitting the number sequence were many dozens of millions to one. But it happened.

How do you find God?

Scientifically the existence of God has not been demonstrated beyond all shadow of doubt. Therefore it cannot—scientifically—be considered a fact. No amount of scientific observation can prove it, although it may certainly increase the probability factor.

But God has chosen not to demonstrate his existence beyond all doubt scientifically.

Why?

Because the existence of God is not just another question to be resolved. If it could be proved scientifically, it would be just another fascinating fact of the universe, finally locked in place. Some wrong concepts would be dislodged, and God's existence would be something we were now sure about. Atheists and agnostics would have to change their minds, just as medieval philosophers had to change their ideas about the earth being the centre of the universe.

But it is not just a question of changing minds. God's purpose in revealing himself to his creation is to change lives. The search for God can never be just another academic exercise. It carries a responsibility with important, eternal implications. It is knowledge that must ultimately impact the seeker in a personal way.

I once discussed this with an eminent British scientist who had



Could a sincerely inquisitive scientist find proof positive that God existed through prayer?

had an illustrious career as a physicist, academic, and theologian. I asked this man if he could think of an experiment that would help a sincerely inquisitive scientist to find proof positive that God existed.

He thought for a moment and then said: 'I think I would have to ask him to pray. He would have to ask God to answer that prayer in a way he could understand'.

That isn't avoiding the issue. It is confronting it head on. He couldn't—I can't—you can't—prove God exists to anyone else. They must do it for themselves.

An encounter in Athens

About 2,000 years ago the apostle Paul confronted the philosophers of ancient Athens with this issue. He had, as his custom was, preached the gospel, first in the relative privacy of the synagogues, and then in public forums. His revolutionary message of salvation through a crucified Saviour aroused the curiosity of the most influential inhabitants of this ancient seat of learning.

They summoned him to appear before them and demanded: 'May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting. You are bringing some strange new ideas to our ears, and we want to know what they mean'.⁴

Paul was not intimidated. He knew his audience and his subject. The Athenians were intensely interested in religious matters, and considered themselves very open minded.

Among the many idols and temples of the city Paul had noticed an altar to the 'unknown God'. The cautious and superstitious Athenians didn't want to overlook any deity.

Paul decided to reveal this 'unknown God'. He explained that this God was too great to be brought down to human worshippers. He was the Creator of heaven and earth, and did not need a temple or altar. He,

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the giver of life itself, needed nothing from those he had created.

How then, could mere mortals ever come to know him? Paul explained it this way: he would make himself known to those who would reach out to him. They would not have to reach far, because 'he is not far from each one of us'.⁵

A relationship with God

But this unknown God, who need not be so unknown, would not reveal himself just to satisfy intellectual curiosity. The understanding of God's existence should not be the end of an argument, but the beginning of a relationship.

Here, then, is why God's existence is ultimately a question one can only answer for one's self. Today as never before, the heavens—and just about everything else we examine—are showing us more of the handiwork of the great Creator, for those with eyes to see and ears to hear. Our discoveries enhance our understanding and perhaps increase our awe and reverence. But the ultimate proof of the existence of

the Creator is a more intimate, very personal journey.

There is no short cut to proving God exists. But then, there is no need of one. As Paul told the Athenians, God is not very far away from any one of us.

The first step towards him can be something as simple as an experimental prayer, asking for an answer that the sincere seeker will understand.

Notes

¹ Psalm 19:1

² Romans 1:20

³ Hebrews 11:3

⁴ Acts 17:19–20

⁵ Acts 17:27

John Halford was a wonderful teacher, caring mentor, a prolific writer who could be serious and humorous, a loving husband, father, brother, and pop-pop. His love for the underdog was unwavering and he saw potential in people and places that others didn't. He died on 21 October 2014 surrounded by family.

Aggressive atheists

By Joseph Tkach

I believe that most atheists are really agnostics. In times of crisis, for example, they, like everybody else, tend to resort to prayer. When the chips are down, they hope a merciful and benevolent God is there for them.

But some of those whom we might call 'aggressive' atheists are different. They like to use science and logic to try to convince believers why they should stop believing. Using science and logic, they argue, it is impossible to prove that God exists.

Richard Dawkins, for example, has compared the idea of an imagined Flying Spaghetti Monster to belief in God. God is no more real or provable by conventional means of proof than a Flying Spaghetti Monster, he argues. It is just made up.

He's right about one thing. The existence of God can't be proven by conventional means of proof. You can't prove God exists using science and logic. You can only know God by faith, not by scientific study. You can only know God through God's own revelation of himself, not by mathematics, logical deduction, or the scientific method.

But what these aggressive atheists don't like to admit is that just as the existence of God cannot be proven through science and logic, neither can it be disproven through science and logic. They have no more grounds to disprove God's existence using conventional means of proof than we believers have to prove God's existence using science and logic.

The tools of belief in God are revelation and faith, start to finish, not science and logic. The atheist

has no basis to disprove what can only be held true by faith. The Flying Spaghetti Monster and other such analogies are not valid analogies for belief in God because they miss the very heart of why so many people believe.

God's personal revelation of himself through Jesus Christ makes sense of the world. It assures us that we matter, that we are not here by accident, and that we were created on purpose and for a purpose. It makes love matter, because by faith we hold that God made us because he loves us, and in that love he will make us into people who can love like he loves.

Aggressive atheists can scoff about the lack of scientific proof for the existence of God, but they are looking in the wrong place. By standing on their premise that God doesn't exist, they miss the still small voice of revelation, and the personal joy of knowing God and knowing God knows them.

I like to say that in the end, there is really only one kind of atheist: the one who will one day come to faith. That's my prayer.

This is a transcript of a weekly 'Speaking of Life' radio programme by Joseph Tkach, president of Grace Communion International. For more information visit www.gci.org.



The love note From space

By Richard Fowler

Have you ever heard that internal voice, challenging you to take the paper you just screwed up and throw it across the room into that enticingly open bin?

There you are, some metres away. You decide to get the undivided attention of those around you to witness this marvel of skill and accuracy. Once everybody's eyes are engaged in this peacock-like show, you decide to launch this missile with a graceful glide. All eyes follow its trajectory, and you feel a sense of anticipation rise in the room. As the missile nears its destination, colleagues rise out of their chairs for a better view, with cheers and applause at the ready. But then, you realise the inevitable, and your heart

sinks: it's going to miss, and as the screwed-up paper bounces next to the bin, the collective tension in the room deflates.

Yet, this near display of precision and accuracy pales into astronomical insignificance when compared to what the world got to witness in July 2015. Imagine throwing that screwed-up paper and trying to hit a target several billion kilometres away (the distance from earth to Pluto ranges from 2.7 billion to 7.5 billion km). Well, that's exactly what we did. Except we threw, not a screwed up piece of paper, but a grand piano sized package of technology known as 'New Horizons', at a cost of \$900 million. It took just under ten years to get there, helped by a 84,000km/h push from Jupiter...don't you just love gravity!¹

It is truly amazing what man is able to do: send a hurtling body of metal into the deepest, darkest depths of one of the loneliest places in our orbiting solar system to meet a target travelling at thousands of kilometres an hour. If you were to take the same lonely journey in a car travelling at 100km/h, it would take you well over 6,000 years.

And what a treat we saw when we got there! Emerging from the darkness was an image that was as surprising as it was poetic: Pluto's unseen love note hidden from humanity's eyes until now. What was it? An enormous and accurately 'drawn' heart shape onto the surface of what is now humbly called 'asteroid number 134340'. It reminded me of some lyrics sung by Rihanna: 'We found love in a hopeless place'.

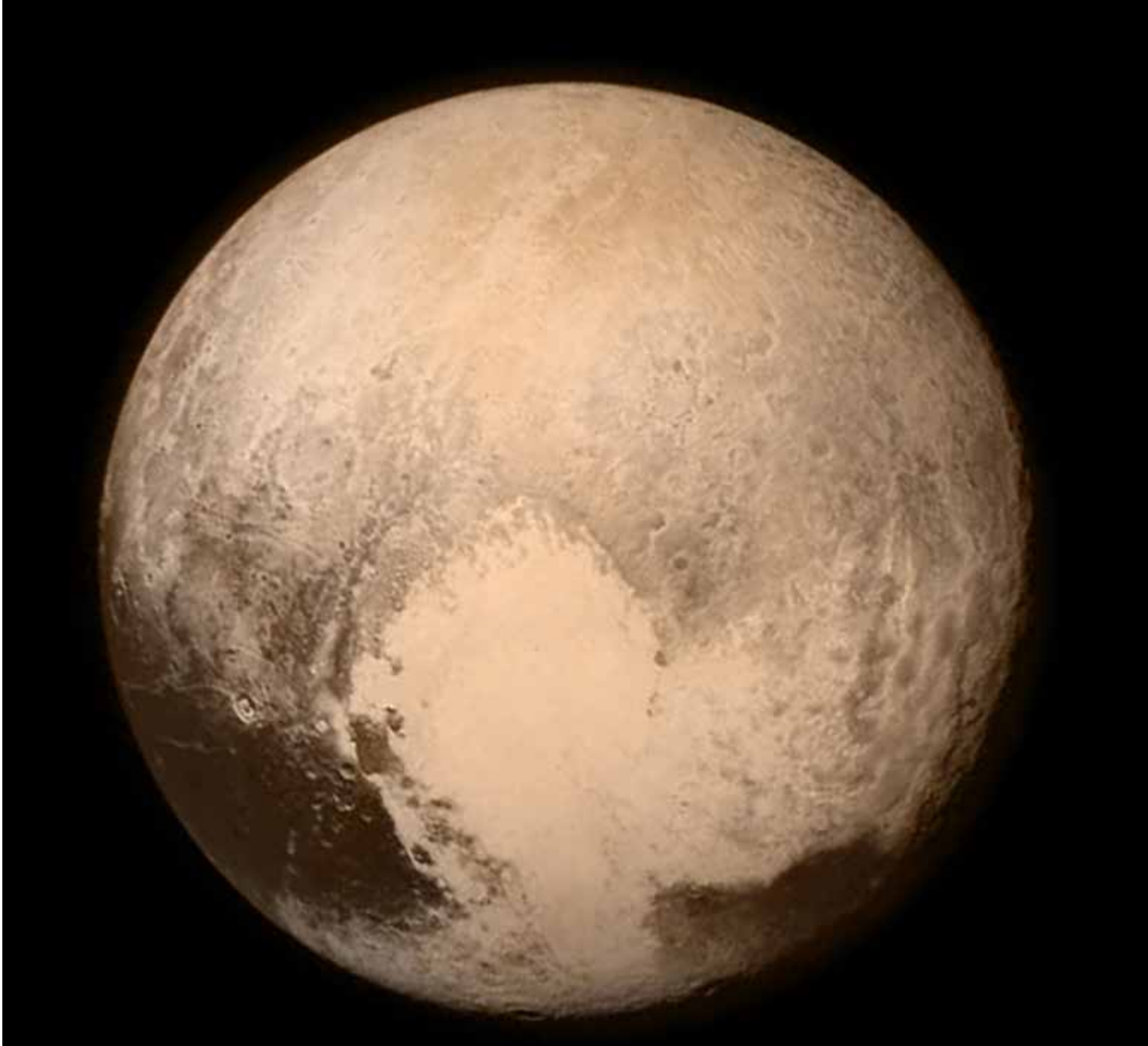
And that's just the point...we did! With this heart splashed across Pluto's surface, there is something to be learned. You see, all this time Pluto has been carrying a metaphorical message for us, a message that we have had to probe the darkest part of our solar system to uncover. Maybe we could look at it this way: no matter how dark it gets in our lives, no matter how lonely we feel, no matter how tough things become in life, God's love is still present, God's compassion towards us never fails!

In fact this message, believe it or not, has been around for centuries. This message written on the surface

An artist's concept drawing of NASA's New Horizons spacecraft speeding towards its 14 July 2015 flyby of Pluto and Charon at the edge of our solar system.

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of Pluto was actually written on the pages of a very special book:

Where can I go from your Spirit? Or where can I flee from your presence? If I ascend into heaven, you are there; if I make my bed in hell, behold, you are there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me. If I say: 'Surely the darkness shall fall on me', even the night shall be light about me...How precious also are your thoughts to me, O God! How great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they would be more in number than the sand; when I awake, I am still with you.²

David, the warrior king and psalmist who wrote this, understood one thing: that the way we sometimes feel is not always reflected in how God feels. Simply put, no matter how lonely or difficult life gets, God is always there, ever present. His wanting us to succeed is never failing.

This is not to say that we will not have difficulties in our lives or that every problem will be solved by understanding the reality of God's compassion towards us, of course not. But knowing this reality will help us develop the mind-set that encourages us to pursue purpose, even when it's hard, even if it means accepting discomfort in our lives. This mind-set can be found in Pluto's

message; not a sentimental heart measuring some 2,000 km across, but an intimation that tells us that God is there for us, that he loves us, and that he will not leave us when we face our darkest, loneliest, and toughest times. It is a love that we don't have to travel across the solar system for, nor one that can be measured!

Notes

¹ <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/science/space/11728951/Giant-heart-spotted-on-Pluto-in-closest-ever-pictures-of-dwarf-planet.html>.

² Psalm 139:7–11, 17-18.

This article was first published in the April 2016 issue of *Because* magazine (www.because.uk.com). Reprinted with permission.

The joy of discovering new things never ends...

An eternity of surprises

By Jonathan Buck

I was jotting down some notes for this article when an earwig crawled up on the table beside me and waddled across to some cookie crumbs I'd left behind from my afternoon tea break. I'd never seen an earwig eat before, so I grabbed a magnifying glass and did a close-up. The earwig clasped each crumb with its front legs, sucked up five crumbs the size of its head at an astonishing rate, and waddled off none the fatter.

Three questions came to mind as I watched. Why, first of all, would an earwig go for cookie crumbs? Secondly, why do we actually need earwigs? And thirdly, why am I asking these questions?

But then a fly I'd never seen before landed on my notes and again I was distracted. It was slightly smaller than a housefly but with legs so long it had to splay out its front legs like a giraffe when feeding. But why would

it need legs that long when other flies didn't, and especially when long legs made feeding seem awkward?

Oh well, back to my article. But then the phone rang with incoming news about my 12-year-old granddaughter's fascination with the contents of a squid's eyeball, which she'd just dissected on her mother's kitchen counter. She couldn't wait to tell me what she'd discovered.

But why? Because, as the Bible says: 'God put this creation together in such a way that we humans might seek him, and maybe we'd reach out for him and actually find him, and discover he's not that far off at all'.¹

Oh, so it's because of God that we can't resist looking under rocks as children to see what's under them, and because of God that we spend billions on sending machines into space to see what's out there, and because of God that researchers with wild hair spend a lifetime peering through microscopes into the depths of bacteria.

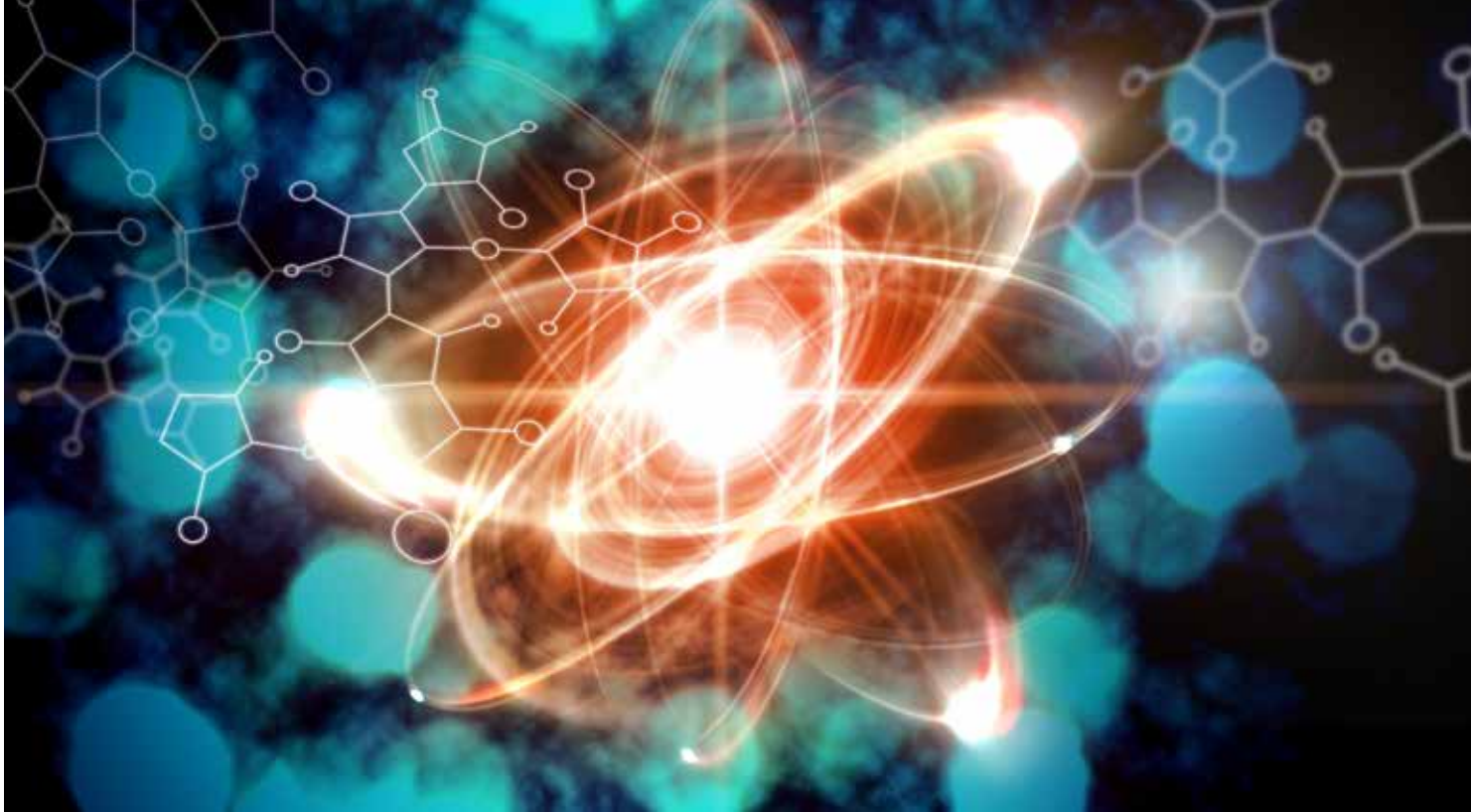
Atheist, agnostic, and Christian, we're all the same. We have this insatiable curiosity to A.S.K. It's like a code built into our heads, so that we're constantly Asking, Seeking, and Knocking—ever pushing the boundaries. And bit by bit the universe is giving up its secrets, too. New wonders keep coming to light, and we discover to our delight that the universe is an eternity of surprises!

And once you realise that, you're hooked. When my granddaughter was 11 years old, she got hooked the moment she entered the Natural History Museum in London, England. Her mind exploded! She ran from exhibit to exhibit gulping in worlds she'd never encountered before. No wonder she's into squids' eyeballs a year later. But now she knows a wonderful secret—tucked away in 'The Teddy Bear's Picnic' song—that if you go out in the woods today (take a peek into God's creation), you're sure of a big surprise!

That's why Science can never stop searching. If we'd stopped with



Jon Buck asks: why do we need the common earwig or European earwig (forficula auricularia)?



An artist's close up illustration of one of those 'subatomic whizzy things' for nuclear energy imagery.

Isaac Newton, for instance, we'd still be thinking the universe is a quietly ticking machine, operating according to fixed, observable laws like gravity, and that's all we'd need to know. Einstein, however, blew that idea right out of the water. No way is the universe that simple or boring. Arrows in flight, for instance, don't hit the ground just because of gravity, they arc toward the ground because space bends. And for those who took the time to follow Einstein's thinking, new worlds opened up that spawned new technology, like the satellite-tracking systems we now use when driving instead of paper maps.

We thought Evolution was amazing too, but scientists are pressing beyond the bounds of how life developed on the earth to how life came into existence in the first place, to try to explain why the universe exists at all when it had no reason to. A whole new breed of scientists, therefore, has been looking under other rocks, at the very core of matter, and how matter could be formed out of subatomic whizzy things that appear and instantly disappear. Science is zooming in ever closer to the substance of life itself.

True Science—real, exciting, mind-blowing Science—comes from the endless birthing of new understanding by those who've caught on that life is full of surprises, and the surprises never stop coming to those who seek with an open mind. Would that Religion caught on to that in its search for God, too: instead of nailing God in a box and telling people that's all there is to know about him, it let God reveal himself his way, with new and endless surprises.

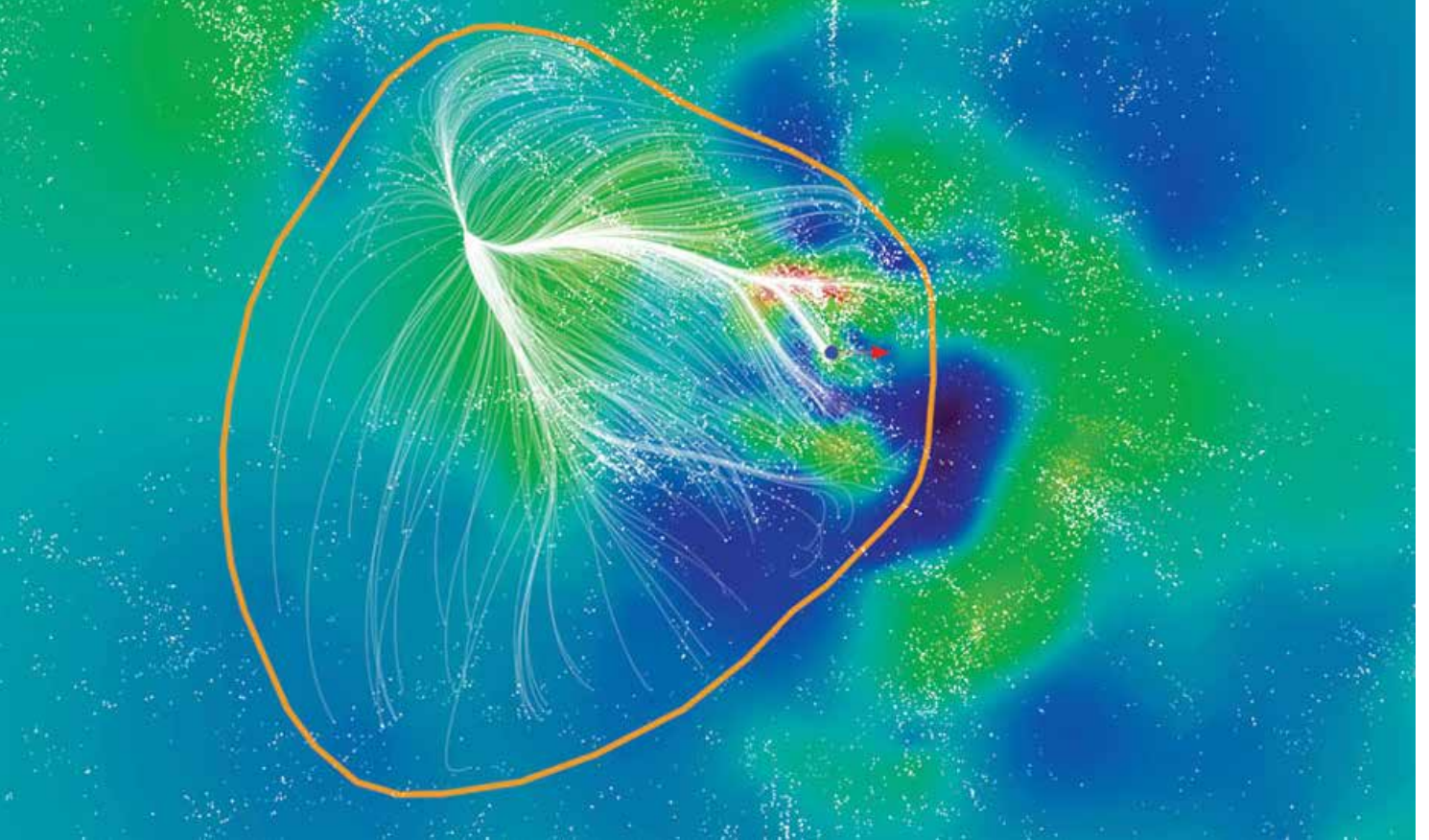
Like the surprise he landed on Religion when he came as a human being. Talk about a 'Big Bang' moment, because every previous picture, concept, preconceived idea, and pet notion about God up to that point disintegrated. Jesus blew more fuses in people's heads by stopping a storm, healing a maniac, and raising a dead child to life again. Here, all of a sudden, was a human being breaking fixed laws of nature, bending time and space, and even demonstrating personally what life looked like after death.

But more surprises were to follow, because right after Jesus' short stint on earth a new breed of humans appeared on the scene, who shot the old hidebound rules of human

behaviour to pieces, too. They weren't driven by self-preservation or ego. They could face death and suffering without fear or resentment. They gave their lives to revealing the truth about God and serving people in love, and they got along together even when they were vastly different in personality and background. This was territory no one had trodden before.

And now Science faces that challenge too, because it's pushing boundaries into areas where no one has trodden before either, and the old models of the universe are gurgling down the plughole. Old concepts suddenly become antiquated and quaint, as new interpretations of the universe blow the old views to pieces.

Unfortunately, influential scientists and religious folk have often become entrenched in tradition, and they've frozen people's knowledge for centuries. They left so many 'why' questions unanswered, and they still do, like 'why was there a Big Bang in the first place?', or 'why would God create a beautiful earth if we all end up in heaven?'



One of the newest interpretations of the universe is depicted in this computer-generated visualisation of the just-identified Laniakea Supercluster of galaxies. The colossal supercluster contains thousands of galaxies, including our Milky Way Galaxy, the Local Group of Galaxies, and the entire nearby Virgo Cluster of Galaxies. An outline of Laniakea is given in orange, while the blue dot shows our location. The Laniakea Supercluster spans about 500 million light years and contains about 100,000 times the mass of our Milky Way Galaxy. The discoverers of Laniakea gave it a name that means “immense heaven” in Hawaiian.

On the other hand, we can all go round in circles asking ‘why’ questions we can’t answer, much like the Athenians the biblical apostle Paul came up against in the early days of Christianity. These people were constantly seeking for truth, but were rather confused. It’s interesting to see how Paul handled them. He tells them that if they seek God they can find him.² That’s Paul’s starting point, because he knows God is at the source of everything, so that’s where the answers are: know God first and the rest follows. Now they could ask whatever ‘why’ questions they wanted, and somewhere in their understanding of God the answer would emerge.

But Paul went one step further and also explained that God designed us to want to seek him out and find him.³ That way God could reveal answers directly to us. Imagine being a scientist, then, and seeking from God’s point of view why things happen the way they do in the universe, and finding God’s answers.

God’s always liked direct communication with humans, though. He walked and talked with Adam and Eve; he dwelt with the Israelites in the tabernacle and temple; and he sent his Son to dwell with us in person to tell us everything we needed to know. And he likes us contacting him for answers. He even promises to answer.

And for those not quite ready yet for direct communication with God, the universe still whispers. From the vastness of space to the microscopic wonder of what matter consists of, a little voice in our head eggs us on to ‘keep looking, because you know there’s always more to find, and you know what you find will be amazing’. Amazing enough, perhaps, that one day a person says: ‘You know what? In every direction I seek, I come up against the extraordinary. Why would that be, I wonder?’

Why? Because science and religion both tell us we’re dealing with a God who loves to surprise. He

loves getting us hooked. He loves distracting us with more amazing things about himself, about his creation, and about...about...I’m sorry, I have to stop here because a strange insect just landed on my leg. It’s shaped like a monstrous hairy mosquito with a giant dragonfly-like head, and what appear to be bright yellow hooks on each foot.

I’ve never seen anything like it before. Where’s my magnifying glass? I must take a closer look...

P.S. All the insect stories actually happened while writing this article.

Notes

^{1, 2, 3} Acts 17:27

Jonathan Buck has been a pastor in England and Canada for over 40 years. His blog is found at bucktobasics.ca.

This article was first published in *Northern Light* magazine (www.gcicanada.ca/publications/northern_light.html).

Becoming your thoughts

By Richard Fowler

I have always been fascinated by thought. What is a thought anyway? Apparently, we have 50,000 of them every day...maybe less for someone like me! But whatever a thought is, we can now use them to control a film!

This first-time film where the plot changes depending on the brain reactions of the viewer had its premiere in June 2018 at Sheffield DocFest. Its real-time plot development is created by your brainwaves: quite literally, you are the director of your own movie. The headset monitors your brain reactions (the firing of brain cells, neurons) and then uses the information to shape the story of the film. For example, depending on your focus, the scenes can be longer or shorter. And there are a staggering one trillion plot combinations for each viewing.¹

This makes me wonder whether there is some reality to this concept, that our thoughts can change the story of our life. Certainly if we go by ancient proverbs, they would seem to attest to this brain-action connection. One wise Middle-Eastern King put it like this: 'for as he thinks in his heart, so is he'.² Siddhartha Gautama (Buddha) had a similar take on this connection observing that 'we are shaped by our thoughts; we become what we think'.

You don't have to go far to realise these two had a point. Whether it is the research on mirror neurons, or brain scans of London cab

drivers who have a sizably bigger hippocampus than most people,³ due to having to remember 320 routes around the streets of London, our thoughts have an impact on us.

Thinking the right kind of thoughts, because we want to, or our circumstances mean we have to, will change us and have a positive impact on, not just our lives, but those of everyone we meet.

In contrast, if our thoughts are selfish and unpleasant, they will have a negative effect on ourselves and other people.

You could say we are writing the story of our life with our thoughts. What stories are we writing? Are our thoughts taking us in the direction we want? Let's think about the thoughts we're thinking!

Notes

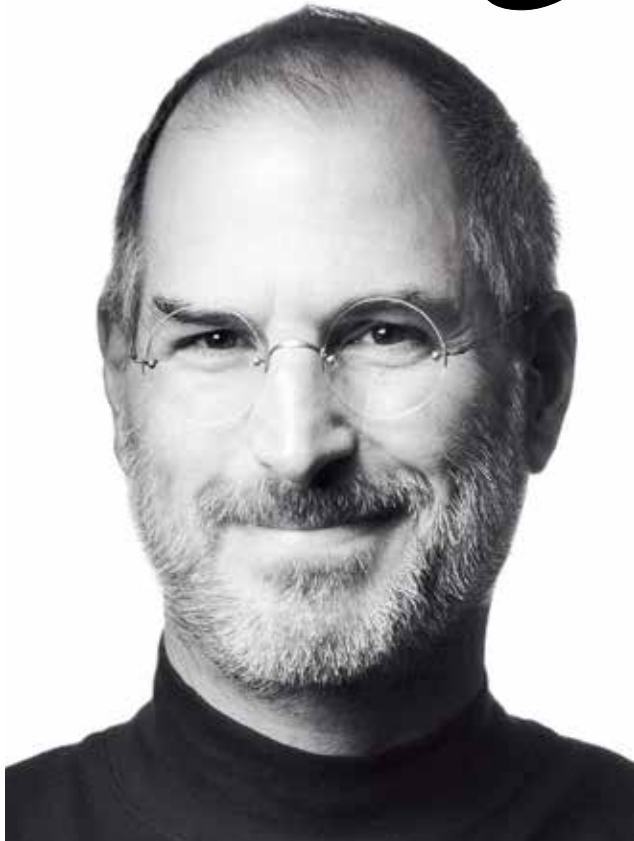
- ¹ www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/technology-44225476/the-moment-how-your-reaction-changes-this-film-s-plot
- ² Proverbs 23:7 (New King James Version)
- ³ <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/london-taxi-memory/>

This article was originally published on Richard's blog at www.because.uk.com.



A lesson from Steve Jobs...

Joining the dots



By Gary Nichols

Life can be good and not so good. You may be in a not-so-good place right now. But I would like to share with you why there is hope.

At college in the 1970s my instructor drew a graph to represent life. It had many peaks and troughs. When pointing to the troughs of life, he counselled us that we rarely stay there, even though, at the time, it may seem like forever and we may not see any purpose in being there. Equally, when life is at a peak and everything seems wonderful, he counselled us to be circumspect: you never know what lies ahead.

Steve Jobs, the legendary co-founder of Apple, had his own ups and downs in life—some that you may be surprised at. He shared some of these experiences in a speech at Stamford University. One experience shows how the downs can be part of the same story as the ups.

When he was at college, he dropped out of his class and as a result he had to sleep on the floors of his friends.

He only got one good meal a week, by walking seven miles to the Hari Krishna temple.

He then stumbled across a calligraphy class and learned about serif and sans serif typefaces. It appeared random and unimportant, without any real purpose. This is what he said in his speech:

None of this had even a hope of any practical application in my life. But ten years later, when we were designing the first Macintosh computer, it all came back to me. And we designed it all into the Mac. It was the first computer with beautiful typography...¹

He then went on to say something we all need to remember when going through hard times: 'Of course, it was impossible to connect the dots looking forward when I was in college. But it was very, very clear looking backward ten years later'.¹

We can't always connect the dots of our life looking forward; we can only connect the dots looking back.

The problem is that when the dark times descend upon us—when we're in a bad place—it is often impossible to understand. But just because we are unable to make sense of it, this doesn't mean there is no sense to be made out of it.



Macintosh was the first computer with beautiful typography.

Selwyn Hughes, a popular Christian writer, used an analogy based on characters in a novel. Pretend you pick up a novel and become engrossed in the characters who appear early in the book, let's say at page 29, and you then have an imaginary conversation with one of them. They tell you about the mess they're in, and you ask how the author is going to get them out of that mess. Then, as you read on, you see how, much later, the author rescues them from distress and turns the whole situation around.

Hughes explains something about this page-29 character in the mess: 'See, it didn't make any



Just because we are unable to make sense of dark times doesn't mean that there is no sense to be made of them.

sense at the time but you were in good hands: your creator had the way out already planned'.²

The page-29 character, if he or she could have talked back, wouldn't have made sense of what was happening at that point, because he or she was unaware that a bigger story was being written.

Life is like this and maybe you feel this right now: things are happening, or not happening, that don't make sense. So how are you to understand?

You must remember that you may only be on page 29. Take courage and encouragement, because the divine author is going to show you the significance of what is happening to you. It might take ten years, like it did with Steve Jobs, or it may take longer. But if you're at a low point, be confident that one day you'll see how the dots join up in a wonderful conclusion.

Notes

¹ news.stanford.edu/2005/06/14/jobs-061505/

² 'Every Day with Jesus', Selwyn Hughes, 2009.

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