

UNDERSTANDING THE TIMES

A SURVEY OF
COMPETING
WORLDVIEWS

JEFF MYERS *&*
DAVID A. NOEBEL

UNDERSTANDING THE TIMES

Published by Summit Ministries

P.O. Box 207

Manitou Springs, CO 80829

In cooperation with

David C Cook

4050 Lee Vance View

Colorado Springs, CO 80918 U.S.A.

David C Cook Distribution Canada

55 Woodslee Avenue, Paris, Ontario, Canada N3L 3E5

David C Cook U.K., Kingsway Communications

Eastbourne, East Sussex BN23 6NT, England

The graphic circle C logo is a registered trademark of David C Cook.

All rights reserved. Except for brief excerpts for review purposes, no part of this book may be reproduced or used in any form without written permission from the publisher.

The website addresses recommended throughout this book are offered as a resource to you. These websites are not intended in any way to be or imply an endorsement on the part of David C Cook, nor do we vouch for their content.

Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version® (ESV®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved. Scripture quotations marked KJV are taken from the King James Version of the Bible. (Public domain.) Scripture quotations marked NIV 1984 are taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV®. Copyright © 1973, 1984 by Biblica, Inc.™ Used by permission of Zondervan. All rights reserved worldwide. www.zondervan.com. Scripture quotations marked NIV are taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV®. Copyright © 1973, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.® Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide. New International Version® and NIV® are registered trademarks of Biblica, Inc. Use of either trademark for the offering of goods or services requires the prior written consent of Biblica, Inc.

LCCN 2014932409

ISBN 978-1-4347-0958-5

eISBN 978-0-7814-1378-7

© 2016 Summit Ministries

Printed in the United States of America

First Edition 2015

Second Edition 2016

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

050116

CONTENTS

	Foreword	7	Postmodernism	14	Law
	Acknowledgements		Page 146		Page 336
	Preface				
1	The Battle of Ideas	8	Theology	15	Politics
	Page 1		Page 172		Page 364
2	Christianity	9	Philosophy	16	Economics
	Page 26		Page 198		Page 394
3	Islam	10	Ethics	17	History
	Page 50		Page 224		Page 424
4	Secularism	11	Biology	18	Conclusion
	Page 74		Page 252		Page 450
5	Marxism	12	Psychology		Glossary
	Page 98		Page 280		Page 481
6	New Spirituality	13	Sociology		Index
	Page 122		Page 306		Page 499

FOREWORD

The book you are holding has a very long story. It began when I was a junior in college and was asked to lead a study group on communism. From that day until now, my interest in the subject has led me to the conclusion that Marxism is a religious worldview. And like other worldviews, it competes for allegiance. This got me wondering: How does Christianity measure up to other competing worldviews? The answer took years to sort out. The first edition of *Understanding the Times* was the finished product of that sorting-out process.

It's been over twenty-five years since those early copies of *Understanding the Times* embarked on their maiden voyages to the bookshelves and consciousness of faithful Christian readers all over the country. The original nine-hundred-page tome was a labor of love by the generous hearts of the Summit family. Shortly thereafter, partnerships were formed with Harvest House and the Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI), with hundreds of thousands of copies reaching laypeople and Christian students alike.

The impact and reception was far greater than anything we could have imagined.

In light of that history, I am deeply pleased with this revised and updated edition. Jeff and his team have completed a marvelous achievement that will take its rightful place in the long legacy of this book. Their efforts have ensured that there will be still more generations that understand the times (1 Chron. 12:32).

David A. Noebel, Founder
Summit Ministries

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This book began as a work of trepidation: How do you take a classic work—and one of the most popular texts on biblical worldview—and update it?

Thanks to the wisdom of teams, though, it turned into something that transformed those who were part of it. From the Verdoorn family, who helped make it financially possible, to Joey Amadee, whose tireless genius conceived and wrote every line of code for its brilliant digital delivery system, I find myself humbled and inspired.

A “who’s who” of subject matter experts checked various chapters for accuracy and logic. These included Dr. Nabeel Qureshi, Dr. Hunter Baker, Dr. Paul Kengor, Dr. Douglas Groothuis, Dr. Scott Smith, Dr. Francis J. Beckwith, Dr. W. Gary Phillips, Dr. Scott Rae, Atty. Casey Luskin, Dr. Clark Rose, Prof. Ernest “Skip” Burzumato, Atty. Jeffrey Ventrella, Dr. Eric Patterson, Dr. Jay W. Richards, and Dr. Richard Shumack. Their helpful comments and insights were thoughtful and impassioned.

David Knopp was our project manager, keeping the trains running on time with the aid of the impeccably organized Amanda Bridger. My executive assistant, Tosha Payne, looked over just about every chapter and gave comments that erased errors and doubts about whether the thing was actually interesting to read.

Our editors and proofreaders, Carlos Antonio Delgado, Robert Hand, Jason Graham, Trudy Friesema, and Dr. Paul Copan read every word and made just the right suggestions in just the right places.

The entire team has dedicated hours upon hours to help me craft the best edition of *Understanding the Times*. Nevertheless, wherever this volume may be found deficient, that responsibility lies solely with me.

Our curriculum director, Roy Faletti, developed the relationships with schools that tested the whole project with their students.

I would also like to thank our Vice President of Programs, Eric Smith, who kept the Summit boat moving smoothly through the water while I wrote six hours a day for nearly a year.

My long-time friend John Stonestreet participated in brainstorming sessions and high-level edits and helped me chart a course of accuracy while avoiding theological landmines.

Finally, I would like to thank the Myers children, who patiently listened to me read from newly written chapters and then asked questions. May the understanding of what is within these pages be part of your generation’s legacy.

Jeff Myers, President
Summit Ministries

PREFACE

How to Use the Understanding the Times Series

Noted Christian writer and teacher Del Tackett has said that the Understanding the Times (UTT) series needs to be the core in every high school, college, and seminary today. Colson Center president, John Stonestreet, has said that Understanding the Times should have a place in every Christian's home library. Why is this series so important for Christian students and adults in all walks of life to use often in today's complex world?

- ***Understanding the Faith: A Survey of Christian Apologetics***—the first book in the series. Christians can use the UTT series to better understand theology and apologetics. The knowledge of a solid Christian worldview is a vital starting place for understanding God. And learning to defend the Christian worldview is critical for those who want to share their faith with an unbelieving world. Theology and apologetics aren't just academic exercises for pastors and church leaders; they are worthy endeavors for every believer.
- ***Understanding the Times: A Survey of Competing Worldviews***—the second book in the series. Christians can use the UTT series to gain biblical worldview insight. Understanding the Times helps Christians understand the six major worldviews that drive today's major global events. When issues occur, UTT should be one of the books that Christians access to help them form a biblical response. Researchers have cited that only a minority of believers possess a proper biblical worldview. And the faithful would be well advised to know the precepts of the other five major worldviews at odds with Christianity.
- ***Understanding the Culture: A Survey of Contemporary Issues***—the third book in the series. Christians can use the UTT series to transform culture. Once a believer is steeped in biblical theology, apologetics, and worldview, he or she can communicate biblical truth to friends, loved ones, and associates. The Gospel affirms the requirement for sharing God's world on timely topics, as well as developing strong relationships from which to influence and change cultural structures and values. UTT helps believers engage biblical faith in life areas where God has placed them today.

As a result, the UTT series is eminently useful for students, teachers, pastors, businesspeople, public leaders, and others who want their faith to make an impact on twenty-first-century society.



SECULARISM



MARXISM



POSTMODERNISM



THEOLOGY

Atheism

Atheism

Theological
Suspicion



PHILOSOPHY

Materialism &
Naturalism

Dialectical
Materialism

Anti-Realism



ETHICS

Moral
Relativism or
Utilitarianism

Proletariat
Morality

Cultural
Relativism



BIOLOGY

Neo-Darwinism

Punctuated
Equilibrium

Anti-
Essentialism



PSYCHOLOGY

Mind/Body
Monism
(Self-Actualization)

Mind/Body
Monism
(Classical Conditioning)

Decentered
Self



SOCIOLOGY

Personal
Autonomy

Proletariat
Society

Social
Constructionism



LAW

Legal
Positivism

Proletariat
Law

Critical
Legal Studies



POLITICS

Progressivism

Statism

Political
Pessimism or
Liberalism



ECONOMICS

Economic
Interventionism

Socialism

Economic
Interventionism



HISTORY

Social
Progress

Historical
Materialism

Historical
Revisionism



NEW SPIRITUALITY



ISLAM



CHRISTIANITY

Pantheism

Monotheism

Trinitarian
Monotheism

Spiritual
Monism

Dualism

Dualism

Karma

Divine
Command
Theory

Agape

Spiritual
Evolution

Special
Creation

Special
Creation

Mind/Body
Monism
(Fourth Force)

Mind/Body
Dualism
(Unfallen)

Mind/Body
Dualism
(Fallen)

Collective
Consciousness

Ummah

Sphere
Sovereignty

Self-Law

Shariah
Law

Natural
Law

Autarchy

Islamic
Theocracy

Subsidiarity

Universal
Enlightened
Production

Shariah
Economics

Biblical
Stewardship

Evolutionary
Godhood

Pan-Islam

Redemptive
Narrative



CHAPTER

I

1

THE BATTLE OF IDEAS

1. THE SECRET TO UNDERSTANDING THE WORLD OF IDEAS

To understand the world of ideas, we must figure out how tennis champs return opponents' blazing fast serves and how chess masters memorize the position of every piece on the board.

If you've ever been on a tennis team, your coach probably told you to "keep your eye on the ball." But that's not good enough if you have to return a 150-mile-per-hour serve from former world-champion tennis player Andy Roddick. By the time you react to the serve, the ball is already past you. Yet those who played Roddick regularly returned such serves. How could they possibly do this?

To understand the world of ideas, we must figure out how tennis champs return opponents' blazing fast serves and how chess masters memorize the position of every piece on the board.

Now think about how chess grand masters read the chess board. After just briefly seeing the board of a partially played chess game, they are able to remember the exact placement of the pieces. Do they have photographic memories?

Maybe tennis and chess champions are just made differently from the rest of us. Maybe they're more gifted. It would be somewhat of a relief if this were true, because we'd be off the hook for having to figure out their secrets and apply them to our own lives. But it's not that simple.

2. CHAMPIONS SUCCEED BY MASTERING THE WORLD'S PATTERNS

Champions have learned to see things differently. This gives them a level of success the rest of us find amazing. Understanding how they do it is the key to successfully navigating our complicated, confusing, and contentious world. There are two keys to unlocking the mystery.

Key No. 1: We live in a rule-governed universe. Andy Roddick can't serve the ball anywhere he likes. He has to make it land in a certain square on the court, or it doesn't count. Similarly, pieces on a chess board cannot be moved wherever the player wishes. There are rules about what each piece can do. Life is like that too. There are rules. If we can understand and live by them, we can find purpose and learn how to make the world a better place.

Key No. 2: When the rules are followed or ignored, patterns emerge. Our friend David Wheaton played against Andy Roddick a few times and described his serve as "unbelievably enormous." David said, "If Roddick hits a 150 mile-per-hour serve in the corner, there's no way to touch it unless you've accurately guessed where it is going to hit." Most of us would just stand there while the ball whizzed past. Experienced players don't do this, obviously. They study the patterns of tennis serves. David told us,

Good returners "absorb" several things about a big server so they can learn or get a sense of where the serve might be going: they notice where the ball toss is, they notice where the server likes to serve on big points and where he's been going on previous points, and maybe they even notice where the server looks before he serves.... Just a lot of little things that give the returner an idea of where the ball might go.¹

In other words, tennis serves reveal patterns. If you can observe and respond to those patterns, you have a shot at winning, or at least not getting completely crushed.

But what about the chess players? The myth of the photographic memory of chess grand masters evaporated when researchers ran a test in which they *randomly* placed the pieces on the board in a way they would never appear during an actual game. Under these conditions, the memories of the baffled grand masters were almost as poor as the control group of non-chess players.²

It turns out that chess experts use their experience regarding how chess pieces move to make sense of the patterns of play. They divide the board into chunks and remember the position of the pieces in each chunk, which enables them to reproduce with incredible accuracy the position of all the pieces on the board. But they can do this only when the pieces are

placed as they would be during an actual game. These chess grand masters aren't memorizing the entire board; they are making sense of the patterns that emerge when the game is played according to the rules.

Of course, it takes a lot of practice to recognize patterns, whether in tennis or chess or anything else. Malcolm Gladwell refers to what he calls the "10,000-hour rule," the number of hours of intensive concentration and practice it takes to master a subject. If you worked at it eight hours a day, it would take you three and a half years to get that kind of experience.³ There is no real shortcut to this rule, at least individually. However, if you have a wise mentor, someone who guides you, builds on your successes, and coaches you in avoiding mistakes, you can become an expert more quickly than other people, though it will still take concentrated effort.⁴

Rules. Patterns. It doesn't matter whether we're playing a sport or a board game or shopping or just navigating through the streets to a friend's house. We are constantly trying our hand at pattern recognition on the assumption that the world is a rule-based place.

Here's a big question, though: Are there patterns that extend to life's big questions? If so, is it possible to discern patterns that reveal where we come from, what the good life looks like, how we should treat others, and what happens when we die? If there are patterns for such things, is it possible to figure out which patterns are good or bad, true or false, just or unjust?

Here's an even bigger question if all of the above is possible: Given the sheer volume of ideas in the world today, is it even possible to accomplish such a massive feat as figuring out the rules and patterns that answer life's ultimate questions? This volume is designed to set you on the course to finding answers to these questions.

This chapter introduces a way of thinking about the world we think you will find compelling and helpful. We'll discuss how ideas become persuasive and how to identify patterns of ideas so you can understand the world around you. We'll also examine six worldviews that influence just about everyone in the world today, and we'll see how that influence manifests itself in the key academic disciplines operating in America's institutions of higher learning.

So now that you know where we're coming from, let's look at the history of the ideas on which this book is based.

3. WHERE UNDERSTANDING THE TIMES COMES FROM

The book you are reading has a history stretching back more than fifty years. As a student at Hope College in Holland, Michigan, David Noebel attended a chapel service addressing the topic of communism. The speaker, an Australian medical doctor named Fred Schwarz, said communism was fast growing and persuasive because it was *religious*. It answered life's ultimate questions, inspired ardor and devotion, and gave meaning to people's lives. It had a means of winning and discipling converts, as well as a vision of spreading to the whole world.

Something clicked for Noebel. Maybe the battles of our age are not first and foremost military battles but battles of *ideas*. And these ideas are compelling because they are religious. As a Christian preparing for ministry, Noebel thought Christians ought to understand the world of ideas in order to not be taken captive by deceptive philosophies (Col. 2:8).⁵ With these thoughts in mind, Noebel approached the speaker to ask a few questions. The college president noted Noebel's interest and invited him to form a study group about communism.

Noebel took up this challenge and came to see communism as a direct competitor to Christianity. Millions were being misled, and millions of lives hung in the balance. And communism wasn't the only counterfeit worldview, he realized; many ideas were battling for the hearts and minds of people, nations, and cultures.

Years later, in 1991, Noebel compiled his extensive knowledge about worldviews into a nine-hundred-page book called *Understanding the Times*, one of the bestselling worldview texts of all time. All together, there are more than six hundred thousand copies in print. If you've heard the term *worldview*, you've likely been influenced by Noebel or someone he influenced.

Soon after the publication of *Understanding the Times*, Noebel asked Jeff Myers to develop an accompanying curriculum featuring videos of Christian thinkers and in-depth reading. More than one hundred thousand people have studied this curriculum. *Understanding the Times* has been periodically revised and expanded to keep up with the emergence of new ideas and the repackaging of old ones. You are holding the latest version, which updates the language, examples, sources, and organization of the original while maintaining its core structure.⁶

But let's go back to the concept of patterns. Do ideas, as well as tennis serves and chess moves, flow in patterns? If so, is it possible to tell whether they are consistent with or different from God's pattern?

4. IDEAS FLOW IN COMPLEX PATTERNS

Imagine walking around a crowded room and then being asked to describe whom and what you saw. You might remember a few details, but a trained investigator or spy would remember much more. He could describe the room with astounding detail. Why? Because he's trained in a *way of seeing*. He knows what to pay attention to and what to ignore. In the movies and on television, such a person always looks like a genius who possesses a supernatural awareness. In reality, understanding comes from discipline and training. In his book *Cold-Case Christianity*, J. Warner Wallace, a highly regarded cold-case detective, demonstrates how detectives identify the details they see and go through a mental checklist to figure out which details are clues and which are background noise.⁷

The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines an *idea* as "a thought or suggestion as to a possible course of action."⁸ What we conceive, what we believe, and our general impressions about the world are always based on *something*. If they are not based on an accurate understanding of truth, we'll always be disoriented, unable to distinguish between genuine clues and background noise. This is why it is important, as the sixteenth-century scientist Johannes Kepler phrased it, to "[think] God's thoughts after him." God made the rules. To bear his image well, we should try to understand them, discern the patterns they create, and live differently as a result.

But it's harder to pick out patterns when we have lots of information as opposed to when our choices are simple. Let's say you open the cupboard and find nothing to eat except a packet of seafood-flavored noodles and a packet of chicken-flavored noodles. *Noodles are noodles*, you tell yourself. *Just pick one*. If you're at the Public Market in Emeryville, California, though, there are seventeen different food stalls offering cuisine from all over the world. Each of these restaurants offers about ten choices. It takes more thoughtfulness to decide when you have 170 choices as opposed to 2.

The same is true with religion. Today, largely because of the Internet, people have more information about religion—and everything else—than ever before. In 2011, according to Domo, a company that helps other companies make sense of the Internet, *every passing minute* 204,166,667 email messages were sent, YouTube users uploaded forty-eight hours of new video, Twitter users sent more than one hundred thousand tweets, and Instagram users shared thirty-six hundred new photos.⁹ By the time you read this, the numbers will be even higher.¹⁰ There is literally so much information on the Internet that it distracts people from doing what they ought to do. The *New York Times* reports that the cost of interruptions to people’s workdays—looking at the latest video they’ve been forwarded or checking out someone’s Twitter feed—is around \$650 billion dollars a year in lost productivity.¹¹

Today, largely because of the Internet, people have more information about religion—and everything else—than ever before.

Some people try to manage the accelerating growth of information by multitasking. Ironically, those who constantly switch between tasks are actually less productive because each activity has its own rules, and it takes time for the mind to switch from one set of rules to another.¹² In the case of driving and texting, this literally kills people. The more than three thousand texting-while-driving deaths each year prove that our capacity is not fast enough to switch between tasks.¹³

In this world of ballooning information, if you are curious about some obscure religion, you can get answers in two or three mouse clicks. No matter how remote the area in which they live, people from all over the world can access all of the world’s ideas and do it with their smartphones while walking down the street. The problem is, of course, that the more information we have, the harder it is to figure out what to do with it all. Even utterly wrong ideas can boast a cool website, making them appear credible. Information growth is exponential; wisdom’s demise is precipitous.

In this world of ballooning information, if you are curious about some obscure religion, you can get answers in two or three mouse clicks.

So who can make their way in a world like this? Those capable of quickly figuring out the rules and recognizing the patterns of ideas. It’s true with tennis and chess, and it’s true with life’s ultimate questions. People with discernment can see the relationship between all of the pieces of information they are trying to process at any given moment. If they are thoughtful about spiritual things, this capacity will enable them to better understand God, the world, and their relationship to God and the world.

5. THE WORLD’S PATTERNS ARE DIFFERENT FROM GOD’S PATTERN

What we understand about God and the world affects what we believe about everything else, including what kinds of arguments we find persuasive and how we justify our intended actions. That’s why the apostle Paul said in Romans 12:2, “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.” To understand what God wants from

us, we must identify the world's patterns, refuse to conform to them, and be transformed to embrace a God-pleasing pattern of living.

We call a pattern of ideas a **worldview**. A worldview answers such fundamental questions as *Why are we here? What is the meaning and purpose of life? Is there a difference between*

Worldview: a pattern of ideas, beliefs, convictions, and habits that help us make sense of God, the world, and our relationship to God and the world.

right and wrong? Is there a God? We all develop ideas in our attempt to answer these questions, and our ideas naturally give rise to a system of belief that becomes the basis for our decisions and actions. Our worldview is like a map. It helps us know where we are, where we need to go, and the best route to get there.

Our worldview does not merely reflect what we think the world *is* like; it directs what we think the world *should be* like. In other words, our worldview not only *describes* reality; it *prescribes* how we should act and respond to every aspect of life. Because our ideas *do* determine how we behave, the bottom line is that our ideas *do* have consequences.

This doesn't mean that everyone is aware of his or her deeply held ideas. If we were to ask a person on the street about her philosophy of life, we would probably get a blank stare. But if we asked how life began, she would probably offer some sort of answer, even if the answer was not completely coherent. Still, her belief would impact the way she lives her life. It's also often the case that people are unaware of where their deeply held beliefs come from. If we were to continue our street conversation by asking *why* this woman believes what she claims to believe, she might shrug and reply, "I don't know; I just believe it." Often people

Often people pick up their beliefs like they catch colds—by being around other people!

pick up their beliefs like they catch colds—by being around other people! And since ideas are everywhere—on television, in books and magazines, at the movies, and in conversation with friends and family—it's easy to pick them up without considering whether they're worth believing.

Regardless of where they come from, the ideas we embrace about the nature of reality lead to a set of core beliefs, which in turn form convictions about how we should live meaningfully. This befits our definition of *worldview*. A worldview is a "pattern of ideas," but it's also a "pattern of beliefs, convictions, and habits that help us make sense of God, the world, and our relationship to God and the world."

Of course, some Christians don't act Christianly. There are also Muslims and Secularists whose lifestyles are inconsistent with what they believe. The Christian idea of the sinful nature predicts this. Human *actions* fall short of human *aspirations*. For example, if a person embraces the idea of sexuality as an expression of love between a married man and woman, he or she will probably believe in abstaining from sexual activity outside of marriage, which reflects a value of sexual purity and a conviction to safeguard it. This does not mean, however, that the person will never indulge in pornography in a moment of weakness. Such indulgence does not invalidate the person's ideas, beliefs, convictions, and habits, but it will produce guilt because the person knows pornography is harmful. On the other hand, a person with

no existing beliefs about love and marriage will still feel guilty but may not understand why. People who continue to indulge in pornography may end up in a habitual pattern shaped by the culture's permissive stance rather than what God wants.

Ideas have consequences. They form our beliefs, shape our convictions, and solidify into habits.

There are hundreds of different worldviews. Is it possible to know which of them, if any, is actually true? If you look in the religion section of a bookstore, you'll see books not only on Christianity and Islam, of course, but also on Confucianism, Buddhism, Taoism, Hinduism, Vedantism, Jainism, Shintoism, and many other religions. Each **religion** attempts to explain what the world is like and how we should live. You'll also notice books on Secularism and atheism in the religion section. This might seem odd, but when you think about it, even atheists have a set of beliefs about the cause, nature, and purpose of the universe. They're religious.¹⁴ Even people who don't care about any of this are religious; their religion says the ultimate questions don't matter. All worldviews are religious.

If everyone is religious we would expect their beliefs to lead to certain actions. C. S. Lewis put it this way:

We are now getting to the point at which different beliefs about the universe lead to different behavior.... Religion involves a series of statements about facts, which must be either true or false. If they are true, one set of conclusions will follow about the right sailing of the human fleet[;] if they are false, quite another set.¹⁵

Here's where we are so far. All people try to make sense of the rules of the world by developing ideas. These ideas flow in patterns, which we call worldviews. People's worldviews lead them to value certain things, which leads to particular convictions governing their behavior. These convictions solidify into habits that affect the way people live.

6. WHY SHOULD WE CARE?

As people try to figure out the rules and patterns of the world, they diagnose what is wrong with the world and suggest prescriptions. As in medicine, a wrong diagnosis could lead to mistreating a disease or leave a serious illness untreated. If everyone lived in isolated caves, the consequences of our actions wouldn't affect others. But we aren't isolated. We live in families, communities, cities, and countries. The consequences of bad beliefs can cause serious pain. Some ideas in history have led to death for millions. Nazism systematically exterminated approximately 21 million people, not counting the tens of millions who died in battles initiated by the Nazi regime.¹⁶ Communist regimes slaughtered well over 100 million people in the twentieth century. As we will see in the chapter on Marxism in this volume, the slaughter continues to this day.

Religion: a system of belief that attempts to define the nature of God and how human beings can understand and interact with the divine; any system of belief that prescribes certain responses to the existence (or nonexistence) of the divine.

Ideas have consequences. They form our beliefs, shape our convictions, and solidify into habits.

Every one of these deaths was in the service of an idea. Ideas have consequences, sometimes unspeakably tragic ones. Like a wildfire, these ideas began with a single flame and rapidly spread before a stunned and unprepared populace, engulfing millions. People thought Adolf Hitler was a pompous fool early in his career. Who could have predicted he would actually amass enough power to slaughter millions? Similarly, who could have imagined that a radical writer named Karl Marx, a man deeply unpopular even with his friends, would be capable of unleashing an idea—communism—that would destroy more people than any other idea in history?

Is it possible to understand ideas and their consequences? More important, is it possible to identify bad ideas in time to stop them before they can lay waste to the lives, hopes, and dreams of countless people? Fortunately, the answer is yes. To grasp the world of ideas, we don't need to know everything about everything. In the following pages, we'll take an in-depth look at the pattern of ideas, beliefs, convictions, and habits that makes up the Christian worldview. We'll suggest that understanding Christianity as a worldview will help us make sense of the world. Understanding other worldviews—other patterns—will confirm the essential truths of Christianity.

Here's a sports analogy: Let's say you play against a team that has sixty completely different plays. It would be hard to prepare for such a complex strategy. But if you know the team actually has six basic plays, each with ten variations, then by figuring out the six plays, you can make better guesses about each variation and know how to counteract it.

In this book we'll discover the six plays and the ten variations that worldview "teams" are running these days. Based on this information, we'll form a mental model from which we can make more accurate guesses about how people all over the world see things. We will examine six dominant worldviews: Christianity, Islam, Secularism, Marxism, New Spirituality, and Postmodernism. Each of these six worldviews claims to present the truth. Then we'll examine each worldview as expressed in ten key academic disciplines to see whether they are, in fact, true.

7. BUT FIRST, A WARNING

Before we analyze the six dominant worldviews, though, a warning is in order: Proponents of many worldviews don't like it when you start poking their nests. This is especially true of academics. Questioning professors and authorities can anger them and make them want to attack. At Summit, we've been called every name in the book: "intolerant," "bigoted," "idiotic," "fanatical," "conspiracy minded," and, our favorite, "bloviating motormouths."

Not all professors have chips on their shoulders. Still, if you embrace a Christian worldview, you should understand that you might be in someone's gun sights. For example, atheist philosopher Richard Rorty, one of the most famous professors of the twentieth century, once proclaimed,

The fundamentalist [by which he meant Christian] parents of our fundamentalist students think that the entire "American liberal Establishment" is engaged in a conspiracy.... These parents have a point.... When we American college teachers encounter religious fundamentalists, we do not consider the possibility of reformulating our own practices of justification so as to give more weight to the authority of the Christian

scriptures. Instead, we do our best to convince these students of the benefits of secularization.... Rather, I think those students are lucky to find themselves under the benevolent *Herrschaft* [teaching] of people like me, and to have escaped the grip of their frightening, vicious, dangerous parents.¹⁷

Rorty was not condemning abusive parents; he was condemning *Christian* parents who, by raising their kids according to a Christian worldview, are “frightening, vicious, [and] dangerous.”

Nowhere are the attacks more vicious than in the sciences. Several years ago Richard Sternberg, a Smithsonian scientist with two PhDs in evolutionary biology, was fired as editor of a Smithsonian science journal for publishing an article written by Cambridge-educated scientist Stephen Meyer. The reason? Meyer’s article defended *intelligent design*, a scientific movement that suggests natural processes cannot in and of themselves explain the great complexity we encounter in the universe.

“[The senior Smithsonian scientists] were saying I accepted money under the table, that I was a crypto-priest, that I was a sleeper cell operative for the creationists,” said Sternberg, who at the time was a Smithsonian research associate. “I was basically run out of there.”¹⁸

A *Washington Post* investigation revealed that Sternberg, who is *not* a creationist, was dismissed because of an orchestrated campaign by the National Center for Science Education (NCSE), a lobbying group fighting to keep criticism of naturalistic evolution out of public schools. In other words, the article Sternberg published was not attacked because its arguments were poor but because these scientific elites had already decided that *no questioning of naturalistic evolution was to be allowed*.¹⁹

Apparently, refusing to believe that everything that exists evolved through random-chance processes, as naturalistic evolutionists believe and teach in schools, is like refusing to wear clothes; it automatically disqualifies a person from appearing in public. Sternberg’s firing led to a chilling, and even a freezing, of free speech among scientists. We have spoken with dozens of scientists who keep their reservations about evolution to themselves because speaking out might damage their careers.

If you live as we are suggesting in this book, you will probably come under attack as well. We’re going to prepare you to respond, not with name calling or sarcasm, but with reasonable arguments. People who make their livings mocking Christianity are actually barring access to a skeleton-filled closet of disastrous ideas. But if you crack that closet door, they’re going to be ticked. Why? Because they have become so accustomed to the ideas they’ve picked up that they cannot imagine the world being any other way. Ideas persist in the thought stream just as viruses enter the bloodstream. When we said earlier that people pick up ideas the way they catch colds, the research shows that this is not far from the truth.

Apparently, refusing to believe that everything that exists evolved through random-chance processes, as naturalistic evolutionists believe and teach in schools, is like refusing to wear clothes; it automatically disqualifies a person from appearing in public.

8. IDEAS SPREAD LIKE VIRUSES

In the 1950s a professor at Yale University named William McGuire developed a theory about how people come to embrace the ideas they find compelling. His insights can help us understand how we might come to adopt good ideas and oppose bad ones.

McGuire theorized that ideas are actually very much like viruses, spreading from person to person. In our fallen and increasingly indiscriminate culture, bad ideas lamentably take root more easily than good ones. Thus, effective leaders must play a dangerous game: they must engage not only in building up good ideas but also in rooting out bad ones. How is it possible to do this without being incurably infected by the very ideas they hope to stand against?

Medical research in the mid-twentieth century demonstrated that a human body can develop immunity to a disease through the process of inoculation, which introduces to the body a weakened form of a disease to give the body's natural defense mechanism time to develop immunity to it.

Professor McGuire wondered whether the same theory would hold true for resisting bad ideas.²⁰ To test his inoculation theory, McGuire exposed subjects to widely accepted claims, such as "People should brush their teeth daily." He then exposed them to counterclaims (e.g., "Brushing your teeth is bad for you") after preparing test groups with varying levels of defense:

- **No preparation** ("Here's an argument—see what you think.")
- **Reinforcement of previous preparation** ("You know that brushing your teeth is good, right?")
- **Warning of attack** ("You will be exposed to a persuasive argument that brushing your teeth is bad.")
- **Inoculation** ("You will hear an argument stating that brushing your teeth wipes away saliva, which is the tooth's natural protective agent.")
- **Inoculation plus refutation** ("When you hear the argument that brushing your teeth is bad because it wipes away saliva, keep in mind that saliva cannot dislodge prepared foods from the teeth—only a brush can consistently do that.")
- **Inoculation plus refutation plus preparation** ("You now know one argument you'll hear to persuade you that brushing your teeth is bad, but you'll be presented with several arguments, and it will be up to you to think them through and refute them.")²¹

In the end, the most effective strategy for resisting counterpersuasion, as you might guess, was the last one: inoculation plus refutation plus preparation. The *least* effective strategy was reinforcement of previous preparation. In fact, more people in this test condition believed the false argument than those in the "no preparation" condition.

That people who have been equipped with the truth could so easily fall for falsehoods is a stunning result. To the extent this research applies to social and political beliefs, we can conclude the following: For people to believe a claim, they must be prepared to defend it

against its challengers. Merely repeating a message over and over again—even with increasing fervency, emotion, and clever staging—is actually *counterproductive*, worse than no preparation at all.

The antidote to indoctrination is to tell the truth, expose people to the lies that would deceive them, show them how to refute those lies, and prepare them with the thinking skills necessary to continue resisting falsehoods. This begins by understanding the worldviews—the patterns of ideas, beliefs, convictions, and habits—that rule the world today. Again, there are six: Christianity, Islam, Secularism, Marxism, New Spirituality, and Postmodernism. Let’s dig in.

The antidote to indoctrination is to tell the truth, expose people to the lies that would deceive them, show them how to refute those lies, and prepare them with the thinking skills necessary to continue resisting falsehoods.

9. THE SIX WORLDVIEWS

As we noted earlier, a *worldview* is a “pattern of ideas, beliefs, convictions, and habits that help us make sense of God, the world, and our relationship to God and the world.” If you know a worldview’s assumptions, you can more accurately guess what its adherents believe and why.

There may be hundreds of worldviews operating today. Even some well-known ones, such as Judaism, have relatively few (around thirteen million) followers worldwide. But many bizarre and even humorous worldviews have attracted followers. As the London *Telegraph* reported, 176,632 people in a 2012 national census of England and Wales considered their religious affiliation to be the “Jedi Knights.”²² Another 6,242 said they worshipped heavy-metal music.²³ Obviously we can’t cover every worldview that has attracted followers, so we’re going to look at the six worldviews that make up the vast majority of the world’s population and are evangelistic (inviting everyone else to join them).

1. Christianity. More than 2 billion people in the world claim to be Christians, nearly one-third of the world’s population. What they mean by “Christian,” of course, varies widely—some people claim to be Christians because their parents were Christian or because they live in a predominantly Christian country. Still, no one doubts that Christianity is a dominant influence in the world. Christianity goes back to the teachings of Jesus Christ, the Messiah prophesied for centuries among the Israelites in the Old Testament. Christians believe that God has revealed himself in the Bible as well as in nature, but especially in the person of Jesus Christ. Because Jesus Christ was God incarnate (as a human being), his life is at the center of the human story.

The Christian worldview offers a narrative of all history. This narrative starts with God’s special creation of human beings, delves into the consequences of their fall from grace, and promises redemption through the sacrificial death of Jesus on the cross and his subsequent resurrection.

Christianity has had a profound influence on the world. French philosopher Luc Ferry, a nonbeliever, claims that Christianity alone established the idea that because we are made in the image of the Creator, all human persons have rights.²⁴ Famed British atheist Bertrand Russell said something similar: “What the world

needs is Christian love, or compassion.”²⁵ Whether or not Russell acknowledged it, such love and compassion result directly from following in the footsteps of Christ himself, the epitome of love and compassion.

The Christian worldview offers a narrative of all history. This narrative starts with God’s special creation of human beings, delves into the consequences of their fall from grace, and promises redemption through the sacrificial death of Jesus on the cross and his subsequent resurrection.

2. **Islam.** Islam began September 24 in AD 622, when seventy *muhajirun* pledged loyalty to an Arabian trader from Mecca who had fled to Medina and began receiving special revelations from Allah. The trader’s name: Muhammad. His submission to God gave his religion its name; *Islam* means “submission.” Those who submit to Allah and his prophet Muhammad are called Muslims. Islam is based on a creed prayed aloud five times a day: “There is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is his prophet.”

Muslims believe that their holy book, the Quran, is God’s full and final revelation. The Quran specifies five things a person must do to become a Muslim:

1. Repeat “There is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is his prophet.”
2. Pray the salat (ritual prayer)²⁶ five times a day.
3. Fast during the month of Ramadan.
4. Give one-fortieth of one’s income to the needy.
5. If able, make a pilgrimage to Mecca.²⁷

According to Serge Trifkovic, “Islam is not a ‘mere’ religion; it is a complete way of life, an all-embracing social, political, and legal system that breeds a worldview peculiar to itself.”²⁸ Islam has grown rapidly in the last few decades; 1.6 billion people in the world now claim to be adherents.

3. **New Spirituality.** What we term New Spirituality is perhaps the most difficult worldview to precisely define. You don’t have to sign, recite, or proclaim anything in particular to join, nor must you attend a church. While unofficial in its dogma, the New Age culture contains an extensive set of beliefs that, once understood, predict what people with those beliefs will value and how they will act.

New Spirituality is a free-flowing combination of Eastern religions, paganism, and pseudoscience that pops up in odd places. Some of the bestselling books of all time—by authors such as Deepak Chopra, Rhonda Byrne, Marilyn Ferguson, and Shakti Gawain—describe a world spiritual in nature but not governed by a personal, all-powerful God. Rather, the spirituality in the world is “consciousness,” an energy in which we all participate and can even learn to control. Talk-show host Oprah Winfrey has admitted to holding many of these beliefs.

New Spirituality is a free-flowing combination of Eastern religions, paganism, and pseudoscience that pops up in odd places.

We will study New Spirituality not because it is deeply philosophical or consistent but because some of its associated beliefs—karma, Gaia, being “one” with the environment, reincarnation, meditation, holistic health, and so

forth—are a daily part of life for millions of Americans and have influenced such academic areas as psychology and medicine.

4. Secularism. Secularism comes from the Latin word *saecularis*, roughly meaning “of men,” “of this world,” or “of this time.” Secularists believe humans are the center of reality. They disdain the influence of those who believe in ideas of gods, an afterlife, or anything beyond what we can sense. The primary identifying characteristic of Secularism is its *nonbelief* in other worldviews. Ironically, though, Secularists do generally have an agreed-upon set of beliefs about the cause, nature, and purpose of the universe. So even though they view their beliefs as the *opposite* of religion, they are actually quite religious.

Interestingly, in the twentieth century, several fairly well-known philosophers, such as John Dewey and Julian Huxley, and later Paul Kurtz and Corliss Lamont, combined the term *secular* (“we are for the world”) and the term *humanism* (“we are for humans”) and developed a philosophy of Secular Humanism. Their manifesto, published in 1933 and updated in 1973 and 2000, led thousands of like-minded individuals to form a club called the American Humanist Association (AHA), whose motto is “Good without a god.” With no apparent sense of irony, the AHA operates as a tax-exempt organization based on the IRS section 501(c)(3) *religious* nonprofit exemption. Though its founders have passed away, the AHA still recruits members. Their dues support a publishing company and a monthly publication.

We’ll discuss Secularism and the Secular Humanist movement more in coming chapters, but it is sufficient for now to recognize Secularism as an umbrella term for a set of beliefs the vast majority of academics today accept unquestioningly. We use the term *Secularism* as a prediction, not a label: if someone accepts a Secularist viewpoint on such disciplines as theology, philosophy, and ethics, we can predict fairly accurately what they believe about biology, psychology, and so forth.

5. Marxism. Some religious worldviews develop over hundreds or thousands of years, but others are made up whole cloth in a very short period of time. Such is the case with Marxism and its offshoots Leninism, Maoism, Trotskyism, Fabian socialism, and the various socialist organizations that operate in the United States and around the world. Marxism was invented by Karl Marx, a scholar determined to demonstrate that ownership of private property, the basis for capitalism, was the root of the world’s evils.

To Marx, history could be defined as a struggle between the haves (the owners) and the have-nots (the workers). If only the workers would rise up to overthrow the owners, they could form a workers’ paradise in which all wrongs are righted, all possessions are shared, and all injustices are brought to an end. The utopian state at the end of this long and bloody struggle is called *communism*. People who strive to bring about this state are called *communists*, and their Bible is *The Communist Manifesto*, Marx’s most famous and enduring work. Other such manifestos are still in print today, including the teachings

Some say it’s pointless to include Marxism as a dominant worldview in this volume, but we disagree. Despite the collapse of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), which dominated what is now called Russia, around 20 percent of the world’s population still lives under the rule of communists.

of Chinese communist leader Mao Tse-tung and a book published by Harvard University Press called *Empire*.

Some say it's pointless to include Marxism as a dominant worldview in this volume, but we disagree. Despite the collapse of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), which dominated what is now called Russia, around 20 percent of the world's population still lives under the rule of communists. The largest communist country in the world today is China. In spite of its growing industry, China's communist rulers are still very much in control. And when we also consider countries operating on the principles Marx taught but not using the label *communist*, we are talking about a *majority* of the world's population living every day with the consequences of Marx's philosophies. As we will see, despite its clearly atheistic philosophy, Marxism has also made many inroads into the church. Some evangelicals involved in the so-called Christian Left have embraced key tenets of Marxism.

6. Postmodernism.²⁹ People talk about postmodern art, postmodern architecture, and even postmodern ways of doing church, and yet they don't realize that Postmodernism is a well-thought-out and deep philosophical worldview. The father of Postmodernism, German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche, had many disciples, including Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, Martin Heidegger, Jean-François Lyotard, and Richard Rorty. All are now dead, but their teachings strongly influence higher education to this day.

We will learn more about the complexities of Postmodernism throughout this volume. In short, though, we can say Postmodernism began as a reaction against modernism, the idea that science and human reason can solve humankind's most pressing problems. While science can be used for great good, Postmodernists understand it to be hopelessly corrupted by the quest for power. It was scientific "progress," for example, that enabled the creation of weapons of mass destruction.

According to Postmodernists, the modern story of science and technology is one of many attempts to formulate what's called a *metanarrative*, or grand story of reality that claims universally valid, "God's-eye"-view, pristine knowledge of the world. Postmodernists say metanarratives become so compelling that people stop questioning them, and it's precisely then that they become destructive and oppressive. Postmodernists are generally suspicious of all modern metanarratives because they are so often used as tools of oppression. Many Postmodernists engage in a process of examining exactly what causes people to fall under the spell of various metanarratives. This is called *deconstruction*. The way deconstruction works on metanarratives is similar to someone revealing how a magic trick is done: in the revealing, people stop being deceived. Postmodernists believe "deconstructing" dominant metanarratives causes them to lose their stranglehold on people's minds.

We'll see, though, that Postmodernists have been carried away by their own ideas, calling everything into question—even the idea that we can know reality itself!

So there you have it. **Christianity, Islam, New Spirituality, Secularism, Marxism, and Postmodernism.** By understanding these six worldviews, we'll see how people come to grips with the rules of the world and form patterns they hope will answer life's ultimate questions.

10. TEN WAYS OF LOOKING AT THE WORLD

“What do you want to major in?” is probably the first question asked of any student on his or her way to college. For some, this strikes fear into the heart: “Am I supposed to know that already?” For others, it doesn’t matter—they just want a diploma so they can more easily qualify for a job. But one thing most people never consider is this: The various academic departments aren’t just places where professors stash what they know. They’re actually different ways of thinking about the ultimate questions of life.

In an ideal world, the academic departments—philosophy, psychology, law, and so forth—would combine their insights to form a *uni* (meaning “whole”) *versity* (meaning “body”) in which the parts come together to closely resemble the truth. In reality, though, various academic departments usually keep to themselves, using introductory and general education courses to persuade potential “majors” to study with their faculty for the remainder of their academic careers.

Some academic departments—the *applied* sciences, for example—focus on what you can do with the knowledge developed by the *pure* sciences. Applied sciences include engineering, medicine, business, and education. Many people say the applied sciences are most important because they’re most needed in society, and hence most likely to lead to a paying job. Certainly we want young adults to be gainfully employed and to work hard toward the greater good. But it is unwise to rush into a career without first trying to understand the various ways of knowing; before you learn how to do, it’s wise to learn how to know! Otherwise you might be stuck making a living without any sense of how to make a life.

In this study we will focus on ten basic disciplines, the seeds from which most things in academia grow: theology, philosophy, ethics, biology, psychology, sociology, law, politics, economics, and history. Here’s a brief overview of each:

1. Theology. An *-ology* means “study of.” *Theos* means “God.” Theology is the study of God. Theology seeks to answer the question, “How did I and everything else *get* here?” When people see something beautiful and are asked, “How do you *know* it is beautiful?” they might point out a few details, but often they will say, “I don’t know. It just is.” How is it that they really know? The theologian says knowing about God’s nature and character is the key to figuring out what is most important in life.

2. Philosophy. *Philo* means “love”—that has to do with the nature of companionship. It is the root word for the name of the city of Philadelphia, which is nicknamed “the city of brotherly love.” *Sophia* is the Greek word for “wisdom,” so when you put *philo* and *sophia* together, you get “love of wisdom.” The philosopher seeks to be wisdom’s companion by answering questions like “What is real?” and “How do I *know* anything?” To the philosopher, the good life consists of figuring out what the nature of reality is, how we know what we know, and how to accurately know about reality and knowledge.

3. Ethics. *Ethos* is the Greek word for “goodness.” Ethicists are not merely searching for a life that *feels* good but searching for “the good life”—a life that actually *is* good. So ethics is the study that seeks to answer questions like “How should I live?” “What does it mean to live a good life?” and “If *everyone* lived the way I’m living, would it be good for us all?” Ethicists seek to understand the various ways people act based on what they believe, and then how those actions enable them to pursue the good life.

4. **Biology.** *Bios* means “life.” Biology is the study of life. Biology seeks to answer the question “What does it *mean* to be alive?” When we see something alive, we know it is alive. But *how* do we know? Ask a group of children sometime, “If you had a robot, what would you have to change to bring it to life?” They might say, “It would have to have a heart.” If you asked why, they might respond, “To pump blood.” To which you might say, “But there are lots of creatures that are alive that don’t have hearts.” Pressing the issue further with the children would probably be cruel, but you get the point. Biologists study living things to assist us in understanding the natural world and making predictions about it. If we see our predictions coming true, we can claim to know true things about the world. Biology is at the heart of the sciences because if we can figure out what makes something alive, then we can perhaps better understand our own aliveness.

5. **Psychology.** *Psyche* is the Greek word for “soul.” Psychology seeks to answer the question “What makes me *human*?” Most people see human beings as different from other creatures, but what makes us unique? From observation we know most creatures are unreflective; that is, they don’t contemplate or communicate about their plans for the future, nor do they appear to feel regret or shame over their past actions. Human beings do all these things and more. Is it possible to understand why people do what they do? Psychologists study the way animals and humans act in order to see if they can figure out something about human nature to help struggling people find a path to a better life.

6. **Sociology.** *Socios* is the Greek word from which we get our word *society*. Whereas psychologists study the individual self and its relationship to other selves, sociologists suspect life will be better if we can answer the question “How do we live in community with one another?” The differences between people, after all, are vast. To really understand how we can live together in community, we ought to have some insight into our various cultures, languages, religious beliefs, and historical challenges. These differences are complex and go back generations, sometimes even millennia. At the end of the day, sociologists hope that by understanding how societies develop, grow, and relate to one another, we might learn to live in greater harmony.

7. **Law.** The word *law* comes from an Old English word *lagu*, which refers to the rules or ordinances by which we are governed.³⁰ It’s the same word from which we get our words *legislate* and *legislature*. The study of law revolves around the question “What constitutes *just* and *orderly* governance?” In order to live together in an orderly way, we need laws we all agree to follow. If even a few people were to decide not to stop at red lights, it would create uncertainty and chaos for everyone. To keep society from breaking down, then, we must have rules and a means of making people obey them. A society’s philosophy of law determines its level of thriving. Lawmakers and legal scholars must consider whether the law is punishing evil doing sufficiently while not harming the freedoms of the just and hardworking. And how, they must ask, does the law ensure fairness without being

What is liberty without wisdom, and without virtue? It is the greatest of all possible evils; for it is folly, vice, and madness, without tuition or restraint.

— Edmund Burke

unfair to one group or another? Figure out the answers to these questions, legal scholars say, and we'll all be better off.

8. Politics. *Polis* means “city.” *Politics* means “the rule of a city.” When people think of politics, political commercials or people with big, fake smiles wearing suits and kissing babies often come to mind, and they dismiss politics as being silly or pompous. But the study of politics really does matter. Politics answers the question “What is the best way to *organize* community?” Everyone in the world lives in multiple political jurisdictions: neighborhoods, cities, counties, states, nations. By living where you live, you agree to abide by the rules governing those jurisdictions. But who makes these rules? Who gets to pick the rule makers? Properly conceived, politics offers a platform from which to encourage virtue, and virtue is at the heart of good government. To those who think it is *only* about liberty, the great British statesman Edmund Burke said, “What is liberty without wisdom, and without virtue? It is the greatest of all possible evils; for it is folly, vice, and madness, without tuition or restraint.”³¹

9. Economics. In Latin, the word for “economics” means “the art of running a household.” Economics answers the question “How can individuals and the community be optimally *productive*?” Let’s say you have a lawnmower, some gas, and a willingness to mow other people’s lawns. One of your customers might say, “If you mow my lawn, I’ll give you some fresh eggs from my chickens.” That’s fine, but what if you don’t *want* eggs? To make it possible for your customer to get what she wants while giving you what you want, you can use a means of exchange called money, based on people’s agreement about the relative value of things compared to other things. Economics becomes infinitely more complex, though, when people want to *borrow* money to acquire very expensive things, or to capitalize a large enterprise. How are these loans made? What rules govern complex transactions such as these? What, if anything, should the various levels of government have to say about all this? Economists try to make sense of this complexity so people can get what they want, which will help them live better lives.

10. History. The study of history seeks to answer the question “How did people in the past think and act on theology, philosophy, ethics, biology, psychology, sociology, politics, law, and economics? What happened in the past could help us understand what we should do now. How can we repeat the good decisions and avoid repeating the bad ones? What *counts* as a good or bad decision? But the historian’s task actually goes beyond these questions, because there are too many facts to write about, and someone must decide which facts are important and which ones aren’t, as well as which facts are included in the account and which facts are left out. People who think America’s founders were bad people who mistreated others will tend to choose confirming facts—such as the fact that some founders’ owned slaves—in order to persuade others that America ought to abandon its founding principles. Should our agendas drive our study of history? Is it possible to select and interpret facts objectively? These are important questions, because if history is told inaccurately, it might lead people to make bad decisions—which in turn could hinder human flourishing.

As you can see, each academic discipline approaches knowledge differently, but with the same goal: to understand how to live meaningful lives, both individually and together. Many more academic disciplines exist, of course, but we believe these ten to be properly basic. By understanding something about these ten, we’ll be able to figure out what to do with the rest.

Before we go any further, though, we need to make an admission, without which the rest of this book will not make any sense: we are biased.

11. OUR BIAS: THE CHRISTIAN WORLDVIEW EXPLAINS THINGS BEST

In this book we hope to show a multitude of ways the Christian worldview best explains the existence of the universe and all things related to it. In a systematic analysis of how each worldview approaches the ten disciplines presented in the previous section, Christianity claims that an acknowledgment of God's nature and character, and the life and work of Christ, will reveal capital *T* Truth (as opposed to isolated cultural or personal truths). As we will see, a robust Christian perspective of each of the disciplines is clear and compelling.

1. Theology. The evidence compels us to believe in the existence of a personal and holy God, a designed universe, and an earth prepared for human life. This evidence together outweighs any argument for atheism (belief in no god), polytheism (belief in many gods), or pantheism (belief in god *as* the universe). Theology begins with verse one of the Bible: "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth" (Gen. 1:1). According to John 1, God's creation was through the person of Jesus Christ, whom the apostle Paul referred to as "the fulness of the Godhead" (Col. 2:9 KJV).

2. Philosophy. We will present evidence that the notion of mind (*logos*) preceding matter is superior to the atheistic stance of matter preceding mind. From the very first book of the Bible, we understand that God created not only the world but the entire universe. Further, he made it possible for us to observe something of his revelation and to know that our observations are meaningful. Other creatures know things in a manner of speaking, but humans *know that we know*. We have a capacity to contemplate what our knowing revealer shows us. Christianity says we can know things because they have been ordered in such a way that our senses can perceive them, and this is because of Jesus Christ, who is the Logos [revealed knowledge] of God (John 1:1).

3. Ethics. The concept that right and wrong can be objectively known based on the nature and character of a personal, loving God is, we believe, superior both theoretically and practically to any concept of moral relativism or pragmatism. The gospel of John says that Jesus Christ is "the true light" (John 1:9; see also 3:19–20). That is, he is the source of what is truly good. In his light we can see what spiritual darkness previously hid from our view.

4. Biology. We argue that the concept of a living God creating life fits the evidence better than spontaneous generation and macroevolution. We see the scientific side of God in the beginning when he organized every creature "according to their kinds" (Gen. 1:21). Interestingly, Jesus Christ is described throughout the New Testament of the Bible as "the life" (John 1:4; 11:25; see also Col. 1:16).³² When it comes to understanding life—physical as well as spiritual—we believe the Christian worldview offers superior insight.

5. Psychology. Understanding human beings as possessing both bodies and souls, even though we are sinful, imperfect, and in need of a savior, far outweighs expecting humans, as many contemporary psychologists argue, to be guilt free and in control of their behavior. Human life is different from other forms of life (Gen. 2:7).³³ We intuitively understand that something is wrong with us. What will make it right? A savior. And who, according to Christianity, is that savior? Jesus Christ (Luke 1:46–47; Titus 2:13).³⁴

6. Sociology. The evidence demonstrates that society functions best when the institutions of family, church, and state exercise their proper authority within their God-ordained spheres. At its most basic level, society flourishes when it is built on strong families composed of a father, mother, and children. Sociology is hinted at in Genesis 1. God said to Adam and Eve, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth” (v. 28)³⁵ and in Genesis 2, when the man and woman became “one flesh” (v. 24). Of all the ways God could have revealed himself to the world, he chose to do it through the one means all human beings could understand: he sent his Son, Jesus Christ (Isa. 9:6; Luke 1:30–31).³⁶

7. Law. God hates the perversion of justice. This truth provides a firmer foundation than legal theories that prey on the innocent and let the guilty go free. In Genesis, God laid down rules to form the optimal conditions for human flourishing. When God rescued a culture of slaves even before he provided a permanent home for them, he gave them a law—the laws of Moses, the Torah. This fledgling nation came to be with *law*, not with *land*. Throughout Scripture, the Messiah, whom Christians believe is Jesus Christ, is characterized as a lawgiver (Gen. 49:10; Isa. 9:7).³⁷

8. Politics. Christians believe the idea that rights are a gift from God secured by government is more logically persuasive, morally appealing, and politically sound than any atheistic theory that maintains human rights are derived from the state. We see the beginning of political authority several places in Genesis, notably in Genesis 9:6,³⁸ when cities were formed around the principle of preventing human bloodshed. Interestingly, among the names given to Jesus Christ throughout the Bible was a political title King of Kings and Lord of Lords (Isa. 9:6; Luke 1:33; 1 Tim. 6:15; Rev. 19:16).³⁹

9. Economics. We will show that the concept of private property and using resources responsibly to glorify God is nobler than coercive government policies that destroy individual responsibility and incentives to work. God put Adam in the garden to work it and keep it. That’s economics. Throughout all of Scripture, the Messiah, Jesus Christ, is described as the owner of all things (Ps. 24:1; 50:10–12; 1 Cor. 10:26),⁴⁰ which says something about the principles of stewardship that undergird economic reality.

10. History. The Bible’s promise of a future kingdom ushered in by Jesus Christ is far more hopeful than utopian schemes dreamed up by sinful, mortal humans. Genesis 3:15⁴¹ describes an ongoing battle between good and evil, a battle won when the offspring of the woman (often thought of as the coming Messiah) crushes the work of the Evil One. Correspondingly, Jesus is described as the “the Alpha and the Omega” (Rev. 1:8), the beginning and the end of history. History has a direction and a goal.

Christians view these ten disciplines as sacred, not secular. They are imprinted in the created order. All ten disciplines are addressed in just the first few chapters of the Bible; they manifest and accent certain aspects of the

In every discipline, we think the Christian worldview shines brighter than any other worldview. It better explains our place in the universe and is more realistic, more scientific, more intellectually satisfying, and more defensible. Best of all, it is faithful to the one person with the greatest influence in heaven and on earth—
Jesus Christ.

created order. Further, God shows himself in the person of Jesus Christ in such a way as to underline the significance of each discipline. The integration of these various categories into society has come to be known as Western civilization.⁴²

In every discipline, we think the Christian worldview shines brighter than any other worldview. It better explains our place in the universe and is more realistic, more scientific, more intellectually satisfying, and more defensible. Best of all, it is faithful to the one person with the greatest influence in heaven and on earth—Jesus Christ. But can we actually know Christianity is true?

12. HOW CAN WE UNDERSTAND WHAT IS ACTUALLY TRUE?

We think the Christian worldview is true, but to make this claim, we must have some concept of truth. Truth has two parts: understanding what is true with our *minds* (Rom. 12:2)⁴³ as well as our *hearts* (Heb. 4:12).⁴⁴ The authors of *Making Sense of Your World* suggest four tests for evaluating whether or not a worldview is true at a mind and heart level:

1. **The test of reason:** Is it reasonable? Can it be logically stated and defended?
2. **The test of the outer world:** Is there some external, corroborating evidence to support it?
3. **The test of the inner world:** Does it adequately address the “victories, disappointments, blessings, crises, and relationships of our everyday world”?
4. **The test of the real world:** Are its consequences good or bad when applied in any given cultural context?⁴⁵

To say the Christian worldview is true is to say that it best describes the contours of the world *as it actually exists*. We’re not asking you to take our word for it: follow *God*, not *us*. If at any point you are confused, prayerfully search God’s Word under the guidance of wise counselors with a determination to understand and obey every good thing you need to do God’s will.

Understanding the truth, though, is only the first step. We must also learn to communicate truth, “always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you ... with gentleness and respect” (1 Pet. 3:15). Critics say Christianity is irrational, unhistorical, and unscientific. Christianity is more than equal to these criticisms, but we must be trained to articulate how and why.

13. CAN’T WE ALL JUST GET ALONG?

In questioning the truth or falsehood of various worldviews, we risk a great deal. Whether we accept Christianity, Islam, Secularism, Marxism, New Spirituality, or Postmodernism, we accept a worldview that describes the others as hopelessly distorted. They cannot all depict things as they really are; their competing claims cannot all be true.

Some people in history have tried to get around the differences between worldviews by telling a parable. Perhaps you’ve heard it: Six blind men come into contact with an elephant. One handles the tail and exclaims that an elephant is like a rope. Another grasps a leg and describes the elephant as a tree trunk. A third feels the tusk and says the animal is similar to

a spear, and so on. Since each feels only a small portion of the whole elephant, all six men give correspondingly different descriptions of their experience.

So no one is really right or wrong, you see. We're all correct in our own way, with our limited knowledge—or so it seems at first glance. *But how do we know the blind men are all touching the same elephant?* The parable assumes that (1) each man can discern only part of the truth about the nature of the elephant, and (2) *we* know something the blind men don't—everyone is touching a real elephant.

The first assumption says no one possesses complete knowledge; the second assumption says we *know* no one possesses complete knowledge because *we* know what the elephant (or reality) is *really* like. But there's a contradiction here. On the one hand, the story claims that we—the blind men—have only limited knowledge. But if everyone is blind, no one can know the ultimate shape of the elephant. We need someone who is not blind, someone who knows all truth and communicates it accurately to us.

We will not claim in this book that non-Christian worldviews are completely false. We can find grains of truth in each. Secularism, for example, does not deny the existence of the physical universe and our ability to know it. Marxism accepts the significance and relevance of science. Postmodernism acknowledges the importance of texts and words. Islam acknowledges a created universe. New Spiritualists teach there is more to reality than matter. And all five non-Christian worldviews, to one extent or another, understand the importance of “saving” the human race.

A major dividing line separates non-Christian worldviews from Christianity: What do you do with Jesus Christ?

However, a major dividing line separates non-Christian worldviews from Christianity: What do you do with Jesus Christ? Christianity views Jesus Christ as the true and living way.⁴⁶ He is the key to reality itself.⁴⁷ Early Christians were known as members of the Way.⁴⁸ All other major worldviews reject Jesus Christ as savior, lord, and king. Some deny that he ever existed.

This is too big of a difference to overlook. Who is Jesus? Did he live on this earth two thousand years ago? Was he God in the flesh (God incarnate)? Did he come to the earth to reveal God's will for us and save the human race from sin? These are important questions. As the apostle Paul pointed out, Christianity lives or dies on the answers: “If Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain” (1 Cor. 15:14).

14. IRRECONCILABLE DIFFERENCES

If Postmodernists, for example, are correct in their belief that no metanarrative can describe reality, then Christianity is doomed. Christianity depends on understanding real universal truths, such as all people have sinned and fallen short of God's glory (Rom. 3:23);⁴⁹ God loves the whole human race (John 3:16);⁵⁰ and Christ died for our sins (1 John 2:2).⁵¹ If these universal claims are false, then Christianity is implausible.

According to a George Barna survey, 63 percent of teenagers agreed that “Muslims, Buddhists, Christians, Jews, and all other people pray to the same god, even though they use different names for their god.”

If the assumptions of Secularism and Marxism are correct, anyone proclaiming the existence of the supernatural is potentially dangerous. Secularists and Marxists understand this quite clearly. For instance, Marx viewed all religion as a drug that deluded its adherents—an “opiate of the masses.” Some Secularists even portray Christians as mentally imbalanced. James J. D. Luce, the assistant executive director of Fundamentalists Anonymous, said, “The fundamentalist experience can be a serious mental health hazard to perhaps millions of people.”⁵² His organization works to “heal” Christians of their “mental disorder”—their Christian worldview. Harvard’s Edward O. Wilson takes this a step further, contrasting liberal theology with aggressive “fundamentalist religion,” which he describes as “one of the unmitigated evils of the world.”⁵³

On the other end of the spectrum, New Spiritualists reject the personal God of the Bible as a dangerous myth separating people into religious factions. They seek instead a “higher consciousness.” Bestselling New Spiritualist author Neale Donald Walsch claims that God revealed to him personally that “no path to God is more direct than any other path. No religion is the ‘one true religion.’”⁵⁴ In an interview with Bill Moyers, filmmaker George Lucas said, “The conclusion I’ve come to is that all the religions are true.”⁵⁵ Lucas’s and Walsch’s convictions are shared in the wider population, even among many Christians. According to a George Barna survey, 63 percent of teenagers agreed that “Muslims, Buddhists, Christians, Jews, and all other people pray to the same god, even though they use different names for their god.”⁵⁶ So, the claim continues, if we don’t have peace on Earth yet, it is only because some wrongly persist in their exclusionist beliefs.

Either Christians correctly describe reality when they speak of a loving, wise, just, personal, creative God, or they are talking nonsense. The basic tenets of the Bible cannot blend well with the non-Christian claim that we are good enough to save ourselves. We say only one view fits the facts: Christianity. God, the creator of the universe, saw its importance, loved it, loved *us*, so he sent his Son to redeem it—and *us*.

Clearly, adherents of other worldviews strongly disagree with our conclusion that only Christianity fits the facts. Some of them are prepared to attempt to dismantle our arguments. So the battle for truth is on. What case can each worldview make for itself? That’s what we’ll discover next.

ENDNOTES

1. Personal email correspondence between David Wheaton and Jeff Myers, January 14–15, 2013.
2. K. Anders Ericsson and Neil Charness, “Expert Performance: Its Structure and Acquisition,” *American Psychologist* 49, no. 8 (August 1994): 725–47.
3. For more information see Malcolm Gladwell, *Outliers* (New York: Little, Brown, and Company, 2008).
4. See, for example, Dorothy Leonard and Walter Swap, “Expertise: Developing and Expressing Deep Smarts” and “Recreating Deep Smarts through Guided Experience,” in *Deep Smarts: How to Cultivate and Transfer Enduring Business Wisdom* (Boston: Harvard Business School, 2005), chaps. 3 and 8.
5. Colossians 2:8: “See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ.”
6. First published in 1991, *Understanding the Times* covered the biblical Christian worldview, the Marxist-Leninist worldview, and the Secular Humanist worldview. An appendix briefly surveyed an emerging worldview called Cosmic Humanism. A later edition added Postmodernism and Islam to its consideration. The current edition

examines the same six worldviews with the names slightly altered in some cases (such as with Secularism) to reflect the changes in terminology used by the proponents of those views. The biggest change is from Cosmic Humanism to New Spirituality. The term *Cosmic Humanism* was intended to be a more academic approach to what was then called the New Age movement. The term never really gained traction. We use the term *New Spirituality* in this edition because we feel it better reflects both the content and the methods people use who are searching for “higher consciousness” today, especially in the ways they incorporate insights from Eastern religions, such as Buddhism and Hinduism.

7. J. Warner Wallace, *Cold-Case Christianity* (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2013).

8. *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. “idea,” www.oxforddictionaries.com.

9. For more statistics and references, see the info-graph compiled from multiple sources at “Data Never Sleeps,” Domo, 2010–2011, accessed January 29, 2016, <http://visual.ly/data-never-sleeps>.

10. How big is the Internet? If each byte of data (the size of one letter or number) were the size of the largest bacteria (0.5 mm), the amount of data YouTube users upload each day would be about twenty-one terabytes, enough to wrap around the sun three times. See “How Much Data Is on the Internet?,” Doug Camplejohn, *Fliptop* (blog), accessed January 29, 2016, <http://blog.fliptop.com/blog/2011/05/18/how-much-data-is-on-the-internet/>.

11. Cited in Steve Lohr, “Is Information Overload a \$650 Billion Drag on the Economy?,” *Bits* (blog), *New York Times*, December 20, 2007.

12. Joshua Rubinstein, David E. Meyer, and Jeffrey E. Evans, “Executive Control of Cognitive Processes in Task Switching,” *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Human Perception and Performance* 27, no. 4 (2001): 763–97.

13. Cited in James R. Healey, “Feds: Phoning, Texting Killed 3,092 in Car Crashes Last Year,” *USA Today*, December 8, 2011, <http://content.usatoday.com/communities/driveon/post/2011/12/nhtsa-cell-phones-killed-3092-car-crashes-1#.UUsnoldnF8E>.

14. John Dewey, the father of modern education, helped organize a group of philosophies into what he hoped would be a new worldview that replaced Christianity. He called it *Secular Humanism*. The word *secular* means “that which pertains to worldly things rather than religious things.” And yet Dewey was forthright about the fact that his new philosophy was, in fact, religious: “Here are all of the elements for a religious faith.... Such a faith has always been implicitly the common faith of mankind.” John Dewey, *A Common Faith* (1934; repr., New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1962), 87.

15. C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: Macmillan, 1972), 58.

16. R. J. Rummel, “Democide: Nazi Genocide and Mass Murder” (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1992), chap. 1.

17. Quoted in Robert B. Brandom, ed., *Rorty and His Critics* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2000), 21–22.

18. Quoted in Michael Powell, “Editor Explains Reasons for ‘Intelligent Design’ Article,” *Washington Post*, August 19, 2005, www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/08/18/AR2005081801680.html.

19. Naturalistic evolution, as we will see in the “Biology” chapter of this volume, says nature is all there is, and the complexity of all of life evolved through random-chance processes starting from nothing. In the view of George Gaylord Simpson, a respected paleontologist, “Man is the result of a purposeless and natural process that did not have him in mind. He was not planned. He is a state of matter, a form of life, a sort of animal, and a species of the Order Primates, akin nearly or remotely to all of life and indeed to all that is material.” George Gaylord Simpson, *The Meaning of Evolution* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1971), 345.

20. See, for example, William J. McGuire and Demetrios Papageorgis, “Effectiveness of Forewarning in Developing Resistance to Persuasion,” *Public Opinion Quarterly* 26, no. 1 (Spring 1962): 24–34.

21. Cited in Em Griffin, *The Mind Changers: The Art of Christian Persuasion* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1982).

22. Cited in Henry Taylor, “‘Jedi’ Religion Most Popular Alternative Faith,” *Telegraph*, December 11, 2012, www.telegraph.co.uk/news/religion/9737886/Jedi-religion-most-popular-alternative-faith.html.

23. Taylor, “Alternative Faith.”

24. Luc Ferry, *A Brief History of Thought* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2011), 60.

25. Bertrand Russell, *Human Society in Ethics and Politics* (New York: Mentor, 1962), viii.

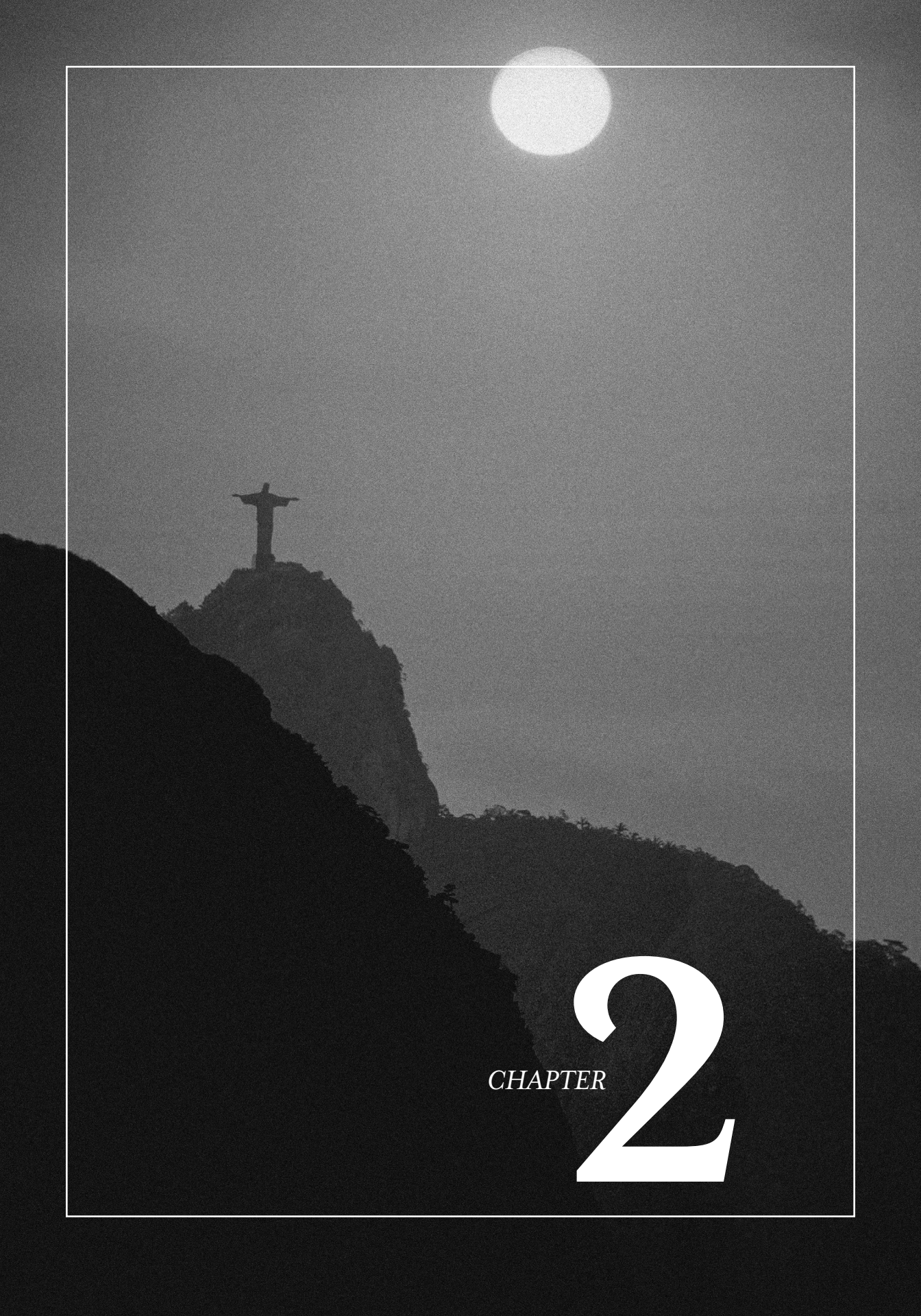
26. The call to prayer, the *shahada*, is an integral part of the *salat*: “*Allahu Akbar; Ashadu anna la ilaha illa Allah; Ashadu anna Muhammadan rasul Allah; Haiya ‘ala al-salat; Haiya ‘ala al-falah; Al-salat khayrun min al-nawm; Allahu Akbar; La ilaha illa Allah.*” The English translation is “God is most great; I bear witness there is no God but God; I bear witness Muhammad is the prophet of God; Come to prayer; Come to well-being; Prayer is better than sleep; God is most great; There is no God but God.” See more at “*Salat: Muslim Prayer*,” ReligionFacts.com, November 10, 2015, accessed March 26, 2016, www.religionfacts.com/islam/practices/salat-prayer.htm#sthash.U8xtC709.dpuf.

27. Norman L. Geisler, *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999), 368–69.

28. Serge Trifkovic, *The Sword of the Prophet* (Boston: Regina Orthodox, 2002), 55.

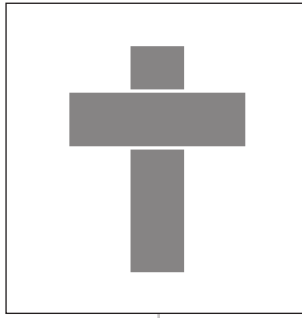
29. Since we will be speaking of Postmodernism as an identifiable pattern of ideas, we will capitalize all references to the term as a worldview.
30. The online etymology website www.etymonline.com says this about the word *law*: law (n.), Old English *lagu* (plural *laga*, comb. form *lah-*) “law, ordinance, rule, regulation; district governed by the same laws,” from Old Norse **lagu* “law,” collective plural of *lag* “layer, measure, stroke,” literally “something laid down or fixed,” from Proto-Germanic **lagan* “put, lay” (see lay [v.]). Replaced Old English *æ* and *gesetnes*, which had the same sense development as *law*. Cf. also *statute*, from Latin *statuere*; German *Gesetz* “law,” from Old High German *gisatzida*; Lithuanian *istatymas*, from *istatyti* “set up, establish.” In physics, from 1660s. *Law and order* have been coupled since 1796.
31. Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (New York: Library of Liberal Arts, 1955), 288.
32. John 1:4: “In [Christ] was life, and the life was the light of men”; John 11:25: “Jesus said ..., ‘I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live’”; Colossians 1:16: “By [Christ] all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him.”
33. Genesis 2:7: “The LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature.”
34. Luke 1:46–47: “Mary said, ‘My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior’”; Titus 2:13: “[We are] waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.”
35. Genesis 1:28: “God blessed [Adam and Eve]. And God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.’”
36. Isaiah 9:6: “To us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace”; Luke 1:30–31: “The angel said to her, ‘Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus.’”
37. Genesis 49:10: “The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet, until tribute comes to him; and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples”; Isaiah 9:7: “Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.”
38. Genesis 9:6: “Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for God made man in his own image.”
39. Isaiah 9:6: “To us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace”; Luke 1:33: “He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end”; 1 Timothy 6:15: “[God] will display [Christ’s appearance] at the proper time—he who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords”; Revelation 19:16: “On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords.”
40. Psalm 24:1: “The earth is the LORD’s and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein”; Psalm 50:10–12: “Every beast of the forest is mine, the cattle on a thousand hills. I know all the birds of the hills, and all that moves in the field is mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell you, for the world and its fullness are mine”; 1 Corinthians 10:26: “The earth is the Lord’s, and the fullness thereof.”
41. Genesis 3:15: “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.”
42. See Alvin J. Schmidt, *How Christianity Changed the World* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004).
43. Romans 12:2: “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.”
44. Hebrews 4:12: “The word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.”
45. W. Gary Phillips, William E. Brown, and John Stonestreet, *Making Sense of Your World: A Biblical Worldview* (Salem, WI: Sheffield, 2008), chap. 3.
46. John 14:6: “Jesus said to [Thomas], ‘I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.’”
47. Colossians 1:16: “By [Christ] all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him”; Hebrews 1:1–3: “Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high”; John 1:1–3: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.”

48. Acts 9:2: “[Saul] asked [the high priest] for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any belonging to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem.”
49. Romans 3:23: “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”
50. John 3:16: “God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.”
51. First John 2:2: “He is the propitiation for our sins [turning away God’s wrath], and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.”
52. James J. D. Luce, “The Fundamentalists Anonymous Movement,” *Humanist* 46, no. 1 (January/February 1986).
53. Edward O. Wilson, “The Relation of Science to Theology,” *Zygon* 15, no. 4 (December 1980); 433.
54. Neale Donald Walsch, *The New Revelations: A Conversation with God* (New York: Atria Books, 2002), 97.
55. Quoted in Bill Moyers, “Of Myth and Men: A Conversation between Bill Moyers and George Lucas on the Meaning of the Force and the True Theology of *Star Wars*,” *Time*, April 26, 1999, 92.
56. George Barna, *Third Millennium Teens* (Ventura, CA: Barna Research Group, 1999), 48. It should be noted that of the teenagers surveyed, 70 percent were active in a church youth group, and 82 percent identified themselves as Christians.



CHAPTER

2



CHRISTIANITY

1. C. E. M. JOAD AND *THE RECOVERY OF BELIEF*

It's easy to imagine C. S. Lewis turning on the radio after an intense morning of writing *The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe* and hearing the voice of C. E. M. Joad on the British Broadcasting Company. Joad was a popular philosopher with a cheery, red face and a bristly beard who, for a time, was Britain's most popular radio personality.

His program revolved around answering questions listeners sent in, some serious ("What is the meaning of life?") and others not so serious ("How can a fly land upside down on the ceiling?"). His answers often included subtle jabs at Christians. People loved it. Joad was a big deal.

Bizarrely, Joad was later caught trying to ride on trains without paying and was fired. Soon thereafter he was diagnosed with cancer. These devastating events led Joad back to the faith of his childhood, and shortly before his death, he penned a stunning book called *The Recovery of Belief*. “It is because ... the religious view of the universe seems to me to cover more of the facts of experience than any other that I have been gradually led to embrace it,” Joad said.¹ “I now believe that the balance of reasonable considerations tells heavily in favor of the religious, even of the Christian view of the world.”²

While we don’t know every factor involved in Joad’s return to faith, we do know that he had read C. S. Lewis’s writings. Perhaps Joad found himself entranced with a mythical lion named Aslan, creator of an imaginary land called Narnia, who shed his own innocent blood to triumph over the White Witch and ransom the treacherous Edmund. Perhaps Joad saw something of Edmund in himself and something of Christ in Aslan. It’s just a story, but it rings true: we know ourselves as betrayers in need of saving.

2. CHRISTIANITY: THE GREAT MYTH THAT TURNED OUT TO BE TRUE

The basics of the Christian worldview to which C. E. M. Joad returned are quite simple: there is a God; through Jesus Christ, God created the world (Col. 1:16);³ human beings were made in God’s image but fell into sin; the fall of humanity brought sin and brokenness to the rest of creation; and God’s Son, Jesus Christ, paid for sin and bought redemption with his own life (Rom. 5:8).⁴ It is, as J. R. R. Tolkien once persuaded a reluctant C. S. Lewis, the great myth that became fact!

The Christian worldview is based squarely on the person of Jesus Christ. As John Stott said, “Christ is the centre of Christianity; all else is circumference.”⁵ Jesus declared, “God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16). Other religions may offer advice on how to search for God, but **Christianity** turns that search on its head: God is the one who gets in touch with us. He walked in the garden with Adam and Eve, dwelled in the temple, and revealed himself in

Christianity: a theistic worldview centered on the person of Jesus Christ that derives its understanding of the world through the teachings of the Holy Bible.

Jesus Christ. He is called Immanuel, “God with us.” He is the shepherd who searches for his lost sheep (Matt. 18:12).⁶ He is the master who came to earth “not to be served but to serve” and give his life to ransom us from our captivity to sin (Mark 10:45).⁷

Nonbelievers find this story fantastical. Some think it’s too simplistic; others think it’s too complicated. Some find claims of miracles absurd, while others bristle at the very idea of supernatural authority. Those who have been hurt by people claiming to be Christians may carry emotional objections. If Christianity is true, though, those who live in unbelief have much to lose: not only do they misunderstand the world we live in, but they sit under God’s judgment (John 3:36).⁸ Doubtless many find this an unpopular teaching of Christianity, even unreasonable and out of touch.

But disliking parts of a worldview is not the same as disproving it; an idea’s complexity, simplicity, or unpopularity is not evidence that it is unreasonable. In this chapter we’ll dig for

the truth in the mysteries of theology, philosophy, science, and ethics in order to see whether Christianity fulfills its claim as the consummate answer to life's ultimate questions.

Christians believe God makes himself known in nature and in the Bible. These two forms of revelation establish a worldview—a pattern of ideas, beliefs, convictions, and habits—that leads us and others to flourish.

Many people think they know what Christianity is all about; some have even attended church all their lives and never grasped its essence. Christianity isn't just a set of commands and inspirational sayings; it is a story that God is telling, a story that makes sense of all other stories.

Christians believe God makes himself known in nature and in the Bible. These two forms of revelation establish a worldview—a pattern of ideas, beliefs, convictions, and habits—that leads us and others to flourish.

3. THE CHRISTIAN STORY

God is not only the beginning of the Christian story; his existence is the prelude. In philosophical terms, he's the necessary condition for everything else. A story needs a storyteller who is outside the story, capable of telling it. No storyteller, no story.

The argument that demonstrates the universe was caused, and that the cause is sufficient for its effect, is called the *cosmological argument* for God's existence. Some claim energy by itself was sufficient to cause our universe. But while the universe is full of energy, energy itself has never been shown to create information like the ordered information we see in human DNA. Also, energy doesn't have a *plan*, and yet the universe seems ordered and purposeful. It's reasonable, then, to conclude that whatever caused the universe must, according to a predetermined purpose, be capable of producing order. This is suspiciously close to how the Bible describes God.

But the Bible's description of God goes beyond his necessary existence as designer. The Bible claims God is personal and has made himself known to his creation. Further, the Bible describes God as active in his creation, specifically in overcoming humanity's fall into sin and bringing about the subsequent rescue, or redemption, of what he made. Let's take a look at these claims.

God is personal. Pure energy does not create; it explodes. The harnessing of energy for purposeful ends indicates the presence of someone with a plan who is doing the harnessing. The Genesis creation account describes God as this kind of designer. A God who desires purpose rather than randomness and who enacts his authority rather than permitting chaos—such a God has the characteristics of a person.

The existence of humanity also suggests that God is personal. Natural causes and forces cannot explain why the world is populated with *persons* rather than mere entities. Whatever—or *whoever*—caused the universe must also be capable of causing persons. The existence of personhood in the universe suggests that the first cause must be personal as well.

To summarize where this brings us so far, the universe we experience suggests an intelligent, purposeful, personal designer brought it into existence.

Further, the way humans are created reveals something about the character of the God who created us. The biblical God creates humans “in his own image” (Gen. 1:27) and charges

us with the task of stewarding his creation. The significant role of humanity in the world is unique to the biblical account.

In contrast to the biblical account, New Spirituality claims god is pure energy, or consciousness. In this view, god has no personality or will. God is a tool to be used, not a person to be known. As William E. Brown points out, in the movie *Star Wars*, Obi-Wan Kenobi doesn't tell Luke Skywalker, "The force loves you" or "The force died for your sins." He tells him to "use the force." The metaphor is significant: we *use* things; we *relate* to persons.

The Bible says God's characteristics are fully independent of our understanding or use of them. "Be still, and know that I am God" (Ps. 46:10); "How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!" (Rom. 11:33); "The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything" (Acts 17:24–25).

We cannot bend God to our expectations. We cannot program him to be predictable. In C. S. Lewis's *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, Mr. Beaver tried to describe Aslan, the Christ figure, to Lucy, who expressed trepidation that Aslan was a lion: "He isn't safe?" Lucy asked. "Course he isn't safe," said Mr. Beaver. "But he's good. He's the King, I tell you."

God has made himself known. The word *revelation* ("to reveal") is from the Greek word *apokaluptō*, which means "to uncover, to unveil, or to lay bare."⁹ God doesn't just reveal his plan; he reveals *himself*. He is *transcendent* (beyond and separate from the world) as well as *immanent* (in the world). When God expressed his thoughts, the universe came into being (Gen. 1:1; John 1:1).¹⁰ His presence sustains the world (Col. 1:16–17).¹¹ The universe speaks of God's creativity and presence; it speaks the language of God.¹²

That God expresses himself communicatively tells us he is relational. Relationship is not something God *does* but something he *is*. God is trune, one God made manifest in three persons: God the Father,¹³ God the Son,¹⁴ and God the Holy Spirit.¹⁵ This relationship in the Godhead is closely tied to what God would have *us* do. Matthew 28:19 says, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the *Father* and of the *Son* and of the *Holy Spirit*." All three persons are critical to our mission in the world.

When people say they can't believe in God because he has not shown himself, they are overlooking a critical fact: this is exactly what he has done. The problem is not a lack of visible evidence but an unwillingness to see. As Elizabeth Barrett Browning wrote in her poem *Aurora Leigh*,

Earth's crammed with heaven,
And every common bush afire with God;
But only he who sees, takes off his shoes,
The rest sit round it, and pluck blackberries,
And daub their natural faces unaware
More and more, from the first similitude.¹⁶

Like an artist, God is visible in his works, and especially in the person of Christ. Yet he is visible only if we have eyes to see (John 10:30; 14:7–8).¹⁷

God has created. God created through *fiat*, a Latin word meaning "let it be." What God wants happens. What God says goes. Even *nothing* became *something* when God told it to.

Many skeptics doubt whether human life has any special meaning. For a depressing example, attend Samuel Beckett's play *Breath*. The curtain opens to a stage littered with trash. The audience hears a birth cry, then the sound of breathing, and then another cry. Twenty-five seconds after it opens, the curtain closes. The message: life begins with crying and ends with crying, and everything in between is garbage. Lest you think this is a prank, as of last count *Breath* has been performed 1,314 times, with eighty-five million people in attendance, making it Beckett's most viewed play.¹⁸

Life is more than an "episode between two oblivions,"¹⁹ as Ernest Nagel memorably phrased it. We are more than "dust in the wind," as an old song describes it.²⁰ The biblical creation account uses the word *good* to describe creation's value. Our English word *good* simply does not convey the goodness of this kind of good. The Hebrew word *tob* means "good in every way possible: in potential, in beauty, in convenience, in joy, in fruitfulness, in economics, in wisdom, in sensuality, in happiness, and even in morality."²¹ God was pleased with creation's goodness and called for it to flourish. To Adam and Eve he said, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth" (Gen. 1:28). It was not a micromanaged event; God unleashed creation with an express desire to see it *teem* with life.²²

Humanity's appearance receives special attention in the biblical creation narrative. Each step along the way God said, "Let there be ...," and it was as he said. In Genesis 1:26, with human creation, the language abruptly changed. Instead of "*Let there be*," the text says, "*Let us make*." After creating humans and imbuing them with purpose, God said it was "*very good*" (v. 31). In Hebrew, the phrase is *meod tob*. It is almost impossible to exaggerate the resonant awesomeness this phrase is meant to convey. It literally means "exceedingly, heartbreakingly, abundantly, richly, loudly, immeasurably good in a festive, generous, happy, intelligent, charming, splendid way." Those who view humans as a plague are not, from God's perspective, wise and brave but stingy, small minded, and bitter—Scrooges on a cosmic level.²³

It was not only the individual creation of Adam and Eve that was good; their relationships with God, with each other, and with creation itself were also good. Christians themselves often miss the true significance of God's design. Lesslie Newbigin, who invested his life as a missionary and theologian in India, once related a conversation with a Hindu friend, who said,

I can't understand why you missionaries present the Bible to us in India as a book of religion. It is not a book of religion—and anyway we have plenty of books of religion in India. We don't need any more! I find in your Bible a unique interpretation of universal history, the history of the whole of creation and the history of the human race. And therefore a unique interpretation of the human person as a responsible actor in history. That is unique. There is nothing else in the whole religious literature of the world to put alongside it.²⁴

Part of our responsibility as human actors is to work. Genesis 2:15 says, "The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it." Work is not a product of the fall; it is very much woven into the fabric of God's very good plan for us. We should work for the love of the work itself, "for the sake of doing well a thing that is well worth doing," as Dorothy Sayers put it.²⁵

Companionship is also part of God's design. "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him" (Gen. 2:18). Relationship and work go together. "Two

are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil” (Eccles. 4:9). Spreading order across the chaos is a task so large and so joyful that it is a pity for it to be done alone. But mere companionship is not all that’s described in Genesis. It is also about a marriage between a man and woman who delight in each other’s company, work side by side, and fulfill God’s commands to flourish. Their names were Adam and Woman. (Woman’s name was subsequently changed to Eve, but that came later.)

The Christian story of creation is this: a relational creator made human beings in his image, releasing them to relate and create. This is the foundation of everything—of human rights, social order, marriage. It is, in short, the framework for the good life—for the individual and for all of civil society.

The Christian story of creation is this: a relational creator made human beings in his image, releasing them to relate and create. This is the foundation of everything—of human rights, social order, marriage. It is, in short, the framework for the good life—for the individual and for all of civil society.

So what went wrong?

Human beings are fallen. Things function best according to their design. If we ignore God’s design for eating, our bodies function poorly. If we ignore creation’s delicate balance, we overharvest and choke the life out of the earth. Ignoring design breaks faith with the Designer. The theological term for this is *sin*. Cornelius Plantinga Jr. defines *sin* as “not only the breaking of law but also the breaking of covenant with one’s savior. Sin is the smearing of a relationship, the grieving of one’s divine parent and benefactor, a betrayal of the partner to whom one is joined by a holy bond.”²⁶

Genesis 3:6 narrates the horrifying way our first parents ate of the forbidden Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, intentionally breaking their relationship with God in order to pursue their *own* good, their *own* delight, and their *own* wisdom.²⁷ Disobedience broke all of the key relationships in their lives. In shame they hid from the God with whom they had previously communed. Their unity with each other dissolved into squabbling and blame. The fruitfulness of nature at their touch was replaced with pain, frustration, deceit, and toil.

In the midst of this misery, it was an act of God’s mercy not to prolong their lives forever. Death finally came to Adam and Eve, but not before long life gave them a front-row seat to the shriveling consequences wrought by their misuse of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, and sin’s consequent vandalism of the world. Saint Augustine used the Latin phrase *incurvatus in se* to describe the grisly way sin curves in on itself. Martin Luther explained:

Our nature, by the corruption of the first sin being so deeply curved in on itself (*incurvatus in se*) that it not only bends the best gifts of God towards itself and enjoys them, as is plain in the works-righteous and hypocrites, or rather even uses God himself in order to attain these gifts, but it also fails to realize that it so wickedly, curvedly, and viciously seeks all things, even God, for its own sake.²⁸

As we pursue everything for our own sakes, our perception of reality grows ever more at odds with what actually exists. We imagine ourselves to be free and beautiful, but in actuality

we grow more hunched, pinched, and sickly with each passing day. Try as we might to ignore the effects of sin in our lives, reality has a way of knocking on the back door when we refuse to meet it at the front door.

One of the most embarrassing aspects of sin is the tendency to *blame* others rather than repent. The man blamed God for creating the woman and blamed the woman for giving him the fruit. The woman blamed the serpent for tempting her (Gen. 3:12–13).²⁹ When we see sin as something others do to us, when we judge ourselves by our good intentions and impute bad motives to others, when we treat as evil that which prevents us from getting our way, we are witnessing the metastasizing of sin in our lives. Only one outcome is possible: “Sin when it is fully grown brings forth death” (James 1:15).

Sin is not just *out there*; it is *in here*. It affects structures as well as persons. Whole communities, indeed whole nations, fall in its wake. Sin never heals; it only corrupts. Sin attacks our humanity—frenzied, we cannibalize the humanity of others. The spiral is downward, always, and endless. We tremble at the destination but refuse to change course; we are addicts, dressing up like gods, wrecking relationships, sadistically bruising that which is fragile. The morning light finds us bloated and bleary, tearfully swearing, “Never again.” But self-destruction is our bent. Some bleed out through disastrous lifestyle choices; others suffocate on haughtiness and contempt. But no matter the means, we all die.

In the midst of this tragedy, still we hold certain graces in common. We bear God’s image even yet. We help people and people help us. Crops grow. Sunsets remain beautiful. But we are *thoroughly* fallen; nothing is unaffected by our fallenness. Worse, we are *absolutely* fallen; nothing we can do for ourselves will fix our fallenness.

If the Christian story is true, we are badly in need of rescue. Who will help us?

God redeems. Some see God as a judge who, after a couple of millennia of contemplation, decided to punish his own Son for the sin of humanity. This picture falls far short of the full truth. In Scripture God reveals himself as the redeemer buying back his wayward creation. We see his redemptive nature in the garden when he told the serpent, “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel” (Gen. 3:15). God took a basic human kinesthetic act—standing on our feet—and transformed it, metaphorically, into a weapon to destroy slithering evil. The one who deceived at the beginning will be crushed at the end (Rom. 16:20; Rev. 12:9).³⁰

Consider, too, the Passover, God’s redemption of the Israelites from Egyptian slavery. The centerpiece of the Passover celebration was a meal of preparation (Exod. 12), again a basic act, which Jesus repeated with his disciples (Mark 14). At the end of all things, according to Christianity, the serpent who said “Take, eat” in the garden will be defeated by

**Sin is not just *out there*; it is *in here*.
It affects structures
as well as persons.
Whole communities,
indeed whole nations,
fall in its wake.**

**At the end of all things,
according to Christianity,
the serpent who said
“Take, eat” in the garden
will be defeated by the
Savior who said “Take,
eat” in the upper room.**

the Savior who said “Take, eat” in the upper room. And to put an exclamation point on it, Christ’s victory will be commemorated with the meal of meals: a wedding feast (Rev. 19:9).³¹

The redemptive language in Scripture indicates that God cares about everydayness. We stand, walk, run, chew, swallow, and digest. These are not just temporal activities; at the end of all things lays the promise of a new earth as well as a new heaven. Eternity is not about escaping the physical but about redeeming it. All things will be made new (Rev. 21:1–5).³²

The Christian story, then, is of a personal, relational God who created optimal conditions for human flourishing, against whom humanity has rebelled and continues to rebel. It’s a story of buying back the rebels in order to set things right again. As you can imagine, those who do not wish this story to be true view it with immense suspicion. So we must be prepared to answer the question, “How do we know it’s true?”

4. GENERAL AND SPECIAL REVELATION: HOW GOD MAKES HIMSELF KNOWN

Let’s review for a moment. Every one of us is on a journey. To complete this journey, we need a map, a reliable guide showing where we are, where we are going, and the route between the two. If, for example, you are searching for a good school to attend, you might identify successful people and inquire about where they got their training. When it comes to life’s ultimate questions, though, we need more than just quick advice. We need someone to bring the dark things to light. This is called *revelation*, a term we discussed earlier in some detail.

So what has been revealed? The famed American scientist Carl Sagan asserted that “the cosmos is all that is or ever was or ever will be.”³³ In his television series *Cosmos*, he rhapsodized, “It makes good sense to worship the sun and the stars because we are their children.”³⁴ Compelling prose, to be sure, but terrible theology and even worse science. The evidence that life arose from nothing through random-chance processes is not as clear cut as secular evangelists like Sagan would have us believe. There are, rather, very good reasons to believe in a God who makes himself known.

Christians believe God has revealed himself in a *general* way through creation and in a *personal* way through his divine words and acts recorded in the Bible, especially in the person of Jesus Christ. Millard Erickson defines the two forms of revelation this way: “On the one hand, *general revelation* is God’s communication of Himself to all persons at all times and in all places. *Special revelation*, on the other hand, involves God’s particular communications and manifestations which are available now only by consultation of certain sacred writings.”³⁵ Let’s examine the Christian view of both, starting with general revelation.

5. GENERAL REVELATION: NATURE SPEAKS OF GOD’S DESIGN

The late Dallas Willard, one-time department chair and professor of philosophy at the University of Southern California, identified the great philosophers—Plato, Aristotle, Saint Augustine, Saint Thomas Aquinas, William of Ockham, René Descartes, Baruch Spinoza, Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, John Locke, George Berkeley, Immanuel Kant, and Georg W. F. Hegel—as theists, in one form or another, even though their particular theistic beliefs differed

from one another. Even David Hume, whom Secularists embrace as one of their own, declared, “The whole frame of nature bespeaks an intelligent author; and no rational enquirer can, after serious reflection, suspend his belief a moment with regard to the primary principles of genuine Theism and Religion.”³⁶

Although it takes special revelation to show us the ultimate truths set down in Scripture and embodied in Jesus Christ, general revelation can bring us to a general knowledge of God because it gives insight into *how* he has communicated his nature and character in creation. Most times, the questions surrounding general revelation are phrased something like this: Did life come from a living, intelligent God who loves order and beauty, or did it arise randomly from inert matter?

People tend to believe in the most likely solution to a problem, so it is unsurprising to find most agreeing that “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth” and “all things therein” (Gen. 1:1; Acts 17:24 KJV). Justin Barrett, a senior researcher at the University of Oxford’s Centre for Anthropology and Mind, found in his research that children instinctively believe the world was created with purpose. They are predisposed to believe in a creator-God.³⁷

If you find it difficult to believe in random particles assembling themselves into a fine-tuned universe, you are not alone. The English astronomer and mathematician Fred Hoyle, who coined the term *big bang* and served for years as a leading atheist spokesman, said there is a better chance of producing a Boeing 747 via a junkyard explosion than there is of arriving at life by accident.³⁸ Further, Hoyle expressed skepticism about the chance development of DNA, noting that merely lining up the necessary enzymes by chance would consume twenty billion years. Three respected scientists—Charles Thaxton, Walter Bradley, and Roger Olsen—wrote in *The Mystery of Life’s Origin* that “the undirected flow of energy through a primordial atmosphere and ocean is at present a woefully inadequate explanation for the incredible complexity associated with even simple living systems, and is probably wrong.”³⁹

Christianity says a creator-God, not a sequence of random cosmic accidents, is responsible for an orderly, beautiful, meaningful cosmos. The Bible says, “The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork” (Ps. 19:1). Evolutionist Paul Amos Moody affirmed, “The more I study science the more I am impressed with the thought that this world and universe have a definite design—and a design suggests a designer. It may be possible to have design without a designer, a picture without an artist, but my mind is unable to conceive of such a situation.”⁴⁰

The universe is a product of design, Christianity says, and everyone can observe this whether or not other arguments suppress that truth.

General Revelation: God’s universal revelation about himself (Ps. 19:1–6; Rom. 1:18–20) and morality (Rom. 2:14–15) that can be obtained through nature.

Christianity says a creator-God, not a sequence of random cosmic accidents, is responsible for an orderly, beautiful, meaningful cosmos.

6. CAN GENERAL REVELATION LEAD PEOPLE TO GOD?

Of course, there are disagreements among Christians about origin issues. But when top scientists contradict atheists' claims, it catches our attention. Robert Jastrow is one person whom atheists wish would have just kept quiet. After completing a PhD in theoretical physics at Columbia University, Jastrow became one of the first employees of NASA, chairing the committee that outlined the scientific goals of moon exploration. It was because of Jastrow's extraordinary credentials and stellar career that the scientific community was so startled when he concluded,

At this moment it seems as though science will never be able to raise the curtain on the mystery of creation. For the scientist who has lived by his faith in the power of reason, the story ends like a bad dream. He has scaled the mountains of ignorance; he is about to conquer the highest peak; as he pulls himself over the final rock, he is greeted by a band of theologians who have been sitting there for centuries.⁴¹

Sometimes insight about general revelation leads people to a personal relationship with God through Christ. Many discover God through the evidence of a structured universe or the purposeful nature of reality. As with renowned philosopher C. E. M. Joad, some come to believe in a personal God and in Jesus Christ as his appointed means of redemption. But general revelation does not necessarily lead people to faith. Biblically speaking, one divine purpose of general revelation is to remove people's excuses for *not* believing in God. Recall Romans 1:19–20:

What can be known about God is plain to [people], because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.

C. S. Lewis framed this “excuse removal” like this:

Suppose there were no intelligence behind the universe. In that case nobody designed my brain for the purpose of thinking. Thought is merely the by-product of some atoms within my skull. But if so, how can I trust my own thinking to be true? But if I can't trust my own thinking, of course, I can't trust the arguments leading to atheism, and therefore have no reason to be an atheist, or anything else. Unless I believe in God, I can't believe in thought; so I can never use thought to disbelieve in God.⁴²

Once the excuses are removed, we enter the domain of special revelation.

7. SPECIAL REVELATION: DIVINE COMMUNICATION THROUGH INSPIRED SCRIPTURE

General revelation is a necessary but insufficient means for revealing the Creator. The character of creation tells us *what* exists but not *why*: Why am I here? Why is there something wrong with us? Why can't we fix ourselves? Christianity turns to the Bible as the opening of heaven's door, showing us what God is like, what he wants us to do, and how we might be saved from our distress.

Christians view Scripture as the way God revealed himself over the course of sixteen hundred years in the recorded words of leaders, prophets, and sages. These writings are not ordinary; they express precisely what God wants to communicate. They are set apart. The biblical word for “set apart” is *holy*. We even call God’s revelation “the Holy Bible.” Christians also call the Bible “God’s Word” because it is, in a real sense, his “speech” (Matt. 4:4; John 17:17–20).⁴³ The teachings and events recorded there are the most reliable basis for understanding all reality.

We use the term *divine inspiration* to describe the doctrine of how God’s words ended up in Scripture. This addresses how a mighty and intelligent God could have communicated his written message to us, which his chosen human vessels rendered just so. It’s a vitally important question. Those who claim to be Christians and yet deny the Bible’s divine inspiration are ignoring the Scripture’s own claim to be God breathed (2 Tim. 3:16–17).⁴⁴

In 2009, a minister named Marilyn Sewell interviewed the acerbic atheist Christopher Hitchens. Trying to exempt herself from Hitchens’s criticisms of Christianity, Sewell said, “I’m a liberal Christian, and I don’t take the stories from the scripture literally. I don’t believe in the doctrine of atonement (that Jesus died for our sins, for example). Do you make a distinction between fundamentalist faith and liberal religion?”

Hitchens replied, “I would say that if you don’t believe that Jesus of Nazareth was the Christ and Messiah, and that he rose again from the dead and by his sacrifice our sins are forgiven, you’re really not in any meaningful sense a Christian.”⁴⁵

How interesting: an avowed atheist could see this simple truth, and a self-proclaimed minister could not. One would expect self-identified Christians to affirm the integrity of their holy book. But some find the Bible’s extraordinary claims embarrassing and think they can soften Secularists’ criticisms by expressing skepticism or disbelief. As Christopher Hitchens showed, though, the effect is the opposite: Secularists already see Christians as typically soft headed. When Christians cave in to criticism, Secularists just shrug and add one more descriptor: cowardly.

Christians need not feel embarrassed about the Bible. There is intriguing evidence justifying the Christian’s belief in the divine inspiration of the Bible. For example, given that different men in very different circumstances authored its books over many centuries, the unity of teaching in the Bible is *startling*. The Bible has changed billions of lives, and even nonbelievers accept the genius of its moral teachings. This cannot be claimed, truthfully, of any other book. British broadcaster Melvyn Bragg put it this way: “The Bible is one of the fundamental makers of the modern world. It has set free not only its readers and its preachers but those who have

Special Revelation:
God’s unique revelation
about himself through
the Scriptures (Ps.
19:7–11; 2 Tim. 3:14–17),
miraculous events (e.g.,
dreams, visions, prophets,
prophecy, etc.), and Jesus
Christ (John 1:1–18).

**I would say that if you
don’t believe that Jesus of
Nazareth was the Christ
and Messiah, and that
he rose again from the
dead and by his sacrifice
our sins are forgiven,
you’re really not in any
meaningful sense
a Christian.**

—Christopher Hitchens

used it as a springboard to achieve gains and enrichment in our world never before enjoyed by so many.⁴⁶

In studying the Bible, the reader meets God's most direct form of special revelation: the person of Jesus Christ. "In Jesus of Nazareth," wrote Carl F. H. Henry, "the divine source of revelation and the divine content of that revelation converge and coincide."⁴⁷ Christ's teachings, actions, and, most significantly, his resurrection provide the cornerstone for special revelation and a solid foundation for Christian theism. The Holy Spirit, too, plays an important role in this dialogue. Henry explained, "Scripture itself is given so that the Holy Spirit may etch God's Word upon the hearts of his followers in ongoing sanctification that anticipates the believer's final, unerring conformity to the image of Jesus Christ, God's incarnate Word."⁴⁸

Our need to be conformed to the character of Christ is why Christians don't just read the Bible once and set it aside but study it as the living Word of God and seek constantly to apply its teachings. It's a project from which a person never graduates until finally arriving in God's presence and knowing the whole and complete truth (1 Cor. 13:12).⁴⁹

For all of these reasons, we need to understand what special revelation is all about. We'll examine it by seeking to answer five questions:

1. How are we to understand the Bible?
2. What does the Bible say about humanity?
3. What does the Bible say is wrong with us?
4. What does the Bible say about how we should live?
5. How are we to understand other worldviews based on the Bible?

1. How are we to understand the Bible? What Scripture means depends on God's intention, not our interpretation. The apostle Peter was clear: "No prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit" (2 Pet. 1:20–21).

What resources do we have to understand the Bible? The answers include careful study, listening to the Holy Spirit, and participation in the body of Christ. As Paul told Timothy, "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15). The analogy of craftsmanship is powerful. Take music, for example. There are many ways for an orchestra conductor to interpret the opening sequence of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony. By directing the orchestra to play the notes at a different pace or volume, the conductor brings out new understandings of the piece. But if the orchestra plays other notes, it is no longer performing Beethoven's work. Similarly, if the musicians are poorly trained, the screeching violins and burping brass will destroy any credibility the conductor's interpretation might otherwise have had.

Craftsmen know that long before the work of interpretation has any meaning, the strenuous work of understanding must be carried out. Interpretation (what the text *means*) precedes application (what the text means *to me*). The next time you're in a Bible study and someone says, "Here's what the text means to me," consider whether that person has thoroughly understood God's intended meaning before you pay attention to his or her application.

2. What does the Bible say about humanity? The Christian worldview ascribes meaning to human existence right from the start, based on God’s declaration, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness” (Gen. 1:26). Naturalistic worldviews rely on chance and time to explain birds capable of aerial navigation and bees that communicate through dance. Christians credit an all-knowing God who ordered the universe in a beautiful symphony of light, life, sound, and color.

Saying “God did it” isn’t a cop-out. C. E. M. Joad’s conversion came about through recognizing that the Christian explanation of human nature better fits the facts of experience and allows a more comprehensible view of the world. He said his “changed view of the nature of man ... led to a changed view of the nature of the world.”⁵⁰ Why would a philosopher like Joad, and so many others through the ages, draw this conclusion? Because they understand the nature of thinking. The mind is not merely the random chemical firings of synapses in the brain. If we understand, it’s because we were meant to.

Even Charles Darwin recognized the problem adherents of atheistic, naturalistic explanations of the mind encounter: “With me, the horrid doubt always arises whether the convictions of man’s mind, which has been developed from the mind of the lower animals, are of any value or at all trustworthy. Would any one trust in the convictions of a monkey’s mind, if there are any convictions in such a mind?”⁵¹

3. What does the Bible say is wrong with us? Embedded in Marxism are stunning examples of humanity’s inhumanity. The record stretches from Karl Marx’s consistent dishonesty and misrepresentation of facts in his writings to the slaughter of millions of innocent citizens at the hands of Marxist-Leninist dictators.⁵² Even a *Moscow News* article referred to the “horrors” of Stalinism, noting that Joseph Stalin was responsible for mass murder. Robert Conquest documented Stalin’s systematic annihilation of millions of Ukrainians, and Jung Chang and Jon Halliday wrote of China that “Mao Tse-tung, who for decades held absolute power over the lives of one-quarter of the world’s population, was responsible for well over 70 million deaths in peacetime, more than any other twentieth-century leader.”⁵³ R. J. Rummel and Stéphane Courtois documented the slaughter of millions more.⁵⁴

The Bible never waxes romantic about human nature. Stories of revenge, genocide, false imprisonment, greed, lust, and murder, among many other forms of evil, fill its pages, putting the inhumanity of humans toward one another fully on display. As C. E. M. Joad said,

Is it not obvious that human arrogance and love of power, that human brutality and cruelty, that, in a

With me, the horrid doubt always arises whether the convictions of man’s mind, which has been developed from the mind of the lower animals, are of any value or at all trustworthy. Would any one trust in the convictions of a monkey’s mind, if there are any convictions in such a mind?

—Charles Darwin

The Bible never waxes romantic about human nature. Stories of revenge, genocide, false imprisonment, greed, lust, and murder, among many other forms of evil, fill its pages, putting the inhumanity of humans toward one another fully on display.

word, man's inhumanity to man, are responsible for ... [tragic events such as the Holocaust]; obvious, too, that it is precisely these characteristics that have written their melancholy record upon every page of human history?⁵⁵

But here's the hard news: if the moral code given in the Bible is a *window* through which we can discern evil and corruption in the world, it is also a *mirror* in which we see every detail of our own utter sinfulness (Jer. 17:9; Rom. 3:10–23).⁵⁶

R. C. Sproul is fond of saying we are a lot more like Adolf Hitler than we are like Jesus Christ.⁵⁷ When we ask ourselves whether our inclinations are good or evil and whether it is fair to blame society for our urges to steal, lust, or lie, we must face our own bent toward sin. G. K. Chesterton was right: our penchant for vice is ubiquitous. And the Bible is certainly right: our hearts are “deceitful [and] desperately sick” (Jer. 17:9).⁵⁸ Even “our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment” (Isa. 64:6) because we perform them out of a prideful belief in our own saving power. “Know thyself,” the ancient Greeks said. We do—and it's not pretty.

The distance between God and us is vast, and the implications for our lives are staggering. Carl F. H. Henry said,

Christianity declares that God is more than the ground and goal of the moral order. Unequivocally it lays stress on the reality of God's judgment of history. It affirms, that is, the stark fact of moral disorder and rebellion: “the whole world lieth in wickedness” (1 John 5:19). By emphasizing the fact of sin and the shattered moral law of God, the dread significance of death, the wiles of Satan and the hosts of darkness, Christian ethics sheds light on the treacherous realities of making moral choices.⁵⁹

The reality of which Henry speaks, that “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23), is a unique aspect of the Christian ethical system. D. James Kennedy wrote,

When a person makes up his own ethical code he always makes up an ethical system which he thinks he has kept. In the law of God, we find a law which smashes our self-righteousness, eliminates all trust in our own goodness, and convinces us that we are sinners. The law of God leaves us with our hands over our mouths and our faces in the dust. We are humbled before God and convinced that we are guilty transgressors of his law.⁶⁰

Once we truly grapple with how corrupt we are, it is easier to see how hopeless we are without divine intervention. The vehicle carrying our hopes and dreams hasn't just been in a fender bender. It is wrecked. We must first wallow in our deadness in Adam before we glory in our aliveness in Christ (Rom. 5:12–21; Eph. 2:1–10).⁶¹

The Christian ethical code points to our sinful nature and introduces the only one who can save us, the man who has not transgressed, Jesus Christ. Put simply, “the law is given to convince us that we fail to keep it.”⁶² When we realize this truth, we are driven for salvation to the One who has not failed.

4. What does the Bible say about how we should live? We cannot simply rely on Christ to save us while continuing in our sinful ways. Rather, once we embrace the ultimate sacrifice God made for us, we gain power through the Holy Spirit to adhere to his moral order. This does not mean it is easy to do what is morally right. As C. S. Lewis said, “There is nowhere this side of heaven where one can safely lay the reins on the horse's neck. It will never be

lawful simply to ‘be ourselves’ until ‘ourselves’ have become sons of God.”⁶³

In the power of the Holy Spirit, we have the capacity to live as the apostle Paul instructed Christians: “Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good” (Rom. 12:9). Christian morality is founded on the conviction of an absolute moral order outside of, and yet somehow inscribed on, our very being. It flows like a river from the nature of the Creator through the nature of created things and into our minds and hearts. We cannot make it up. To quote Lewis again, “The human mind has no more power of inventing a new value than of imagining a new primary colour, or, indeed, of creating a new sun and a new sky for it to move in.”⁶⁴

According to a good number of secular philosophies, we should treat all morals as relative to the situation or to the culture in which we were raised. In practice, even Secularists treat some abstract values (such as justice, love, and courage) as absolute. They cringe at the Nazi Holocaust, the abuse of child soldiers, and sex trafficking. The Christian worldview explains how we intuitively know these things are wrong: not because we’ve been raised in certain cultures or have had a certain kind of training but because moral truth actually exists for all people in all cultures at all times.

This moral understanding, according to the apostle John, is “the true light, which gives light to everyone ... coming into the world” (John 1:9). The apostle Paul called it “the work of the law ... written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness” (Rom. 2:15). This insight gives light to our ethical eyes, as we will see in the “Ethics” chapter, so we can “take every thought captive to obey Christ” (2 Cor. 10:5).

Many who finally begin to reflect on the deeper things of life—“How did I get here? Why am I here? Where am I going?”—discover the Christian answers to these questions are more complete, more robust. Even today the vast majority of people (an average of 92 percent⁶⁵) believe in God, a fact Paul also found to be true in the Athens of his day (Acts 17:23).⁶⁶

When we understand God’s nature and character, and when we acknowledge Christ’s atoning sacrifice, the Christian worldview gains tremendous explanatory and transformative power:

- Putting Christian economics into practice results in prosperity for the greatest number of people, even while the interventionist welfare state seems to secure generational poverty.
- Putting Christian sociology into practice encourages strong families and guards against widespread drug use, crime, unemployment, poverty, and disease; whereas secular views of sexuality destroy the family, which holds society together.
- Putting Christian law into practice guarantees human rights as God ordained, while its denial—in France for two centuries, in the Soviet Union for seventy years, and in the United States for the last half century—has resulted in a history of carnage.⁶⁷
- Putting Christian theology and philosophy into practice results in salvation of the soul (Matt. 16:26),⁶⁸ enlightenment of the mind, and purpose in life.

It will never be lawful simply to “be ourselves” until “ourselves” have become sons of God.

— C. S. Lewis

5. **How are we to understand other worldviews based on the Bible?** Often the children's game of tag features a "home base" to which one can cling for safety; resting in this neutral zone frees one from making decisions, from taking risks. But there is no neutral zone in the war of ideas. To reject one worldview is to automatically go over to another side. C. S. Lewis expressed it starkly in *The Abolition of Man*: "Either we are rational spirit obliged for ever to obey the absolute values of the *Tao* [moral order], or else we are mere nature to be kneaded and cut into new shapes for the pleasures of masters who must, by hypothesis, have no motive but their own "natural" impulses."⁶⁹

The other five worldviews we will consider in this book—Islam, Secularism, Marxism, New Spirituality, and Postmodernism—all came about long after Christianity, so we can't expect the Bible to address them specifically. But the other worldviews present in Bible times, some of which were much more popular than Christianity itself, were similar enough to give insight into modern perspectives. Christianity views non-Christian worldviews as based on "the basic principles of this world" and not on Christ (Col. 2:8).⁷⁰ In a word, they are foolish. It is foolish to say, "There is no God" (Ps. 14:1).⁷¹ It is foolish to scan the heavens and argue for chance and accident. It is foolish to examine the human body without an eye to design. It is foolish to experience the seasons of life and never sense the witness of God. It is foolish to listen to Handel's *Messiah* and picture evolving monkeys making music.

It is foolish to listen to Handel's *Messiah* and picture evolving monkeys making music.

As we draw this chapter to a close, let's briefly examine the other five worldviews and see how the Christian worldview interacts with each.

Islam. As the number of adherents of Islam grows rapidly, Christians are faced with having to understand and grapple with the implications of a worldview that only a few short years ago, most Americans saw as an exotic and distasteful set of beliefs held by people we don't understand in parts of the world we don't think much about. But with rapid immigration and a global economy, every Christian will encounter Islam as both a religion and a political ideology.

For Christians especially, Islam presents a confusing dilemma. Muslims believe in one God. They acknowledge Jesus as a prophet. They believe in moral absolutes. And yet Muslims see Christians as blasphemers because they believe in the Trinity, a doctrine they say has led to secularization and corruption. In countries like Nigeria, where the Christian-Muslim divide is especially intense, some have embraced Chrislam, a synthetic religion combining elements of Christianity and Islam. But while Christians and Muslims must learn to live together, their beliefs are incompatible. Islam cannot answer the ultimate questions of life in a way that satisfies the tests of truth.

Muslims believe in one God. They acknowledge Jesus as a prophet. They believe in moral absolutes. And yet Muslims see Christians as blasphemers.

Secularism and Marxism are cousins. To both, it is seen as misguided and possibly dangerous to stake much on a belief in God as revealed in the Bible. Divine action is not needed to explain life's existence, they insist. This *naturalism* reduces both Secularism and Marxism to

one reliable way of knowing: *scientism*, the notion that reliable knowledge comes only from scientific inquiry and method. But explaining all of reality is a burden far too heavy for science to carry. Even Julian Huxley, one of the twentieth century's leading evolutionists, recognized the limited nature of the scientific method:

Science has removed the obscuring veil of mystery from many phenomena, much to the benefit of the human race: but it confronts us with a basic and universal mystery—the mystery of existence in general, and of the existence of mind in particular. Why does the world exist? Why is the world-stuff what it is? Why does it have mental or subjective aspects as well as material or objective ones? We do not know.⁷²

Even if science could go beyond *how* and reveal to us *why* we exist as we do, it has very little to say about things that make life worth living: we ponder, we laugh, we sing, we are capable of doing good, we feel guilt and sadness over our own wrongdoing and that of others, we create things, we reason our way to conclusions, and experiences of beauty and craftsmanship deeply move us.

Naturalists cannot account for these things, but they depend on them for meaning in life, just as you and I do. To describe them as secondary, derivative, or mere reflections of material reality is inadequate. As C. S. Lewis pointed out, we ascribe meaning to our things, which is not a reasonable assumption if they proceed from a random universe. For casting such a wide net, worldviews based on naturalism catch very little.

New Spirituality. New Spirituality's view of God as impersonal consciousness is irreconcilable with the biblical concept of God as a personal, relational being who reveals himself generally in nature and specially through Scripture. When it comes to the nature of God and reality, the Christian worldview offers a confidence not found in New Spirituality. Hebrews 11:1⁷³ explains that biblical faith is based on confidence and assurance, not wishes or guesses. Based on the historical eyewitness accounts of Jesus's life, death, and resurrection, Christians are confident of his claim that he is "the way, and the truth, and the life" (John 14:6). In contrast to the all-roads-lead-to-God notion, the map of Christianity shows only *one* road leading to God : the road passing through the life, teachings, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ (John 8:31–32; 14:6; Col. 2:2; 2 Pet. 1:16–18; 1 John 5:20).⁷⁴

Postmodernism. Postmodernism considers truth to be particular to a person's language, community of origin, and socially constructed self. The Christian worldview, by contrast, claims the existence of an objective truth that can be known. This truth is universal in its scope and application—nearly everything about Christianity is. God created the *whole universe*, and sin is a *universal* condition affecting every human being. Christ died to redeem the *whole world*. Christians are to love God with *all* their hearts and minds and their fellow human beings around the *whole world* (Matt. 22:37–37). Christians may join Postmodernists in critiquing *scientific materialism*, the idea that only matter exists and that only science can reveal its nature, but they will find Postmodernism's assertion that "all worldviews are local" unpersuasive.

Postmodernism considers truth to be particular to a person's language, community of origin, and socially constructed self.

8. WHERE DOES FAITH COME IN?

Unfortunately, some Christians see faith as indefensible. Belief by its very nature is “beyond reason,” they say. These Christians point to Colossians 2:8 (NIV 1984), where the apostle Paul wrote, “See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy.” People who use this verse as an anti-philosophical proof text do so by omitting its ending, in which Paul described the kind of philosophy he was warning Christians against—philosophy “which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ.”

Paul did not see Christianity as beyond reason or inaccessible to those unfamiliar with localized Jewish traditions. In Acts 17, he confronted the vain and deceitful philosophies of the atheistic Epicureans and pantheistic Stoics—the professional Secularists and New Spiritualists of his day. He countered their ideas with Christian ideas, he reasoned with them, he preached to them, and he accented three truths many Christians would like to soft-pedal: the resurrection of Jesus Christ (Acts 17:18), God’s creation of the universe (v. 24), and the judgment to come (v. 31).⁷⁵

Of course, while Paul’s hearers understood creation and suspected him to be correct about judgment, they thought he was crazy to argue for the resurrection of the dead. Even here Paul gave arguments that scholars like N. T. Wright and Gary Habermas have expanded upon in our own day. Josh McDowell says, “After more than seven hundred hours of studying this subject and thoroughly investigating its foundation, I have come to the conclusion that the resurrection of Jesus Christ is one of the most wicked, vicious, heartless hoaxes ever foisted upon the minds of men, or it is the most fantastic fact of history.”⁷⁶ McDowell’s conclusion: this improbable and thrilling event actually happened. You can follow these arguments in McDowell’s book *The New Evidence That Demands a Verdict*,⁷⁷ N. T. Wright’s book *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, and Gary Habermas’s book *The Case for the Resurrection of Jesus*.

Once we have captured every idea and made it obedient to Christ, we should use these thoughts to

- “destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God” (2 Cor. 10:5);
- “walk in [Christ], rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as [we] were taught, abounding in thanksgiving” (Col. 2:6–7);
- “see to it” that we are not taken captive “by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ” (v. 8); and
- be “zealous for what is good” without fear, “always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks” for the reason for our hope, and to do so “with gentleness and respect, having a good conscience” that puts slanderers to shame. Along with this, we must be willing to “suffer for doing good, if that should be God’s will, than for doing evil” (1 Pet. 3:13–17).⁷⁸

We encourage you to consider these passages a magnifying glass through which to examine every area of your life: the way you daily invest your time, energy, giftings, relationships, and creativity. If Christianity is so reasonable, though, why do so many people resist believing it?

9. IF CHRISTIANITY IS TRUE, WHY DOESN'T EVERYONE SEE IT?

Either a supreme mind has always existed and at specific points in time created matter and the universe, or matter is eternal and formed the universe by itself. There really aren't any other viable options on the table at this point. Christian arguments are reasonable when it comes to seeing the universe as the product of design (general revelation) and the Bible as the most accurate description of the Designer and how we might come to know him through Jesus Christ (special revelation).

But why do so many people not see what Christians believe to be self-evidently true? The key may be found in John 1:1–2, 10–11:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God.... He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him.

We humans have two problems: the world is dark and we are blind. In the sense of general revelation, what is true about God is plainly seen. Regarding special revelation, though, the Christian worldview must be believed to be understood. So how do we come to this belief? Christian interpretations vary, but an old hymn weaves together what most can agree on: "I sought the Lord, and afterward I knew / He moved my soul to seek Him, seeking me. / It was not I that found, O Savior true; / No, I was found of Thee."⁷⁹

Without revelation to light the way, people cannot comprehend truth. They'll invent counterfeit worldviews in an attempt to shed light on their own paths. We'll take a look at each of these worldviews in turn, starting with one many people see as a close cousin of Christianity: Islam.

ENDNOTES

1. C. E. M. Joad, *The Recovery of Belief* (London: Faber and Faber, 1952), 16.
2. Joad, *Recovery of Belief*, 22.
3. Colossians 1:16: "By him [Christ] all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him."
4. Romans 5:8: "God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."
5. John R. W. Stott, *Basic Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1958), 21.
6. Matthew 18:12: "What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go in search of the one that went astray?"
7. Mark 10:45: "Even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."
8. John 3:36: "Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him."
9. Dr. Bruce Ware, "Doctrine of Scripture," *Biblical Training*, accessed March 12, 2014, www.biblicaltraining.org/library/doctrine-scripture/systematic-theology-i/bruce-ware.
10. Genesis 1:1: "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth"; John 1:1: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."
11. Colossians 1:16–17: "By him [Christ] all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together."
12. For more information, see Francis Collins, *The Language of God* (New York: Free Press, 2007).

13. Malachi 2:10: "Have we not all one Father? Has not one God created us? Why then are we faithless to one another, profaning the covenant of our fathers?"; Matthew 23:9: "Call no man your father on earth, for you have one Father, who is in heaven"; John 14:9-10: "Jesus said ..., 'Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works"; 1 Corinthians 8:6: "For us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist"; Ephesians 1:3: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places"; Ephesians 4:6: "[There is] one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all"; Hebrews 1:3: "[Christ] is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high."
14. John 1:1: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God"; John 1:14: "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth"; John 5:18: "This was why the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him, because not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God"; John 8:58: "Jesus said ..., 'Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am'"; John 10:30-33: "'I and the Father are one.' The Jews picked up stones again to stone him. Jesus answered them, 'I have shown you many good works from the Father; for which of them are you going to stone me?' The Jews answered him, 'It is not for a good work that we are going to stone you but for blasphemy, because you, being a man, make yourself God'"; Philippians 2:5-8: "Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross"; Colossians 2:9: "In [Christ] the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily"; Hebrews 1:8: "Of the Son [God] says, 'Your throne, O God, is forever and ever, the scepter of uprightness is the scepter of your kingdom.'"
15. Matthew 28:19: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit"; 2 Corinthians 3:16-18: "When one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed. Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit"; 2 Corinthians 13:14: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all"; Ephesians 4:4-6: "There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all."
16. Elizabeth Barrett Browning, *Aurora Leigh*, 3rd ed. (London: Chapman and Hall, 1857), 304.
17. John 10:30: "I and the Father are one"; John 14:7-8: "[Jesus said,] 'If you had known me, you would have known my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.' Philip said to him, 'Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us.'"
18. C. J. Ackerley and S. E. Gontarski, eds., *The Faber Companion to Samuel Beckett* (London: Faber and Faber, 2006), 73.
19. Ernest Nagel, *Logic without Metaphysics: And Other Essays in the Philosophy of Science* (New York: Free Press, 1956), 17.
20. Kerry Livgren, "Dust in the Wind," recorded by Kansas, © 1978 Kirshner.
21. Based on definition in Spiros Zodhiates, ed., *Hebrew-Greek Key Word Study Bible: King James Version* (Chattanooga: AMG, 2008), s.v. "tob."
22. See Andy Crouch's thought-provoking book *Culture Making: Recovering Our Creative Calling* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2008).
23. See, for example, E. Calvin Beisner, "The Competing World Views of Environmentalism and Christianity," Cornwall Alliance for the Stewardship of Creation, accessed March 26, 2014, www.cornwallalliance.org/docs/THECOM-1.PDF. In this essay, Beisner noted a statement from Britain's Prince Phillip that if he were to be reincarnated, he would want to come back as a killer virus to decrease the human population to manageable levels.
24. Lesslie Newbigin, *A Walk through the Bible* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1999), 4, quoted in John W. Miller, *How the Bible Came to Be: Exploring the Narrative and Message* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 2004), 113.
25. Dorothy L. Sayers, *Letters to a Diminished Church* (Nashville: W Publishing Group, 2004), 118.
26. Cornelius Plantinga Jr., *Not the Way It's Supposed to Be: A Breviary of Sin* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 12.
27. Genesis 3:6: "When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate."

28. Martin Luther, *Lectures on Romans*, 515–16, quoted in Mark Johnston, *Saving God: Religion after Idolatry* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009), 88.
29. Genesis 3:12–13: “The man said, ‘The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate.’ Then the LORD God said to the woman, ‘What is this that you have done?’ The woman said, ‘The serpent deceived me, and I ate.’”
30. Romans 16:20: “The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet”; Revelation 12:9: “The great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.”
31. Revelation 19:9: “The angel said to [John], ‘Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.’ And he said to me, ‘These are the true words of God.’”
32. Revelation 21:1–5: “Then I [John] saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, ‘Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.’ And he who was seated on the throne said, ‘Behold, I am making all things new.’ Also he said, ‘Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.’”
33. Carl Sagan, *Cosmos* (New York: Random House, 1980), 4.
34. Carl Sagan, *Cosmos*, directed by Adrian Malone (Australian Broadcasting Corporation, Carl Sagan Productions, and KCET, 1980).
35. Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 3 vols. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1983), 1:153.
36. Quoted in J. P. Moreland and Kai Nielsen, *Does God Exist? The Great Debate* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1990), 211. What can a naturalist do with mind, soul, altruism, creativity, rationality, conscience, song, and laughter?
37. Martin Beckford, “Children Are Born Believers in God, Academic Claims,” *Telegraph*, November 24, 2008, www.telegraph.co.uk/news/religion/3512686/Children-are-born-believers-in-God-academic-claims.html.
38. Fred Hoyle, *The Intelligent Universe* (London: Michael Joseph, 1983), 18–19.
39. Charles Thaxton, Walter Bradley, and Roger Olsen, *The Mystery of Life’s Origin: Reassessing Current Theories* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1984), 186. Students particularly interested in biological origins should also read Percival Davis and Dean Kenyon, *Of Pandas and People*, 2nd ed. (Richardson, TX: Foundation for Thought and Ethics, 1993).
40. Paul Amos Moody, *Introduction to Evolution* (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), 497.
41. Robert Jastrow, *God and the Astronomers* (New York: Norton, 1978), 116.
42. C. S. Lewis, *Broadcast Talks* (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1944), 37–38.
43. Matthew 4:4: “[Jesus] answered, ‘It is written, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.”’”; John 17:17–20: “Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth. I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word.”
44. Second Timothy 3:16–17: “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.”
45. “The Hitchens Transcript,” *Portland Monthly*, December 17, 2009, www.pdxmonthly.com/articles/2009/12/17/christopher-hitchens.
46. Melvyn Bragg, *The Book of Books* (Berkeley, CA: Counterpoint, 2011), 5.
47. Carl F. H. Henry, *God, Revelation, and Authority*, vol. 2, *God Who Speaks and Shows* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1976), 11.
48. Henry, *God Who Speaks and Shows*, 2:15.
49. First Corinthians 13:12: “Now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.”
50. Joad, *Recovery of Belief*, 46.
51. Charles Darwin, *The Life and Letters of Charles Darwin*, 2 vols., ed. Francis Darwin (London: John Murray, 1887), 1:316.
52. See Paul Johnson, *Intellectuals* (New York: Harper and Row, 1988), 52.
53. Jung Chang and Jon Halliday, *Mao: The Unknown Story* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2005), 3.
54. R. J. Rummel, *Death by Government* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1994); Stéphane Courtois et al., *The Black Book of Communism: Crimes, Terror, Repression* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999).
55. Joad, *Recovery of Belief*, 46.
56. Jeremiah 17:9: “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?”; Romans 3:10–23: “None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one. Their throat is an open grave; they use their tongues to deceive. The venom of asps is under their lips. Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness. Their feet are swift to

shed blood; in their paths are ruin and misery, and the way of peace they have not known. There is no fear of God before their eyes.' Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin. But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."

57. R. C. Sproul, *Before the Face of God*, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993).

58. Jeremiah 17:9: "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?"

59. Carl F. H. Henry, *Christian Personal Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957), 209.

60. D. James Kennedy, *Why I Believe* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1980), 91.

61. Romans 5:12–21: "Just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned—for sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law. Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come. But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if many died through one man's trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many. And the free gift is not like the result of that one man's sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brought justification. For if, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ. Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous. Now the law came in to increase the trespass, but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, so that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord"; Ephesians 2:1–10: "You were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them."

62. Kennedy, *Why I Believe*, 90.

63. C. S. Lewis, *God in the Dock* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970), 286.

64. C. S. Lewis, *The Abolition of Man* (New York: MacMillan, 1955), 56–57.

65. Luis Lugo et al., *U.S. Religious Landscape Survey* (Washington, DC: Pew Research Center, 2008), 162, <http://religions.pewforum.org/pdf/report-religious-landscape-study-full.pdf>.

66. Acts 17:23: "As I [Paul] passed along and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription, 'To the unknown god.' What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you."

67. Yes, carnage in the United States: abortion kills 1.2 million unborn babies every year.

68. Matthew 16:26: "What will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul?"

69. Lewis, *Abolition of Man*, 84.

70. Colossians 2:8: "See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ."

71. Psalm 14:1: "The fool says in his heart, 'There is no God.' They are corrupt, they do abominable deeds, there is none who does good."

72. Julian Huxley, *Essays of a Humanist* (New York: Harper and Row, 1964), 107.

73. Hebrews 11:1: "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen."

74. John 8:31–32: "Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, 'If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free';" John 14:6: "Jesus said ..., 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me';" Colossians 2:2: "[May] their hearts ... be encouraged, being knit together in love, to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery, which is Christ"; 2 Peter 1:16–18: "We did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For when he received honor and glory from God the Father, and the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, 'This is my beloved Son, with

whom I am well pleased,' we ourselves heard this very voice borne from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain"; 1 John 5:20: "We know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true; and we are in him who is true, in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life."

75. Acts 17:18: "Some of the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers also conversed with him. And some said, 'What does this babbler wish to say?' Others said, 'He seems to be a preacher of foreign divinities'—because he was preaching Jesus and the resurrection"; Acts 17:24: "The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man"; Acts 17:31: "[God] has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead."

76. Josh McDowell, *The New Evidence That Demands a Verdict* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1999), 203.

77. McDowell, *New Evidence*.

78. First Peter 3:13–17: "Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good? But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame. For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil."

79. "I Sought the Lord," music by George W. Chadwick, circa 1880, public domain.