

*Whatever
Things Are
TRUE...*

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*Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true,
whosoever things are honest,
whosoever things are just,
whosoever things are pure,
whosoever things are lovely,
whosoever things are of good report;
If there be any virtue,
and if there be any praise,
think on these things.*

Philippians 4:8

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*This book is dedicated to Mother,
who taught me what love means,
prayed for me, and let her light shine
through all the ups and downs of life.*

Foreword

My wife, Susan, is a person of ideas. Her mind often races ahead of mine. When she gets interested in something, she gathers all the information she can find, organizes it, and lastly writes it down.

I've seen her do this several times over the years. She shares what she learns with me and I hear her thoughts as they develop. She doesn't think she's a scholar, but I do. I learn a lot of interesting stuff just being around her, though I don't have her love for research (unless it's on airplanes or snowmobiles).

I'm now 65 years old. That seems impossible. I'm at the age when friends are beginning to pass on. I'm "over the hill" or at least at the top of the hill. I can see the end from here. Years go by fast now. It hardly seems like a year begins before it's Christmas again!

Our dog, Goldie, is 14. Just a few years ago he was a puppy, tearing up everything he could find. Now he can't hear. He can't see too well either. Sometimes it's hard to get him up for a walk. Instead of him dragging us on the leash, we drag him. His life is on fast forward. I look at him and see my future.

I'm afraid that in this world I'll never have the time to spend with my friends and family that I wish I could. I've already thought up more plans and adventures than I could fit into the next 30 years, even if I did stay strong and healthy that long. Everyone is so busy with so many directions to go at one time. I buy stuff, thinking that I'll have a use for it in the future, but the future is shrinking fast. For the most part, new stuff is just more I have to maintain.

Not that we've stopped having adventures, or that I've only recently realized life is short and precious. Our lifestyle has always made us aware of our mortality. In flying airplanes, a lot of things can go wrong in a hurry! I've been in the clouds a few times and also good and lost. I've learned to depend on instruments then, not on what feels or seems right to me. Sometimes what saves us comes from outside ourselves.

A 26-year-old acquaintance died this last year only a week after he got sick. He thought he had the flu, but it was leukemia. My mom and dad died within six weeks of each other two years ago. We've seen tragedy overtake a lot of people that we care about, and there will be more in the future.

So I'm glad Susan wrote this book. She's written several books, but this one may be her *opus maximus*. I have sometimes discouraged her from talking to friends about this subject because I know it's controversial and I don't like to offend. A book may be the right thing. If it makes a difference for even one person, it was surely worthwhile.

If there's a heaven, and I'm now confident there is, I want everybody I like to be there. I want *you* to be there. If there is a heaven, then the approach of the end of life here on earth has a silver lining. *Oh grave, where is thy victory? Oh death, where is thy sting?* (1 Corinthians 15:55)

Susan and I already live in heaven, here in Alaska. At least *we* think it's heaven. If life ends forever at death, I wouldn't have regrets. But I don't think it will. I don't think heaven is just wishful thinking, and I don't think it's automatic for everyone. It's not the default. It's a free gift, but if we don't recognize and accept it, it doesn't become ours.

Now, if you disagree, it's OK. But please hear Susan out. Friends can agree to disagree. Nobody knows the entire truth.

The older I get, the more I appreciate these words:

All men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of the Lord stands forever.

—1 Peter 1:24-25

Why This Book?

Have you ever been absolutely *certain* you were on the right road, only to discover that you were wrong? It happened to Dennis and me in the fall of 2003. We had been driving from Minneapolis to Washington D.C. on I-70. In Frederick, Maryland, we exited to find a motel. The one we'd chosen had no vacancy so we continued on down the street, eventually stopping at Tourist Information, where we lined up accommodation at EconoLodge. Our motel was right next to I-70, so the next morning we got back on the freeway and continued happily on our way.

An hour later, doubt crept into my mind. We should have reached the beltway, I thought. But I quieted the doubts and pushed them from my mind. Surely it was just ahead. More time passed. We talked and enjoyed the scenery. Gradually, the doubts resurfaced. The road signs said nothing about Washington, D.C. Maybe I should check the map. I couldn't imagine that *we'd* made a mistake. Someone had obviously neglected to put up the signs!

The map confirmed my doubts and fears. The mistake was ours (*mine* to be exact—I'm supposed to navigate). At Frederick, I-270 turns south to Washington, D.C. and I-70 continues east to Baltimore. In our wanderings through Frederick, we'd missed the turnoff and the signs that would have put us on the right road.

Now we were late. My cousin Diane was leaving for Switzerland and if we didn't get to her place on time, we'd miss seeing her! Part of me longed for the peace of mind I'd had

when we *thought* we were on the right road. It felt better than the stress we were under *now*, with no time to backtrack and no knowledge of side roads that could shortcut the backtrack. On the other hand, if we'd happily continued on toward Baltimore, we'd have had no chance at all of getting to Diane's on time.

We did make it, by the way, and had a wonderful lunch out with her before she left. But it wasn't a morning I'd like to repeat.

What about the opposite situation? What if you suspect or fear someone else is on a wrong road? They're happy and content, enjoying the scenery. You know that they'll likely be *less* happy and content, at least in the short run, if you say anything. They might even be angry, and that anger might be directed at *you*. Besides, there's at least some chance you're wrong. What is the right and loving thing to do in that situation?

I met a woman last spring in Colorado who confided that she was experiencing difficulties in her marriage and feared for her future. She now knew she was on a wrong road. Perhaps she had been blinded by love before the wedding. She had not perceived certain characteristics and tendencies in her husband when there had been time to choose another direction.

She said that what hurt her the most in the whole situation was the fact that her friends told her they'd seen this coming from the beginning. "Why didn't they say something?" she cried. "They saw this coming! I didn't have a clue. If they're really my friends, they should have said something in time for me to make a different decision!"

"Do you honestly think you'd have listened or done anything differently?" I asked. "I don't know," she replied. I was in love. I might have married him anyway. But at least I wouldn't have been totally in the dark. I wouldn't have been blindsided. They're supposed to be my *friends*. They should have tried to tell me, even if I *didn't* listen. I feel more betrayed by them than by my husband. How can they claim to be my

friends when they didn't care enough to even try to talk to me about something this important?"

I knew right then that I had to write this book. I understand her friends' reluctance. On a small scale, we all know how uncomfortable it is to tell someone their fly is open or there's food in their teeth. They're perfectly happy not knowing, and your mentioning the problem certainly won't make them feel better, at least not immediately. But when *I'm* the person with my fly open or food in my teeth, I'd rather hear it from a friend than discover it myself hours later!

Several years ago, I was asked by a friend's supervisor to speak with her about something which, unchanged, could have led to her disgrace and possibly even dismissal. It was a heavy and unwelcome responsibility. I procrastinated as long as I could. As much as I dreaded the talk, I was grateful for the sake of my friend that the supervisor had given me an opportunity to handle things on the quiet. When I'd made every excuse for delay I could think of, I finally called, set up a time to meet, and broached the subject. She was devastated, as I'd expected and feared. She wondered if she should resign. I encouraged her to stay on and make some changes. Few people were aware of the problem, and it would likely evaporate into nothing if she took precautions. That's exactly what happened. The long-term gain was worth the short-term pain, for her *and* for me.

Would a refusal to talk with her have been polite consideration for her feelings, or cowardice? What *is* the loving and right thing to do in a situation like that? The answer was clear to me. I couldn't have lived with myself if I'd kept silent and let her continue down a road I knew led someplace she didn't want to go.

Several years ago, a woman I know was approached by a stranger who had been sitting behind her in an auditorium. He told her that a black spot on her skin might be serious and she should have her doctor look at it. I can't imagine that was welcome news, but she did get it checked and it was melanoma, a deadly skin cancer. Thanks to the warning, it was caught in

time and removed with no complications. She is in good health today and perhaps has him to thank for her life.

The Bible in Ezekiel 3 gives an example of a watchman on the wall. If a watchman sees danger and doesn't sound an alarm, he is to be held personally responsible for the lives and injuries of anyone harmed by his negligence. It is as though he had personally killed and injured the people he was assigned to guard.

If a watchman sounds an alarm, on the other hand, and people refuse to heed it, the same horrible things may happen, but the responsibility for it will not be his.

What if a watchman *thinks* he sees approaching danger, but is not 100% sure? What if he's only 50% sure? What if he's 90% sure? At what point does the risk of allowing danger to approach too closely outweigh the risk of disturbing people unnecessarily?

You'd probably agree that an alarm shouldn't be sounded for every shifting shadow. A good watchman won't allow his imagination to run away with him. When he suspects danger, he should heighten his vigilance and alert other watchmen. An alarm should be sounded only when he is personally convinced that danger is real, even if further investigation proves there is an innocent explanation for what he saw in the dark of the night.

When a group of friends camps in the wilderness, everyone is a watchman. Anyone who suspects danger is responsible for alerting the others so that they can investigate and confirm whether the danger is real. It would be unwise for fellow campers to become angry with the person who wakes them, then turn over to go back to sleep without investigating. If the danger turns out to be *real*, they will regret judging the situation prematurely. Of course, not even the watchman *wants* the danger to be real, even if it would vindicate him. It's not about what we want; it's about what is true.

I realize that some of you might be upset with me for even mentioning the subject of this book. It's politically incorrect. I have waited and procrastinated. I have made every excuse I can

think of to delay or avoid it. It's uncomfortable, especially because I am pretty sure *I* would have responded with hostility if a friend had approached me some years back.

On the other hand, I've done a lot of homework. I was skeptical, very skeptical. I've investigated and confirmed this information to the best of my ability, over a period of more than 15 years. I can't imagine you would be interested in reading all the books I've read (on both sides of the question) or spending all the time I've spent researching this. But I honestly think that if you did, you'd arrive at the same conclusion. I am personally convinced beyond a reasonable doubt that what I'm going to share with you is critical to your long-term happiness, more important, in fact, than anything else. I would be negligent if I remained silent. If I care about you, I am obligated to try. Writing is the "softest" way I have been able to think of to "talk" with you about this subject. It leaves you free to put the book down, scream, or even rip it up without offending me or risking our friendship. Besides, I'm a writer. I communicate better this way.

You are not obligated to listen. If you listen, you're not obligated to care. And you're *certainly* not obligated to agree. You don't have to say "thank you" or respond in any way. You can, in fact, toss this into the trash unread and I will still have achieved my objective. I will have tried. My conscience will be clear. We can continue our friendship without a ripple. My regard for you does not rest on you agreeing with me, and I trust the reverse is also true.

At a minimum, I hope you will better understand how Dennis and I came to where we are. You might think us completely wrong, but perhaps after reading this, you won't think us completely crazy.

Optimally, you will discover that there is more to the Bible and the question of God than you thought. If I can encourage even one person to take a fresh look, this effort will be worthwhile. If you wish, we can begin a conversation. I've included here only a small sample of what I've learned. I'd love

to share more with you. Questions are welcome, even “hostile” questions as long as they aren’t personal. I can recommend books, and even lend or give some books to you if you will read them. If you think *I’m* on the wrong track, I understand. Recommend books for me to read if you think my research has been narrow or unbalanced.

If you investigate and conclude I’m mistaken, that’s fine. Just investigate, please. Don’t assume that you’re on the right road or that all roads lead to a place you really want to go.

Some food for thought from America’s founding fathers:

Let us with caution indulge the supposition that morality can be maintained without religion. —George Washington

Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other. —John Adams

If we are not governed by God, then we will be ruled by tyrants. —William Penn

I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just, and that His justice cannot sleep forever. —Thomas Jefferson

I have carefully examined the evidences of the Christian religion, and if I was sitting as a juror upon its authenticity I would unhesitatingly give my verdict in its favor. I can prove its truth as clearly as any proposition ever submitted to the mind of man. —Alexander Hamilton

It cannot be emphasized too clearly and too often that this nation was founded, not by religionists, but by Christians; not on religion, but on the gospel of Jesus Christ. For this very reason, peoples of other faiths have been afforded asylum, prosperity, and freedom of worship here. —Patrick Henry

Justice

Any of you who know me know I love investigation, research and reading! When I become interested in a subject, I read everything I can find about it, on all sides of the issue. I gather pieces of the puzzle. When I reach a point of diminishing returns and find myself encountering the same facts and arguments again and again, I try to fit what I’ve learned into a cohesive picture, keeping in mind that facts may be available that I haven’t located, and that new facts may be uncovered in the future. In other words, I put the puzzle together, recognizing that I don’t have every piece.

I don’t expect you to have the same passion for investigation that I do. I don’t claim to be an authority or to be smarter than anyone else. I have simply read a lot in certain areas. I wish I’d known some of the things I’m including in this book earlier in life. I also realize that I may well have refused to listen earlier in life. I have tried to imagine what might have piqued my interest and include it for your consideration, while excluding a lot else. My goal is to keep this book relatively *short*.

For about 15 years, I’ve investigated the claims of the Bible. For the past 4-5 years, I’ve pursued a second line of investigation, into the workings of the American justice system. The two are more closely related than I would have suspected!

I remember the first time I saw a *60 Minutes* show about convicted felons being released on the basis of DNA testing that proved beyond doubt that they had not committed the crime.

It was a shock! I knew there were guilty people walking the streets, but I would never have guessed that innocent people

could end up in prison, let alone on Death Row! At least not in America! I couldn't forget that show. It bothered me. I knew that if I'd been on the juries that convicted those men, I'd likely have voted to convict. I'd have been deceived. I'd have been *wrong!*

Before that show I was completely confident that unless I committed a crime, I would never be accused of doing so. Now, I know better. It can happen to anyone. It wasn't a welcome realization.

Things sometimes look a lot different from a distance than they do upon close examination.

How do innocent people end up convicted of heinous crimes? Often it's with the best of intentions on everyone's

When there's a preconceived notion, we build facts into it, to support the notion.

—Barry Scheck
From "Actual Innocence"

part. Something horrible happens to an innocent victim. The media covers it. The public is in shock, perhaps afraid for themselves and their children. The police very much want to

find the bad guy. They begin to investigate and find a suspect. They conclude that it's likely he's the bad guy they want. They inform the media. They begin to build a case.

Unintentionally, without even being conscious of it, they prejudge and ignore leads and clues that don't fit their theory. If something doesn't point to their suspect, it isn't relevant.

Looking at botched cases and wrongful convictions in *retrospect* often reveals that the answer was in front of investigators all the time, but they didn't see it.

They didn't *want* to see it. They didn't intentionally hide evidence or minimize clues. They honestly believed they had the right

The strong presumption that verdicts are correct has been weakened.

Committee on the Future of DNA Evidence

suspect, and their belief obscured the truth. They were *sure* at the time that they were right.

It isn't easy to be objective. Strong emotions destroy objectivity. Many wrongful convictions are for heinous crimes. Jurors, emotionally inflamed by the horror of the crime, are unable to objectively and dispassionately weigh the hard evidence connecting a particular defendant to the crime.

With God as my witness, I have been falsely accused of these crimes. I am innocent. I just pray in the name of Jesus Christ that truth will be brought out.

It is difficult to investigate or consider anything "religious"

—Calvin Johnson
(life sentence; later proved innocent)

unemotionally. Few people can hear the words "sin" or "Jesus" without recoiling. To make a right decision, jurors or investigators *must* set emotion aside temporarily and *force* themselves to listen to both sides as objectively as they possibly can. Otherwise, it may be impossible to discern truth. The same goes for any consideration of God or religion.

Ironically, the fact that people naturally react so vehemently against anything concerning Jesus or the Bible is evidence in its favor. The Bible predicts and anticipates that!

Objectivity is especially important if there is potentially a great deal at stake. If the Bible claims are not true, nothing is at stake. If they *are* true, a great deal may be at stake for you personally.

I will assume you are aware of arguments against Christianity and the Bible. To get a balanced view, it's also necessary to consider arguments for the defense. Nearly any defendant would be convicted if jurors listened only to the prosecution!

This book will lay out a few of what I consider the best arguments "for the defense." They aren't by any means all of the arguments, but like I said before, I want to keep this book *short*.

Discerning Truth

Never in history have so many alternative philosophies and truth claims competed for people's attention as in America today. Add to that the frantic pace of life and the daily pressures that crowd out time for thought and reflection, and many people give up on the possibility of finding truth and settle for what "works for them." They choose from a smorgasbord of truth claims what is most to their liking.

It is my hope that you will be willing to take a deep breath and simply *consider*. What if the Bible claims are true? We each view the world through glasses colored by our basic assumptions, but generally we accept those assumptions on authority, without questioning. It is worthwhile to examine basic assumptions. Mine have changed over time. They may change again, although I don't anticipate that.

Can "your truth" be different than "my truth"?

"Truth is whatever you want to believe." —Phil Donahue

"It is not possible to judge another's truth." —Shirley MacLaine

"There is no one truth, nor two; there are often several truths."

—Peter Jennings

Are the preceding statements *true*? Many Americans would say so. One survey found that 72% of Americans aged 18-25 believe there is no such thing as absolute truth.¹ If you concur, please read at least *this* chapter with as open a mind as possible.

What is truth? Webster says it is what corresponds to the body of real things, events and facts. It is accurate, not false or

deceptive. Aristotle wrote, "It is by the facts of the case, by their being or not being so, that a statement is called true or false." If reality exists independently of our minds, truth can be defined as the agreement of thought with reality.

But *does* reality exist outside your mind? *Are* there objective facts? As obvious as it may seem to many of us, it is exactly what pantheism denies. Pantheism is the belief that *everything* is God, an idea that is at the foundation of eastern, New Age, and pagan religions. Some pantheists do not believe an objective, material universe exists. What we *perceive* as a material world, they would say, is a construct of our minds, like a dream, and can be changed by changing our minds.

To conclude that objective truth exists, you must agree that a real world exists, an objective world that is independent of your thoughts about it. There is no way I know of to prove that beyond doubt.

If all "truth" is relative, it would follow that lies and deception are impossible. A lie is by definition not true. If something is *not* true, something else *is* true. If you agree that lies are possible, you must agree that truth exists.

No one can consistently hold to a position that truth is relative rather than absolute. People who say that all truth is relative are making an absolute (not a relative) statement. They have already broken their own rules. Someone who claims opposites can both be true does not really believe the opposite of *that* statement is true!

If truth exists at all, it is absolute. It is narrow, excluding everything to the contrary. Falsehood, by contrast, "has a hundred thousand shapes and a limitless field."²

While truth itself is absolute and objective, however, our human ability to perceive and understand it is anything but absolute. If we know in advance that a search for truth might be confusing or fruitless, are we justified in abandoning the attempt altogether?

Think of the implications if the justice system accepted that line of reasoning. Unless the authorities were sure in advance

that they could prove to 100% certainty, with little or no investigation, that a certain suspect committed a certain crime, they just wouldn't bother. Criminals wouldn't be subject to arrest unless a crime was clearly videotaped. No one would consider that acceptable! We expect the authorities to solve as many crimes as they can, and we don't require 100% certainty.

Some have compared "man's search for God" to the mouse's search for a cat. Most of us are content with a cursory search because we really don't *want* to know truth. There's an old Yiddish saying that atheists can't find God for the same reason a thief can't find a policeman.

We do not need to know everything in order to know something. We don't know in advance what an investigation might reveal. And we don't have to believe in God before investigating the evidence.

That's getting the whole process backwards and will prejudice the results from the start! A superficial investigation will not do. Apparent "facts" must be examined closely and questioned.

God either exists or He does not. There is no third option. What we want to believe has nothing to do with it. Not all Christians believe the Bible because they *want* it to be true, any more than all jurors *want* a defendant to be guilty (or innocent)! In both cases, people believe something is true, perhaps reluctantly, because of the evidence. Witness C.S. Lewis' remarks about his conversion to theism (belief in God):

Remember, I had always wanted, above all things, not to be 'interfered with.' I had wanted (mad wish) 'to call my soul my own.' You must picture me alone in that room in Magdalen, night after night, feeling, whenever my mind lifted even for a second from my work, the steady, unrelenting approach of Him* whom I so earnestly desired not to meet. That which I greatly feared had at last come

*A little philosophy
inclineth man's mind to
atheism, but depth in
philosophy bringeth men's
minds about to religion.*

—Sir Francis Bacon

upon me. In the Trinity Term of 1929 I gave in, and admitted that God was God, and knelt and prayed: perhaps, that night, the most dejected and reluctant convert in all England. The Prodigal Son at least walked home on his own feet. But who can duly adore that Love which will open the high gates to a prodigal who is brought in kicking, struggling, resentful, and darting his eyes in every direction for a chance of escape?³

Socrates encouraged men to "follow the argument, wherever it led." It takes courage to consider evidence and truth that may not be welcome, to follow an argument even when we don't like where it seems to be leading.

Sometimes we know there *is* a truth, although we can't know what it is. Recently the search for a missing floatplane in southeast Alaska was called off. Five people were aboard the plane. We can only speculate about what might have happened. It is possible that the plane was hijacked and all the people are alive in a terrorist hideout, but it is unlikely. It is likely that the plane went down in the water and sank, leaving no trace. Even in that case, one or more people might have been able to swim to shore, but the odds of finding someone alive were too small to warrant the expense of continuing the search.

The important decision to end the search had to be made with incomplete evidence. Someday, perhaps, wreckage or other evidence will be found. Until then, your belief and my belief about what happened can differ. We can agree to disagree, knowing that we can't both be right. For now, we proceed as though the plane and the people went down into the sea and are lost.

* I realize that you may object to God being called "Him." God is spirit, not a sexual being. There are reasons, however, that God is called "Him". Marriage is a picture of the relationship He wants with people. The Church, consisting of both men and women, is called the Bride of Christ. Marriage means two becoming one in a relationship of love and respect (Ephesians 5:21-33). *People* are the beloved of the Creator. Even among animals, females are sought by males and can refuse their advances. We are sought by God and can refuse His advances.

Belief v. Truth

When it comes to questions of God, people tend to focus on faith or belief rather than truth. It makes no sense to believe something that is not true. You are, of course, free to choose any belief you wish, but not the consequences of that belief. You could believe with all your heart that you can fly, but that doesn't make it true. It would not be a good idea to jump out of a 10-story window, no matter how sincerely you believed you could fly!

If you have ever been on a jury, you were obligated to listen to evidence and arguments on both sides. You were asked to suspend judgment until you had heard all the evidence, and to deliberate with other people before reaching a verdict. Sometimes deliberation clarifies truth and changes people's minds. If you have not seen the movie *Twelve Angry Men*, you should watch it sometime! It's an excellent illustration.

Jurors know that someone is probably lying to them, either the defense, or more often than we might like to think, the prosecution and police. Jurors make judgments about who is telling the truth and who is either lying or relating what he *thinks* is true but actually is not. If the evidence supporting the prosecution's theory of the crime does not convince jurors beyond a reasonable doubt, they are supposed to acquit, at least in America.

Jurors may disagree with one another, even after much deliberation. Sometimes people refuse to consider evidence and rely on their feelings. Sometimes one or more people will not admit that their first impressions might be wrong or incomplete.

Sometimes a juror will relinquish personal responsibility and vote the way another juror votes, probably someone they like and respect. That might result in a correct verdict, if the other person's judgment is sound. Most of you will agree that the more evidence available to be considered, the better the cross-examination, and the more rational and impartial jurors remain, the more likely a jury is to reach a true and correct verdict. Justice is never served if a verdict is wrong.

What jurors believe or want to believe has nothing to do with the truth. Take the O.J. Simpson trial. Some people believed from the beginning that he was innocent, others that he was guilty. Only one of the two options can be true. You and I can be tolerant of each other's beliefs on this matter because his guilt or innocence doesn't affect us personally. But though our opinions may differ, we should be able to agree that we can't both be right! He is either guilty, or he is not. He is not both.

If jurors don't care what is true, or don't think truth matters, they are likely to either acquit someone who is guilty or convict someone who is innocent. The same thing happens if they refuse to consider the evidence before acquitting with the excuse that since they can't know for *sure*, why waste time deliberating?

An excellent illustration of the difference between belief and truth is a story released by the Associated Press on February 7, 2004. Defendant Darryl Hunt had been convicted twice for the murder of a young woman in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. He had served twenty years of a life sentence when DNA tests cleared him and implicated another man, who then confessed. At a judicial hearing, Hunt said to the woman's parents, "I feel the pain you've been through.... I've lived with it every day." But they vehemently objected when the court vacated Hunt's conviction because they still *believed* Hunt had some role in their daughter's murder.

Their belief and the truth do not line up. My heart goes out to them, and I respect their right to believe whatever they choose, for whatever reasons. I would not, however, advocate

leaving Mr. Hunt in prison to serve out a life sentence just because they *believe* he is guilty!

It has been said that faith is what bridges the gap from where the evidence leaves off to where the evidence is pointing. If you don't even consider the evidence, any leap of faith will be a leap in the dark. You might be lucky and land on solid ground. You might not.

Dogma is a positive or emphatic assertion of *opinion* put forth as authoritative without adequate grounds. Dogmatism is not confined to religion. Science itself, while its goal is to prove facts conclusively, rests on a dogmatic assumption that nothing supernatural exists.

Materialism (the belief that nothing exists other than matter and the physical universe) is not a proven fact. It is a dogmatic assumption. Yet according to Professor William Provine: "Let me summarize my views on what modern evolutionary biology tells us loud and clear.... There are no gods, no purposes, no goal-directed forces of any kind. There is no life after death.... There is no foundation for ethics, no ultimate meaning to life, and no free will for humans."⁴

Have these things actually been *proved* or are they beliefs that rest on a dogmatic assumption?

Consider for yourself. Do you have free will? Can you choose between options? Can your children choose whether or not to obey you?

If science has indeed *proved* that free will does not exist, why do we still send people to prison with the assumption that they could have *chosen* not to commit the crime? We either have free will or we do not. Both things cannot be simultaneously true.

Does Belief Matter?

Sometimes it matters what we believe and sometimes it does not. For example, you may believe that O.J. Simpson is guilty of murder, and you might even be right, but what you believe doesn't matter. It mattered what the jurors believed, but what *you* believe is of no consequence.

You may believe that the U.S. was wrong to invade Iraq. Your belief doesn't matter in that case, because you weren't responsible for making the decision. Your belief may cause you to vote a certain way, and if enough people share your belief, it might matter. But in general, what you believe doesn't matter, although you might wish it did.

If you ever sit on a jury, what you believe will matter to the defendant. If you believe certain witnesses lied, even though it cannot be proven, you will not give weight to their testimony, even if they were telling the truth.

If you believe the prosecutor is always on the side of justice, you may discount the importance of evidence that indicates the possible innocence of the defendant. People have been convicted even when they had well-substantiated alibis, corroborated by numerous people with no motivation to lie. The jurors in those cases *believed* that the defendant was guilty, and no facts could convince them otherwise. Even then, what they believed did not matter *to them*. It only mattered to the defendant. The jurors went home and continued their lives.

On February 29, 2004, there was an article in the newspaper about Argentina. The country owes nearly \$88 billion to creditors in the U.S., Europe and Japan. It defaulted on its loans

in December 2001, and the current president, Nestor Kirchner, defiantly says he doesn't plan to pay them back. Posters in Buenos Aires proclaim: "To whom are we indebted?" and "What debt?"

The Argentine president and his followers don't *believe* their debt matters. They unilaterally canceled it. But can they declare themselves free, just like that, without consulting their creditors? They may not *believe* they owe anything, but don't the creditors have a say in the matter, too?

God either exists, or He doesn't. If He doesn't, what we believe does not matter. If He does, it might matter to Him. If He had anything to do with the Bible, He says we each owe Him a debt, regardless of what we might believe. We can say, "What debt?" like the Argentine government. Or we can try to ascertain if there's any truth to that statement, and, if so, determine what can be done.

The bad news of the Bible is that we owe a debt. The good news is that provision has been made to pay it completely, for those who are willing to acknowledge the debt and accept the provision.

In the case of God, there might be a lot at stake for you individually. Your decision might affect you personally, and possibly for a very, very long time. Reaching the right "verdict" is much more important than it would be in any criminal case.

What does God want us to believe, assuming there is a God? The truth. The Bible claims to relay truth. That claim may be false. We shouldn't assume it's false, however.

Can anyone be sure they know the truth? Not beyond all doubt. But the more evidence we consider and the more impartial we can discipline ourselves to be, the more likely it is that we will reach a correct verdict. Faith can be the last step, the leap from where the evidence leaves off to where the evidence is pointing.

Faith is of much less importance than the object of faith. A tentative faith in something true is of much more value than a strong faith in something untrue. For example, I might believe

that the ice on a frozen lake will hold my weight, or I might not believe it before making careful measurements. In either case, what saves me from danger is the strength of the ice, not the strength of the belief.

C.S. Lewis wrote that faith is the art of holding on to things your reason has once accepted, in spite of your changing moods. Faith is reason with assent. It is supported by reason but goes beyond it. Faith has been called "a resting of the soul in a sufficiency of evidence." There is no need for faith once something has been proved beyond doubt.

The Bible claims to be truth. Jesus claimed to be the truth. Those claims need to be investigated.

Are the basic claims of the Bible true? Can it be trusted as authoritative? Does it contain some truth laced with untruth? Is most or all of it lies, with a little truth thrown in? The question is not whether we like what it has to say, but whether it is true!

A comfortable lie can seem preferable to a hard truth, but truth sets us free. Even when it is not to our liking, truth frees. We make better decisions in light of truth.

Overview of the Arguments

In a trial, both attorneys outline their case prior to introducing evidence, in order to give the jury an overview of what they think the evidence will prove. Arguments are not evidence. In order to keep this book short, I will concentrate on defense, not prosecution. I will assume you are already familiar with arguments against Christianity.

Before drawing any conclusions about God or spiritual truth, the following questions must be answered:

1. Does God exist?
2. If so, is the Bible God's authorized message to us?

A "yes" answer to the first question means you are a theist (a believer in God). A "yes" answer to the second question may lead to Christianity. A person can be a theist without being a Christian. Albert Einstein fit into that category, as do many scientists. Einstein wrote:

The harmony of nature's law...reveals an intelligence of such superiority that, compared with it, all the systematic thinking and acting of human beings is an utterly insignificant reflection.⁵

Einstein believed in God, but did not conclude that the Bible is God's message. He didn't like what it had to say. He was unable to get his honest questions about it answered. I don't know how much investigation he did before rejecting the Bible, or if emotions influenced his decision.

It is my hope that everyone who reads this book will be encouraged to do whatever it takes to make a clear, conscious and informed decision, whatever it may be.

The following conclusions can be reached without reference to a Bible or holy book of any kind:

1. God exists.
2. We are not God.
3. Things are not "right."

The next three statements cannot be ascertained entirely apart from special revelation (the Bible or other communication from God), so it is important to establish which special revelations or holy books, if any, are authoritative before accepting what they say.

4. The reason things are not "right" is human rebellion, otherwise known as "sin."
5. A solution is available.
6. We are free to accept or reject the available solution.

I'll now lay out evidence and arguments to support each of these statements.

Does God Exist?

You may doubt the existence of God, but it is difficult to doubt your own existence or the existence of a material universe. Why does anything at all exist?

Until the 20th century, there was no hard evidence to disprove the idea that the universe and life had existed eternally. Eastern religions (Hindu, Buddhist, etc.) are based on that assertion, and an eternal universe is the preferred view of atheists, as well. If there is no beginning, no Creator or Beginner is necessary. Sir Thomas Eddington, one of the first scientists to understand the implications of Einstein's Theory, wrote, "Philosophically, the notion of a beginning of the present order of nature is repugnant.... I should like to find a genuine loophole."⁶ Anything that begins requires a beginner, something or someone that existed before and outside it.

Einstein's second law of thermodynamics, proposed in 1915, states that things naturally become less ordered over time. In plain language, the universe is running down. Things were more orderly in the past and will be less orderly in the future. C.S. Lewis wrote: "If a Nature which disintegrates order were the whole of reality, where would she find any order to disintegrate?"⁷

The "red shift" discovered by Edwin Hubble in 1929 indicated that the universe is even now expanding in all directions at a tremendous rate of speed. Rewind the process and there must be a beginning.

About 1930, the Big Bang theory was proposed and named by its detractors, who laughed in derision at the preposterous

idea that something could pop out of nothing for no apparent reason and without cause. But scientists, to their credit, generally follow evidence, even when it leads where they don't particularly want to go. The discovery in 1965 of uniform cosmic background radiation, predicted by the Big Bang theory, was a final blow to the notion of an eternal universe. The last possible hope, an oscillating universe that expands, contracts, and expands again forever, cannot be supported by evidence.

No less an intellect than Cambridge physicist Steven Hawking has said,

The odds against a universe like ours emerging out of something like the Big Bang are enormous. . . . I think there are clearly religious implications wherever you start to discuss the origins of the universe. There must be religious overtones. But I think most scientists prefer to shy away from the religious side of it.⁸

The universe began. It is now recognized as a fact. It is not a welcome fact for anyone committed to atheism or pantheism (the idea that all is God and God is all). There is a scientific law: for every effect, there must be a cause. If nature had a beginning, it must have a Beginner.

Not only did the universe begin, life began. Until the 1880s, most people believed that life was generated spontaneously. If a dead body is left out for a while, living things crawl out of it. One living thing that crawled out of dead things was the scarab beetle. The ancient Egyptians worshipped it as a symbol of life coming from death.

Louis Pasteur decisively disproved the theory of spontaneous generation in the mid-1880s. It is a proven law of science that life comes only from life.

A little science estranges men from God. Much science leads them back to Him.

—Louis Pasteur

Life does not arise from non-life at the present time. But could things have been different in the past? It is not possible to know, scientifically. Although experiments have demonstrated

that many building blocks of life can spontaneously form in a carefully controlled environment, it is a long way from building blocks to a building. If intelligence is involved, that is exactly where it would be involved, in the organization of the building blocks.

A single cell is more complex in its organization and function than the city of New York or than any machine built by man. One scientist calculated that if we were to construct a model of a typical cell atom by atom at one atom per second, it would take some 10 million years to complete.⁹ Cells are not “simple.”

Francis Crick, a biochemist who won a Nobel Prize for constructing the first model of the DNA double helix, wrote:

An honest man, armed with the knowledge available to us now, could only state that in some sense, the origin of life appears at the moment to be almost a miracle, so many are the conditions which would have had to have been satisfied to get it going.¹⁰

Crick turned to the theory of panspermia, which suggests that life originated on earth as an “infection” of bacteria from outside our solar system. But this only pushes the problem to another unknown place in space. It doesn’t solve the difficulty.

Nor do long periods of time solve the problem or account for the existence of order. If an airplane dropped red, white and blue blocks onto a field, we would not expect them to naturally form an American flag on a field below! Taking the airplane to a very much higher altitude to allow more time for the blocks to self-organize would not increase the chances of getting a flag, or any other orderly design!

George Wald, a biologist who won a Nobel Prize in physiology for his work with vitamin A and night vision, said candidly:

When it comes to the origin of life on this earth, there are only two possibilities: creation and spontaneous generation (evolution). Spontaneous generation was disproved 100 years ago, but that leads only to one other conclusion: that of supernatural creation. We cannot accept that on

philosophical grounds: therefore, we choose to believe the impossible, that life arose spontaneously by chance.¹¹

We choose to believe the impossible. Ultimately, we all choose what we believe. We are free to choose the impossible. Our beliefs, however, do not determine what is true.

Sir Fred Hoyle, a world-renowned astronomer, calculated that the information content of the higher forms of life is represented by the number $10^{40,000}$. See page 34 to get an idea of that number. In nature, odds of 1 in 50 are considered impossible to overcome. Hoyle reluctantly became a theist.

Even in the unlikely event that all the necessary chemicals and atoms, cell wall, proteins and components came together in one place, life would not necessarily result. Any recently dead body has all that infrastructure, but is not alive. Life is something more than a combination of chemicals.

Some scientists have continued to follow the evidence where it leads, even though it currently seems to be leading away from strict naturalism (the traditional scientific assumption that nature is all there is or ever has been).

The anthropic principle, proposed in 1973 by Cambridge scientist Brandon Carter, states that the seemingly arbitrary and unrelated constants in physics have one strange thing in common—they are precisely the values you need if you want to have a universe capable of producing life. Dr. Robert Jastrow, founder of NASA Space Studies, wrote,

The Universe was constructed within very narrow limits, in such a way that man could dwell in it. This result is called the anthropic principle. It is the most theistic result to come out of science, in my view.¹³

The universe, from the first millisecond, had to have been very precisely tuned. Paul Davies wrote in *God and the New Physics*:

Had the explosion (Big Bang) differed in strength at the outset by only one part in 10 to the 60th, the universe we now perceive would not exist. To give some meaning to these numbers, suppose you wanted to fire a bullet at a one-inch target on the other side of the universe, twenty billion

Your aim would have to be accurate to that same part in 10 to the 60th.¹⁴

Just for comparison, the “talking number” (number of words estimated to have been spoken by every human in all of history) is about 10¹⁶. The number of elementary particles in the universe (protons, electrons, neutrons, and all the others) is about 10⁸⁰.

Steven Hawking admits in *A Brief History of Time* that,

The initial rate of expansion [of the universe] would have had to be chosen very precisely for the rate of expansion still to be so close to the critical rate needed to avoid recollapse. ... It would be very difficult to explain why the universe should have begun in just this way, except as the act of a God who intended to create beings like us.¹⁵

He finds this idea “very hard to believe” but not because evidence disproves it.

The idea that there is no God, creator, or supernatural intelligence, is not the result of scientific inquiry. It is the starting place. According to Richard Lewontin, writing in *The New York Review* in 1997,

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 counter intuitive, no matter how mystifying to the uninitiated. Moreover, that materialism is an absolute, for we cannot allow a Divine Foot in the door.¹⁶

Materialism is a dogmatic assumption that nothing exists outside nature. Fundamentally, there is no real conflict between science and religion, as long as neither claims to possess the

whole of truth. No less an intellect than Wernher Von Braun, the renowned scientist who directed the development of the Saturn V rocket that took men to the moon, said,

I find it as difficult to understand a scientist who does not acknowledge the presence of a superior rationality behind the existence of the universe as it is to comprehend a theologian who would deny the advances of science.¹⁷

People are free to believe whatever they wish, whether supported by evidence or not. There are those who insist that the Holocaust never happened, or that man never landed on the moon. They contend that all supposed “evidence” for these historical events is a hoax. Nothing can convince them otherwise. But I submit that an objective person, free of prejudice and committed to truth, would conclude that a being of supernatural intelligence (generally called “God”) exists, beyond a reasonable doubt.

Atheist Robert Jastrow admits in *God and the Astronomers*:

That there are what I or anyone would call supernatural forces at work is now, I think, a scientifically proven fact.¹⁸

If God exists, miracles are *possible*, whether or not they are actual. The mere existence of the universe points to a miracle that took place sometime in the past. The existence of life points to another miracle. A Being who could create something out of nothing would be powerful enough to suspend natural laws if He so chose. A Being who created time would stand outside of and have power over time.

Miracles are singularities, not regularities. They are outside the realm of science, but not outside the realm of reality or history *if* God exists. They are unrepeated exceptions to natural law which leave natural law intact and therefore do not negate anything scientific.

C.S. Lewis wrote: “If there is no God, then we have no interest in the minimal religion or any other. We will not make a lie even to save civilization.”¹⁹ If there *is* a God, however, it might not be safe to ignore Him. There is no such thing as neutrality. Ignoring God is not neutrality but a form of

Remember that operations and origins are two very different things. If a primitive tribe discovered a generator running in the jungle, they might be able to take it apart and eventually figure out how it operated. They may even be able to conclude that someone must have designed it and put it there, that it could not have come into existence by a natural process. But they would not be able to *scientifically* figure out who built it or who put it there, let alone why! Its origin would be a question outside the realm of science.

Darwin suggested that mutation and natural selection could account for all the diversity in the living world. Both mutation and natural selection do operate in the natural world, and can account for what is called “microevolution.” Darwin’s theory proposed that what we see on a small scale also operates on a large scale, that the same process that makes finches diverge into different species of finches can account for amphibians becoming reptiles and eventually birds.

A problem with mutation is that 99% of mutations are harmful. Most are deadly. Mutations are mistakes in copying *existing* DNA. They do not explain the origin of DNA. One of the best examples provided in my high school textbook was sickle cell anemia. People with sickle cell anemia do not contract malaria. However, many die from sickle cell anemia! The mutation is beneficial in one way, but harmful in another.

No one would think that by typing a book repeatedly, making a few more mistakes each time, you could end up with a large number of better books. Could a similar process result in a large number of superior organisms?

Natural selection, according to Darwin, accounts for the preservation and spread of helpful mutations. We all know about artificial selection. The original dogs have been selectively bred into dogs as diverse as Great Danes and poodles. But once you have Great Danes, you can’t breed them back into poodles. Genetic information has been *lost* in the process of selection. Natural selection selects from a huge reservoir of *existing* genetic material. It says nothing about the

origin of that information. Someone has said that natural selection accounts for the survival of the fittest, but not the arrival of the fittest! Believing that selection can account for increasingly complex organization is like a merchant believing he can lose a little on each sale but make it up in volume.

A good example of natural selection from my high school textbook is the peppered moth. Before the Industrial Revolution in England, light-colored moths predominated and were camouflaged against the light-colored tree bark. During the Industrial Revolution, when coal smoke darkened the bark of trees, dark-colored moths predominated because predators could easily see the light moths against the dark background. After pollution controls went into effect and tree bark was light again, light-colored moths became more numerous.

This explains change and adaptation, but says nothing about the origin of the moth. Both dark and light moths were present before, during, and after these observations were made, although in different proportions. The observations began with two colors of moths and ended with two colors of moths. Moths didn’t turn into anything else and neither of the colors disappeared, though they might have in time.

A human designer might include both a heater and air-conditioner in an automobile, to make it more adaptable. The air-conditioner might eventually be removed or “selected out” of a vehicle brought to Alaska’s north slope. The fact that diversity exists and selection occurs says nothing about how anything came into being.

Different species have different numbers of chromosomes. An animal having 50 chromosomes cannot successfully mate with an animal having 46. Generally, it is deadly rather than beneficial to be born with a different number of chromosomes than your parents.

Yet according to the theory of evolution, sexual reproduction had begun by the time mammals, for example, diverged. In order for a change in the number of chromosomes to be beneficial and carry on to another generation, *two* animals (a

male and a female) would have to be born with the same change at the same time and in the same place (or near enough to find one another). This unlikely scenario would have had to be repeated hundreds of times, not just once, for the diversity we observe to have come about naturally.

Julian Huxley, an atheist who helped popularize Darwin's theory, calculated that the odds of getting a number of favorable mutations in one strain through pure chance alone are 1 in 1 followed by three million zeros.²⁰ To get an idea of that number, add 1,461 full pages of zeros to the number on page 34.

Would you bet your life on those odds? How about your eternal life (if there is one)?

Darwin wrote in *Origin of Species*:

If it could be demonstrated that any complex organ existed which could not possibly have been formed by numerous, successive, slight modifications, my theory would absolutely break down.²¹

The bombardier beetle is an example of such complexity. This little bug has cells that produce chemicals, which are collected in a reservoir in his body. The reservoir opens through a valve into a thick-walled reaction chamber, which is lined with cells that secrete other chemicals. When the beetle is threatened, the contents of the reservoir are forced into the reaction chamber. The chemicals combine and react to produce heat that brings the mixture to the boiling point and vaporizes part of it. Boiling chemicals are then expelled explosively through openings at the tip of the abdomen into the face of the would-be attacker.

It is difficult, if not impossible, to imagine any such system arising step-by-random-step. What would be the adaptive advantage of a reaction chamber without chemicals? How could one chemical be of use without the others? Unless cells existed to produce chemicals for storage in the reservoir, why would natural selection retain the reservoir? None of the parts work without the others and it's hard to imagine that natural selection would preserve any of them if they were useless in

isolation. The design is complex and specific, and requires many parts to function together to achieve a single result.

There are numerous other examples of "specified complexity" including the eye. Some scientists think the human eye is evidence against a designer, because it is wired "backwards." An intelligent designer, they say, would have done a better job. Yet the eye, for all its seemingly bad wiring, works pretty well. Intelligent humans have not yet been able to replicate it.

DNA itself is both specific and complex. It is a language that humans are only now decoding. Once it can be read, we will likely be able to use DNA to encode (write) information.

Each DNA molecule has many times more information than the *Encyclopedia Britannica*. Our bodies have some 3 trillion cells, each containing a copy of our DNA. If intelligent humans invented a way to store that much information in that small a space, I think we'd consider it an amazing technological breakthrough! Yet we're just learning to manipulate what's already *there!* It's a discovery, not an invention. Even the most primitive humans had DNA, though they knew nothing about it.

But haven't fossils proved evolution? No. Darwin expected the fossil record to eventually show numerous small changes, an unbroken chain of evolution with any time period being just an arbitrary slice. That's not been the case. After 150 years, we don't have a few missing links. We have a missing chain!

According to scientist Stephen Jay Gould:

The extreme rarity of transitional forms in the fossil record persists as the trade secret of paleontology. The evolutionary trees that adorn our textbooks have data only at the tips and nodes of their branches; the rest is inference, however reasonable, not the evidence of fossils.²²

Although microevolution (such as sideways divergence of bird species) is a demonstrable fact, it takes faith to believe in upward-moving macroevolution (fish to amphibians to reptiles to birds). Remember that faith is the leap from where the evidence leaves off to where the evidence seems to be pointing.

The evidence that naturalistic evolution accounts for all the diversity of life is not convincing to me. Each of us has to reach our own conclusion or “verdict” about that.

Evolution is a lovely and far-reaching theory that frees people (who wish to be free) from any concerns about God or judgment. One person noted that it was always possible to be an atheist, but evolution made it possible to be an intellectually fulfilled atheist! The question should not be how much we like evolution or atheism, but whether it’s true!

Thomas Sowell wrote about the power of a vision in *The Quest for Cosmic Justice*:

Powerful visions may not only dispense with facts, they can defy the most blatant facts for years on end.... The more sweeping the vision—the more it seems to explain and the more its explanation is emotionally satisfying—the more reason there is for its devotees to safeguard it against the vagaries of facts.... The very thought of condemning the theory—or even testing it by evidence—seems unthinkable.²³

Microevolution (sideways change) is a proven fact. Macroevolution (upward change) has been a powerful and comprehensive vision for many people for a long time. *National Geographic* in November 2004 called it a beautiful concept that is as overwhelmingly supported by evidence as the Theory of Relativity. I am not convinced. Maybe you know of evidence I didn’t find that will convince me of its truth. Even if evolution occurred exactly as scientists say, the first cell had to originate somehow. The process needed a kick start. I can’t avoid the conclusion that something supernatural *must* exist.

There’s a lot more to the subject than I’ve covered here. I highly recommend *Darwin’s Black Box* for anyone interested in learning more. It’s a scientific, not a religious, book. You might want to just browse the science section of any bookstore to see what’s being debated. A lot has changed in recent decades!

*In theory, the facts determine the theory.
In fact, the theory determines the facts.*

Are We God?

While atheists deny that God exists, pantheists say that we *are* God (as is everything else that exists). Are we? As strange as it might sound, it is more difficult to argue that we are not God than it is to argue that God exists.

The notion that we are God is at the foundation of Eastern, New Age and pagan religions. These religious traditions have recently become popular in the United States and Europe. They are very attractive to religious seekers, and are extremely positive, inclusive, peaceful and affirming, at least superficially. A quote from Suzanne Somers illustrates the attraction of this philosophy:

I believe in God, but not the God of my childhood. That God was cruel and punishing; that God scared me. The God of my understanding today is my closest ally, an all-compassionate, loving part of myself. The God of my understanding today is the voice within, my inner dialogue, the part of me that gives and receives the messages; it is the part of me that can do anything I desire if I am willing to do the work. It is the part of me that is my highest self. It is love, pure and simple. The God within is my connection to all living things and gives me reason to find the good in all things, even when they are perceived by society as wrong.²⁴

Much of what people have been taught about God in their childhood or through the culture is not accurate. Many people teach versions of Christianity that are not Biblical. Humans do create gods in their own image or embellish basic facts about God using their imagination or selected details. But regardless of how inaccurate some concepts of God may be, they don’t

indicate or prove that no God exists or that we are free to choose any god we create or prefer. That *may* be true, but we shouldn't assume it to be true.

For example, most of us had a relationship of sorts with Princess Diana. We didn't know her personally, although we knew some things about her. We embellished the facts we had with our imaginations.

She may have represented something special to us, some dream of our own. But the things we thought or imagined about her may or may not have accurately reflected reality. If we'd had the opportunity to visit with her personally over a cup of tea, we might have been quite surprised to find her much different than we had imagined. The fact that our visions or ideas of her might be wrong has nothing to do with the existence of a *real* Princess Diana.

If you define God as the ultimate authority, the one who has the right to make rules and enforce them, even some atheists might consider man to be God. After all, they would say, we are the most highly evolved organism on the planet. A basic tenet of humanism is that humans can achieve utopia here on earth through our own efforts and the scientific method. Darwin himself believed that man in the distant future would be a far more perfect creature.

You are God and Goddess, creators and co-creators. So as God and Goddess, creators and co-creators, I ask you now to make the decision, to integrate the decision into your minds and hearts from now on we will create Harmony, Peace, Love and Balance upon this Earth.

—Merlin, channeled through Das Melchizedek

You are God yourself. Is it not foolishness to search for yourself in the outside world? Look within, only then can you find God.

—Sai Baba

Pantheists, on the other hand, say that everything and everyone is God, and that our purpose in life is to remember and reclaim our godhood. Some pantheists say that nothing material

exists, that we are each creators of our own universe and can change it to the extent that we can change our minds. Other

YOU ARE GOD. Every living and discarnate individual is God.... God doesn't exist on a throne in heaven. He is you and right now he/she is reading this article.

—Dick Sutphen, *New Age teacher*

pantheists believe that the material universe is to God as our bodies are to our souls. There is tremendous flexibility and tolerance in pantheism, as long as you don't suggest God exists *apart* from us or has authority over us.

From what I can determine, the belief that we are God does not match reality. Some of my pantheist friends were quick to accuse the God of the Bible for allowing the September 11 disaster, to my surprise! If they really are God, why couldn't *they* have prevented it?

If we are God, we should have the ability to end or avoid pain and death. Yet pantheists past and present get sick and die just like everyone else. It seems more likely to me that scientists will learn how to extend life than that pantheists will be able to escape death or even live an extra 50 years by altering their thinking.

Pantheism is a congenial belief system. It puts us squarely in the center of our universe, and that is a comfortable, though responsible, place to be. I was once a pantheist. But as much as I tried, I eventually had to admit that evil and death are REAL. I couldn't accept the idea that evil is really good, like the light side and the dark side of "the

Anyone who is in search of God will finally merge with God and that person will say I AM GOD.

—Hindunet.org

Remember YOU are in control, YOU are God in action, and YOU CAN reprogram your mind to create perfect health.

—Ascended Earth Healing Program

Force.” Pantheism would say nothing is wrong, really. We just *perceive* it to be wrong and we need to change our perceptions.

Consider the following quote from *Conversations with God*:

All bad things that happen are of your choosing. The mistake is not in choosing them but in calling them bad.²⁵

If we are God, then we must have existed prior to our arrival in this life. That cannot be proved or disproved beyond a reasonable doubt. It is a dogmatic assumption, meaning it is not supported by objective, verifiable evidence. But if we are God, why would we

voluntarily confine ourselves to what is sometimes a miserable existence? Why would we forget the past with each return to life on earth? Why aren't things on earth getting better? If reincarnation and karma are true, does

You are God. Everyone in this world is a part of God. The more you remember that you are a part of God, the more you realize that you can make the world how you want it. And the more people believe that the world is a certain way, the more it actually is that way.

—Douglas C. Klimesh, *New Age teacher*

that mean poor people deserve their fate? In India, untouchables have had buckets of acid dumped on them because they offended someone from a higher caste. They are thought to deserve it. They must have done something horrible in a past life or they wouldn't be have been born untouchable.

Remember that according to the story of the Garden of

I am God!

—Shirley MacLaine

Eden, the serpent told Eve she could be like God; she could function independently and on an equal basis with

God. Many pantheists would say the serpent was telling the truth and God was lying! The Bible says the opposite. Which is correct?

You must answer for yourself the question of whether you are God. For purposes of this argument, I only ask that you seriously consider the *possibility* that you are not.

Things Are Not “Right”

I won't spend much time arguing this. It's hard to imagine that any of you would contest the statement that things are not “right” in this world. I suppose I could include a long list of newspaper headlines, crime statistics or stories of oppression and injustice. Unless you've avoided TV and newspapers, I don't expect I'd be telling you anything you don't already know.

When I was young, I imagined that things could be made right if we just tried hard enough. It was only a matter of time. Idealism has been common to youth for centuries. I remember that wonderful old song: “We shall overcome. We shall overcome. We shall overcome some day. Deep in my heart, I do believe, that we shall overcome some day.” Is that belief based on evidence, or is it just wishful thinking?

Although we can probably agree that things are not right, disagreements will arise if we attempt to assign blame for the current, less-than-optimum situation in the world.

Rousseau startled the world in 1762 by writing that man is good by nature but spoiled by society, that humans in a natural state would be naturally good. This led to the idea of the “noble savage” which is still a popular philosophy.

Humanists believe that religions and superstitions are responsible for the problems in the world; that without religion people would be good by nature and could create a utopia.

Adherents of some religions believe that atheists or adherents of religions other than their own are the problem. Hitler believed that Jews were the problem. Communists believed that capitalists or the bourgeois were the problem.

Environmentalists blame big business. Republicans blame Democrats and vice versa. Some people blame God for allowing evil, for permitting the world to be less than perfect.

Would it even be possible to get everybody to agree on what is the problem, let alone work together to solve it? If not, what's to be done with those that refuse to see things our way? Would it be right to eliminate them (kill them)?

Regardless of what one believes to be the cause of the problem, it is difficult to deny that there is a problem. I once heard the human condition called a "magnificent ruin." There is so much promise, so much potential for greatness in human beings, yet reality falls far short of the potential.

People are alienated from each other, and, if God exists, from God. There is suffering and death, which, despite being "natural", seem somehow unnatural and wrong. Even aging seems "wrong." We're like fish out of water in time, which may be a subtle clue that we weren't created for time. Have you ever looked in a mirror and wondered who that old person was looking back at you?

Is the Bible God's Message?

Unless God exists, the Bible cannot possibly be a message from Him. So if you don't believe in God, this might be a good time to shelve this book and investigate that question to your satisfaction. If, however, you are willing to admit the *possibility* that God exists, that you are not God, and that God might have something to say about why things are not right in this world, read on. My ultimate hope is that, once you determine that God exists, you will decide to seek Him using whatever process works for you. Hebrews 11:6 tells us God exists, and will reward those who diligently seek Him.

Even if God exists, the Bible is not necessarily His message. The questions are related but separate. Some other holy book might be His message, or He might have chosen not to give any messages. He might have created the universe and then turned His attention elsewhere, much as we might wind up a clock and leave it to wind down on its own.

Even some who call themselves Christians do not consider the Bible to be anything more than a collection of ancient wisdom and myths. The Bible itself insists we should seek truth and turn away from myths (2 Timothy 4:4). C.S. Lewis, who professionally studied ancient literature, said that those who consider the New Testament to be mythology have read too few myths.²⁶ Myths have a "flavor" the New Testament does not.

Some people believe that, at best, the Bible contains some of God's words. Which parts of the Bible are from God and which are not is a matter of opinion. If the Bible is not authoritative, it may contain good advice but need not be taken too seriously.

On the other hand, if it is authoritative, it makes sense to take it seriously even if we doubt or disagree with it.

The Bible is an ancient book, like many others. We base our knowledge of ancient history in large part upon books and writings that have come down from antiquity. How do scholars figure out whether any book that claims to be ancient is in fact authentic and reliable, not a forgery?

There are three tests historians use to evaluate ancient texts:

1. Internal consistency. Is it consistent within itself?
2. External consistency. Is it consistent with other known facts of the time?
3. Bibliographic. How many manuscripts have survived and how close in time are those manuscripts to the originals?

A book that passes all these tests is considered authentic (not a forgery). That doesn't mean everything it says is *true*! But if you had a teenaged son who told you the truth every time you could check the accuracy of his story, your confidence and trust in him would grow. You would tend to give him the benefit of the doubt when he told you something you couldn't prove independently. You would cease to suspect or question everything he said. You would not only believe him, you would come to believe *in* him, in his truthful character. If the Bible is shown to be trustworthy where we *can* check it independently, there is a good chance, though not a guarantee, that it is trustworthy in other areas as well.

So how does the Bible hold up under the same kind of scrutiny that is applied to every ancient document?

Internal Consistency

I will never forget the time that I casually picked up a study Bible and began to read and look up cross-references. I was stunned at the amount of internal consistency that immediately became apparent. It has been said that Scripture speaks with one voice. I think the only way to validate that for yourself is to

check it out for yourself. It was amazing to me that a book written by at least 40 people with such different personalities and styles over a period of more than 1500 years would demonstrate so much consistency of thought.

The first time I read through the Bible, I wrote down every question, "mistake" and apparent contradiction I could find, then began asking questions. Again, to my surprise, I found that many apparent contradictions can be easily and clearly explained. Others are not so easy to explain. I still don't have all the answers. I'm not sure anyone does. But the seeming inconsistencies faded in importance as the fundamental, inexplicable consistency shone through.

Simon Greenleaf, the Harvard lawyer who wrote *Treatise on the Law of Evidence*, became a Christian after carefully examining the Gospel "eyewitness" accounts from a legal standpoint. He was not troubled by what initially appeared to be minor inconsistencies in the accounts. That is normal in authentic testimony from independent witnesses. If the stories *did* match up word for word, it would arouse suspicion of complicity. He said, "The competence of the New Testament documents would be established in any court of law."²⁷

Another internal "evidence" of the Bible's authenticity is the fact that it records a great many events and observations that humans, if it were purely of human origin, would have edited out of their own history. Anyone who writes history generally spins it in such a way that it makes his people look good. Embarrassing details are left out. Heroic acts are embellished.

As one critic wrote:

The winner writes the history books—books which glorify their own cause and disparage the conquered foe. As Napoleon once said, 'What is history, but a fable agreed upon?' By its very nature, history is always a one-sided account.²⁸

The Bible does not make the Jews who wrote it (or any of us for that matter) look good. Nothing adequately explains why some of the Bible stories did not disappear from the book and

from historical memory if it is solely the product of human writers as is often alleged.

Josephus, a Jewish historian in the first century, wrote, What faith we have placed in our own writings is evident by our conduct; for though so long a time has now passed, no one has dared to add anything to them, or to take anything from them, or to alter anything in them.²⁹

The Jews (keepers of the Bible for centuries before Christ) did not alter what it said because they truly believed it was God's Word. How did they know who was relaying a message from God and who was a false prophet? Deuteronomy 18:22 gives the guidelines: *If what a prophet proclaims in the name of the LORD does not take place or come true, that is a message the LORD has not spoken. Only prophets with 100% accuracy in foretelling future events were to be trusted.*

The majority of people who use alleged contradictions in the Bible as a basis for rejecting it have never read the Bible in its entirety. Nor have they sought explanations for the seeming contradictions. Nor are they willing to listen to explanations that are offered. Honest seekers, however, retain an open mind. They may not "buy" all the explanations given, but they will at least ask and listen, and persist if an answer is not convincing. They will consider the Bible as a whole and refrain from focusing exclusively on apparent contradictions.

It might be good to briefly address here the allegations that books were left out of the Bible. The apocryphal books (between the Old and New Testaments in the Catholic Bible) do not claim to be the Word of God. The Jews who wrote them have never considered them to be Scripture. They were not included in the Catholic Bible until 1546, after Martin Luther objected to the Catholic doctrine of purgatory. References from these books were used to contradict Luther's arguments. Yet only 12 of the 15 apocryphal books were admitted. At least one of those rejected (II Esdras) is *against* prayers for the dead.

What about *The Gospel of Thomas* and other books supposedly left out of the New Testament? In the centuries that

followed Jesus' time on earth, myths and fabricated histories began to appear, as would be expected. Some of them attempted to fill in the "missing years" of Jesus' childhood. Some attempted to select out of Christianity what seemed to support non-Christian philosophies such as Gnosticism, which has to do with secret knowledge that only a privileged few can attain. The Bible was written in common language for common people, and it has not always been popular with those who considered themselves elite, special or superior. (Although some Christians have that attitude, the Bible condemns it.)

The situation of many inconsistent and contradictory "Christian" books being circulated reached a crisis level by the early 300s. The first canon (list of approved books) was compiled by a sect that excluded the entire Old Testament (the very "Scriptures" Jesus said testified about Him in John 5:39). The Council of Nicea met in A.D. 325. They listed books thought to be authentic and authoritative, those not forgeries or late inventions. Their primary test was: Was a book written by or under the direct authority of an apostle? Some, such as *The Gospel of Thomas*, claimed to be but were not.

There were no strong arguments to support the authority of any books left out. On the contrary, there were arguments against some of the books retained, including Hebrews, 2 Peter, and James. James, for example, was Jesus' half-brother and the leader of the Jerusalem church but he was not one of the apostles.

The Gnostic gospels and other books not included in the canon are not consistent with the 66 books of the Bible but are consistent with other belief systems that predated Jesus. All the questioned books are now available on the Internet for anyone who would like to compare their teachings with those of the Bible. It surprises me when people uncritically accept the word of scholars who call the Gnostic gospels and other apocryphal books authentic while criticizing and disparaging books of the Bible. There are scholars on both sides of the issue. Bias can occur on either side.

Scholars are like “expert witnesses” in a trial. They may present evidence and help us understand it, but their opinions are just opinions, not evidence.

Every book of the current New Testament was quoted and referred to as authoritative by writers in the second and third centuries (A.D. 100-300). All but 11 verses were cited before A.D. 200. The Council of Nicea could not have manufactured or substantially rewritten Scripture that people within living memory had been willing to die to preserve. Nor could they have rounded up all traces of writings they disagreed with and destroyed them. Thousands of manuscripts and manuscript portions that predate the Council of Nicea are still in existence.

If God inspired and authorized the Bible as it claims, and if He considers it an important means of communication with people, we can reasonably assume He is capable of protecting it from substantial corruption over time.

External Consistency

No other holy book I’m aware of, with the exception of *The Book of Mormon*, even claims to record true history. Most holy books are philosophical or mythological rather than historical. But while no archeological evidence has been found to support *The Book of Mormon*, the Bible contains hundreds of specific place names and details that can be and have been validated through archeology.

Of course, archeology cannot prove or disprove the Bible. It can only validate its authenticity by providing an external check in areas where archeology and the Bible intersect. New archeological evidence is still being uncovered. Before 1994, there was no independent evidence to validate the existence of King David of the Bible. Now that is an established historical fact. Who knows what future discoveries might reveal?

Modern archeology began a little more than 100 years ago, yet already a tremendous amount has been learned about the early life and times of Israel (later named Palestine by the

Romans, after the ancient enemies of Israel, the Philistines).

For many years, archeologists considered the Hittites, first mentioned in Genesis 10, to be a mythical people. Then, in 1906, a German archaeologist discovered the capital city of the Hittite empire, with 10,000 clay tablets documenting Hittite history and validating what the Bible says about this culture.

The Ebla Tablets, discovered in 1974, predate all other written records by hundreds of years. Yet they speak of *one* being who created the

There are more sure marks of authenticity in the Bible than in any profane history.

—Sir Isaac Newton

heavens, moon, stars, and earth. These tablets contain references to Adam and Noah and contradict the critical claim that polytheism gradually evolved into monotheism.³⁰

Time and time again, scholars who set out to use history and archeology to disprove the Bible as the inspired Word of God have been disappointed. After 30 years of critical research into a single historical book (Acts), historian William Ramsay acknowledged its integrity and historicity and became a Christian.

The standard for evaluating historical texts should not change because a text addresses the topic of God or religion. Josh McDowell wrote:

After personally trying to shatter the historicity and validity of the Scriptures, I have come to the conclusion that they are historically trustworthy. If a person discards the Bible as unreliable in this sense, then he or she must discard almost all the literature of antiquity. One problem I constantly face is the desire on the part of many to apply one standard or test to secular literature and another to the Bible.³¹

We cannot rightly regard secular texts as “innocent until proven guilty” yet consider texts addressing spiritual matters as “guilty until proven innocent.”

Sir Isaac Newton wrote: “There are more sure marks of authenticity in the Bible than in any profane history.”³² One of

those marks is the fact that women are reported as being the first to learn of the Resurrection. In a fabricated or “edited” account written by a man of those times, that little detail would not appear.

In the Biblical account of the Garden of Eden, Satan accused God of lying. Jesus later called the devil “a liar and the father of lies.” (John 8:44). It’s reminiscent of a criminal trial, where prosecutors accuse the defendant of lying, and the defendant accuses prosecutors of lying, perhaps by hiding or ignoring

An agnostic is nothing but a gutless atheist.

—Karl Marx

exculpatory evidence. Both sides can’t be telling the truth. In a criminal trial, jurors use various tests, including the external evidence test

(whether a version of the story explains and integrates the known facts) to decide who is lying and what is true.

We have the same task as regards the Bible and its claims. Jurors who are completely biased from the outset, or who refuse to listen, consider evidence or deliberate, jeopardize the whole system. If juries frequently refused to render verdicts, the system would completely break down and justice would *not* be done. Refusing to make a decision is a decision in itself. It is safe to be content with agnosticism (not knowing) only if God doesn’t exist or doesn’t care one way or the other. The Bible says He cares.

According to an article in *Time* magazine several years ago:

After more than two centuries of facing the heaviest scientific guns that could be brought to bear, the Bible has survived—and is perhaps better for the siege. Even on the critics’ own terms—historical fact—the Scriptures seem more acceptable now than they did when the rationalists began the attack.³³

I could say much, much more about how the Bible has passed the external evidence test better than any other ancient book, but I think the point is made. I strongly encourage you to check out this claim for yourself.

Bibliographic

The bibliographic test concerns the transmission of original writings through time. How likely is it that what we have now is a faithful reproduction of the ancient original?

The New Testament stands alone among ancient books in regard to its manuscript support. Nearly 5,700 early manuscripts and manuscript

portions of the New Testament have survived.

Some 76 of these are written on papyrus, which was not commonly used after 200. The Iliad is the next best documented ancient book, with 643

manuscripts. The only two surviving manuscripts of Tacitus were copied eight and ten centuries after the original, while the earliest manuscript fragment of the Bible was written between 117 and 138.

Mythology has not been found to encrust historical fact for at least four generations. No one would be able to embellish and falsify something like the Resurrection within living memory of witnesses. And consider the fact that all the apostles were martyred (though John survived boiling oil to die later of old age). People may die for a lie they wrongly *believe* to be true, but all twelve apostles (including Paul and excluding Judas) died for what they would have known was a lie if they had stolen the body as Jewish leaders alleged. At the time of the Crucifixion, the disciples were crushed and hopeless, yet a few days later they were so energized that they went out and changed the history of the world. Even the most critical scholars admit *something* unusual must have happened! Chuck Colson, once jailed for his part in the Watergate conspiracy, considers this convincing evidence of the truth of the Bible. No way, he says, would 12 conspirators all die for a lie.

The number of manuscripts is so large and so early that it is practically certain that the true reading survives. This can be said of no other book of the ancient world.

—Sir Frederick Kenyon

By carefully comparing the many texts that remain against one another, scholars can reconstruct the original text with great fidelity. After much study, Sir Frederick Kenyon wrote,

The interval between the dates of original composition and the earliest extant evidence becomes so small as to be in fact negligible, and the last foundation for any doubt that the Scriptures have come down to us substantially as they were written has now been removed. Both the *authenticity* and the *general integrity* of the books of the New Testament may be regarded as finally established.³⁴

William Albright, director of the Oriental School of Research, wrote: “We can already say emphatically that there is no longer any solid basis for dating any book of the New Testament after about A.D. 80.”³⁵ No event in the ancient world has more supporting evidence than the life, death, and resurrection of Christ. A lot of this evidence has been discovered since I went to college in the 1970s. Again, I will not take many pages to prove this point because my objective is to encourage you to seek for yourself. Please do not trust what you may have heard or what seems to be common knowledge.

The Old Testament does not have nearly as much manuscript support as the New Testament. Before the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, the oldest manuscript was dated about 1000. It was customary for the Jews to replace any scroll showing wear and to ritually burn the older copy.

The Dead Sea Scrolls dramatically proved how much attention the Jews paid to detail in the copying and transmission of their Scriptures. Hidden shortly after the time of Christ and not discovered until 1948, the Scrolls contained portions of every Old Testament book except Esther and some complete books, including two copies of Isaiah. Although differences were found to have crept in during 1000 years of copying, none substantially affected the meaning. Most were minor changes in spelling.

Since the Jews believed their Scripture to be the Word of God, they dared not alter it. There were strict specifications governing how to make copies. *Nothing* could be written from

memory. Lines and even letters were counted methodically as part of the proofreading process. If a mistake was found, the manuscript was discarded and the scribe began anew.

Fulfilled Prophecy

The Bible passes the three tests so far considered better than any other ancient writing. That may be impressive, but it doesn't prove it was written under the authority of God. How can we discern, rationally and objectively, whether it should be trusted as authoritative, the very Word of a living God?

Isaiah 41:23 tells how to distinguish what is from God and what is not: *If you are gods, tell us what will occur in the days ahead. Or perform a mighty miracle that will fill us with amazement and fear.*

Jesus' resurrection is an example of a “mighty miracle” attested to by numerous independent eyewitnesses whose testimony appears to be trustworthy in areas where it can be checked. If a theistic God exists—if nature is not all that exists—miracles are possible. Since they are by definition historical and particular, not scientific and repeatable, we must evaluate evidence for them based on testimony.

The Bible is the only holy book that records miracles by means of purported eyewitness testimony that can be checked for historical

No well-accredited prophecy is found in any other book or even oral tradition now extant, or that has ever been extant in the world.

—R. S. Foster

accuracy in other areas. No other books contain credible prophecy that can be independently validated. Only a Being who created time and stands outside it could predict future events with accuracy. Our best weather forecasters miss when they predict weather for the following day!

By contrast, Bible prophecies written thousands of years ago have been fulfilled within living memory.

About 1/3 of the Bible contains prophecy. Not all of the prophecies have been fulfilled, but enough have been to give us a basis for believing that others will be.

Although many false prophets are mentioned in the Old Testament, none of their writings survived. The Jews knew who

No honest person can remain an unbeliever after even a brief study of prophecy.

—Dave Hunt

was speaking for God because *everything* he or she predicted came true (yes, there were female prophets). The messengers were authenticated in the short term as well as the long term, and therefore, their

words were recorded as God's words even when people did not like what they said.

To be of value, prophecy must be specific, not a vague guess. To accurately predict that a certain president will die in office is general. To accurately predict the day, time and exact method of an assassination would be far more convincing!

Again, my purpose in writing is to encourage you to seek for yourself, not to convince you to accept what I say, so I will not detail hundreds of prophecies that have been fulfilled. I will offer just a few examples.

In Isaiah 45:13, it was predicted that a king named Cyrus would rebuild Jerusalem and set the Israelite exiles free. More than a century later, that is exactly what happened, according to 2 Chronicles 36:23 and other historical records.

Jesus fulfilled more than 200 specific prophecies, many of them during the 24 hours before the Crucifixion. He quoted the first verse of Psalm 22 from the cross, *My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?* That would have been a familiar passage to most Jews of the time. Read the rest of that Psalm for yourself. It tells exactly what was happening around Jesus while He was on the Cross, although it was written some 1000 years earlier. Isaiah 53 is another chapter to read that is filled with specific prophecies about Jesus.

At least 33 Old Testament prophecies were fulfilled the last day of Jesus' earthly life. During that time, He was a prisoner and was not in a position to artificially arrange things to appear to fulfill prophecy. Remember that no writings had been added to the Jewish Scripture for 400 years prior to Christ's birth. Also remember that most modern-day Jews don't accept Jesus, yet to this day they use the Scriptures from which these prophecies come (Psalm 22, Isaiah 53 and others). They certainly wouldn't have gone back and altered their ancient texts to fit the profile of someone whose authority they rejected!

Professor Peter Stoner calculated that the probability of only eight specific prophecies being fulfilled in one man by chance would be 1 in 10^{17} . To illustrate that number, imagine 10^{17} silver dollars. That many coins would cover the entire state of Texas to a depth of two feet. Mark one coin and stir all of them thoroughly. What are the chances that a blind man could pick out the marked coin?³⁶

And that is for only *eight* prophecies to be fulfilled in one man, not 33 or 200! Purely based on odds, a gambler would bet on Jesus and not on naturalistic evolution. Remember, the odds against a *single cell* organizing itself without intelligent input was calculated by Sir Fred Hoyle to be 1 in 40,000.

But could early Christian authors have tailored the New Testament accounts to make it *appear* as though prophecy was fulfilled even though it was not? The apostles were all Jews. They knew Jewish Scripture. Could they have fabricated an elaborate hoax?

One way to address the question is to consider prophecies that have been fulfilled more recently. No one would say that the Bible has been substantially rewritten to accommodate a particular point of view within the past century. Yet a number of prophecies written thousands of years ago have been fulfilled within the past 100 years.

During World War I, the British entered Palestine under General Allenby. He was a Christian who had been taught as a child to pray for the peace of Jerusalem (Psalm 122:6). He did

not want to bomb or destroy the ancient city. The night before the planned attack, he prayed and read the Bible. Isaiah 31:5 came to his attention: *Like birds hovering overhead, the LORD Almighty will shield Jerusalem; He will shield it and deliver it, He will 'pass over' it and will rescue it.* On December 11, 1917, Allenby sent wave after wave of airplanes flying low over the city. The Turks, who had never seen airplanes, fled in terror. No blood was shed and nothing was destroyed. Allenby assembled his troops and read them the verse, saying, "Men, this day has this Scripture been fulfilled before your very eyes."

The return of the Jews to their ancient homeland was predicted repeatedly in prophecies written hundreds of years before Christ:

- *See, I will bring them (the remnant of Israel) from the land of the north and gather them from the ends of the earth. Among them will be the blind and the lame, expectant mothers and women in labor; a great throng will return. (Jeremiah 31:8)*
- *Therefore say: 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: I will gather you from the nations and bring you back from the countries where you have been scattered, and I will give you back the land of Israel again.' (Ezekiel 11:17)*
- *Even if your exiled people are at the farthest horizon, I will gather them and bring them to the place I have chosen as a dwelling for my Name. (Nehemiah 1:9)*
- *I will bring back my exiled people Israel; they will rebuild the ruined cities and live in them. They will plant vineyards and drink their wine; they will make gardens and eat their fruit. (Amos 9:14)*

These prophecies were literally fulfilled in 1948 of the Gregorian calendar. Coincidentally (perhaps), Abraham was born in 1948 of the Hebrew calendar.

Frederick the Great once asked his chaplain to give him one irrefutable proof for the existence of God. The chaplain replied, "The Jew. The proof, your majesty, is the Jew."

The odds against any group of people scattered throughout the world for 2000 years maintaining a unique identity are staggering. It has not happened in any other case. Every Jew, by his very existence, regardless of what he/she believes, is evidence for the existence of God. Rousseau called the Jews an astonishing spectacle; they mingle with all the people yet are not confused with them.

All things are mortal but the Jew. All other forces pass, but he remains. What is the secret of his immortality?
—Mark Twain

Whether you agree or disagree with the 1947 United Nations decision to allow Israel to become a Jewish homeland, you cannot deny it happened! What's more, it happened in a single day, just as was predicted by Isaiah thousands of years before:

Who has ever heard of such a thing? Who has ever seen such things? Can a country be born in a day or a nation be brought forth in a moment? (Isaiah 66:8)

Prophecy as yet unfulfilled indicates that a popular world ruler will eventually arise who will resolve the continuing Middle East crisis. He will guarantee peace to Israel for seven years. The Jews will rebuild their temple. Peace will last for three and a half years, then the ruler will break his agreement, declare himself to be God, and begin to persecute the Jews. (Daniel 9:25-27)

Will this actually occur? Those who think so base their opinion on the Bible's track record and on their trust in its authority. Either the Bible is wrong or its critics are wrong. The only way to have confidence one way or the other is to evaluate the weight of evidence and testimony. It is better to avoid prejudice toward or against either side before considering the evidence.

Another prophecy that critics questioned for centuries has been fulfilled within the past hundred years. Daniel 12:4 says, *But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, [even] to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased.*

Until this past century, few people traveled far from home for any reason. The majority of people around the world were illiterate. This verse baffled Bible scholars in those times. The explosion of knowledge and information, especially since the advent of the Internet, is unparalleled in history. I think of that phrase “many shall run to and fro” almost every day as I run to and fro through endless traffic. Who could have predicted this 150 years ago, let alone 2,500 years ago? Just try predicting what will happen 2,500 years from now!

Does any of this prove that the Bible is God’s message? Not beyond all doubt. It is simply evidence to consider, just a small part of the evidence I considered.

We are all free to believe whatever we choose, whether or not it is true or supported by evidence. Some people choose to believe the earth is flat. But most people, I think, prefer to believe what is true rather than what is not. Though some things can’t be proven, enough can be learned to enable us to take the leap from where the evidence leaves off to where the evidence is pointing. The more evidence we have, the shorter that leap becomes.

We may not *like* truth, but unless we discern what it is, we can’t take the next step. Believing in God is not enough. James 2:19 says, *You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder.*

Once we settle the question of whether the Bible is God’s message, we still must choose whether or not we *wish* to be reconciled to Him. It’s not mandatory. We can remain enemies. We can shrug our shoulders and say, “Who cares?” Or we can acknowledge God’s legitimate authority over us and make peace. We can choose anything we wish, but we can’t control the consequences of our choices.

The Problem

Although the Bible is a rather large book, its fundamental message is rather simple and straightforward. A good part of space is taken to validate it as God’s message to those who are seeking truth. Although creation indicates the existence of a Creator, the Bible has to prove itself as an authoritative message of that Creator before we can rely on what it says.

The basic message of the Bible is very simple. Things are not “right” on earth because of human pride and rebellion (“sin”). We are all rebellious (sinful) by nature. We naturally want to be at the center of the universe, in full control with power over everyone around us. We rebel against authority, even legitimate and beneficent authority.

We are born with a streak of pride and rebelliousness, though it manifests differently in different people. It is *natural*. We can’t fix the problem by working hard, keeping the law, or “being good.” It’s deeper than that.

Because we are unwilling to accept God’s authority, we are alienated from Him. Because of sin (our own and others’), we are alienated from each other.

A solution to make things right again has been provided. God took the initiative to provide the solution, and it’s up to us whether to accept or reject it. It’s as though we’re born with a deadly disease. An antidote is available, but unless we acknowledge that we have the disease and take the antidote, we will die. It has been said that we’re born on a road to hell, but one with lots of warning signs and exits. Concerning people past and present who have never heard of Jesus, don’t worry.

Everyone has some light, if only the stars above and the quiet whisper of conscience within. People will be held accountable for responding to the light they have, no more and no less. No one will be wrongly condemned for what they don't know.

Time is being provided for us to make a choice. Not endless time, but substantial time. While that time passes, things will continue to be a lot less than perfect on earth.

But Aren't People Good By Nature?

The Bible doesn't make people (any people) look "good." It calls us all rebels. *All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.* (Romans 3:23)

Let me quote commentator Dennis Prager:

The statement, 'I have never met a bad kid,' like 'People are born basically good,' is simply wishful thinking.

To believe that human nature is basically good—after Auschwitz, the Gulag, Rwanda, Armenia, and Tibet, just to mention some of the horrors of the twentieth century alone—is a statement of faith as monumental as the most wishful religious belief. Whenever I meet people who persist in believing in the essential goodness of human nature, I know I have met people for whom evidence is irrelevant.

How many evils do humans have to commit to shake a person's faith in humanity's essential goodness? How many more innocent people have to be murdered and tortured? How many more women need to be raped?

There is no number. Just as no contrary evidence will shake the faith of many religious believers, so none will shake the faith of those, especially the secular, who believe in humanity's goodness. Faith in humanity is the last belief a secular individual can relinquish before utterly despairing. The less religious a person is, the more he or she needs to believe in humanity.³⁷

Those who believe that people are naturally good have to find something else to blame for all the trouble that is around us. Some blame society, although society is basically just people.

Some blame God. While it's true that people have committed many crimes in the name of one or another god, people have also committed atrocities under the banner of communism, which is completely atheistic and secular. Eliminating religion would not eliminate war. People use religion as one excuse for war. If religion weren't available, they'd find another excuse.

Economically, capitalism succeeded because it is based on a true picture of human nature. People are naturally greedy. Communism failed because it was based on the idea that people are naturally good, and if the bad people (the bourgeois) were just eliminated, the world would soon be a perfect place where everyone would get along and be willing to share the wealth.

For centuries, people who believed in the essential goodness of humanity have looked to the future and envisioned a utopia that could be achieved here on earth. The incredible advances of modern science fueled those dreams. An example of utopian thought comes from William Godwin, who believed that with the spread of knowledge, man would attain moral perfection. He wrote of the future (our present) in 1793:

There will be no war, no crimes, no administration of justice, as it is called, and no government. Besides this, there will be neither disease, anguish, melancholy nor resentment. Every man will seek with ineffable ardor the good of all.³⁸

I must admit I wish he had been right! Will his dream *ever* come true? Are we closer to that ideal than we were in 1793? Someone once said, "I love mankind, but I can't stand people." It is much easier to be hopeful that something vague like "mankind" is moving ever more toward perfection than it is to deal with individuals, who sometimes find it impossible to get along with each other, control their spending, or overcome addictions. There is something intractable in human nature. We become more aware of it when we try very hard to change it.

In the United States today, things are about as good as they've ever been anywhere on earth. Reading history can cure a lot of romantic notions about golden ages of the past. G.K.

Chesterton once said that the doctrine of original sin is the only philosophy empirically validated by centuries of recorded history.

But what about babies? How can anyone think a sweet little infant is sinful? Dennis Prager answers the question, “Are babies born good?”

The answer is no. Babies are born *innocent* and they are certainly not born evil, but they aren’t born good, either. In fact, babies are the quintessence of selfishness. I want Mommy. I want milk. I want attention. I want to be played with. I want, I want, and if you don’t do everything I want I will ruin your life.

To be sure, this is normal behavior for a baby, but on what grounds can it be characterized as morally *good*?³⁹

Someone once said the innocence of infants may well be due more to weakness of limb than to purity of heart.

Chuck Colson wrote:

The myth [that mankind is basically good] deludes people into thinking that they are always victims, never villains; always deprived, never depraved. It dismisses responsibility as the teaching of a darker age. It can excuse any crime, because it can always blame something else—a sickness of our society or a sickness of the mind.⁴⁰

We all sin. We all fall short. We all miss the mark, even when we’re aiming at the right mark and doing our very best. The people I call evil are those who consciously and intentionally aim to do wrong. They are proud of their crimes.

The harmful results of unintentional and intentional sin can be identical. Take the 9–11 disaster, for example. The perpetrators of that crime were evil. They intentionally set out to terrorize and kill others. The same results could have followed an accident, however, if someone negligent in performing maintenance on an airplane set off a cascade of events that led to disaster. Sin includes evil, and all sin can have evil results. The point is that even the best and most conscientious people sin. At a minimum, they resent and rebel against the rightful authority of the One who gave them life.

The Bible says God holds people responsible for both their thoughts and their actions. God knows exactly what we know and when we knew it, what other options were available to us and the reasons we rejected them. *Nothing in all creation is hidden from God’s sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.*

(Hebrews 4:13) We do not have that kind of knowledge about each other, so we cannot rightly judge each other. God can, and says He will. We are told that when all evidence is clearly laid out before us, we will agree that His judgment is perfectly just. At the moment, we don’t have all the evidence.

The Bible says the root of all our problems is sin (ours and others’). The things we do, our actions, are just outward symptoms of a deeper problem, so changing our actions won’t solve the problem. The solution, it says, is to accept God’s provision for reconciliation and allow Him to begin to change us from the inside out. We don’t change overnight. It’s a long process that won’t be completed during this lifetime. The promise, though, is that it can and will happen, that we will eventually be made “good by nature” though still free.

Can we believe that promise? It depends on whether the basic claims of the Bible are true. You don’t have to believe every word of the Bible literally to accept it as trustworthy or as a message from God. Christians disagree about things, sometimes very important things. But if they agree on the authority and trustworthiness of the Bible (that it is from God and that God is not lying), they can seek clarity, and can agree to disagree when something is unclear. The fact that people don’t always *understand* the Bible doesn’t mean it’s in error.

We are free to reconcile with God or not as we wish. We are free to believe whatever we choose. That freedom is a tremendous gift. Anyone who tries to force another person to do or believe anything is not doing God’s will as expressed in the Bible. God has such incredible respect for human choice that He will even allow those who want nothing to do with Him to choose eternal freedom from His laws and influence.

The Solution

Unless you are aware of a problem, you won't be interested in a solution. If someone offered you free chemotherapy and cancer medication, you might be grateful for their generosity, but puzzled. Unless you had cancer, that "solution" would be worthless to you. Even if you had cancer but didn't yet know it, you wouldn't value the gift. Until we realize we have a real problem with rebellion and sin, we won't see any need for a solution.

It's always easier to see sin in other people than in ourselves (and that goes for Christians as well as everybody else). It is natural to excuse our own sins as innocent and harmless, while seeing others' (especially those that hurt us) as evil and intentional.

When I find myself doing that, I think back to a certain specific sin I committed decades ago that was knowing and intentional, that hurt someone innocent, and for which I had no excuse. I'm not going to tell you what it was, and if I did you might not think it as big a deal as I do, but I know what was in my heart when I did it. Remembering that helps keep me honest and prevents me from whitewashing or thinking I'm a fundamentally "good" person.

The sins of some people are black and repulsive. We read about them in the newspaper and shudder. The sins of others are private and hidden, and for all we know some people are saints. We tend to see only the good in people we like, and only the bad in people we dislike, although everybody is both good and bad in ways unique to them.

You wouldn't drink a glass of water that was obviously polluted with oil and garbage. But you might be tempted to drink a glass that *looked* fresh and clean, even if it contained a lethal drop of invisible poison. God sees *everything* in our hearts and minds, and knows that even in the best of people, there is at least a little sin, considered by Him to be pure poison. If we are perfectly honest with ourselves, we all have to admit sometimes we fall short (that's the literal definition of "sin") and sometimes we have no excuses.

We may try to minimize our shortcomings by saying, "I'm only human," but that's exactly the *point!* We're only human. We aren't God! No matter how hard we try, we cannot be perfect. Often we don't even *want* to do our best. All those rules and regulations are a burden too heavy to carry. We can't keep them perfectly, yet unless we do, people get hurt. Last summer, a good friend of ours was killed. A sleepy teenager nodded off briefly, crossed the centerline, and smashed into his motorcycle head on. That young man did not intend to hurt anyone that day, but the results are the same as if he did. As I understand, he was a great kid and had never been in trouble before. I cringe to think of times my eyelids have dropped briefly while driving and I was startled awake by a rumble strip.

We can be hurt by our own sin, but a good part of what hurts us is the sin of others. It all gets mixed up together until we can't be sure what percentage of blame for a bad situation is ours and what belongs to others.

Some part of us knows that things are not as they should be. We are offended when others lie to us or harm us. We have an innate conscience and sense of what is "right." But where does that come from? How can we pronounce something to be evil unless a part of us understands the meaning of "good"?

It is tempting to accuse God of evil. C.S. Lewis did, until he thought it through:

If a Brute and Blackguard made the world, then He also made our minds. If He made our minds, He also made that very standard in them whereby we judge Him to be a Brute

and Blackguard. And how can we trust a standard which comes from such a brutal and blackguardly source? If we reject Him, we also ought to reject all His works. But one of his works is this very moral standard by which we reject Him. If we accept this standard then we are really implying that He is not a Brute and Blackguard. If we reject it, then we have thrown away the only instrument by which we can condemn Him.⁴¹

There's no way out of the dilemma.

The Bible offers a solution to what's not "right" in the world. Whether it's a real solution depends on whether you can trust the Bible, so you may need to establish its authority to your satisfaction before considering its proposed solution. Here's a succinct summary of the problem and God's proposed solution:

1. *All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.* (Romans 3:23)
2. *The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.* (Romans 6:23)
3. *God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.* (Romans 5:8)
4. *If you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.* (Romans 10:9-10)
5. *Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.* (Romans 10:13)

Saved from what? Saved from eternal separation from God, the very Source of life. I've heard some people say they'd prefer hell to heaven! I don't know if they have really thought it through, but they have complete freedom to make that choice. We all get what we choose. We can choose to be with God or without Him. He will respect our choice.

Some people reject the Bible primarily on the basis that it teaches there is a hell. Few people like the idea, even if they believe in it. Their belief is not based on preference, but on their trust in the authority of the Bible. Lots of people have get

speculated about what hell might be like, but nobody really knows. Jesus frequently talked of hell. Was He lying?

It is not possible, if you read what Jesus actually said, to consider Him merely a gentle, good teacher. He claimed to be God and was condemned by the religious authorities for making that claim. If He was not God, He was either a liar or delusional and we should not trust what He said about hell or anything else. Of course, even if He lied or was deluded, He might have said some good things, but they are not authoritative.

Many people wonder why God allows so much evil and suffering in the world. At the same time, they can't imagine He would judge and punish people. But if you or someone you love has been the victim of a horrible crime, you know what it feels like to long for justice. People sometimes cheer when notorious criminals are executed! It helps me to know that even when justice is not achieved in this world—even when someone gets away with a horrible crime here—it's not the end of the story. It makes it easier for me to forgive or to allow an accused person the benefit of the doubt when guilt cannot be proven.

A reason people are wrongly convicted for horrible crimes is that in such cases, the public and the victims demand retribution. As unjust as it is to convict someone on less-than-sufficient evidence, it somehow seems a better alternative than to allow a horrible crime to go unpunished. There is more closure for the victim and more ability to heal if someone is in prison for a crime, even the wrong someone. But convicting an innocent person is an additional evil, a further crime.

We cannot count on justice in this world. The Bible says there will be justice eventually, perfect justice. No one will be wrongly accused, and no one will be judged blameless. But provision has been made for anyone who will acknowledge his faults and accept God's solution.

For some reason, God gave people freedom. It is impossible to destroy evil forcibly without destroying freedom. No one can be made to choose what is good against his/her will. Force and choice aren't compatible.

God's solution to evil, we are told, is to provide a place to accommodate those who desire complete freedom from Him and His influence. That place is called hell. C.S. Lewis said, "There are only two kinds of people in the end: those who say to God, 'Thy will be done', and those to whom God says, in the end, 'Thy will be done.'"⁴² Anyone who wants God to leave him or her alone will eventually have that wish granted.

At the same time, those who desire good but are hampered by evil will have *their* wish granted. They will be made new, free from sin and the desire for it. God says He will accomplish that by changing our inner nature so we will become good by nature and will *want* to do what's right. In Ezekiel 11:10, God makes a promise: *I will give them an undivided heart and put a new spirit in them; I will remove from them their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh.*

Several years ago, a woman I know shared her story with me. She grew up in a terrible home, and in high school decided to commit suicide. Nothing, she thought, could be worse than what she was experiencing. Death could only be a welcome relief.

She drove to a remote place with a gun, then sat for awhile thinking. She began to wonder if there really was a hell. Probably not, she thought, but what if? She knew for certain she was going through hell right then in her life, but the difference was that hell after death might last forever, with no possibility of escape. You can't commit suicide if you're already dead. She decided she'd better check it out while she still had the chance. Suicide could wait a little while. That option would continue to be open.

So she began her investigation into the Bible and its claims, not expecting to find it true, but checking just in case. In the end, she decided it was true and accepted Jesus' forgiveness and provision. When I met her, she was happily married with four wonderful kids.

Heaven will probably be better than we can imagine and hell will be worse. One way to picture heaven is to think of the

world as it is right now but without the evil. Imagine all the same people, but without the addictions, the selfishness, the pride. Same people, same activities, same everything else, but untainted. The idea that heaven will be boring has no basis. If God could create *this* world, with all its natural beauty and interesting people, and if heaven is said to be better, it will be at least as interesting and enjoyable as the best parts of this life!

Hell may be like the world is right now but with no pesky pricks of conscience, laws or restrictions. Imagine a place where people like Hitler or Stalin would never die. Imagine a place where everyone had perfect freedom to do whatever he/she wanted with no restrictions. Some have imagined hell to be a place of solitary confinement, where

It is possible by means of shrewd and unremitting propoganda to make people believe that heaven is hell—and hell heaven.

—Adolf Hitler

everyone gets anything he requests—great food, beautiful house, nice car—but there's no one else around, for eternity. *That* would be boring! It might be accurate to picture hell as a place where nobody can really be trusted, where whatever goodness or softness there is in people will fade away and only their selfishness will remain. C.S. Lewis, in his introduction to *The Screwtape Letters*, discourages us from picturing demons as black with bat wings. That's a Greek, not a Christian, idea.

I like bats much better than bureaucrats. I live in the Managerial Age, in a world of "Admin." The greatest evil is not now done in those sordid "dens of crime" that Dickens loved to paint. It is not done even in concentration camps and labour camps. In those we see its final result. But it is conceived and ordered (moved, seconded, carried, and minuted) in clean, carpeted, well-lighted offices, by quiet men with white collars and cut fingernails and smooth-shaven cheeks who do not need to raise their voice. Hence, naturally enough, my symbol for Hell is something like the bureaucracy of a police state or the offices of a thoroughly nasty business concern.⁴³

There is no Biblical basis for thinking that a devil or demons will be in charge of hell. Jesus said in Matthew 25:41 that hell was prepared for them. They will be prisoners, not wardens.

My dad used to say he'd prefer hell so he wouldn't have to hang out with hypocritical Christians. Trouble is, the hypocritical Christians will *be* in hell (Matthew 25:51)!

At Costco or Sam's Club, there are often tables set up with free samples of food and goodies. The samples cost nothing to enjoy. If I want to take anything *home* with me, however, I have to make a decision, put a package in my cart, and pay for it. The default is just a free sample. I should be grateful for it. It would be wrong to be angry that the whole cheesecake isn't free! If I want more, I can have it, but I have to do something.

Physical life on earth is a free sample. We each get samples of heaven and samples of hell. A free sample of heaven might be the feeling you have when a new baby is born, the excitement of a new love, or the joy you feel looking at an incredible sunset sky. A sample of hell might be learning you or someone you love has a terrible disease, being the victim of a

*Without Religion this World would be
Something not fit to be mentioned in
polite Company, I mean Hell.*

—President John Adams

crime, fighting on the front line in a war, or being betrayed by someone you love and trust. We ALL get free samples. But to

get “life that is truly life”, to connect to the very Source of life, we have to make a decision. We have to do something.

The good thing is, we don't have to *pay* for heaven. It's priceless and we couldn't afford it anyway. What we have to do is *accept* it as a gift from someone who can afford it, Jesus. It's too easy in one way but not at all easy in another. By accepting it, we place ourselves under His authority and protection. We voluntarily give up some of our autonomy. We choose to welcome Him to change our hearts as He promises He can do.

What if you fear someone you love might be in hell? Some people say they'd prefer hell if that's where their loved ones are!

In most cases, we don't know for certain about anyone else. We don't know what they knew and when they knew it. We don't know what they were taught or what opportunities they might have had and rejected. Even if we think we know, we can't be sure something didn't change soon before death.

But I can say with some certainty that *if* anyone who loves you *is* in hell, they want you to go elsewhere. I base this on the story Jesus told in Luke 16:19-31. The problem might not be so much the place as the people. A maximum-security prison here in Alaska is in an incredibly beautiful natural setting. It would be wonderful to have a home in a place like that. But even if the prison facility were incredibly beautiful and comfortable, I still wouldn't want to be there. It's not the place; it's the people. If I ever ended up in that prison, I wouldn't want you to come live there, at least not if I care about you.

The universe we're in is pretty amazing. Just this earth without the bad stuff would be fine by me. If the Bible is correct that heaven will be better and hell will be worse than this, the choice isn't hard to make.

Could we be happy in heaven if others were in hell? Can we be happy eating while others starve? That happens every day! It would make a difference if you knew for certain those others had been offered food but had turned away and refused it. God promises to judge justly. People *cannot* judge justly. Jesus wept for those who chose to reject Him, but He honored their choice. He didn't use force. Anyone who tries to force you to believe anything doesn't know the Bible very well.

The Bible calls this world “the land of the shadow of death.” (Matthew 4:16 and Isaiah 9:2) Imagine what life would be like if that shadow were removed!

It is our choice. We are free to choose and that freedom is a gift of love. Deuteronomy 30:19 says: *This day I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live.*

God wants us to choose life. He doesn't force us.

The Justice of God

There is not space in this book to address common questions and objections, but I will make one additional comment related to justice. Something that bothers many people when they first read the Bible is that God judged and punished people, cities, even whole nations. It may seem unfair, even unjust.

I recently sat in on a trial where the question was not the guilt or innocence of the defendant, but the state of mind at the time of the crime. Was it intentional (first-degree murder), knowing (second-degree murder), reckless (manslaughter) or negligent (criminally negligent homicide)? Although I listened to most of the evidence, I found myself wondering how I, or anyone else, could possibly know exactly what was in the defendant's mind at the exact moment the criminal act occurred. There are indicators, of course, but there is no way to be SURE. Sometimes we don't even know what's in our own minds, let alone anyone else's.

In February 2004, a jury here in Alaska awarded nearly \$1.7 million in damages to the families of two 17-year-old boys who were killed when the four-wheeler they were riding slammed into a cable on a road near the Knik River nearly eight years ago. A third passenger on the four-wheeler, a girl, survived and ran for help. (Just a note: There are warnings against carrying even one passenger on a four-wheeler.)

One of the boys had bought beer and rum illegally at a liquor store before the accident. The teens then went to a party on the riverbank, drank, and got into a fight with two other teens who chased them in a car. The chase ended before the four-

wheeler swerved off the main road onto a private road and slammed into a cable property owners had strung across it.

What interested me was how blame for this tragic event was apportioned by the jury. They assigned 35% of the blame to the owners of the liquor store. The residents who strung the cable across the road going into their property were 28% at fault.

We're making all these God-like decisions without God-like skills. But people don't want to be bothered by that.

—Michael Radelet

author of "In Spite of Innocence"

The teenaged driver of the four-wheeler was 25% at fault, his parents 5%, the other teen who died 2% and his parents 1%. The other teens who had fought and then chased the four-wheeler with a car, along with their parents, were allotted 4% of the blame.

I didn't hear all the evidence on this one, but it doesn't sound entirely just.

Sometimes it is clear that a single person bears 100% of the blame for something bad that happens, but most often that is not the case. Even in what may seem to be a clear-cut case and where one person is deemed 100% responsible, it is very likely that others share at least some blame. While we wouldn't acquit a person who shot someone in cold blood, it is true that his parents, peers, teachers, moviemakers, mass media, or others may have influenced his decision in some way. They may not even know what they said or did that contributed to the crime. We can't see inside people's hearts and minds, but God can. He knows what we know and when we knew it. He sees through every lie. He knows the exact degree of intention or deception involved and the precise allocation of responsibility.

Proverbs 17:15 says: *Acquitting the guilty and condemning the innocent—the LORD detests them both.* The Bible contains dozens of references to God's hatred of injustice, as well as exhortations for men to treat each other justly and impartially.

God detests injustice, and calls *man* unjust again and again in the Bible. Imagine for a moment that you could see every crime that was committed anywhere on earth, and could know every thought that entered everyone's mind and every person that influenced anyone one way or another. Imagine you could feel everyone's pain as intensely as they feel it. We don't have that kind of information. God does. We don't have all the evidence. We don't even know who's guilty and who's not in some cases, let alone what was in their mind, who else might share the blame for what they did, or how it should all be apportioned out.

Is God unjust? All I know is that I'm not in a position to accuse Him of that, even when something might appear to me to be unjust. I don't have all the facts. The evidence I have seems to indicate reasonable doubt, at least.

If I want to be considered innocent until proven guilty, I must grant the same to others. The Bible says God's judgment is perfect and just. I don't know that for certain in every specific case, but I don't have all the evidence. Based on what I know, I think I can trust God's integrity and truthfulness.

Justice is an idea that is best understood in its absence.

—Stanley Cohen
author of "The Wrong Men"

Who's the Boss?

A game I like to play with kids is "Who's the boss?" In the classroom, the teacher is the boss. But the teacher has a boss. Who's that? The principal. The principal has a boss, too. Who's that? It's an opportunity to teach kids that everyone is under authority, even when they are also *in* authority. Even the president has a boss. Who's that? In a democracy, it's theoretically the people who vote.

If you've ever supervised children, you know that *they* want to be the boss. They want to call the shots and be in full control. They want things to happen when they desire them, not on someone else's timetable. They want the world to conform to their will. When something goes wrong, even if it's caused by a bad decision they made, they feel entitled to be rescued and released from responsibility. After all, they're only kids!

A perfect example is the first time my husband took his grandson skiing. As soon as they got to the top of the lift, before Grandpa had time to get situated, the little guy pointed his skis downhill and took off. He was a little wobbly but he didn't fall. It was exhilarating! Everybody cheered.

He's a gifted athlete, and after a few more trips up the lift, he told Grandpa to go away. "I don't need you!" he said. Grandpa arched his eyebrows and said, "OK, you're on your own." Within minutes, before he even got to the lift, he was piled in a tangle of skis, poles, arms and legs, crying, "Help me!" Demanding help, to be exact. Feeling entitled to help on command and sounding angry with Grandpa for not responding

more quickly. He might have been a bit angry with himself for falling, but that anger was directed at Grandpa.

It was a perfect illustration of human nature, including my own nature. Every one of us has the same tendencies, however well concealed beneath grown-up manners. We want the privileges of power without the corresponding responsibilities. We don't want anybody ruling over us. We question authority simply because it *is* authority. We don't trust authority, period, regardless of how legitimate or lawful it may be. We want to be in full control. If something bad happens, even if it's a result of our own wrong decisions, we feel entitled to immediate rescue and release from responsibility. After all, we're only human!

When things are going well for us, like they were for Dennis' grandson on the ski slope early that day, we happily declare our independence. We don't need help. We want God to leave us alone and not interfere with our plans and priorities. We don't want to be bothered with being grateful or following any ridiculous rules. But when something goes wrong, we have a natural tendency to demand that God rescue us right away, even if the problem is a result of our own bad decisions. If He doesn't intervene rapidly enough or in the way we think He should, we feel angry, throw up our hands, and say it's ridiculous to believe in God anyway.

Even if we believe in God, it is our nature to want Him to submit to US, rather than vice versa. We want His power under our command. We want to be able to pick and choose the rules we like and ignore the rest. We feel entitled to judge and evaluate everything God does. If we're satisfied that His job performance is satisfactory, we'll keep Him on for the time being.

Children can't imagine that the rules they chafe against could possibly be for their own benefit. The benefit of others is not a real and present concern. Their idea of a good parent might be a parent who waits on them and gives them whatever they want whenever they want it, not a parent who holds them responsible for following rules or showing respect. Of course,

adults must model by being true to their word and showing respect for children as well as for their own authorities.

If you're a parent or teacher, you love your children even when they rebel. Their hugs and the sparkles in their eyes make every trial and trouble worthwhile. One father told me he enjoyed watching his kids learn to ski more than he'd enjoyed learning to ski himself years earlier. Loving parents want to give gifts to their children, out of love, not because the gifts are demanded. Their hearts warm when a child enjoys a gift, especially if she appreciates not just the gift but the giver. The relationship itself is the reward.

You remember being a kid. You know that you have a broader perspective than you did then, and you expect that your children will gain perspective with maturity. They may rebel now, but eventually they'll realize that everything you did, whether they knew it or not at the time, was done out of a love so deep and strong it would bring tears to their eyes if they could comprehend it.

If you're a loving parent, you don't want to beat your kids or force them to do your will. You don't want to hurt or imprison them. You don't want to break their will. Your heart's desire is that they'll love you back, that they'll someday want to please you as much as you want to please them.

As long as a child's desire for independence stays within limits, you probably consider it a good thing. After all, you want kids to be able to stand on their own two feet and not depend on you for everything. It is incredibly rewarding to raise kids who turn out to be wonderful, responsible, independent and loving adults who value what is valuable.

You could say the parent/child relationship is a physical picture of a spiritual reality. We are all free to love or to hate our parents as well as God, to appreciate the giver as well as the gifts, or to grab the gifts and shove the giver aside.

When children rebel, loving parents wait and hope. Even if a child packs up everything and leaves home the minute he can, pushing his parents out of his life completely or contacting them

only when there is some need or demand, they hope. There's a large window of opportunity for them to repent, soften their hearts and reconcile. But if children continue throughout life to reject, revile and ignore their parents, they can't rightfully expect a large inheritance!

I saw a 10-year-old boy in a store awhile back pushing his elderly grandmother in a wheelchair. He kept asking her where she wanted to go. Could he get her something to eat or drink? Was she cold? Could he help her with her sweater? It was apparent that he considered it a great privilege just to be with her. He wanted to do for her whatever he could, not because someone was forcing him, but because he loved her. He enjoyed the relationship with her as much as she enjoyed him.

When you're old and no longer able to do for others, love is what counts. It transcends everything else, and gives a person eternal value. In the end, when health, possessions, beauty, jobs and everything else have been lost, love reveals its true worth. The people who sit beside your deathbed and hold your hand, not because they have to but because they want to, are your true family. Anyone who prefers you dead so they can be free of your authority or maybe get a share of your stuff is not family, regardless of any blood relationship.

"Why would God love me?" we might wonder. "If He created the whole universe, why would He bother himself with an insignificant speck like me?"

It's a reasonable question. But value doesn't depend on size. A tall person is not more valuable than a short person. You don't love a teenager more than a newborn baby. A gift in a small box might be a lot more valuable than a gift in a large one. Oddly, humans are about midway in size between the largest and the smallest known objects (the universe and subatomic particles). Our brains are more complex by many orders of magnitude than anything else known. There are more potential connections in the human brain than there are atoms in the universe.

It may not make sense to us. We'd have done things differently if we were God. But we're not God. If you agree something is worth exactly as much as someone will pay for it, we're worth a lot. We're worth the price Jesus paid, His life.

By the way, Jesus was not victimized and no one is to blame for His death. It was expected, predicted, part of the plan. He explained it all in Luke 24:25-32. The Scriptures He refers to are what Christians call the Old Testament. The New Testament hadn't been written yet.

The Bible says repeatedly that Jesus willingly gave His life. If He was God, as He claimed, He could not have been forced to do that. If He was not God, Christianity is a farce and should be rejected.

Why was Jesus' death necessary? To pay our debt. That's another reason for the marriage analogy. In a marriage, partners are allowed to pay each others' debts. In fact, they're legally responsible for them, even if they didn't incur them.

Jesus' love gives people value. It does not depend on anything we can do. If we love a grandmother, it's not because of what she can do for us. She may be helpless and totally dependent on us. But it is a privilege to spend time with her and serve her if we love her.

So who's the boss? God is the boss—everybody's boss, like it or not, at least if the Bible can be trusted. We are told we will all be accountable to God. His desire is a loving relationship with anyone who wants the same. There's nothing more permanent or more precious than a relationship of love. It benefits both parties, the lover *and* the beloved.

God understands our rebellious nature and gives us a large window of opportunity to repent, to turn towards Him in gratitude for our very lives, to be sorry for the hurtful things we've thought and done, sorry we took credit for everything good and blamed Him for everything bad.

That explains why God hasn't done anything (yet) to clean up the mess this world is in. He is still waiting for somebody.

The window of opportunity has not yet closed. There is at least one more person in the world who will freely choose to turn and be reconciled.

When we think *we* are entitled to be the boss, we expect God to serve us. That thinking, according to a survivor of Auschwitz, is backwards. I don't have the faith this person does, but his comments made me think:

It never occurred to me to question God's doings or lack of doings while I was an inmate of Auschwitz, although of course I understand others did.... I was no less or no more religious because of what the Nazis did to us; and I believe my faith in God was not undermined in the least. It never occurred to me to associate the calamity we were experiencing with God, to blame Him, or to believe in Him less or cease believing in Him at all because He didn't come to our aid. God doesn't owe us that, or anything. We owe our lives to Him. If someone believes God is responsible for the death of six million because He didn't somehow do something to save them, he's got his thinking reversed. We owe God our lives for the few or many years we live, and we have the duty to worship Him and so as He commands us. That's what we're here on earth for, to be in God's service, to do God's bidding.⁴⁴

God gave us two precious gifts: life and freedom. When we quit trying to be the boss and accept His legitimate authority, we can receive a gift of real life. Once we know we are loved for who we are and aside from what we do by the Author of the universe, we can rest and enjoy what that relationship has to offer. When we realize how much He loves people, we will understand why He lets things go on as they are in this world and why we have to suffer. There's at least one person who needs more time to make their decision, to decide who's truly the boss.

By the way, when Christians call Jesus "the Lord", they're simply using an old-fashioned term for "the boss."

What Now?

Mark Twain once wrote that it wasn't the parts of the Bible he didn't understand that bothered him. It was the parts he *did* understand.

By now, I hope you will concede that while the Bible may or may not be true, it is at least *potentially* true and worth investigating. If you feel comfortable making a decision either way, without further investigation, that's fine. I may discover I'm wrong about the whole thing eventually, who knows? Even if that's the case, I had to encourage you to investigate.

Get the evidence you need, consider it, and render your verdict. Does God exist? If so, is the Bible God's message? If not, that's that. You're done. If so, you have one further choice to make. Will you personally accept God's free gift of eternal life? Take the time you need, but don't delay getting started. The deadline is death and none of us knows when that will happen or if we'll be conscious when it comes. In case you wait until the last minute, I will clarify what you have to do. Romans 10:13 says, *Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.* That's what you have to do. Admit your sin (your debt) and accept God's offer to pay it. Call on the name of the Lord! Acknowledge that He's the Boss. It seems too simple. It is simple! But that doesn't mean it's easy!

If Dennis or I can help in any way, let me know, but we won't bother or push you. The reason for this book is to say my piece, make as good a case as I can, and be done with it. I will refrain from mentioning the subject again unless you bring it up. To repeat: Our regard for you does not depend at all on whether

you agree with us. I hope that goes both ways.

In 1987, a teacher friend came into my classroom and told me she'd started going to church. My first reaction was, "(*Expletive deleted*), now she's one of *those!* I like her! I like being her friend. Why did she have to go do *that* and mess everything up?" Don't worry. Dennis and I haven't lost our sense of humor or joined a weird cult. We still have the same interests and activities. We don't expect you to change in any way to accommodate us and we respect whatever you believe or don't believe.

Some of you may be content to render your verdict right now. Some of you may be like me and will require 15 years to investigate the evidence. I am glad I had that 15 years and didn't wait until death was imminent. That's why I encourage you to start now, so you'll have as much time as you need or want, so you won't be rushed.

The next step for you might be to investigate. Here are some things I did:

1. *Read the Bible.* The Bible claims to be God's revelation of Himself. No ancient book has spoken so directly to people of all times and places. The *One-Year Bible* arranges the text into daily sections of 4-5 pages, which I read with my morning coffee. Initially, you can scan the parts you find confusing. The first time through, I noted all the questions that came to mind and set out to find answers. Dennis and I can try to answer your questions, or ask someone else. On important and difficult matters, get more than one view or opinion. Try to avoid drawing conclusions prematurely.
2. *Pray.* Most of us pray at times, regardless of our beliefs. If the car slides out of control and is hurtling toward oncoming traffic, most of us pray. My basic prayer was, "God, IF you exist, help me find truth." That's a prayer He'll answer.
3. *Read other books.* On p. 94 is a list of a few I liked.
4. *Listen to Christian radio.* I hesitate to recommend this because there are some real hucksters out there. Don't send any money to anyone! You can always switch the radio off!

5. *Use the Internet to do some research.* There are forums where you can ask any question you have and get answers from people with all sorts of beliefs. I've listed some web sites you might try on p. 96.
6. *Begin studying the Bible.* I am always surprised that people think they need to *believe* the Bible before learning what it has to say. Quite the contrary! You cannot decide whether Christianity is true or false if you do not even know what it is *about!* Don't assume that what you were told as a child, what you read in the papers, or what any individual says is accurate. Not everyone *wants* you to discern truth! Be like a juror, with an open mind and a presumption of innocence.
7. If you're interested in another religion or philosophy, investigate it also. Read its holy books. Read about its history. Read its critics and check to see if what they say is *true*. Truth can withstand scrutiny. Try to avoid bias in any direction. (Incidentally, have you ever wondered why no one swears in the name of Buddha or Mohammed?)

You might notice that I didn't recommend that you attend church. I wish I could. But in researching a church to recommend to a friend a few years ago, I was shocked to realize how many churches exist that I wouldn't recommend to anyone! Some take bits and pieces from the Bible and mold them to fit a favorite philosophy. Others are a place to socialize, not a place to learn. I wouldn't recommend any church that discourages hard questions, emphasizes feeling over thinking, or stresses some parts of the Bible to the exclusion of others.

Another problem is that churches are full of people, and people are, well, people. The charge that Christians are hypocrites is not unfounded. It could be argued that anyone who aspires to something higher than himself falls short and thereby becomes a hypocrite, but that is no excuse. Some people live up to their aspirations a lot better than others. Hitler's primary personality trait, by the way, was unparalleled consistency in everything he said and did. He meant what he said, he lived by his ideals, and he practiced what he preached.

I'd like that said of me, but for different ideals. If you decide to try a church, try several. They're not all the same.

A surprising number of Christians have never read through the Bible. Anyone who seems to judge you or think they're superior to you might well be one of them. I tried to keep my focus off the people and on the Bible. It helped me to remember M. Scott Peck's observation that *if* good and evil exist and *if* the church is a front line in the battle, you should expect to find both good and evil in church. Aside from the fact that not everyone who claims to be a Christian actually *is*, there's the fact that Christians are *not* good by nature, not yet. C.S. Lewis commented that of all bad men, religious bad men are the worst! People are just messengers. The focus should be on the message. You wouldn't discount someone's entire testimony because she wasn't a sterling character. You would, however, seek corroborating evidence before believing her.

Jesus never condemned skeptics. He condemned self-righteous and prideful religious leaders in no uncertain terms. The invitation is, *Come, let us reason together.* (Is. 1:18) The promise is, *Seek and you will find.* (Jer. 29:13) God wants people to "seek Him and perhaps reach out for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us." (Acts 17:27)

William James, pragmatic American philosopher, wrote: Religion is a *forced* option.... We cannot escape the issue by remaining skeptical and waiting for more light, because although we do avoid error in that way *if religion be untrue*, we lose the good, *if it be true*, just as certainly as if we positively chose to disbelieve.⁴⁵

C.S. Lewis summed up the situation this way:

Christianity asserts that every individual human being is going to live forever, and this must be either true or false. Now there are a good many things which would not be worth bothering about if I were going to live only seventy years, but which I had better bother about very seriously if I am going to live forever.⁴⁶

Although I believe it's far better to render your verdict and make your choice based on evidence, you have a 50-50 chance

if you just flip a coin. Some make their choice based on Pascal's wager:

If we become nothing after death, we will not be there to regret having prepared for something. But if we are something after death, and we have not prepared at all, ... we will long feel bitter, painful regret. So we have everything to lose by not preparing, and nothing to gain; we have everything to gain by preparing, and nothing to lose.⁴⁷

Our deadline is death. Life on earth is a free sample, just a shadow of "real" life. Anyone who loves life should seriously think about whether they want more of it than a mere 70-100 years. Even compared to recorded history, that's only the blink of an eye. The Author of life has issued an invitation to each of us. We have this lifetime to consider that invitation. If you've ever wondered why God doesn't do something *now*, the answer is in 2 Peter 3:9: *The Lord is not slow in keeping His promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.* Everyone means everyone, including even the worst of criminals, who, by the way, will face God's judgment and can request His mercy, the same as anyone else. They have an invitation, too. WE might not have issued them an invitation if we were God, but we aren't.

C.S. Lewis offers the following advice to anyone who wants to avoid God:

How, then, it may be asked, can we either reach or avoid Him?

The avoiding, in many times and places, has proved so difficult that a very large part of the human race failed to achieve it. But in our own time and place it is extremely easy. Avoid silence, avoid solitude, avoid any train of thought that leads off the beaten track. Concentrate on money, sex, status, health and (above all) on your own grievances. Keep the radio on. Live in a crowd. Use plenty of sedation. If you must read books, select them very carefully. But you'd be safer to stick to the papers. You'll find the advertisements helpful; especially those with a sexy or snobbish appeal.⁴⁸

In 1984, an Avianca Airlines jet crashed into the side of a mountain in Spain, killing everyone on board. When the “black box” cockpit recorder was recovered, it was discovered that several minutes before impact, a shrill, computer-synthesized voice said repeatedly in English, “Pull up! Pull up!” The pilot, probably thinking it was a malfunction, snapped, “Shut up, Gringo!” and switched off the warning system.

It was reasonable for the pilot to suspect a malfunction. His error was to *assume* that and act on his assumption without verification.

It is reasonable for you to suspect the Bible is nothing more than a storybook from a superstitious age. But I encourage you not to *assume* that. Check it out. There’s still time to “Pull up.”

Thank you for taking time to read this. I feel better. A weight has gone off my shoulders. If you conclude I’m wrong, I apologize in advance for bothering you. If I’m right, I’ll someday be glad that you won’t be able to say to me, “You knew this? You call yourself a friend? Why didn’t you bother to say something when there was time for me to make a different choice?”

As a former hostile skeptic, I can imagine how offended I might have been if someone had given ME this book 15 years ago. I would have stayed silent on this subject if I didn’t honestly think it was important. But check things out for yourself. My hope is that everyone I care about will make a conscious and informed choice, whatever it may be.

I’ll close with the words of Paul in 2 Corinthians 5:18-20:

God has given us the task of reconciling people to Him. For God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself, no longer counting people’s sins against them. This is the wonderful message He has given us to tell others. We are Christ’s ambassadors, and God is using us to speak to you. We urge you, as though Christ Himself were pleading with you, ‘Be reconciled to God!’

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Recommended Reading

Quotes are from promotional material on the book covers.

Alcorn, Randy, *Deadline*. Sisters, OR: Multnomah Books, 1994. “A dramatic and vivid novel of substance, filled with hope and perspective for every reader who longs to feel purpose in life.”

Alcorn, Randy, *Safely Home*. Wheaton: Tyndale House, 2001.

“American business executive Ben Fielding has no idea what his brilliant old college roommate is facing in China. But when they’re reunited in China after 20 years, the men are shocked at what they discover about each other. This brilliant story mixes the warmth of a good novel with the harsh reality of the persecuted church.” It’s a favorite book of ours. I researched the realities in China, and this book is right on. It helped us see Christianity and America through Chinese eyes.

Behe, Michael, *Darwin’s Black Box: The Biochemical Challenge to Evolution*. New York: Free Press, 1996.

My #2 highest recommendation. “This book should be on the essential reading list of all those who are interested in the question of where we came from, as it presents the most thorough and clever presentation of the design argument that I have seen.”

Denton, Michael, *Evolution: A Theory in Crisis*. Bethesda: Adler & Adler, 1985. I recommend this second to *Darwin’s Black Box* on the subject of evolution.

Johnson, Philip E., *Darwin on Trial*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993. “With the intrigue of a mystery and the gripping detail of a court trial, Johnson takes readers through the evidence with the lawyer’s skill he learned as a Berkeley professor of law specializing in the logic of arguments.”

Lewis, C.S. *Miracles: A Preliminary Study*. “C.S. Lewis’ logic is seemingly effortless, his illustrations are shrewd, and he open-mindedly leaves the historical evidence for miracles to the reader to discover for himself.”

Lewis, C.S. *Mere Christianity*. “Lewis is the ideal persuader for the half-convinced, for the good man who would like to be a Christian but finds his intellect getting in the way.”

Lewis, C.S. Anything concerning Christianity by C.S. Lewis is recommended. He answers hard questions and explains things in terms that are understandable to anyone.

Lubenow, Marvin L., *Bones of Contention: A Creationist Assessment of Human Fossils*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1992.

“Lubenow is not content to merely quote biblical theory. Like a true scholar he researches in depth the literature in the scientific journals, sifting the evidence....” This is a complete critique of the fossils of so-called “ape men”, well documented and written for a layperson.

McDowell, Josh, *More Than a Carpenter*. Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1977. My #1 recommendation, short and easy to read. “Josh McDowell thought Christians must be out of their minds. He put them down. He argued against their faith. But eventually he saw that his arguments wouldn’t stand up. This is a hard-headed book for people who are skeptical about Jesus’ deity, His resurrection, and His claims on their lives.”

Price, Randall, *The Stones Cry Out: What Archeology Reveals About the Truth of the Bible*. Eugene: Harvest House Publishers, 1997. “Pottery shards, stone inscriptions, ancient scrolls, and other fascinating artifacts have shed new light on the people and events of the Bible—bringing them from the realm of mystery to the world of fact.”

Rawlings, Maurice S., Ph.D. *To Hell and Back*. Out of print.

Dr. Rawlings is a cardiologist who has brought several patients back to life after several minutes. Some people return terrified!

Richardson, Don, *Eternity in Their Hearts*. Ventura: Regal Books, 1991. What about people in other times and cultures who’ve never heard of Jesus? Ecclesiastes 3:11 says God has set eternity in the hearts of men. Here’s evidence.

Scheck, Barry et al., *Actual Innocence*. New York: Random House, 2000. “Using real-life stories more horrifyingly gripping than any fiction, the authors make clear the deep flaws in our criminal justice system, and the positive difference that is being made by DNA identification methods.” I wish this book were mandatory reading for anyone who serves on a jury.

Sheller, Jeffery L., *Is the Bible True? How Modern Debates and Discoveries Affirm the Essence of the Scriptures*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1999. “For those who want to think critically and carefully about the Bible and historical issues, and not merely parrot the dictums of the extremists, this book is a must.”

Strobel, Lee, *The Case for Christ: A Journalist's Personal Investigation of the Evidence for Jesus*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1998.

“Retracing his own spiritual journey from atheism to faith, Lee Strobel, former legal editor of the Chicago Tribune, cross-examines a dozen experts with doctorates from schools like Cambridge, Princeton, and Brandeis who are recognized authorities in their own fields.” This book is a “riveting quest for the truth about history’s most compelling figure.”

Vanauken, Sheldon, *A Severe Mercy*. New York: Harper & Row, 1977. “The author and his wife were lucky enough to discover that radiant love so often written of in books, so seldom found in real life. Their perfect love became a test of courage, and a search for truth.” This is Dennis’ and my all-time favorite love story. The author and his wife were friends of C.S. Lewis and became Christians under his influence. One reviewer wrote, “I wept as I read. What Vanauken has written makes all the books on marriage and courtship seem shoddy.”

Recommended Websites

I haven’t spent much time in some of these. They’re just to help you get started. Let me know if you find any other helpful websites.

<http://www.SusanCAnthony.com/>

My site. Check under “About Susan” biography & “Resources.”

<http://www.apologetics.org/>

C.S. Lewis Society: Helping skeptics doubt their doubts. Forums.

<http://www.GotQuestions.org/>

42,374 answers. Ask any question and get an answer by e-mail.

<http://www.provethetbible.net/>

Information to help you judge the Bible for yourself.

<http://www.rationalchristianity.net/>

Articles for skeptics. Stories from people convinced by evidence.

<http://www.christianapologetic.org/>

Download “Handbook of Reason and Insight for Scientists.”

<http://www.evidenceofgod.com/>

Offers books for sale, also has lots of answers.

<http://www.allaboutgod.com/>

For seekers, skeptics and believers.