

PARACLETE

ADVOCATING FOR THE TRUTH OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

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Salt and Light: The Evidence for God (Part 3)

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In previous issues of the *Paraclete*, I wrote about the fingerprints of God as revealed in nature and in history (Volume 1, Issue 6, and Volume 2, Issue 1). Those arguments are considered “hard” or objective evidence for the existence of God. Here I appeal to “soft” evidence: the phenomenon of **transformed lives**. Some people view it this way:

What is the greatest argument for the existence of God? Answer: Christians!

What is the greatest argument against the existence of God? Answer: Christians!

These two seemingly contradictory answers illustrate the efficacy of the soft evidence of transformed lives. People of every walk of life, social status, nationality, and age—all share a common testimony that their faith in following Jesus changed their life in very positive ways. As long as they “walk the talk” in practice, it supports the contention that God exists (James 1:22-27). If, on the other hand, they don’t, it is used as an allegation that God doesn’t exist.

Jesus Himself stated that His followers’ transformed lives should serve as a witness to the reality of God: “*You are the salt of the earth... You are the light of the world... let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven*” (Matthew 5:13-16, ESV, used throughout this article).

The Bible is clear that the power for this transformation is not innate in humans, but is sourced in God the Holy Spirit, who indwells the believer (John



14:16-17). The apostle Paul, writing to the Christians at Corinth, identified this truth: “*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. All this is from God...*” (2 Corinthians 5:17). He also says that “*...we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit*” (2 Corinthians 3:18).

This is *not* a claim that Christian believers are without fault. The Bible is clear when it says to everyone—believer and unbeliever alike—that “*if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves...*” (1 John 1:8). Instead, believers are like the blind man who, when he was healed by Jesus, exclaimed to the inquiring Pharisees: “*...one thing I do know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see*” (John 9:25).

The fact is the believer is a work in progress, becoming more Christ-like while growing in relationship with God. Paul again, identified this process in himself to the church at Philippi:



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IN THE NEWS

Instant Fossils!

Scientists at Britain’s University of Bristol have converted animal and plant tissue into fossils, **in just twenty-four hours!** With the help of a hydraulic press and high temperatures, they converted bird feathers, lizard limbs, and leaves into fossils which are very similar to those dug out of the ground.

According to a university press release, “[H]igh heat and pressure accelerate the chemical degradation reactions that normally occur over millions of years when a fossil is buried deep underground and exposed to geothermal heat and pressure from overlying sediment.”

Researchers published their findings in the journal *Palaeontology*, writing that the synthetic fossils “closely resemble exceptional fossils, not just visually, but also microscopically as revealed using a scanning electron microscope.”



Cast of fossilized remains of *Archaeopteryx*, dated from around 150 million years ago, or is it?

These results support what creationists have said for some time: It doesn’t necessarily take millions of years to produce fossils; rather, they could have been formed under the right conditions, such as those caused by a **global flood** as recorded in the book of Genesis. 

Source: “Made-to-Order Fossils”, *Answers Magazine*, Vol. 13, No. 6 (Nov-Dec, 2018), p. 32. See also “Creating ‘synthetic’ fossils in the lab sheds light on fossilisation processes,” press release from University of Bristol, retrieved February 20, 2019; <https://www.bristol.ac.uk/news/2018/july/creating-synthetic-fossils.html>.

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...in order that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith... I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal... (Philippians 3:7-16, excerpt).

This is the nature of the testimony of countless new believers: **not perfection but transformation.**

Nor does it follow that every Christian must be “nicer” than every unbeliever in order for this evidence for the existence and transforming power of God to be true. What **must be true** is that a person becoming a Christian will be nicer (see Galatians 5:16-24) than if they had *not* become a Christian; and anyone becoming a Christian will be nicer than he was *before* becoming a Christian. This substantial life change was evident even to the Sadducees:

“Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished. And they recognized that they had been with Jesus” (Acts 4:13).

This is the sense in which Christian life transformation is a witness to God: “...that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted

generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world” (Philippians 2:15). This is also consistent with Jesus’ promise to His followers when He said, “I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly” (John 10:10).

Finally, the evidence of transformation should not be confused with mere improvement or even niceness alone. As C.S. Lewis so aptly wrote, “A world of nice people, content in their own niceness, looking no further, turned away from God, would be just as desperately in need of salvation as a miserable world—and might even be more difficult to save” (*Mere Christianity*, p. 182).

Mere improvement is not redemption.

The right response is: “Will I yield my nature to God?” Again, Lewis provides insight: “God became a man to turn creatures into sons; not simply to produce better men of the old kind but to produce a new kind of man” (Ibid.). Each person who experiences this new creation (Ephesians 2:8-9) is then free to manifest the convinc-

ing evidence of this “new kind of man” transformation.

Jesus, the source of power for this new creation (see Hebrews 12:2) clearly expressed His desire for Christians: “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows Me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life” (John 8:12). Let us pray that the light of Christian lives around the world will be the greatest argument **for** the existence of God! 🕊



FOR REFLECTION

A Good Plastic?

Plastic has long been labeled as a bad pollutant because its petroleum-based production releases chemical contaminants, and because it takes hundreds of years for plastic to decay.



In the January issue of *Bioresource Technology*, researchers at Tel Aviv University described a new technique that produces a **biodegradable plastic**.

Since this new production process does not require soil or fresh water, it will enable countries with a shortage of fresh water like China, India, and Israel to switch from petroleum-derived plastics to quickly-biodegradable plastics.

According to researchers, the new polymer “is derived from microorganisms that feed on seaweed. It is biodegradable, produces zero toxic waste and recycles into organic waste.”

How much **better stewards** of the earth we would be (Genesis 1:28) if the world’s scientists would focus their research on the discovery and application of the ingenious wisdom found in the creation rather than spending billions of dollars on evolutionary pursuits. 🕊

Source: “Building Better Plastics”, *World Magazine*, Vol. 34, No. 2 (Feb. 2, 2019); p. 58. See also Tel Aviv University, “No more plastic in the ocean?” December 28, 1081; retrieved February 20, 2019, https://english.tau.ac.il/news/end_of_plastic

IN THE NEWS

Descendants of Methuselah?

Guinness World Records recently announced that a Japanese couple, **Masao and Miyako Matsumoto**, set a world record for the oldest living married couple. They celebrated their **eightieth wedding anniversary**. He is 108 years old and she is a mere 100! 🕊



Source: *AMAC Advantage Magazine*, Nov/Dec 2018, p. 8. See also “Couple together for 80 years with combined age of 208 set oldest living married couple record,” *Guinness World Records*, retrieved February 20, 2018, <http://www.guinness-worldrecords.com/news/2018/8/couple-together-for-80-years-with-combined-age-of-208-set-oldest-living-married-c-535346>

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