

WHAT S NEW Robert L. Park Friday 16 May 08 Washington, DC

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1. BIG QUESTION: DOES SCIENCE MAKE BELIEF IN GOD OBSOLETE?

Yesterday at the American Enterprise Institute in Washington, DC, William Phillips, 1997 Nobel Prize for Physics, answered "Absolutely not!," while Michael Shermer, well known skeptic and author, said "It depends." Their stimulating debate was co-sponsored by the Templeton Foundation, created in 1987 to act as a "catalyst" for scientific studies into the "Big Questions." Shermer noted that "belief in God," cannot be obsolete since most people, including many scientists, are believers. Science, by contrast, begins with causality; supernatural causes don't count. To Phillips, however, that simply means that belief in God is not a scientific belief. Like most religious scientists, Phillips keeps science and religion separate. The God/Creator doesn't do much these days. He must be emeritus. Or perhaps quantum-indeterminacy exists to allow God to do stuff without being detected. You may recall that Templeton once went directly to the American Association for the Advancement of Science with a million dollars to create the AAAS Dialogue between Science and Religion. What Templeton bought was elaborate sound effects supporting his conviction that science and religion will find common ground. Many scientists found this relationship inappropriate and it was ended. For the American Enterprise Institute it seems perfect.

2. EINSTEIN S GOD: PUTTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT.

Like many scientists of his era, Einstein often used God as a metaphor for forces of nature that are not yet understood. As a result, he is often incorrectly cited as a physicist who believed in God. It happened again in yesterday's AEI debate. Ironically, at that very moment a January 3, 1954 letter from Einstein to philosopher Eric Gutkind went on sale in a London auction house. The letter, handwritten in German one year before his death, described belief in God as "childish superstition," and ridiculed the belief that Jews are "the chosen people." The letter sold to someone with "a passion for theoretical physics," for \$404,000, 25 times the pre-sale estimate

3. CASUALTIES OF WAR: THE FIRST CASUALTY IS COMMON SENSE.

Defense Secretary Robert Gates said yesterday that medical care of the wounded needs major changes before he leaves office. Why not start with

the Fort Bliss Restoration and Resilience Center? Last Friday the American Forces Press Service reported on the treatment of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) at the new Center. The cutting edge treatments at the facility include Reiki, acupuncture and Qi Gong – three so-called "energy" therapies that have in common that they are many hundreds of years old and have no conceivable mechanism of benefit other than the placebo effect. Our soldiers deserve better.

4. MIRACLE STUDY: IS THE LEGAL NIGHTMARE OVER?

The SLAPP suit against courageous Ob/Gyn Bruce Flamm at UC Irvine was thrown out of court last month. Daniel Wirth, the con man who arranged the pregnancy by prayer scam completed his jail term last. Still, the absurd study has never been withdrawn by the Journal of Reproductive Medicine. You might ask the editor, Dr. Lawrence Devoe 314 991-4440, why?

5. DISCOVER: WHITEHOUSE WITHHOLDS RELEVANT DOCUMENTS.

Why did NASA mothball a key \$100 million space craft that could resolve remaining climate change questions? It appears that the Whitehouse is refusing to release any documents related to the decision.

THE UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND.

Opinions are the author's and not necessarily shared by the University of Maryland, but they should be.

Archives of What's New can be found at <http://www.bobpark.org>

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