

Opinions

Everybody has one...

The \$3 million question

In a recent advertisement by reader George Mitchell, he questions where the \$3 million in back tax collections has disappeared. Well, George seemingly believes that is found money. Well, it's not. It's money that was actually budgeted by the school system and the county government prior to its collection by Tax Commissioner Lee Knight. Basically, until that money was on the books, the governments that oversee our school system and county government had to figure out ways to make ends meet while that money was not in the county coffers.

Straight Shooting

Charles Duncan



Mr. Mitchell seems to think that there is a grand conspiracy among the county government and school system to hide what's being done with the local government funds. He thinks that the newspaper is covering up for both. There is no mystery, there is no cover up and there is no hidden money. It's right there in the county coffers. When money isn't collected, it puts a hardship on the county government and on the school system to make ends meet. Tax Commissioner Knight has done an outstanding job to bring in current tax collections and past due tax collections. These collections keep county government and the school system working on a functional level. It seems Mr. Mitchell wants to point a finger, develop a conspiracy theory and continually question the local leaders about the government finances. It's nice to have an advocate like Mr. Mitchell, but I'm not sure that his talents are aimed in the right direction. Citizen advocates, or better yet, watchdogs are necessary in society. But, I'll say this, we don't see Mr. Mitchell at any of the county meetings, or the Board of Education meetings. At these meetings is a simple process, it's called Public Comment. It's not against any rule to get on the meeting agenda and ask questions of the local governments during Public Comment. Mr. Mitchell wants to critique and criticize in the Letters to the Editor section of this newspaper. It's okay to criticize in that section. However, we won't let someone beat a dead horse every week, as Mr. Mitchell seems to enjoy. Go to the local meetings George, ask questions of the people who have answers.

Convinced

It is a stronger faith that not only knows what to believe, but how to know it is true. I polled a few Christians to learn what they find convincing about our faith. What follows are their responses with my editorial elaborations.

All Things New

Wayne Fowler



"For me it is fulfilled prophecy." In fact by some counts, Jesus fulfilled over 350 prophecies penned hundreds of years before his birth. He was aware of that, and to the scholars of his day he said, "You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; it is these that testify about me" (John 5:30). "It makes sense of the world as we observe it." This refers to the glory of creation, awareness of self, yearnings of the human heart, and dignity of humans. The world seems caused and sustained by something outside of it while struggling against that which decays and destroys. Our hope is that "greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world" (1 Jn 4:4). G.K. Chesterton believed Christianity "because the thing has not merely told this truth or that truth, but has revealed itself as a truth-telling thing." "The miracle of changed lives." The Christian message is that we can be released from that which drags us down. "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and death" (Rom 8:2). We are empowered to live righteously. "I have been crucified with Christ and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me" (Gal 2:20). "I am strengthened by believers from elsewhere." The news of brothers and sisters in Christ remaining steadfast in harsh places like China, Iraq, Syria, and North Korea emboldens those who know their sacrifice. As a college student, the first time I heard my Ethiopian friend pray in Amharic left me quite aware that God is not American. "We hear them in our own languages speaking of the mighty deeds of God" (Acts 2:11). God transcends time, nation, race, and language. "Answered prayer." Such claims can seem quite subjective to skeptics. But a sincere believer with an active prayer life does not treat God like a cosmic genie. C.S. Lewis said, "I pray because the need flows out of me all the time - waking and sleep-

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Questions and Answers

These are follow-up questions from July 29th. A lot of this information was provided in an excellent article by the NGN on July 22, page 1. However, as a reminder and to make sure all the information is clear, I want you, the reader, to fully understand the process of bond financing through SPLOST and the payoff and refinancing of the Community Center bond.

Q & A from Union County Commissioner

Lamar Paris



Q. How much money did the county borrow for the next SPLOST IV?
A. We borrowed slightly over \$8 million. The total borrowed will actually be \$8,185,000. While this process is called bond financing, it is the same as if you were borrowing at the bank, except with a SPLOST bond, the County's general obligation pledge and the ability to levy property tax is utilized as backup in case the sales tax revenue could not repay the bonds. This excellent collateral is the reason bond financing, utilized by almost all county governments, is usually so reasonable with a relatively low interest rate.
Q. Who determines how much interest the county will have to pay for bond financing?
A. There are two methods of going to market with the sale of bonds. The first is called "public offering," which means the county is required to go out and have an expensive bond rating and incur other significant costs and reporting requirements. The bond is then offered to the general public. In very large bonds with much higher interest rates, the extra expense of doing all of this can potentially save a county money, but with the historically low bond interest rates now, the financial experts recommended that they simply call several of the major institutional purchasers of bonds, receive quotes from them, then they would assist the county in choosing the best deal and lowest interest rate. This method is called "Private Placement."
Q. What will the SPLOST bond (borrowed money) be used for?
A. In order to be fiscally conservative and not spend most of the borrowed money on just new SPLOST projects, we instead decided to pay off the 15-year URA Bond debt of \$5,122,000 for the Union County Community Center. We sold URA Revenue bonds (borrowed money) about five years ago to build the Community

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Letters to the Editor ...

Religion and Science

Dear Editor,

The Biblical account of the creation has generated discussions, conflicts, and arguments for centuries. There are many verses that seem to be illogical or impossible. Can harmony with religious writings and scientific discoveries be reached by examining and comparing writings of prophets and spiritual leaders to the writing of contemporary scholars, archaeologists, paleontologists, evolutionists, and other scientists. Can conflicts ever be resolved? Seeking for the truth is the most important goal.

Genesis 1, day one states that God divided light from darkness. Day two that water was divided onto water above and below the firmament.

Day three that dry land was separated from earth, and grass and fruit yielded seed. Day four that a great light, a lesser light and stars were made.

Day five that the waters were to bring forth animals that swim and fly. Day six that the earth was to bring forth all other animals including man who was in God's image and was to be male and female. That all animals and plants were for food for man.

Day 7, as everything was complete, God rested from his work. So the creation was finished, right? But wait!

Let's read Genesis 2:4 and 5. These verses are probably the most ignored and misunderstood verses in the Bible.

"4 These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens, 5 And every plant of the field BEFORE it was in the earth, and every herb of the field BEFORE it grew: for the Lord God had not caused it to rain upon the earth and there was NOT A MAN to till the ground."

Verse 7 starts the physical creation. Man, as a LIVING SOUL, was created and in verse 19 the animals were created and brought to Adam to name. Verse 20 says Adam was alone.

The seven-day story was what God was going to do, not the physical creation. God's planning took seven days. It doesn't matter how long the periods of God's planning were.

The seven days could have been seven of our days or 7,000 years, or seven longer periods. The duration of the physical creation followed the ideas of the design but is not described in the Bible. Scientists have observed through rock formation and fossils that it required billions of years for the earth to reach its present state. Since Genesis 2 clearly states that the 7-day time was not the physical creation, there should not be a conflict with the idea that God's physical implementation of His design, took a very long time.

Scientists feel that we are reaching the day when genetic changes can permit a man to live forever. Certainly it appears possible, then, that Adam could have lived a very long time as he named the animals. As the physical creation took place, eventually primitive man came on the scene. At some time, through his fall, Adam became mortal, and with Eve, had children.

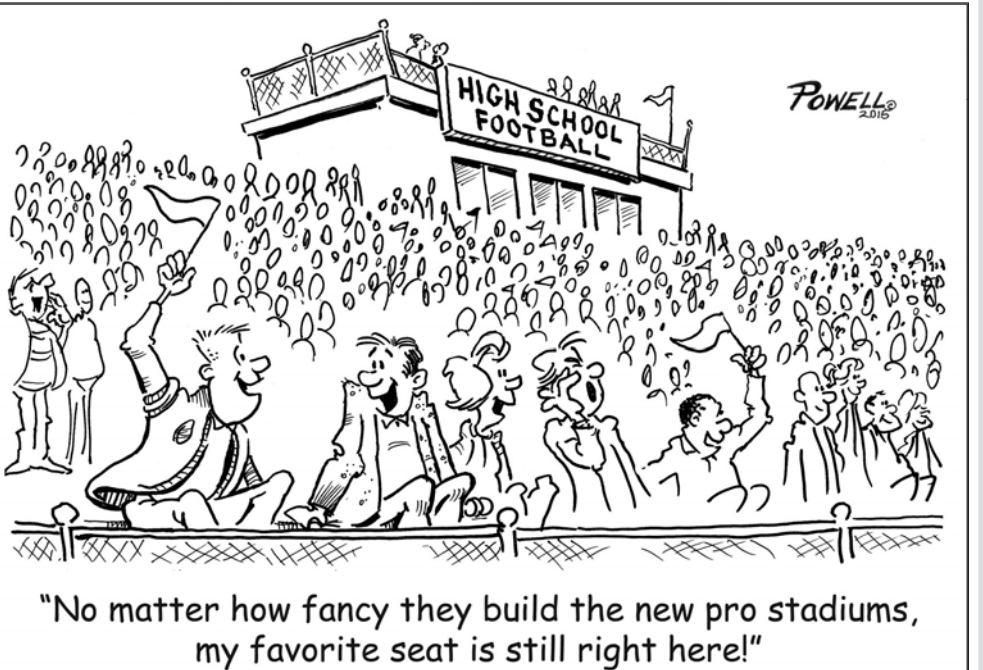
How did the variety of modern man develop? In Genesis 6:2 and 4, there appear to be different kinds of men.

2. The sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair; and they took them wives."

4. There were giants in the earth in those days; the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men and they bare children to them."

To scientists and many people, it does not appear that the descendants of Adam, are the ancestors of the Orientals, Africans and eastern and western Indians. How did this evolution happen? Eventually God and science will tell us.

Walter B. Kerr



"No matter how fancy they build the new pro stadiums, my favorite seat is still right here!"

Think about it

Dear Editor,

The following is from a List of America's Stupidity - Only in America:

1. Could people claim that the government still discriminates against black Americans when voters elected a black President, have a black Attorney General and roughly 20 percent of the federal workforce is black (while only 14 percent of the population is black), more than 40 percent of all federal entitlements goes to black Americans. That's three times the rate that go to whites and five times the rate that go to Hispanics.

2. Could the people who believe in balancing the budget and sticking by the country's Constitution be called extremists.

3. Could you need to present a driver's license to cash a check or buy alcohol, but not to vote.

Gives one food for thought, doesn't it? Respectfully submitted for thought, Arlene M. Gray

Tax Question

Dear Editor,

A question for Lamar Paris. I live in Lance Crossing. Other states where we've resided give tax payers the option of paying annual property taxes in two payments, the first due by March 30th; the second half due six months later, or Sept. 30.

Residents who opt for paying the full amount by March, would receive a reduction, typically 1-2 percent.

Now why can't this system be instituted for Union County?

In the long run this system benefits both. The county gets the money sooner, and the taxpayer doesn't feel the pressure to pay right before the holidays.

John W. Engelmann

Men in Black

Dear Editor,

Mark Smith need not have gone all the way back to Germany and the Magdeburg Confession written (in Latin) in 1550 to find justification for a lesser authority to refuse obedience to an unjust/immoral law created by a superior authority.

Our very own Constitution will do quite nicely, as Thomas Jefferson noted when he declared "[An] act of the Congress of the United States... which assumes powers... not delegated by the Constitution, is not law, but is altogether void and of no force."

Of course, as Mr. Smith correctly observed, "our beloved Constitution is all but forgotten." And if you cite the Constitution, or Mr. Jefferson as your authority to publicly disregard unjust laws, men dressed in black, riding in black helicopters and carrying automatic weapons, will arrive at your door, to solicit your compliance.

Cordially, Chuck Esposito

Scared!

Papa had been to a singing at Saint Paul Church that night. He'd walked three miles to the church and another three miles beyond the church to the girl's house. Papa had walked across the Mon Dye Bottoms and up through the bluffs where his

Around The Farm

Mickey Cummings



Grandfather John Cummings and Grandfather Champ West had made liquor. Back in those days people walked or rode horses everywhere they went. And young men walked for miles to court a young lady. However, the only courting allowed was courting at church events. Papa really liked this girl so it was nothing for him to walk the six miles to her home and three miles back to Saint Paul Church.

The route, which Papa had taken, was beautiful especially in the fall of the year. The smell of autumn leaves and a cool gentle wind against his face made Papa's day wonderful. At the singing Papa was able to buy the girl's cake in the Cake Sale. Everything was grand until Papa delivered the girl back to her home and began the long nine-mile walk back to his house. After all it was Halloween and my 16-year-old papa was a little nervous and very superstitious.

He had to walk down the bluff where Uncle Billy was hung by the Home Guard during the "War Between the States" for refusing to side with the South. By the time Papa got to this particular bluff the wind had picked up and the sound of rustling leaves caused Papa to be a little on the edgy side. Just the previous week a "painter" (panther) had been spotted just a mile or so down the creek in the Dime community. Papa made it down the bluff and crossed the creek without incident. However, halfway up the other side Papa saw what he thought was a man in a black suit without a head standing beside the trail.

Papa called out to the man to identify himself. The man refused to answer. A little shiver ran down the spine of my grandfather as he contemplated what should be done. Papa called out again, "Is that you Hollis?" There was still no answer. At this point Papa became angry. He called out to the man, "Mister, I don't know what you want, but if it's trouble you're after then trouble is what you'll get." Then Papa bent over and picked up a nice sized stick. He approached the man and warned him, "If you don't get out of my way I'm gonna whop you with this stick." The man did not answer. So, with a mighty blow Papa struck the man where his head should have been. A hollow thud was all he heard. Papa started to swing again, but looked closer. The man turned out to be a burnt tree stump that was about 6 feet tall. Papa laughed to himself and started home.

Papa was nearing home and feeling safer. However, he still had to go by the old home place where his Uncle Howard Cummings had been ac-

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North Georgia Farm Trail

Agritourism continues to thrive in Blairsville-Union County and across North Georgia. Our Chamber of Commerce is thrilled to be part of the promotion

Blairsville - Union County Chamber

Cindy Williams



of so many tremendous assets in Union County. For those who are unfamiliar, agritourism is a beautiful blend of Georgia's top two revenue generating industries - agriculture and tourism. Some examples of agritourism businesses include farmers markets, u-pick farms and orchards, vineyards & wineries, pumpkin patches, corn mazes, and farm-to-table restaurants.

In the summer of 2013, the Chambers of Commerce in Gilmer, Fannin, Union, and Towns counties unveiled the first edition of the North Georgia Farm Trail guide. This pocket guide quickly became a popular reference for all agritourism destinations in the four county area along Georgia Highway 515. Union County listings included places like the Union County Farmers Market, Georgia Mountain Research & Education Center, Southern Tree Plantation, Logan Turnpike Mill, Sunrise Grocery, The Sawmill Place, wineries, horseback riding stables, alpaca farms, and roadside markets. In 2014, we introduced the second edition of the Farm Trail guide, which added sites in Pickens County as well as handmade arts and crafts retail locations.

I am proud to announce that the third edition of the North Georgia Farm Trail pocket guide

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Impossible missions

We were going to the movies on Monday night. Friends suggested we meet at the Blairsville Cinema at 6:30 for a 7 p.m. showing. I pooh-poohed that, exclaiming that it was Monday night in Blairsville, and that we weren't

Farmers Market Moment

JorAnne Leone



likely to have difficulty securing a good seat. Under my breath I mentioned that we'd probably be in there, alone in the dark. Well, I ate my words, along with my delicious, fresh popped corn that night. The theater was at least filled to 80 percent capacity with most of the audience Baby Boomers or older.

We were there to see *Mission Impossible-Rogue Nation*. I didn't choose the movie, but I wasn't going to fight it. I figured I'd get a nap - but, oh contraire. For the next two hours and 11 minutes, I did anything but catch up on my much-needed rest. As action-thriller movies go, this one was exceptional. It was camp where it should have been, not too predictable, impeccably directed, well scripted and the cast played it like a great ensemble, the way it has to be in order to perform the impossible feats of a spy. It was tense, compelling and very entertaining.

So, here's the interesting feeling I had when I left the theater that evening. The special effects were not so special. The stunts, the high tech gadgetry, the intelligence the team uses to thwart their nemesis, it was all believable. In fact, it was actually conceivable. And that's really why I'm feeling compelled to write this, today.

I remember reading *1984* in 1970. Lewis Beale, of CNN recently noted that we are living in the predictions of George Orwell's science fiction, written in 1949. "It appears that the police now have a device that can read license plates and check if a car is unregistered, uninsured or stolen. We already know that the National Security Agency can dip into your Facebook page and Google searches. And it seems that almost every store we go into these days wants your home phone number and ZIP code as part of any transaction."

He continues with this quip, "So when Ed-

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