



*The North Texas*

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## A Visit to the Creation Evidence Museum

By Gabriel Mettlach

*A month ago a group from UTD and UT Arlington went to the Creation museum. Gabriel Mettlach, a Neuroscience grad student, describes, his impression of the place and what they teach.*

One hundred and ten million years ago what is now known as Glen Rose, Texas, was covered by tidal flats near a shallow sea. Dinosaurs roamed the earth and left quite a display of tracks that would fossilize and later become exposed by the usually gentle flow of the Paluxy River. At least, that is what scientists would have us believe happened at Texas' Dinosaur Valley State Park.

Just up the road from the actual park stands the Creation Evidence Museum, a rather plain jumble of buildings made a reality by a few people with big ideas, not to mention over \$10 million of tax deductible donations since its 1984 creation as a 501(c)(3) organization. The creator and director of this facility, a "Dr" Carl Baugh, whose doctorates come from no accredited colleges, is of the opinion that there is a concerted effort on the part of scientists across many fields of research to suppress evidence that, among other things, the dinosaur prints made just down the road from his museum are less than 10,000 years old. And people made tracks there too, living as they did alongside the dinosaurs.

Such are the things learned by participants of an August 2, 2008, joint field trip by the UT Arlington Freethinkers and the UTD Atheists Skeptics and Humanists. Members of both student organizations carpooled all the way to Glen Rose that Saturday morning just in time to see the smiling Carl Baugh and his entourage give their monthly lecture on "recent creation." But to our surprise before the lecture we were treated to what might be termed a musical sermon in praise of the Christian God. Baugh's organization evidently makes no pretense at being a secular purveyor of science education. This little service was followed by an update on the odd future procurement by the organization of an actual Torah in scroll form, apparently an item

### EVENTS CALENDAR

#### October Program

Saturday, September 18, 2008  
2 p.m.  
Center for Nonprofit  
Management 2900 Live Oak  
Street in Dallas

Rodrigo Neely will speak at the  
October program. Check our  
Web site for more information:  
[www.ntskeptics.org](http://www.ntskeptics.org)

#### NTS Social Dinner & Board Meeting

Saturday, October 25, 2008  
7 p.m.

**Sushi Ichiban**  
12101 Greenville Avenue #112  
in Dallas  
(972) 437-9514

Let us know if you are coming.  
We need to reserve a table.

NTS Hotline: 214-335-9248

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The North Texas Skeptics is a tax-exempt 501 (c) (3) scientific and educational organization. All members receive the NTS newsletter and may attend NTS functions at which admission is charged at no or reduced cost. In addition, members will receive mailings on topics of current interest or social events.

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of great veneration and importance to this assembly, to be displayed under a protective case upon a smooth granite surface. And our group thought we would be treated to at least a pseudoscientific lecture. Eventually though, we did receive such a treat.

That day's theme was "Design and Recent Creation," part of Baugh's series of lectures on various supposed lines of evidence for a recently created universe. A subtext he attempted to set up for the lecture was an argument that not even Ken Ham would use, citing the second law of thermodynamics as evidence that there is something going terribly wrong with the universe. Baugh even went so far as to claim the process of entropy proves, somehow, that biological evolution could not have produced increasingly complex organisms.

Throughout the lecture what he really proved though is his fundamental misunderstanding of scientific philosophy and theories. From cosmology, astronomy, and physics to population ecology, genetic disease, and neuroscience, Baugh presented an amazing array of science he did not seem to comprehend in either content or implications. When asked an important question concerning one of his claims, Baugh began some nonsense about having supposedly talked to various academic figures about that very question. To any skeptical observer he was only making a fool of himself. But to the rest of the audience one can only assume he oozed authenticity. There may be hope though, as some of the younger audience had fallen asleep at some point in the lecture.

A few of our group were able to grab Baugh for some deeper conversation afterwards. But the better part of the trip was yet to come, as next we proceeded to the sun battered Dinosaur Valley State Park. The Texas heat was not forgiving that day. Yet we pushed on along the banks of the lazy Paluxy in search of footprints laid down so long ago. The river was not low enough for us to see all of the tracks, but there were a few sites where we could bask in the full realization that here walked a clawed theropod or there a herd of sauropods.

The cool running water and appreciation of the real science behind these tracks offered us a reprieve from the oppressing ignorance that surrounded us a short time beforehand. Our curiosity fulfilled and bodies exhausted, we retired to a local restaurant for food, discussion, and much needed ice cold drinks before returning home.



## North Texas Skeptics

### Future Meeting Dates

October 18, 2008      November 15, 2008  
 December 20, 2008      January 17, 2009

## Web News

by John Blanton

*The World Wide Web is a wonderful source of information and news. Some of it is true, and some of it is not.*

**Skeptics, this will be an all-creationism column.**

### A royal reaming

<http://www.ntskeptics.org/news/news2008-09-20.htm#royal>

It doesn't get much more royal than this. Sir Christopher Wren, Samuel Pepys, Sir Isaac Newton, Sir Humphrey Davey, William Thompson (First Baron Kelvin), Sir Ernest Rutherford and Sir William Henry Bragg have all served as president.

The most recent director of education was, until quite recently, Michael Reiss. No longer.

The Reverend Reiss was recently found to be too cozy with creationism. The Evolution Update newsletter from the National Center for Science Education (NCSE) reports the following:

The director of education for the Royal Society of London, Michael Reiss, resigned from his position on September 16, 2008, in the wake of a controversy occasioned by his recent remarks on creationism. According to a September 16, 2008, press release from the Royal Society, "Some of Professor Michael Reiss's recent comments, on the issue of creationism in schools, while speaking as the Royal Society's Director of Education, were open to misinterpretation. While it was not his intention, this has led to damage to the Society's reputation. As a result, Professor Reiss and the Royal Society have agreed that, in the best interests of the Society, he will step down immediately as Director of Education."

Reiss's remarks were apparently offered during the British Association for the Advancement of Science's Festival of Science, which took place September 6-11, 2008, in Liverpool; he subsequently posted a corresponding essay, "Science lessons should tackle creationism and intelligent design," on the Guardian's science blog on September 11, 2008. In the latter, Reiss posed the question, "What should science teachers do when faced with students who are creationists?" and answered that "when teaching evolution, there is

much to be said for allowing students to raise any doubts they have (hardly a revolutionary idea in science teaching) and doing one's best to have a genuine discussion."

Notorious anti-creationist Richard Dawkins chimed on the affair in a letter to NewScientist:

Perhaps I was a little uncharitable to liken the appointment of a vicar as the Royal Society's Education Director to a Monty Python sketch. Nevertheless, thoughts of Trojan Horses are now disturbing many Fellows, already concerned as they are by the signals the Society recently sent out through its flirtation with the infamous Templeton Foundation.

Accommodationism is playing politics, while teetering on the brink of scientific dishonesty. I'd rather not play that kind of politics at all but, if the Royal Society is going to go down that devious road, they should at least be shrewd about it. Perhaps, rather than resign his job with the Royal Society, Professor Reiss might consider resigning his Orders?

[http://www.newscientist.com/channel/opinion/dn14748-letter-richard-dawkins-on-the-royal-society-row.html?feedId=online-news\\_rss20](http://www.newscientist.com/channel/opinion/dn14748-letter-richard-dawkins-on-the-royal-society-row.html?feedId=online-news_rss20)

### Rabbis back evolution

Great! With the rabbis on our side we've got creationism on the run.

<http://www.ntskeptics.org/news/news2008-09-20.htm#rabbi>

<http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/local/chi-relig-evolution-19-sep19,0,4695850.story>

### Christian clergy wrote similar missive in 2004

**By Robert Mitchum | *Chicago Tribune* reporter  
September 19, 2008**

For Rabbi Gary Gerson of the Oak Park Temple B'nai Abraham Zion, evolution does not oppose religious belief but strengthens it.

"If anything, it all the more underscores the magnificence of creation as the expression of some highest order," Gerson said. "We as Jews every day praise God for the times and seasons and the order of being, and that perhaps is the greatest miracle of all. This is not caprice. There is a natural order to things."

Seeing evidence of the divine in the theories of Charles Darwin meant that Gerson did not hesitate

to sign an open letter drafted by a suburban Chicago rabbi this summer supporting the teaching of evolution in public schools. The two-paragraph letter, written by Rabbi David Oler of Congregation Beth Or in Deerfield, has attracted 235 signatures since its completion in July, with Jewish leaders from across the United States supporting its cause.

Wait. Aren't these the same guys who invented creationism about 3000 years ago?

## Teachers for creationism

<http://www.ntskeptics.org/news/news2008-09-20.htm#teachers>

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/2988753/Creationism-should-be-taught-in-science-lessons-say-teachers.html>

If teachers are in with the creationists we need all the help from the rabbis we can get. This is from the *Telegraph*:

By Graeme Paton, Education Editor

Many believe God had a role in the creation of the universe - and pupils should be encouraged to debate it alongside the theory of evolution, it is claimed.

The conclusions come amid continuing debate over comments from Professor Michael Reiss over the role of creationism in school biology classes.

In a controversial move, he said the topic should be tackled by teachers if raised by pupils.

Prof Reiss, a Church of England minister, quit as director of education at the Royal Society following criticism of the remarks, which he claimed had been taken out of context.

But research by Southampton University suggests many teachers agree that religious beliefs should play a part in discussions about the origin of life.

Actually, it's not as bad as it sounds. At least the teachers associate creationism with religion and are not claiming it is science. Besides, this is back in England, and when was the last time we imported anything from there?

## The Catholics, too

Oh, great. The Catholics are in on it, too. Maybe not wanting to be upstaged by the rabbis, the Vatican has weighed in against creationism.

<http://www.ntskeptics.org/news/news2008-09-20.htm#Vatican>

<http://www.catholicnews.com/data/stories/cns/0804713.htm>

## Vatican evolution congress to exclude creationism, intelligent design

By Carol Glatz Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Speakers invited to attend a Vatican-sponsored congress on the evolution debate will not include proponents of creationism and intelligent design, organizers said.

The Pontifical Council for Culture, Rome's Pontifical Gregorian University and the University of Notre Dame in Indiana are organizing an international conference in Rome March 3-7 as one of a series of events marking the 150th anniversary of the publication of Charles Darwin's "The Origin of Species."

Jesuit Father Marc Leclerc, a philosophy professor at the Gregorian, told Catholic News Service Sept. 16 that organizers "wanted to create a conference that was strictly scientific" and that discussed rational philosophy and theology along with the latest scientific discoveries.

He said arguments "that cannot be critically defined as being science, or philosophy or theology did not seem feasible to include in a dialogue at this level and, therefore, for this reason we did not think to invite" supporters of creationism and intelligent design.

Father Leclerc was one of several organizers speaking at a Sept. 16 Vatican press conference about the congress, part of the culture council's "Science, Technology and the Ontological Quest," or STOQ project.

## John Derbyshire on Jindal

Derbyshire is a conservative columnist for *National Review Online* and *New English Review*. Given that, his take on Bobby Jindal's part in the Louisiana Science Education Act is revealing. What he thinks about the Discovery Institute is more so.

<http://corner.nationalreview.com/post/?q=NGI0ZmZIMDVIMDM0MzVhNTcwNzA3MmYwYjY2NGM0Y2Q>

Whether or not the law as signed is unconstitutional *per se*, I do not know. I do know, though — as the creationist Discovery Institute that helped promote the Act also surely knows — that the Act will encourage Louisiana local school boards to unconstitutional behavior. That's what it's *meant* to do.

Some local school board will take the Act as a permit to bring religious instruction into their

science classes. That will irk some parents. Those parents will sue. There will be a noisy and expensive federal lawsuit, possibly followed by further noisy and expensive appeals. The school board will inevitably lose. The property owners of that school district will take the financial hit.

Where will the Discovery Institute be when these legal expenses come due? Just where they were in the Dover case — nowhere! What, you were thinking that those bold warriors for truth at the Discovery Institute will help to fund the defense in these no-hope lawsuits? Ha ha ha ha ha!

Helping to defend creationist school boards in federal courts is *not* the Discovery Institute's game. Their game is to (a) make money from those spurious "textbooks" they put out, and (b) keep creationism in the news so that they don't run out of lecture gigs and wealthy funders. So far as those legal bills are concerned, Discovery Institute policy is: Let the dumb rubes fund their own stupid lawsuits.

## Teachers on the front lines

Forget about those teachers in England. *The New York Times* reports on a teacher who is carrying the flag for science into some very hostile territory.

<http://www.ntskeptics.org/news/news2008-09-08.htm>

<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/24/education/24evolution.html>

**August 24, 2008 By AMY HARMON**

ORANGE PARK, Fla. — David Campbell switched on the overhead projector and wrote "Evolution" in the rectangle of light on the screen.

He scanned the faces of the sophomores in his Biology I class. Many of them, he knew from years of teaching high school in this Jacksonville suburb, had been raised to take the biblical creation story as fact. His gaze rested for a moment on Bryce Haas, a football player who attended the 6 a.m. prayer meetings of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes in the school gymnasium.

"If I do this wrong," Mr. Campbell remembers thinking on that humid spring morning, "I'll lose him."

In February, the Florida Department of Education modified its standards to explicitly require, for the first time, the state's public schools to teach evolution, calling it "the organizing principle of life

science." Spurred in part by legal rulings against school districts seeking to favor religious versions of natural history, over a dozen other states have also given more emphasis in recent years to what has long been the scientific consensus: that all of the diverse life forms on Earth descended from a common ancestor, through a process of mutation and natural selection, over billions of years.

Campbell uses examples and a line of reasoning that avoids directly challenging students' religious convictions, many such convictions being in direct conflict with what we know from science.

"Science explores nature by testing and gathering data," he said. "It can't tell you what's right and wrong. It doesn't address ethics. But it is not anti-religion. Science and religion just ask different questions."

He grabbed the ball and held it still.

"Can anybody think of a question science can't answer?"

"Is there a God?" shot back a boy near the window.

"Good," said Mr. Campbell, an Anglican who attends church most Sundays. "Can't test it. Can't prove it, can't disprove it. It's not a question for science."

Bryce raised his hand.

"But there is scientific proof that there is a God," he said. "Over in Turkey there's a piece of wood from Noah's ark that came out of a glacier."

Mr. Campbell chose his words carefully.

"If I could prove, tomorrow, that that chunk of wood is not from the ark, is not even 500 years old and not even from the right kind of tree — would that damage your religious faith at all?"

Bryce thought for a moment.

"No," he said.

The room was unusually quiet.

"Faith is not based on science," Mr. Campbell said. "And science is not based on faith. I don't expect you to 'believe' the scientific explanation of evolution that we're going to talk about over the next few weeks."

"But I do," he added, "expect you to understand it."



## My Exorcism

by Kristine Danowski

When I arrived at college as a first-year student, I didn't expect to see a lot of bizarre things. However, I witnessed a bizarre thing in my own room, and it was something I invited.

Student housing at my college consisted not of dorms, but large houses built in the late 1800s and after. One of the older houses on campus, my house had steam heat that was carried through old metal pipes. Occasionally, even with the heat off, steam would build up in the system for reasons unknown, and the excess energy would be released as extremely loud clanging noises. These noises sounded like hammers hitting the pipes. This happened several times a night, keeping my roommate "Lora" and me awake. The noises possibly occurred during the day as well, but neither Lora nor I were home to hear them. We spoke to our maintenance person at length about stopping this infernal noise, but we got nowhere. The maintenance person shrugged and said he could do nothing. After a few weeks of sleepless nights, we were desperate.

Another student, "Alice," heard me complaining about the noise in my room. She asked if there was anything she could do. I thanked her but I didn't think there was. However, Alice had other ideas. Quite seriously, she suggested my room was haunted or demon-possessed. I replied that I doubted it, that it probably was the heating system, but Alice insisted. A senior and fundamentalist Christian, she was basically a nice person genuinely trying to help. Keeping a straight face, she said we might benefit from an exorcism. Keeping an equally straight face, I declined.

I told Lora about Alice's offer. Both atheists, and without any belief in the paranormal, we thought the whole exorcism idea was both ludicrous and hilarious. But Alice persisted. She told another housemate, "Sandy," about our plight, and Sandy wanted to help with the exorcism. Lora and I discussed it again, and we decided what the heck, why not. An exorcism couldn't hurt, although it definitely wouldn't help. We decided it would be good for a laugh.

We told Alice, and she was ecstatic. She told us how much better our lives would be when the demons were gone. I didn't disagree. Nevertheless, Alice cautioned us that we were probably doing something to attract the demons since no one in the house had noises as loud as ours. Alice listed some demon-loving actions: not believing in Jesus, not praying, watching unwholesome television shows, having premarital sex, thinking evil thoughts, and conducting satanic rituals. We assured her we were not conducting any rituals, and we simply

wanted the clanging noises to stop. She said she would talk to her minister and get back to us.

A day or so later, with the noises unrelenting, Alice and Sandy were ready. After dinner, they came to our room with their props: a bowl of "holy" water, their crosses, and their bibles. Alice said her minister instructed her on how to conduct the exorcism. I don't know what exactly I expected from an amateur and virgin exorcist like Alice, but she displayed no pyrotechnics or flamboyance at all. She didn't even raise her soft voice. Nothing *Exorcist*-like happened, and I must say I was disappointed. I at least anticipated some yelling, moaning, and flinging of religious implements. That's why we invited them, after all.

The ritual consisted of Alice faux-dramatically reciting some prayers and reading from her bible banishing the demons while Sandy sprinkled holy water around the room. Preferring to watch rather than participate, Lora and I remained quiet throughout. We were too polite to laugh. The entire scenario was too strange, I thought. I was dumbfounded that college-educated people could take demonic possession seriously in the twentieth century. The whole thing lasted about 20 minutes. After Alice and Sandy left, Lora and I were amazed. We weren't sure what to think. We both had the creeps.

That night, and I have no explanation, *there was no noise from the pipes*. Lora and I slept in blissful silence. The next morning I told Alice and she was very happy. This proved to her the exorcism had worked. After the ritual Alice had left the bowl of holy water on the steam radiator, the source of the noise. I returned Alice's bowl to her. She asked if any water was left, and I told her no, it had all evaporated. Alice said this absence of water was further proof the exorcism had worked; the "holy" water was needed around the room to quell the demons. Holy evaporation, Batman!

Unfortunately, the next night the banging returned with a vengeance, as if to make up for lost time. Thoroughly disgusted, Lora and I complained to our head resident and the maintenance person yet again. This time he said he would look into it. A few days later the noise was mostly gone. The maintenance person told us he adjusted the steam pressure, and that was the source of the noise. Why he could not or did not fix this sooner is beyond me. In any event, only the occasional loud clanging noise bothered us.

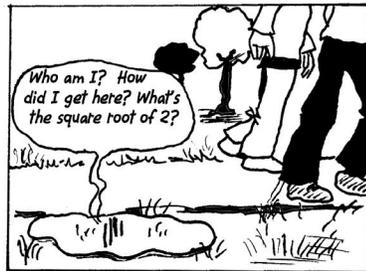
So the exorcism did not work. Demons were not responsible for the noises we'd been hearing. I broke the news to Alice, but she refused to believe it. Despite the evidence, some people apparently will maintain their belief. I should have known.



*Kristine Danowski is Vice-President of the North Texas Skeptics*

## Skeptic Ink

by Prasad Golla and John Blanton.  
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## What's new

by Robert Park

[Robert Park publishes the What's New column at <http://www.bobpark.org/>. Following are some clippings of interest.]

### EMF: are power lines causing cancer again?

It began in 1989 with scare stories in the *New Yorker* attributing childhood cancers to power-line fields. With a change in acronym from EMF to NIR (Non-Ionizing Radiation) power-line fear has returned to close kindergartens in Petah Tivia, Israel, and bury power lines in New South Wales, but as before it is a mistake. All known cancer agents break chemical bonds, which non-ionizing radiation cannot, thus creating mutant strands of DNA.

### Heavy metal: many ayurvedic medicines are toxic.

A study of 193 traditional Indian Ayurvedic medicines bought on the internet or from US stores contained high levels of lead, mercury or arsenic. The traditional medicine of India, Ayurveda, is even older than traditional Chinese medicine. Under the 1994 Dietary Supplement and Health Education Act they cannot be regulated by the FDA unless they are shown in court to be harmful. "Not until the bodies begin piling up" as one FDA official put it.

### Perpetuum mobile: the Newman "energy machine" again.

In Ashland, LA a weather-beaten oysterman with "practical inventiveness" has made the local papers with a car battery that runs a boat winch connected to a bicycle wheel that turns a car alternator that recharges the battery. It's not new. I must tell

you that I invented such a machine when I was 10. It didn't work either.

### Faith healer? the end of the "outpouring."

Todd Bentley, 32, is a revival preacher from British Columbia, who for several months has been conducting a twice-daily revival he calls the Outpouring in Lakeland, Florida. His gimmick is one of the oldest in the revival profession: Todd Bentley is a reformed bad boy. He looks the part with full-body tattoos, facial piercing, and clothes to match. Are there any laws to protect people from faith healers? There are few laws to protect people from any kind of health quack, least of all faith healers who wrap themselves in the first amendment. It's almost always a question of intent. Bentley says he gets visits from the apostle Paul, but who is to say he doesn't. Up to 10,000 people a day flock to a baseball stadium to be revived. But this week Bentley's Fresh Fire Ministries announced that he is separating from his wife and will be ending his Florida revival.research.

### Cell phones and cancer: Dr. Larry King clears it up.

It began 15 years ago on Larry King Live; a guest, David Raynard, whose wife died of brain cancer, "she held it against her head and talked on it all the time." What more do you need? This week Dr. King was back, talking about the warning issued by Dr. Herberman, director of the University of Pittsburg Cancer Center. He based it on one fewer cases than David Raynard had to go on. WN wrote about it last week. Why did Ron Herberman, a law abiding immunologist and administrator, who probably hasn't had a parking ticket in 20 years, decide to flout the conservation of energy, the most fundamental law of physics?



Bob Park can be reached via email at [opa@aps.org](mailto:opa@aps.org).

North Texas Skeptics  
P.O. Box 111794  
Carrollton, Texas 75011-1794

**FIRST CLASS**

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