

Saint Stephen's News

SAINT STEPHEN'S ANGLICAN CHURCH · TIMONIUM, MARYLAND

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A parish in the classical Anglican tradition

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FROM THE RECTOR

Science proves claims of God's death premature

For decades, the fashionable opinion among the West's intellectual elite – here in the U.S., but most particularly in Europe – has been that belief in God is somehow 'unscientific'. In 1966, Time magazine, for instance, ran a cover story asking: Is God Dead? And the implication of the article was most decidedly 'yes.'

Not so, it turns out. In the Christmas edition of The Wall Street Journal, science writer Eric Metaxas reported: 'It turns out that the rumours of God's death were premature. More amazing is that the relatively recent case for his existence comes from a surprising place – science itself.'

In 1966, the same year as the Time article appeared, Metaxas wrote, the late astronomer Carl Sagan announced that there were two important criteria for a planet to support life: The right kind of star, and a planet the right distance from that star.

Given the roughly octillion (1 followed by 24 zeros) planets in the universe, there should have been about septillion (1 followed by 21 zeros) planets capable of supporting life, wrote Metaxas.

With such 'spectacular odds', a large and expensive collection of private and publicly funded projects known collectively as 'the Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence' was launched in the 1960s.

'Scientists,' he continued, 'listened with a vast radio telescopic network for signals that resembled coded intelligence and were not merely random. But as years passed, the silence from the rest of the universe was deafening.'

The reason for the silence was that as knowledge of the universe increased, it became clear there were far more factors necessary for life than Sagan supposed, according to Metaxas.

His two parameters grew to 10, and then 20, and then 50, and so the number of potentially life-supporting planets decreased accordingly. The number dropped to a few thousand planets and kept on plummeting.

'As factors continued to be discovered,' Metaxas declared, 'the number of possible planets hit zero, and kept going. In other words, the odds turned against any planet in the universe supporting life, including this one. Probability said that even we shouldn't be here.'

'Today there are more than 200 known parameters necessary for a planet to support life – every single one of which must be perfectly met, or the whole thing falls apart ... The odds against life in the universe are simply astonishing!

'Yet here we are, not only existing, but talking about existing. What can account for it? Can every one of those many parameters have been perfect by accident? At what point is it fair to admit that science suggests that we cannot be the result of random forces?'

'Doesn't assuming that an intelligence created these perfect conditions require far less faith than believing that a life-sustaining Earth just happened to beat the inconceivable odds to come into being?'

'There's more. The fine-tuning necessary for life to exist on a planet is nothing compared with the fine-tuning required for the universe to exist at all.'

'For example, astrophysicists now know that the values of the four fundamental forces—gravity, the electromagnetic force, and the "strong" and "weak" nuclear forces—were determined less than one millionth of a second after the big bang. Alter any one value and the universe could not exist...'

'[T]he odds against the universe existing are so heart-stoppingly astronomical that the notion that it all 'just happened' defies common sense. It would be like tossing a coin and having it come up heads 10 quintillion times in a row.'

'Theoretical physicist Paul Davies has said that "the appearance of design is overwhelming" and Oxford professor Dr John Lennox has said "the more we get to know about our universe, the more the hypothesis that there is a Creator ... gains in credibility as the best explanation of why we are here."

'The greatest miracle of all time, without any close seconds,' Metaxas concluded, 'is the universe. It is the miracle of all miracles,

one that ineluctably points with the combined brightness of every star to something – or Someone – beyond itself.'

This shouldn't come as a surprise to most serious Christians, of course. Atheism is a most foolish conceit of an exceedingly conceited age – a corollary of the equally silly notion that belief in God is achievable only by totally suppressing one's reasoning and rational thought processes.

Belief in God is entirely rational. Even before the scientific evidence Metaxas reported, it should have been clear that the notion that our vastly complicated and ordered universe was brought into being by some super colossal cosmic accident defied reason.

Indeed, such a curious and illogical supposition took an act of the blindest faith to swallow. 'Acting in blind faith' is the only way to describe folks who stubbornly close their eyes to an overwhelming preponderance of evidence to the contrary and, instead, cling to the irrational position that God does not exist.

The Parish Prayer List

Our Prayer Chain offers prayer daily for people on the Prayer List as well as the guests of the Joseph Richey Hospice. To add a name to the prayer list, or to the visiting list, or to join the Prayer Chain, call the parish office at 410 560 6776.

FOR RECOVERY: Hilarie, Vivian, Jack, John, Donald, Evelyn, Cal, Finton, Fran, Edie, Oona, Cary, Janna, Martina, Leela, Isabelle, Julie, Ray, Mary, Phyllis, Liz, Joe, Indra, Marjorie, Steve, Wendy, John, Joy, Walt, Nina, James, Nancy, Janet, Connie, Hobie, Nathan, Matthew

FOR LIGHT, STRENGTH & GUIDANCE: Stephen, Lydia, Ann, Melba, Donna, Josh, Kim, Shane, Susan, Paula, Hannah, Scott, Charles, Vinnie, Doug

ON ACTIVE SERVICE: Lt Benjamin Schramm, USMC; Lt Alex Bursi, Capt. Charles Bursi, Lt Nicholas Clouse, USN. Lt Col. Harry Hughes

Blind faith, moreover, is merely a polite way of saying 'vain superstition'. And, truth to tell, atheists are even more in the thrall of ignorant superstition than savage animist pagans are in thrall to their primitive deities.

Savages at least can muster sufficient logic to grasp the fact that a God must exist. Their problem is identifying the right one.

Conversations with ignorant and superstitious people do not fall into the category of feasts for the intellect – which explains why dialogues even with intelligent atheists tend to be interminably dull.

Debating the obvious – 'Does God exist?' – is too boring for words. And until one gets past that, one cannot even begin to discuss the fundamental question: 'Does God care?'

One thing that lightens the whole business up is that God has a marvellous sense of humour. Atheists, for example, are usually quite ignorant of the Bible and, thus, they write it off as myths and legends, unprovable by modern 'scientific' investigation. God, however, has a way of puncturing their smug complacency.

Jericho's walls, it turns out, came tumbling down exactly as the Book of Joshua describes. Modern archaeology has demonstrated that St Luke knew First Century Jerusalem far better than the critics who claimed that he made up his descriptions of the Holy City out of whole cloth.

Characters who supposedly never existed come crawling out of the grave to greet us. Skeptics claimed Pilate was an imaginary figure ... until archaeologists started digging up inscriptions bearing his name.

And they similarly questioned the existence of Caiaphas, the Chief Priest who helped engineer Christ's crucifixion, until they dug up his grave a few years ago.

It's richly ironic that in life Caiaphas condemned Jesus as a liar, while in death he bears witness to Christ's truth. Funny the way God works, isn't it? **GPH**

FROM THE PARISH LIFE COMMITTEE

Shrove Tuesday Pancake & Sausage Supper on 17 February

Saint Stephen's Shrove Tuesday Pancake & Sausage Supper takes place on 17 February at 5.00 PM. These famous suppers are not only gastronomic events, they are also real inflation fighters. The price has remained unchanged for 26 years. We challenge you to find anything in Baltimore with a comparable record!

For a mere \$5 per adult you can feast on scrumptious pancakes and a heaping helping of the finest sausages the city has to offer. (You could manage seconds? Be our guest!) Naturally, there will be lashings of syrup, butter, and apple sauce, with low calorie equivalents for folks watching their weight. Beverages will be available at nominal cost. Kids under 12 can tuck in for half price (\$2.50) for the first two, and the other kids you bring along – your own or anyone else's – eat free. We challenge you to find a better deal in town than that! It can't be done! We have managed to hold our prices steady without compromising quality because the Pancake Suppers are not fund raisers but family affairs aimed at fostering fellowship and fun. If we make a profit, it's entirely accidental.

Join us for fellowship, fun and fantastically good food at this year's Pancake and Sausage Supper. It's the best value in Baltimore. Doors open at 5.00 PM and close at 7.30 PM.

Death in Holy Orders

Attention P. D. James fans! A screening of the BBC's 2003 adaptation of *Death in Holy Orders* is planned for two nights at Saint Stephen's. The production stars Martin Shaw as Commander Adam Dalgleish. Part 1 will be shown after the Pancake Supper on Tuesday, 17 Feb, and Part 2 will follow on Thursday the 19th at 6:30 PM. Each instalment is 90 minutes in duration. (The Rector kindly requests that no one get any ideas!)

FROM THE LADIES WHO LUNCH

The Ladies will Lunch one week early this month

Since Ash Wednesday falls on the third Wednesday of February, the Ladies Who Lunch will meet instead on the *second* Wednesday this month. Join us on 11 February at 12 noon for a convivial get-together over a delicious meal at Joey Chiu's Greenspring Inn (10801 Falls Road, Lutherville). Good food and good fellowship – what more could you want?

Please phone Joyce Perlberg on **410 252 2680** to make your reservation; she will need a final count by the 9th.

Saint Stephen's Anglican Church

11856 Mays Chapel Road, Timonium, MD 21093
Office: 410 560 6776 · Rectory: 410 665 1278
Pastoral Care: 410 252 8674

www.ststeve.com

The Ven. Canon Guy P. Hawtin, *Rector*
The Ven. Michael Kerouac, *Vicar*

The Rev. Michael Belt, The Rev. John Novicki, *Associate Rectors*
The Rev. Mr M. Wiley Hawks, *Deacon* · Adric, *Magister Chori*
Mrs Happy Riley, *Director of Pastoral Care & Wedding Coordinator*

SUNDAY SERVICES

8 AM: Said Eucharist

9.15 AM: Choral Eucharist (with Nursery & Church School)

11 AM: Choral Mattins (1st Sunday: Sung Eucharist)

6 PM: Choral Evensong (as announced: evensong.ststeve.com)

WEEKDAY SERVICES

Wednesday, 6 PM: Evening Prayer

Friday 12 NOON: Healing Eucharist

Saturday, 5 PM: Family Eucharist

Calendar of Events

WEEKLY

Mondays, 6.30 PM: Bridge Club

Tuesdays, 7 PM: Fellowship Breakfast (Nautilus Diner)

Thursdays, 10 AM: Knitting Circle

Fridays, 10.30 AM: Bible Study

MONTHLY & SPECIAL

Wednesday, 11 February, 12 NOON:

The Ladies Who Lunch meet at Joey Chiu's

Tuesday, 17 February, 5 PM:

Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper

(followed by screening of *Death in Holy Orders*, Part 1)

Thursday, 19 February, 6.30 PM:

Screening of Part 2 of *Death in Holy Orders*

N.B. – There will be no Afternoon Tea this month

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Saint Stephen's Anglican Church
11856 Mays Chapel Road
Timonium, MD 21093

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