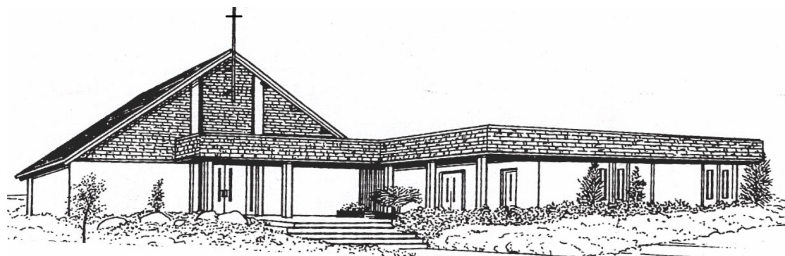




The Reporter



The Special Nature of the Cross

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February Calendar

Once I was drawn into a discussion with two people regarding the cross. It was not whether Jesus died on it or not. Nor was it about the fact he died for the sins of all. The discussion centered on the cross itself. One person said it was only right and proper to have a crucifix, namely a cross with the corpus (body of Jesus) on it. The other person was just as adamant in stating the cross should be empty. As the discussion lingered, it became more of a debate. Each person emphasizing their position with stronger and more heated overtones. Each refused to give an inch, considering compromise a severe blow to their faith. Frustrated with each other, they looked at me. Each desperately beckoned to me to support their point of view. Each hoped my answer would support their position.

So which is right and proper, a cross with a corpus on it, or the cross that is empty? I hesitated for a moment. Both of the people were articulate. Both supported their conclusions with amazing conviction and compelling arguments. Still, both held incomplete views.

I proceeded cautiously. I knew if I would lean one way or the other, it would intensify the debate even more. I also realized if I said you were both wrong, I would create an entirely new controversy. So, how would I answer?

Although my answer was typical of a politician running for office, it was the only true solution to the debate. I said, "you're both right." Then, I cut off any opportunity for a rebuttal by immediately saying, "please let me explain."

The cross has a special nature, and it proclaims a special message. It also maintains a special place in a believer's life. It is more than a work of art or a piece of jewelry.

The special nature of the cross is that it speaks to me in every aspect of life. Consider the crucifix. What do I see when I gaze upon the thorn-encircled brow and painfully disfigured body of Jesus? I see a love like no other. I also see an obedience beyond comprehension. Jesus went to the cross to carry my sin and endure my punishment. He subjected himself to an agonizing death to release me from the punishment I deserved.

I need to see Jesus suffering on the cross when I am not moved to tears over the guilt of my disobedience. I need to see the horrible consequences of God's justice on my sin when my confession becomes arbitrary or without sorrow. I need to realize I put Jesus on the

Continued on page 6

On the Theory of Unintelligent Design

By Art Battson

Most of you are well aware of the conflict between science and religion, however, many of you have probably not been taught much about the conflict between science and atheism.

The story of Galileo, Copernicus, and the Catholic Church is a familiar one. Prior to the Copernican revolution the sun actually orbited around the Earth. (It was close enough for government research.) This was recognized by virtually all academic authorities since the time of the Greek astronomer, Ptolemy, and was widely accepted by most of the Church leaders in the fraternity commonly known as the House of the Rising Sun.

Voltaire once wrote, "It is dangerous to be right in matters on which the established authorities are wrong," so the Church -- on a Bingo Night a long, long, time ago -- put its money on the "established authorities" rather than on a couple of upstart Christians (we'll call them Galileo and Copernicus, for short) who believed in the intelligent design of the universe and thought that the designer bore a remarkable resemblance to the God of the Bible. While this isn't exactly where the argument traditionally leads, I think you get the point.

Sometimes the Church taught things that weren't found in their Scriptures which later turned out to be false. Pope John Paul, for example, taught that Darwinian evolution was more than just a theory. He was right. It was actually a materialistic philosophy known as "The Everlasting Belief in Unintelligent Design" masquerading as a scientific theory under the academically respectable title of "The Arrival of the Fittest by Means of Pure Chance." But I digress.

No doubt you have heard it expressed that the "Theory of Intelligent Design" is not scientific. (Let's assume, for sake of argument, that Galileo and Copernicus really didn't care.) The simple reason is that the natural sciences are limited to the study of purely naturalistic and materialistic phenomena while an ultimate intelligent designer is probably not a purely naturalistic and materialistic phenomenon. (Besides that, scientists can't get grants for inferring that a designer deserves credit for anything he may have designed. They can only get awards for describing some tiny part of the universe he probably knew about already. But I digress again.)

Materialistically speaking, Richard Lewontin put it this way: "Our willingness to accept scientific claims that are against common sense is the key to an understanding of the real struggle between science and the supernatural. We take the side of science **in spite** of the patent absurdity of some of its constructs, **in spite** of its failure to fulfill many of its extravagant promises of health and life, **in spite** of the tolerance of the scientific community for unsubstantiated just-so stories, because we have a prior commitment, a commitment to materialism.

It is not that the methods and institutions of science somehow compel us to accept a material explanation of the phenomenal world, but, on the contrary, that we are forced by our **a priori** adherence to material causes to create an apparatus of investigation and a set of concepts that produce material explanations, no matter how counterintuitive, no matter how mystifying to the uninitiated. Moreover, that materialism is absolute, for we cannot allow a Divine Foot in the door." (Lewontin, Richard "Billions and Billions of Demons" *New York Review of Books* January 9, 1997, p. 28)

To the skeptical mind, Lewontin's dogmatic commitment to Materialism raises a number of questions. As David Letterman might put it (Recall his "Top Ten" list counting down from #10):

10. Are we supposed to just believe that since science is limited to the study of natural phenomena that any reasonable explanation of our origins must be purely naturalistic? Might the truth possibly lie elsewhere?
9. If Intelligent Design is ruled out a priori, aren't we simply left with a Theory of Unintelligent Design where chance is called upon to create almost everything?
8. Can scientists develop a test to distinguish between Intelligent and Unintelligent Design? If they can't tell the difference between the two, why is either concept scientific?
7. Isn't it possible that purely unguided natural processes (e.g. chemical cross-reactions) would have inhibited a materialistic origin of life?
6. How can the natural sciences describe the origin of time, space, matter, energy, and Natural Laws without reference to time, space, matter, energy,

(Continued on page 3)

(Continued from page 2)

or Natural Laws? Might a Natural Law Giver help?

5. Did absolutely everything arise from absolutely nothing with absolutely no cause?
4. Are there absolutely no absolutes?
3. Is there a conflict between science and atheism?
2. Who put the material in Materialism anyway?
1. If we were to divide our universe by zero (see my upcoming best-seller, *Three Impossible Things to Do Before Earning Your BS*), would a universe exist where the Chicago Cubs won every World Series?

Let's take a deep breath and start at the beginning. Prior to Hubble's discovery that our universe is expanding and the eventual development of the Big Bang theory, most scientists believed that the universe had always existed. We now know that the universe had a moment of creation and was finely tuned in a great number of ways to eventually produce all of the right chemicals necessary for the existence of life.

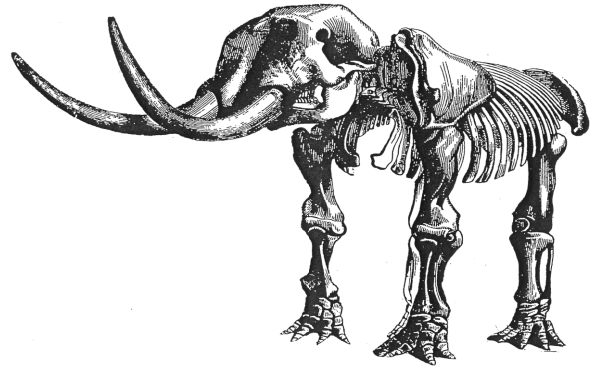
Moments of creation usually require a Creator so, if you have already jumped to that conclusion, you may put your hand down and sit quietly while the rest of the class catches up. Usually, someone is going to object that giving credit to God for the creation of everything in the universe doesn't account for the existence of God, so let's look at the options:

1. Matter and energy have always existed, or
2. God has always existed.

Now science does have something to say about whether or not matter and energy are eternal: "Not so likely." If our universe had existed for even a trillion years (give or take our national debt), it would have died out by now thanks to the 2nd Law of Thermodynamics. It is more reasonable to conclude that God has always existed (and we will always be in debt).

Even Antony Flew, perhaps the world's most renowned atheistic philosopher has recently come to this conclusion (except for the national debt bit). He is not alone.

Paul Davies has moved from promoting atheism to conceding that "the laws [of physics] ... seem themselves to be the product of exceedingly ingenious design." (*Superforce*, p. 243)



He further testifies, "[There is for me powerful evidence that there is something going on behind it all ... it seems as though somebody has fine-tuned nature's numbers to make the Universe ... The impression of design is overwhelming." (Paul Davies *Superforce*, p. 243 *The Cosmic Blueprint*, p. 203)

One of the last holdouts for a steady-state universe, Sir Fred Hoyle, finally confessed, "A common sense interpretation of the facts suggests that a superintellect has monkeyed with the physics, as well as with chemistry and biology, and that there are no blind forces worth speaking about in nature. The numbers one calculates from the facts seem to me so overwhelming as to put this conclusion almost beyond question."

But perhaps, Robert Jastrow has summarized the situation best, "For the scientist who has lived by faith in the power of reason, the story ends like a bad dream. He has scaled the mountains of ignorance; he is about to conquer the highest peak; as he pulls himself over the final rock, he is greeted by a band of theologians who have been sitting there for centuries." (Robert Jastrow, *God and the Astronomers*)

So where does this leave us? Simply put, while "Intelligent Design" is not a scientific theory by definition, science itself is the study of things which have been intelligently and purposefully created. Before any one of us could say "Big Bang" or "Let There Be Light," science was in conflict with atheism.

The goal of science is not to develop a materialistic creation myth, but to most accurately describe how things function and interact. As a famous scientist once put it, "Science allows us to think God's thoughts after Him." Overstated? Perhaps. But it's a good start to a more reasonable faith.

Art Battson is a contributor to www.charlesdarwin.org and www.veritas-ucsb.org

Anxiety & Worry-Free Future

The new year is under way, and many have made new year's resolutions. Perhaps some have made progress, while others perhaps have seen their resolutions already subside in the everyday struggle to cope with life's problems.

I guess no one is anxiety or worry-free in this life, at least not for long. There seems to be always something not quite right, something that could go wrong, something that needs to be repaired, someone who needs to be attended to, a problem that needs to be solved, or a job that should have been completed yesterday.

Even our greatest prophets in the Lord were prone to anxiety, as suggested by the following verse:

"When anxiety was great within me, your consolation brought joy to my soul." *Psalm 94:19 NIV*

But Jesus came to us to resolve our principal problem, and provide our most important need, which is salvation from our sins that otherwise would have us in bondage to Satan:

"Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes?"
Matthew 6:25 NIV

"Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?"
Matthew 6:27 NIV

"Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own."
Matthew 6:34 NIV

And finally, the apostles give us sound advice when we struggle with life's routine or sometimes especially difficult problems:

"Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God."
Philippians 4:6 NIV

"Cast all your anxiety on him, because he cares for you."
1 Peter 5:7 NIV

May we all, in times of anxiety or worry, recall the comfort our Lord provides in his promise of a completely anxiety and worry-free eternal future in Heaven!

Luther on Worry

Let him, then, who wants to be a Christian by all means learn to believe and to exercise and demonstrate his faith in his affairs, both physical and spiritual, in what he does and in what he endures, in life and in death. Let him divest himself of care and fearful apprehensions, vigorously and confidently flinging them aside, but not into a corner, as some vainly mean to do; for when cares cling to the heart, they cannot be flung aside in that way. Let the Christian learn to cast both his heart and his cares upon God's back, for God has a strong neck and strong shoulders; He can easily carry the load. Moreover, He has commanded us to commit our cares to Him. Nor can we lay and cast too much upon Him; He only likes it even more. And He also promises that He will carry your cares and concerns for you.

This is truly a splendid promise and a beautiful and precious statement - if we only believe it . . . For what is better and nobler than a calm and peaceful heart? All men strive and labor for that. We, too, have hitherto done so. We have run here and there in search of a peaceful heart, yet we have found it nowhere but in the Word of God. This Word bids us cast our cares and concerns upon God and thus seek peace and rest.

What Luther Says, page 1541-2
"Where to Cast One's Cares"

February Birthdays

We rejoice in the many blessings given the members of our family of faith. May the Lord continue to bless them richly.

8th —Kathy T.
11th —Janelle S.
Michael J.
14th —Eleanor P.
17th —Debbie A.
19th —Ray C.



Annual Christmas Undecorating Party

By Alan Todd

Did you sleep in on Saturday, January 6, 2007? If so, you missed a great fellowship and service opportunity at church from 9:00 A.M. to 10:30 A.M.

That opportunity was the taking down and storing away of the Christmas decorations that graced our church during the 2006 Christmas season. A group of 6 men and 1 woman showed up and managed to take down and safely store away all the decorations, including our first ever outdoor lighting of the flagpole, in just an hour and a half. Think of how quickly the job could have been accomplished with even more helping hands.

I always appreciate these opportunities. They provide a way to give back to the congregation out of love for Christ and all he has done to make us part of God's family. They also provide a time of fellowship with the other workers to get to know each other even better as brothers and sisters in Christ.

In 2007, I recommend that you schedule some time to help both decorate and then undecorate the church for the Christmas season. As with all the service opportunities that the church provides, you will be glad you did!

A Garden of Success

With Spring around the corner, it is time to think about planting a garden. Here's some suggestions for the "garden" we call Our Redeemer.

Plant five rows of **PEAS** . . .

Prayer, Preparedness, Promptness, Perseverance
and Politeness

Include three rows of **SQUASH** . . .

Squash gossip, Squash criticism
and Squash apathy & indifference

Add five rows of **LETTUCE** . . .

Let us be faithful, Let us be loving, Let us be truthful,
Let us be unselfish and Let us be patient

No garden is really complete without **TURNIPS** . . .

Turn up to serve, Turn up joyful,
Turn up with a new idea,
and Turn up with determination

*"Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching."
Hebrews 10:25 NIV*

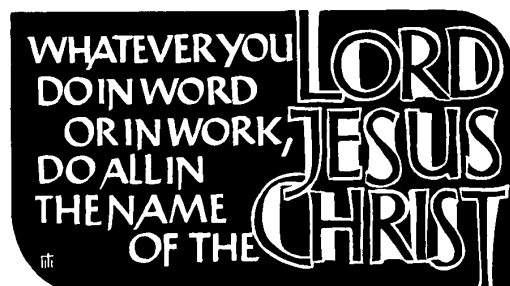
Outreach to Seniors

On January 28th Our Redeemer began a new form of outreach. It was to the people at Wood Glen Hall, and was the result of going through a "door" opened to us by the Spirit.

For the last 2 years we have gone to Wood Glen to sing Christmas hymns to the residents. The first invitation was offered through Irene Eggert who lives there. We returned this past Christmas. Once again, the people were very appreciative of our service. Following our second visit, Pastor Proeber investigated whether they had a regular worship service or Bible Study during the month. The answer was no. So plans were made to start going to Wood Glen Hall one Sunday afternoon a month. (An interesting side note is that the assistant activities director has attended our Easter Sunrise service in Tucker's Grove Park. Because of his familiarity with our message, he was very excited and very helpful in getting the service up and running.)

One might say the first service wasn't well attended. There were 7 residents present. However, the work has started. The residents are interested. Now, plans are underway to meet 2 times a month later in the Spring.

Certainly, the Lord has given us an open door and a precious opportunity. In time, each one of us will also have some additional opportunities to serve these precious souls. Keep your eyes open, and keep your prayers ascending to the Lord.



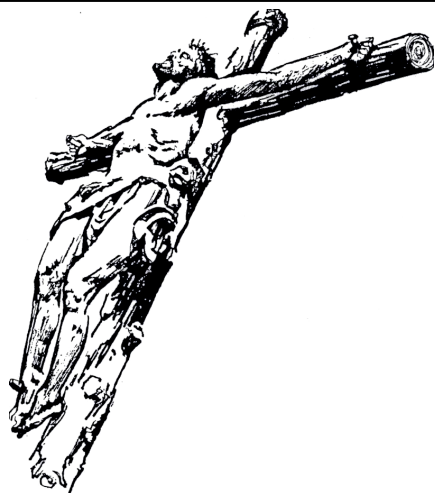
The Crucifix as a Natural and Valuable Symbol

I know for sure that God would have us hear and read his works, especially the suffering of Christ. But if I am to hear it or think about it, I cannot possibly do so without picturing it to myself in my heart. For whether I want it or not, the picture of a man hanging on a cross arises in my heart when I hear about Christ, just as water naturally reflects my face when I look into it. If then, it is not sinful but good to have a picture of Christ in my heart, why should it be sinful to have it in my eyes?

Christ's Resurrection -- the Death of Sin and Guilt

If Christ is not risen from the dead (*and the cross empty*), then sin and death have devoured and killed him. Since we could not rid ourselves of our sins, Christ took them upon Himself that he might tread sin, death, and hell underfoot, and become their Lord. But if he did not rise, He did not overcome sin but was overcome by sin. But if he was overcome by sin, He did not rise. If he did not rise, He did not redeem you. Then you are still in sins.

*"What Luther Says"
Regarding the Cross of Christ*



Cross, cont'd from page 1

cross. I brought him shame and agony. I condemned him to hell and brought him to the grave. The crucifix tells me justice was served, and payment was rendered. It also proclaims God's great love for me.

When my sins trouble me, I can look at the crucifix. There I find peace. There I receive forgiveness. There I am reconciled to God. At the same time, it is equally important to remember Jesus didn't stay on the cross. The empty cross is a reminder of the victory Jesus accomplished. He died, so that I could live. He was crucified, so I could be rescued from punishment. He left the cross empty, so my life could be filled with hope. As the crucifix is the reminder of Jesus' work as the Lamb of Sacrifice, so the empty cross is a reminder that he is the King of Glory and Eternal Son of God. He gave his life, only to take it up again. The result is I can live with the confidence he alone can provide. I am victorious. I am a conqueror. I am free to live for the one who loved me.

The empty cross becomes my hope, my strength, my joy and my comfort. In life and in death, the empty cross offers me the confidence that I am his, and will be his forever.

So which is more proper and correct - the empty cross or the crucifix? The answer is both. I need to see both whenever my sin troubles me. I need to see both whenever I am weak in times of temptation. I need to see both whenever I am unsure of God's great love for me. This finally is the special nature of the cross of my Savior.

I fear no foe with thee at hand to bless;
Ills have no weight and tears no bitterness.
Where is death's sting? Where, grave, thy victory?
I triumph still if thou abide with me.

Hold thou thy cross before my closing eyes;
Shine through the gloom and point me to the skies.
Heaven's morning breaks, and earth's vain shadows flee;
In life, in death, O Lord, abide with me!

Christian Worship 588

Wednesday Night Worship

On February 21st we will begin our mid-week Lenten worship services. The theme of the services will invite us to "Look to the Cross." There we will see our Savior's Cross as . . .

A Place of Commitment	February 21
A Place of Fulfillment	February 28
A Place of Refuge	March 7
A Place of Compassion	March 14
A Place of Sacrifice	March 21
A Place of Punishment	March 28

Each of the services will begin at 7:00 pm

News and Notes

Dinner and a Movie—February 17

President’s Day weekend will give us the opportunity to get together to enjoy a pot luck dinner at 5:30 pm, and to turn our attention to how our country was formed as “One Nation Under God.”

A video discussion on D. James Kennedy’s lecture is planned for 7:00 pm.

This is a great opportunity to invite friends and acquaintances to study this very timely, and important topic. It will also help each of us understand what we could actually lose, if we sacrifice our roots and foundation to modern “secular-progressive” thinking.

St. Patrick’s Day Progressive Dinner

It’s time to look for your shamrocks, kilts, corned beef, cabbage, and anything green. Plans are well under-way for a St. Patrick’s Day Progressive Dinner. Keep Saturday, March 17th open for an evening of fellowship, good food and fun.

The evening will start at the Proeber’s with appetizers and salads at 5:00 pm. The second stop on our gourmet journey will be the Schueler’s. Here we will savor the main meal at 6:15 pm. The final stop will be the Todd’s home at 8:00 pm. As the evening winds down, we will indulge in desserts and other treats.

Remember, keep the day open -- March 17th! Friends and guests are always welcome. Please RSVP with either the Proeber’s or the Schuelers as soon as possible.

Meetings for February

Handbell Choir	Monday	@ 7:00 pm
Youth Instruction	Monday	@ 3:15 pm
Bible Class	Wednesday	@ 7:00 pm
Adult Choir	Thursday	@ 7:00 pm
Church Council	February 6th	@ 7:30 pm
Outreach meeting	February 10th	@ 9:30 am
Bd of Elders	February 20th	@ 7:00 pm
Bd of Trustees	February 27th	@ 7:30 pm
Bd of Education	To be determined	

Holy Week and Easter

It is not too early to start thinking about this precious time of year. This is a great opportunity to invite others to come and hear what their Savior did for them in love.

Our journey with Jesus will start on Palm Sunday, April 1st, focusing on his triumphant arrival in Jerusalem. We will be able to join with the crowds who cried, “Hosanna to the Son of David! Hosanna in the highest!”

The second stop will be the upper room on Maundy Thursday evening, April 5th. Here we see our Savior’s love for his disciples, as well as his love for his Church of all times. Here we will receive the assurance of the forgiveness of our sins in his body and his blood.

The third stop will be one of sadness as we make the trip up Golgotha. On Good Friday, April 6th, we will come to understand God’s justice and his love in the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. Although it is solemn service, there is great joy, because Jesus went to the cross as our Substitute to secure our forgiveness.

Easter Sunday fills us with joy as we consider what is ours through Jesus’ resurrection. In two separate services we will see and hear what is ours because Jesus lives. The first service on Easter Sunday, April 8th, is the sunrise service at Tucker’s Grove Park. The second festival service is at 9:30 am back at the church.

What a blessing it is to be able to have this precious message! What a blessing it is to be able to share this message with those we know.

Holy Week Schedule

Palm Sunday	9:30 am	April 1st
Maundy Thursday	7:00 pm	April 5th
	<i>with the Lord’s Supper</i>	
Good Friday	7:00 pm	April 6th
Easter Sunrise	6:30 am	April 8th
	<i>at Tucker’s Gove Park</i>	
Festival Worship	9:30 am	April 8th
	<i>at Our Redeemer Lutheran Church</i>	

News and Notes



The Apocalypse of Jesus Christ

as recorded by the Apostle John

The Wednesday evening Bible Class continues to make progress in the study of the Book of Revelation. Although there are many curious pictures, the truth is still clear. Christ our Savior will keep his people safe until he claims them on Judgment Day. Then, he will rescue them from this world and take them to himself in heaven.

Until that time, there will be difficult times made worse by the advancing army of false teachings. There will also be a growing loss of love among the faithful. But, even in these times, Jesus will preserve his Word and the people within his Church. This is the promise with which we, as well as every believer, can live every day.

If you have ever had a question about this precious book, come. If you need to review its precious truths, come. It is never too late to take part in the study. The Wednesday class meets at 7:00 pm.

“When he opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour. And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and to them were given seven trumpets. Another angel, who had a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense to offer, with the prayers of all the saints, on the golden altar before the throne. The smoke of the incense, together with the prayers of the saints, went up before God from the angel’s hand. Then the angel took the censer, filled it with fire from the altar, and hurled it on the earth; and there came peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning and an earthquake. Then the seven angels who had the seven trumpets prepared to sound them.”

Revelation 8:1-6