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# Greater Than Your Greatest Need

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# Signs OF THE TIMES



# GOD IS GREATER THAN YOUR GREATEST NEED

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How science helped convince Dr. Maxwell that there is nothing too big or too small for God to do for men.

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# GREATER THAN YOUR GREATEST NEED

I was one of four college teachers on a TV panel assigned to discuss the existence of God.

All at once the professor at my right turned to me and asked, "Do you really mean to say that the students where you teach come out of their laboratories still believing in God? Don't you know that Copernicus drove God out of the universe four hundred years ago?"

To which I replied, "The students where I teach come out of their labs believing in God more firmly than when they went in!"

Science, far from proving God doesn't exist, constantly provides ever greater evidence that He does; and what a God it portrays!

I shall never forget the night when my wife and I stood on the Chicago shore of Lake Michigan and searched the sky for one of the earliest sputniks.

The voice at the newspaper office had told us on the phone exactly when it would appear (10:30 p.m.), how high in the sky (forty-five degrees above the horizon), and the direction in which it would be traveling (due south).

We were ready. At 10:30 we focused our eyes forty-five degrees above the horizon, facing northeast. Right on time, precisely where we were searching, there it was. Its light was the same clear color as the stars and of about the same intensity; but it was easy to tell the difference. This "star" was moving rapidly, and its light was pulsating off and on as it tumbled gently in its flight.

A thrill of excitement went through me.

As a child I had heard my older brother say that a ball could be made to fly clear around the earth if only someone could be found to hit it hard enough. I believed him implicitly and often turned the idea over in my mind. What a fantastic possibility! I can still see an imaginary ball sailing out over the corner of our backyard on its way into orbit. Of course, I knew such a thing could never happen.

But here it was happening, right before my eyes.

Then as I looked up into the heavens and watched the shining satellite fade into the orange haze above Gary and Hammond to the south, the sky all at once seemed disturbingly crowded. A Bible verse I had learned to recite in childhood

raced through my mind: "The heavens declare the glory of God" (Psalm 19:1); but this time it insisted, "The heavens declare the glory of *man!*"

The presence of this shiny sputnik seemed a profane violation of a fundamental principle. It had no right to be there. I had been taught that the stars prove the unique power of an omniscient Creator, but here was a new star claiming equal power for man.

For a fleeting second I felt myself thinking as an agnostic or an atheist.

But then I gave it further thought. The Russians had laughed at America's first tiny satellite and called it a grapefruit. Here in the sky now was one of theirs—and it wasn't much larger than, say, a garbage can—not much bigger than one of the breakwater rocks lying at my feet on the shore of Lake Michigan. Marvelous and sophisticated as it was, this sputnik was a very little thing compared with our little earth, let alone with the rest of the universe.

The stars up there—the other stars beyond the sputnik—shine on and on forever. No astronomer has any idea how many there are, or how long they've been there. Scientists estimate there are at least 200,000,000 stars in our own Milky Way galaxy, and they compute that more than a billion such galaxies exist in the universe as a whole. That is, they used to tell us this when they thought the edge of the universe was 350,000,000 light-years away.

But in 1963 astronomers found a "quasar" that appeared to be emitting radio and light energy millions of times more powerful than all the stars in our entire Milky Way galaxy put together. They labeled it "3C 273" and identified it with a faint star they formerly had supposed belonged to our own private galaxy; only now their calculations indicated that it was a billion light-years away, *three times as far from us* as we had previously supposed the outer rim of the universe to be.

Since then Maarten Schmidt has found another quasar that may be four to eight billion light-years away. Suddenly what we once had thought to be our entire universe has turned out to be a neighborhood, a housing development, a small suburb of the real universe that goes on, perhaps, forever.

And what does all this prove about God?

Did that sputnik launch itself into space? Do the great Apollos of today bolt themselves together, blast off from their pads, and shed their lunar modules to land within feet of their targets on the moon *by chance?* It takes a worldwide team of highly trained men to make them succeed. Thus space-age science offers compelling proof of the existence of a living God. A spacecraft, relatively tiny as it is, cannot get into orbit without a living brain to plan for it. What nonsense, then, to suppose that a trillion island universes can soar through space without an infinite Intelligence to guide them!

"The heavens declare the glory of God"—and man, what a God they declare!

When an archaeologist finds a primitive stone arrowhead buried under river gravel in an abandoned cave, he says, "Here is evidence of an ancient civilization. People used to live here!" But when a paleontologist finds a complex trilobite fossil exposed in a Cambrian rockslide, he is often prone to say, "Here is evidence that there is no God. Complex animal life developed by chance." But this is not the kind of reasoning that commends itself to everyone, least of all to many inquiring teen-agers. A survey made as recently as 1965, after a century of evolutionary instruction (*Life,* October 8, 1965), showed that *more than half* of all United States high school students were still *unwilling* to accept evolution as a valid hypothesis. The students where I teach are not the only ones who come out of a laboratory still believing in God.

And they are right. Copernicus did not drive God out of the universe four hundred years ago. If anything, he provided evidence more certain than ever that He is in command.

For centuries before the time of Copernicus men had believed in the limited and disorderly hypothesis of the ancient astronomer Claudius Ptolemy, with its "progressions" and "retrogressions" and individual planetary "epicycles." Copernicus demonstrated our solar system to be far more orderly than Ptolemy had thought probable and in the process provided better proof than ever of the existence of a Master Intelligence at the control of things. Whatever conclusions philosophers today may derive from it, his theory of a sun-centered solar system did not cause Copernicus himself to give up his faith in God. He died a Christian, a firm believer in a living God.

So also died Isaac Newton, whose name is often cited in proof of the disappearance of the Deity. "God," many people say today, "was invented in ancient times to fill the gaps in man's knowledge of the universe. Now that science has filled most of these gaps with well-established theories like Newton's law of gravity, we don't need God anymore."

Newton never understood his works to be a graveyard for the Deity. His epoch-making discoveries in mathematics and astronomy have earned him praise even from Albert Einstein as "this shining spirit," "this marvelously inventive . . . genius"; but Newton gave the glory for his achievements to God and crowned his years with nearly 400,000 handwritten words on the prophecies of the Bible and on his hope in the second coming of Christ. This original handwritten manuscript is housed in the library of the university where I teach.

Though I am interested in heavenly bodies, microscopic things have always fascinated me far more. In my college days the single-celled paramecium, with its complement of minuscule organelles so analagous to human organs, was my favorite little animal. Recently the T4 bacteriophage virus has taken its place in my interests.

This intriguing little creature that destroys bacteria in our intestine ("bacteriophage" means "bacterium

eater") is so precisely architectured that most people cannot believe their eyes when they first see a picture of one. I couldn't believe mine; but the pictures taken with an electron microscope reveal intricate functional details.

Unbelievable as it is in its appearance, with its icosahedral head, its "end plates," "cores," "collars," "sheaths," and "leglike fibers," the behavior of the T4 when it confronts a bacterium is even more incredible. Its leglike fibers swing back to allow its end plate to contact the "skin" of the very much larger bacterial cell. Its springlike sheath snaps closed, driving its ribbon of DNA down into the heart of the bacterium's protoplasm. Genes in the DNA ribbon force amino acids in the host cell to reorganize themselves. Within fifteen minutes two hundred icosahedral heads have taken shape at intervals along the DNA ribbon; then two hundred collars, two hundred cores, two hundred sheaths, two hundred end plates, and two hundred sets of leglike fibers! In less than half an hour the bacterium is dead and in its place stand two hundred new T4 viruses, fully assembled and ready to start the cycle over again in two hundred other bacterial cells.

This process, incidentally, is taking place in your own body at this very moment. Since the time you began to read this chapter you have helped to produce countless millions of these amazing viruses!

To say that the T4 virus just "happened" is like saying that electronic "chips"—the microcircuits, complete with diodes, capacitors, and transistors, with their wide range of application—from hearing aids to spaceships—just "happened." If it took brains to develop the electronic chip, then there is intelligence behind the development of the T4 virus! And what a God this suggests, as much a master of the infinitesimally small as of the infinitely large!

Complex and wonderful as viruses are, the human body is, of course, much more so.

The body of an adult human male contains, on the average, sixty thousand billion (60,000,000,000,000) cells. Think of it! Counting at top speed for twelve hours a day, allowing barely time enough to catch your breath, you could scarcely count a billion in thirty years. Merely to enumerate the cells in one's body would require twenty thousand lifetimes.

And what about the individual cells? On the average, each cell contains two hundred thousand billion (200,000,000,000,000) molecules. And these molecules, in their turn, may contain up to thirty thousand atoms each! There are thousands of different kinds of molecules in each body cell, and each minute of his life a person produces thousands and thousands of them in each of his sixty thousand billion cells. A pretty young coed may be earning an F in general chemistry and at the same time be synthesizing in her body thousands of compounds the exact structures of which are unknown even to the most brilliant scientists.

And what about the atoms that make up these molecules? In the days of ancient Greece, Democritus said that atoms were simple solid bodies. About forty years ago everyone knew this was wrong; atoms themselves were seen to be complex units composed of protons, neutrons, and electrons. Today scientists claim to have identified some thirty or so additional "elementary particles" smaller than atoms—mumesons, antilambda particles, anti-xi-zero particles, and many more.

Perhaps the most mysterious elementary particles are the neutrino and its antimatter counterpart, the antineutrino. Neutrinos pour into the universe from the heart of the sun at such a rate that over a hundred billion of them pass through the thick of your thumb every second. Nothing stops them. At night, when the sun is shining on the opposite side of the world, they stream in undiminished numbers through the eight-thousand-mile thickness of the earth and on out into space at the speed of light. In the course of a lifetime there pass through a person's body a number of neutrinos represented by a 10 with twenty-three zeros after it, yet *only one* is likely to interact with it and stay by.

What a universe we live in! Neutrinos at one end of the scale of things, and a trillion island galaxies at the other! What a Master Intelligence must lie behind it all! A loving Intelligence, concerned with the very small; a powerful Intelligence, able to accomplish whatever He desires.

The Bible calls this intelligent being God and portrays Him, not cold and heartless, but as truly a person as is any human scientist. Jesus taught us to call Him "Father" and to address Him in prayer as our heavenly Father. See Matthew 6:9-13. Jesus invited us to believe that God is attentive to our needs (Matthew 6:31-33) and knows all there is to know about us and loves us just the same.

The God of the Bible is a Being of infinite power who created the universe effortlessly: "He spoke, and it came to be; He commanded, and it stood forth." Psalm 33:9, RSV. Yet He is also a Being of infinite kindness and compassion. "*The Father Himself,*" Jesus said, "*loves you.*" John 16:27, RSV.

Indeed the Bible invites you to "throw the whole weight of your anxieties upon Him, for you are His personal concern." 1 Peter 5:7, Phillips. No problem is too small to bring to the God of the neutrinos, nor too large to bring to the God of the island galaxies.

Man, what a God! □

**This article is the first chapter of Dr. Maxwell's latest book, "Man, What a God!" You can get the complete book by writing to Pacific Press, 1350 Villa Street, Mountain View, California 94040. Just $1.25 postpaid. Order several copies for your friends. Mervyn Maxwell is also the author of the popular answers to youth questions. See pages 26 and 27 of this issue.**

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