



"THE TIME WILL
COME WHEN PEOPLE
WILL NOT PUT UP WITH
SOUND DOCTRINE!"
2 TIMOTHY 4:3

ASK MY PASTOR!

HE KNOWS THAT STUFF

alarmingly unexpected and marginally funny

ALAN ROOT ROBERTSON

A QUICK-START GUIDE TO
WHAT CHRISTIANS BELIEVE

**BITESIZED
NUGGETS
FOR HUNGRY
PEOPLE!**

This book won't make you smarter or better looking, and no points just for owning it. It's simply an antidote for the pervading postmodern deconstruction of absolutes!

GOD DIDN'T LEAVE US IN THE DARK: SOME PEOPLE JUST KEEP MESSING WITH THE SWITCH.

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"If you do not listen to Theology, that will not mean you have no ideas about God. It will mean that you have a lot of wrong ones ..."
C.S. Lewis

"There are five authors whose books I'd pay to read. Alan makes six."

Pastor Andrew Higgins

ASK MY PASTOR!

HE KNOWS THAT STUFF



Alan Root Robertson is a traveling evangelist and musicianary. If he can understand the stuff in this book, anyone can. He's written 7 books for tweens about the basics of faith in Jesus.
www.alanroot.com

ASK MY PASTOR!

HE KNOWS THAT STUFF

A quick-start guide to what Christians believe

**“ARE YOU NOT IN ERROR BECAUSE YOU
DO NOT KNOW THE SCRIPTURES OR
THE POWER OF GOD?”**

MARK 12:24

“If you do not listen to Theology, that will not mean that you have no ideas about God. It will mean that you have a lot of wrong ones -- bad, muddled, out of date ideas. For a great many of the ideas about God which are trotted out as novelties today, are simply the ones which real Theologians tried centuries ago and rejected.”

C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*

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HE KNOWS THAT STUFF

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Alan Root Robertson is a big-picture type, always fascinated by the panoramic view of life and faith, 'cause he thinks context helps. For 30+ years, he's traveled the nation as an evangelist and a musicianary. His call includes kids and families. He's been privileged to be present at the moment where thousands of kids have said yes to the call of the Holy Spirit in salvation. He's all about **downloading the nuts and bolts of our common Christian thing** in songs, sermons, and crusades.

His love of teaching has made him *have to be* a lifelong learner. Along the way, he's noticed that **a ton of us don't know what we believe or why we believe it**. And we really don't know how to even begin to remedy the problem. Hence this book.

Getting the basic non-denominational teachings of the Bible into the hands of those who sincerely want to know what's going on with their faith in Jesus Christ.

Alan is uniquely equipped for this job by his default mode for simplification, encouragement and his seeming inability to be serious for long stretches of time. Here in this book are **the basics of what believers believe**: an eagle's-eye view of the landscape of Biblical doctrine. As the hymn says, "*How firm a foundation, ye saints of the LORD, is laid for your faith in His excellent word!*"

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ASK MY PASTOR – HE KNOWS THAT STUFF

Great: a dry book about a dry subject: doctrine. We want to laugh, to dance, to pass the time and get relief from our problems: we want to be entertained. But God meant our lives to be a hugely satisfying adventure, not just an existence. To be the overcomers, not the overcome. If knowing more about a stupid cell phone can unlock riches unknown, what do you think knowing more about Almighty God might do? Are we living to die, or dying to live?

→set up **HEY: WHY BOTHER** is ignorance really bliss?

Christianity seems to have become a professional sport. We hire a church staff to act like Christians all through the week so the rest of us can go about our business. We buy tickets for those highly scripted Sunday events by dropping money in a collection plate that passes through the crowd, and we then sit back and evaluate how well our team is doing. The pastor is showing marked improvement, the worship leader's still struggling, while the Sunday school teacher? Let's just say they're not keeping us *entertained*. We think of trying that other church on the corner: they serve soy milk lattes in the sanctuary.

Apparently, we Christians are judged solely by occasional church attendance, and maybe not even that. We're no longer expected to know what we believe and why. We're not even sure what God expects of us anymore, we're so busy telling God what *we* expect. We said a sincere prayer when we were in high school, and we were told our ticket was punched: we were good to go. Yet we still have the feeling we're missing something. Sunday mornings, we drive past people reading morning newspapers at the coffee shop and we wonder what it would be like to dare to sip expensive hot drinks in tee shirts and sunglasses at an outside table

every Sunday instead of having to show up and evaluate the church staff.

We think we oughta be happy and successful because, after all, God's reputation is on the line and we don't want Him to be embarrassed. We're nagged by the suspicion that we fall woefully short of pleasing Him, so we double our efforts to produce lives that look OK on the outside. We're supposed to be doing and believing something or other, but it's complicated and confusing. We can't even agree on Bible translations forget being salt and light. We've just sorta checked out.

What? You have a question about Christianity? Sorry, no clue. Ask my pastor, we pay him to know that kind of stuff . . .

We talk about movies, we talk about sports, we talk about the weather, we talk about restaurants and cars and clothes. My friend and former pastor Ron Ferguson rephrased a Chesterton axiom when he said, "Everything matters except what *matters*." We want to think of ourselves as deep, but our conversations take us no further than the shallow end of the conversation pool. But each of us, deep down inside, want to talk about, and be about, the things that really *do* matter.

Everybody's got an opinion, and thanks to social media, everybody can benefit from knowing what ours are. It's a great time to be alive because apparently nobody's opinions are wrong. Unless your opinions should happen to come from the Bible. Then those most certainly are wrong: bigoted, out of date, intolerant and horrifically, embarrassingly wrong! If you think that's an overstatement, try this: Stand up and declare, "God hates divorce!" Or maybe, "Ten percent is only a minimum suggested beginning amount of money for giving!" Or the ever popular, "If you follow Jesus, expect your life to be really hard!" These are some of God's opinions. There're bunches more where those came from. Don't like 'em? Then I guess you can go make your own time/space continuum any way *you* like! But we'd better at least know what his opinions *are*, don't you think?

This book is about God's opinions revealed in Scripture. What does God think about stuff? What's he revealed in the Bible? These revelations are the stuff of Christian doctrine. Do we even know these things anymore?

Doctrine has been relegated to the domain of theologians and it should never have been. It's is the coin of the realm of the Kingdom of God and thus ought to be the birthright of every one of his children. Ignorance of doctrine frustrates our desire to mature and produce the fruit of an effective and victorious life. I mean, come on. Are we scared to have our own beliefs challenged by the Scriptures? Maybe we should be! Maybe we might have to alter or ditch some of them!

Doctrine attempts to tackle questions about which we ought to be curious. Charles Spurgeon said doctrine answers such questions as: why do we exist? How can we know anything? How much can we know? Who is God? What's wrong with the world? How is God going to fix it? How do we reconnect with Life? Is God just?

What does God expect of us? What's the key to belonging to his family?

Doctrine is like a swimming pool: it takes the “deep things of God” and puts them in a handy, comprehensible box; a tub where we can touch the bottom and the sides, and not feel like we're in over our heads. As fun as the ocean is, have you noticed people would rather actually *swim* in a swimming pool? No one wants be helicopter-dropped in the middle of the vast bottomless ocean. Doctrine provides a safer way to come into the always overwhelming world of God's thoughts and actions, helping us systematize his revelation so we can better know what he's like and what he expects of us.

Doctrine is the theological equivalent of a “fixed point.” Surveyors and astronomers sometimes designate a fixed point as a stationary observational position from which to begin to map the landscape or the constellations. A benchmark. A null point. A point of reference. An unmoving systematic belief system platform from which to judge the veracity of the ideas flying all around us.

Doctrine is a storage place for concepts about God. When you have to organize a large room full of stuff, it's helpful to have shelves with labels. We can take one of God's revealed truths and roughly categorize it by placing it on a shelf with other revealed truths like it. It will be there when we need it.

Doctrine provides context for the vocabulary we come across in the Bible, guarding us from gross error. Sharing a vocabulary is not enough unless we also share a dictionary. In the dictionary, “fast” means both rapid and stationary. “Bark” is either something you can touch or something you can hear. And “bad” can mean defective, unpleasant, decayed, diseased, guilty, worthless, immoral or even surpassingly good. The point is, words without *context* can often give the opposite idea of what was intended.

Doctrine decodes the messages that bombard our senses. If you don't know the code, the colors of the traffic lights mean nothing. If you come up to a light with 5 lights in a circle: pink, orange, blue, magenta, and purple -- what will you do if the magenta light is on? Stop? Go? Wait? Freak out? The point is, we need the code.

The doctrines in this book are generally ones about which most Christians *agree*. My bias is conservative evangelical with a touch of liturgical charismatic flavoring. I've tried to compensate, but you'll have to adjust your screen for that slight skew! Any book written by human beings will fall short, and this one certainly does. The reason I wrote it is because the church is constantly tossed about by changing tides of societal pressures. Doctrine can serve as an anchor to keep us from drifting.

Jesus said, **“You know these things; you're blessed if you DO them.”** It's crucial that we *do* whatever we know to do; yet we must “know” first before we can then “do!” May this book help us celebrate the commonwealth of the wisdom and the knowledge and the love that is found in Jesus Christ, and in him alone.

ASK MY PASTOR – HE KNOWS THAT STUFF

If you could experience a life without any truth, what do you imagine it would be like? Obviously at that point, everything you believed would be of no value whatsoever. Nothing would be reliable. Everything, and I mean everything, would simply be a cheat and a fraud. Maybe we under-appreciate the vital role of truth in our lives. It's kind of like oxygen: we don't think about it, but we sure do miss it when it's not there!

→chapter one

TRUTH: THE UNDERLYING REALITY

listen: can I tell you a secret?

“THE SECRET THINGS BELONG TO THE LORD OUR GOD, BUT THE THINGS REVEALED BELONG TO US.”

DEUTERONOMY 29:29

Everyone loves a secret. Everyone loves to *blab* a secret. Everyone loves to *hear* a secret blabbed. Well?! God's been blabbing a ton of secrets. He calls it *revelation* truth. Is there any conceivable reason that we might not listen?

Luke 8:10 says, “*The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of God has been given to you.*” This is stupendous stuff. This is Indiana Jones, Marco Polo, Christopher Columbus magnitude. Secrets of the Kingdom? Given? To us? Is that a past-tense verb Jesus uses? You'd better believe it, pal. It's no small matter. Will we pay

attention to this gift? Will we leave this gift under the tree? Will we chase after lesser gifts and ignore this one?

For good reason, we honor truth above all things. Even when it's painful, we want the truth. We adjure our court witnesses to stick to it. We expect our philosophers to seek it. We want our songwriters to explore it. We demand our children tell it. We hate lies and liars more than we hate anything.

Truth destroys lies as light destroys darkness. Truth battles destructive heresy as Lysol disinfects toilet bowls. Truth fills up our lives the way good, hot, honest food satiates a hungry man. Truth connects with us in our deepest place, reminding us of what we already suspected but perhaps hadn't yet come to realize. Truth is like cool water to our thirsty souls. Truth is the most solid, satisfying thing we know. So why would we settle for anything less than the absolute truth?

I don't know; you tell me!

• EVIDENCE

how many blatant, barefaced signposts do we require?

WISDOM CALLS ALOUD IN THE STREET, SHE RAISES HER VOICE IN THE PUBLIC SQUARES; AT THE HEAD OF THE NOISY STREETS SHE CRIES OUT, IN THE GATEWAYS OF THE CITY SHE MAKES HER SPEECH: HOW LONG WILL YOU SIMPLE ONES LOVE YOUR SIMPLE WAYS? HOW LONG WILL MOCKERS DELIGHT IN MOCKERY AND FOOLS HATE KNOWLEDGE?

PROVERBS 1:20-22

If our senses are working at all, we know there's a God. We know he's powerful and masterful. We know he's vast in his imagination and in his creativity. We know that he's beyond our ability to figure out. We know that he's purposeful and unstoppable in whatever he decides to do. All this just by standing still and experiencing our surroundings. All this without ever cracking open a Bible. God definitely wants us to know a lot about him.

We of the western world have a procedural custom that comes from Greek and Jewish culture by way of the Roman Empire. We try to lay aside our feelings and emotions and attempt to be rational about things. To *think* rather than react based on hormones or outside stimuli. We place an emphasis on our determination to gather the facts, and based on our assessment of the veracity of those facts and their claims, to act accordingly. Modern science was formulated by Western Civilization.

In this light, the “if it feels good, do it” motto of the 60’s in America is a vile regression from Western thought, so much so that the generation that subscribed to that empty philosophy have become bankrupt: both rationally and morally. Sadly, it is these 60’s people in our time who are in elected office and Hollywood, steering the culture with disastrous results; perhaps unintended, perhaps not. Still, who cares what they intend if the result is the same?

Naturalism, gnosticism, animism, legalism, dualism, materialism, multiculturalism, secular humanism, and new-age demonic spirit-guides are more often the norm than we might want to think. These are irrational beliefs: to buy into them, a person must push away the witness of creation, their own conscience, their mind, the Bible and the Holy Spirit. The worst kind of deception is self-deception, but I think in the case of our relationship to God’s truth, it’s the only kind of deception the devil ever needs: it works so well.

Into this tangle of wrong thinking comes the witness of *evidence*, obvious clues left everywhere. All around, in every language of sensory experience, we get a billboard of truth that calls us to the right road. In the end, no one will be able to say they never knew that God is who he says he is, nor can they credibly claim that their search for truth yielded no answers. When we stand before God, ignorance is one excuse that just won’t wash.

Evidence ought to be something that changes the way we think. Perhaps it won’t change the way we feel, but it definitely should affect our mindset. If I know my business associates are cheating scumbags, I may still like them and want to stay friends, but it’s unlikely I’ll loan them money. When evidence is produced it ought to redirect any decision-making process. Evidence influences. Evidence shapes. Evidence persuades. Evidence convicts.

Evidence does not leave us where it found us, it calls us to make a choice. It demands an assessment of our present course. We sidestep evidence at great cost. God has left us scads of evidence about himself. What will we do now that we know what we know? There are 4 possibilities: *ignore* the evidence, *contest* the evidence, merely *assent* to the intellectual veracity of the evidence, or *act* upon the evidence.

Ready? Choose.

1 meaning

does it make sense that anything makes sense?

WHAT MAY BE KNOWN ABOUT GOD IS PLAIN TO THEM, BECAUSE GOD HAS MADE IT PLAIN TO THEM.

ROMANS 1:19

God's not playing hide and seek with us. If we can't see him, it's because we refuse to look. Perhaps our observational abilities have been seared like a steak on a sizzling grill. We persist in rationalizing our wrong behavior, and the warning signals of God's truth no longer reach us as easily as they used to. It's as if we're calmly resting our hands on a hot stove because our pain response has been deadened. But the truth remains. Everyone knows the truth. Truth is plain as the nose on your face: God is for real, God is in charge, God makes the rules not us. We turn our backs on him at our own peril.

Meaning must exist, else we'd have no idea that it didn't! Do you get that? I'm not sure I do, but it's true. Meaning is what we call *self-evident*.

Let me try again. Meaning must exist before someone could possibly posit that it doesn't. Meaning must be real because if it weren't we'd never know that it might not be. I mean, plug in your own explanation here and see what YOU get. Hah! It's not so EASY, is it? Even the attempt to talk about meaninglessness is difficult to accomplish in a meaningful way!

I know Solomon said *everything* was meaningless, but he wasn't sawing off the rational branch he was standing on. When he spoke of "meaning," he was using the word as a synonym for "purposefulness." It couldn't be otherwise. How could Solomon possibly bemoan the lack of something that wasn't bemoan-able due to it's not being there? This is getting so weird. Even here, there is a clue to the truth.

To even *say* that everything is meaningless proves the reality that everything does in fact have meaning. As Jon Foreman of the band Switchfoot says, "*The shadow proves the sunshine.*" Meaninglessness is not the problem. It's not possible for life to be meaningless, because if it were, we would be unable to wonder if it were.

So we have positive proof of the existence of meaning. What does this tell us? Meaning is not accidental, nor is it evolving. Meaning can only be recognized by sentient, conscious, aware beings; so it must proceed from a sentient, conscious, and aware Being. Don't read too much into this. We aren't yet even close to the God of the Bible or his goodness or creativity or power or love. We've only said this: our ability to wonder about meaning is a solid fact of the existence of Someone from whom meaning itself emanates.

This is such a telling fact that agnostics either have to ignore it or fall on their knees. To an agnostic or a neo-Darwinist, meaning is a pink elephant in the room. Once we admit that life has meaning, we must admit that there is a bigger Someone of some sort if we want to keep a shred of our intellectual viability. And if one admits to the existence of meaning, there's a tiger loose in the house. There's no telling what's going to happen now.

God might be good, might be maniacal, might be loving, might be sadistic, might be compassionate or might be out for only himself. But you can't say that he doesn't exist and call yourself perceptive. Can you?

The existence of meaning lets us in on a secret: there's more to the universe than just what we can see or what we can observe in a petri dish or describe with a thermometer or a telescope. There is something alongside us in this universe that enriches things with significance and consequence. There's a *point* to life, whatever that point is. And the question of what is the ultimate point of the universe haunts us deep inside our soul.

Meaning just *IS*, it exists with no help from any of us. And, my friends, it absolutely must *originate* from Someone who *IS*.

2 mind

are you aware that you're self-aware?

WHO ENDOWED THE HEART WITH WISDOM OR GAVE UNDERSTANDING TO THE MIND?

JOB 38:36

Scientists cannot produce a brain.

Oh sure, they can make a computer circuit that will produce calculations based on an algorithmic program and bake it into a silicon chip. No emotions, no morality, no memory of joy and laughter. No sense of *self*. No longing, no regret. In the future, we will continue to produce toys that look and act deceptively more like ourselves, but bear in mind: *deceptive* is the operative word.

Our brains are just a collection of fat cells with connective pathways. How in the world did Someone make that into a mind, into a soul? Do we understand the implication of "mind?" Look at me. I asked you a question.

The fact that we *have* a mind points to the inescapable conclusion that we *came from* a Mind. Mind does not come from mindlessness. Our mind comes from THE

Mind. Descartes said, "*Cogito ergo sum.*" Since we're all Latin scholars, I don't really need to translate that, but I'll do it anyway just to show that I can use Google: "I think, therefore I am." Sure, thinking proves we exist, but it also proves that THE BIG THINKER exists. Beyond "I think therefore I am" is this inescapable proposal: "We think . . . therefore *God* is."

We would not be able to think unless God exists. Dr. Ravi Zacharias, the Christian apologist, was once asked by a student during a Q&A: "Do I exist?" To which the good doctor replied, "Whom shall I say is asking?" Love it.

Can we wonder if mind exists? Then, ergo and ipso facto, it does. And equally ipso facto, eons of mindless evolution of fatty tissue does not account for the existence of mind. Mind comes from mind. It's not mindless nor is it accidental. The presence of our mind reveals the presence of God's mind. I'm belaboring this point because it is routinely overlooked in our world. The smartest people can (and standardly *do*) miss this pedestrian and glaring reality. So I don't apologize for belaboring it.

The mind has the distinction of being the only body part Jesus ever added into a quotation of Old Testament scripture! In the Shema, Moses says in Deuteronomy 6:4 and 5, "**Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is one. And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul and all your strength.**" In explaining the most important commandment, Jesus said, "**Love the LORD with all your heart, all your soul, all your MIND, and all your strength.**" We are obviously to go all out in our love and service to God, but *why on earth would Jesus add the word "mind" here?*

First, I honestly don't know. Second, I'm fairly sure it wasn't because Moses didn't hear correctly the first time. My guess is that Jesus was speaking to a Western culture that valued mind in a way unprecedented in civilizations to this point. After all, both the Greeks and Romans were slowly overrunning the land of Israel.

We in America have deep roots in Israel, Greece and Rome. Western Civilization and the Enlightenment have elevated rationality to a new level. We are to apply not only our hearts, our souls and our bodies to loving and serving God, but also our *minds*.

Make of that what you will; our minds are perhaps the most amazing creation of our Amazing Creator. For those of you (like Charles Darwin) who prefer that the *eye* should be the most miraculous body parts God made, I won't argue, but the mind is right up there. Our present day supercomputers are poor mockeries of something God made in a nanosecond on the sixth day of his creation. Watery protoplasm that houses personality, memory, cognitive ability, learning, reasoning, awareness, recognition, input processing, language management . . . the list is endless. And don't forget the mind's ability to appreciate beauty, create poems and paintings, impose itself over our sense of self-preservation, and laugh at jokes.

Our minds mimic the Great Mind that fashioned them.

3 causality

does a universe just happen by accident? really?

WHEN I ACT, WHO CAN REVERSE IT?

ISAIAH 43:13B

God is the First Cause. He's where everything originates. Even evil does not exist on it's own -- there's no balanced yin yang in the universe. Evil is the result of God's gift of free will gone sour. Evil is a product of the Creator giving creatures permission to make decisions outside of his own will and purpose. There isn't anything that God did not ultimately cause. His actions are the initial determinant power fed into the closed system he instigated.

He started all of this. All of it.

Sometimes truth is discovered through the application of logic. If I see a man in a suit carrying a briefcase riding a transit to the city, I can logically deduce he is a businessman instead of a farmer. This deduction is based on assumptions and conclusions I can draw in my mind. Or since I know that a car was designed and manufactured, not the result of random sun rays bouncing off inanimate materials accidentally leached into a pool of water; I can assert that human beings, of greater complexity and functionality than a car, have been designed and manufactured. They have a Cause. Simple enough. This is not rocket science.

If I see a room with shelves of ordered books, arranged furniture, and plugged-in light fixtures, I don't think wow, what a coincidence, it must have been star beams! Similarly, if I see a universe with discoverable scientific principles, I see a system that must have a Principle Establisher. If I see a universe with ordered orbits I must conclude that it was put in place by an Orbit Designer who prefers certain orbits and can bring them about and maintain them. If I discover that there are personalities in people that I meet, I arrive at the deduction that a Personality is at work in the universe. If I see beauty in the world around me, there must exist a Lover of Beauty who caused it and triggered the appreciation of it in me.

It is in fact *illogical* to not believe there is a God. It's embarrassing how many legitimate lines of reasoning must be disregarded to do so. There are smart atheists like Christopher Hitchens (now dead) and clever atheists like Richard Dawkins (who will someday die), but there are no wise atheists. Psalms 14:1 explains why: ***"The fool has said in his heart, 'No God for me.'"***

Someone calculated that the last time a single person could know all of what can be

known was sometime around 1850. Even if an atheist were to know nine-tenths of everything there is to know in all the world, that little one-tenth they did not know should give even an atheist pause before pronouncing that God is fictional. Frankly, we don't even need a tenth of all knowledge to catch the aroma of God's presence, just watch ants go about their daily business. Now *there's* a sermon! Even old Solomon was impressed with them in Proverbs 6:6.

The thing is, every event has a cause. As the brilliant philosopher Julie Andrews sang in *The Sound of Music*, "Nothing comes from nothing: nothing ever could." Causality is only logical. That's why it amazes me when evolutionists and big bang believers say that Christians are backward rubes! Come on! How clueless do you have to be to ignore the inviolable law of causality? You might be clever, but you can't possibly be *smart*.

If the principle of causality holds, then there are many corollaries. Causality requires a First Cause, we call him God. Causality requires a First Cause full of purpose and design, since what he caused is full of purpose and design. Causality requires a First Cause who is concerned about us, since he fashioned a planet with the perfect size, temperature, composition, and everything needed to support life. And causality requires a First Cause who is willing to reveal himself to us, which is what science attempts to accomplish: map the fingerprints of the First Cause.

The logic of causality, when applied, should comfort us in ways Biblical theology might not even be able to do!

4 conscience

that tiny angel hovering over your shoulder

WHEN GENTILES, WHO DO NOT HAVE THE LAW, DO BY NATURE THINGS REQUIRED BY THE LAW, THEY ARE A LAW FOR THEMSELVES, EVEN THOUGH THEY DO NOT HAVE THE LAW, SINCE THEY SHOW THAT THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE LAW ARE WRITTEN ON THEIR HEARTS; THEIR CONSCIENCES ALSO BEARING WITNESS, AND THEIR THOUGHTS NOW ACCUSING, NOW EVEN DEFENDING THEM.

ROMANS 2:14-15

In this passage, Paul instructs the Christians in Rome that no one can credibly claim, "Nobody told me! I never knew how God expected me to behave! I'm off the hook because no one ever read me the rules!" Bah-lony. The fact is, we *all* know what's right and wrong. Jew and Gentile. Ancient and Modern. Eastern and Western. Educated and Ignorant. God's rules are written on our hearts.

That's inarguably true and we know it. Case closed.

If we think about it, we didn't really even need the Ten Commandments, since they're already part and parcel of our very nature. Who doesn't already agree with the Ten Commandments? Respect authority? Check. Hands off what belongs to others? Check. Do the right thing? Check. This is stuff we all reinforce with our kids, but no one really needs to be taught: we know these laws without being told. We call this phenomena *conscience*. Like noses, everybody (and every body) has one.

Conscience comes as software preinstalled on our hard drive. It automatically loads when our computers boot. No one has to tell us it's wrong to steal. No one argues that lying is a virtue. While people may disagree about when it's alright to fight, nobody values a coward or a thug.

Conscience is not, as the Darwinists would have us believe, an evolved instinct to preserve the species, since quite often what our consciences tell us to do might short-circuit our chances of survival.

Conscience is uncomfortable, since most of what we *feel* like doing is frowned upon by our conscience. Conscience is inconvenient. Inescapable. Bothersome. Cold water. Conscience is the goody-two-shoes party-pooper you wish you'd left behind. We just want it to shut up.

Have you ever seen the cartoons where a tiny angel sits on one shoulder and a tiny devil on the other? Often, the angel and the devil look exactly like the character on whose shoulder they appear, and they argue with each other. The angel is our conscience, the devil is our own will. Hence the idiom "our better angels," coined by Abe Lincoln. The conscience is a built-in gyroscope that keeps us flying right.

Should we break in line? Should we help old ladies? Should we kick cats? Should we tell the truth? Should we dump our garbage in someone else's yard? Should we encourage people to break their promises? Should we laugh at the sufferings of others? Should we flaunt authority? Are these questions hard? Of course not. We all have consciences and we don't have to get out life's rulebook and look up the answers to these questions.

Right and wrong is easy. Not at all easy to *do*, but easy as pie to figure out!

In the Garden of Eden, God declared that after eating from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil Adam and Eve were now like him in the sense of knowing right and wrong. Knowing right and wrong is part of the "fruit," if you will, of The Fall. We now have the *responsibility* of making right choices, and guess what? We don't. All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. Nobody chooses right. It's not that we're ignorant, it's that we're *rebellious*. Our consciences should protect us from our boneheaded decisions, but instead they only rag on us after we flame out and bomb in our behavior. If we don't know the Mosaic Laws, it doesn't let us off the hook for our sins, because God's laws are part of our inner code -- in

our consciences. We know right. We do wrong.

Tabula Rasa is a lie, there's no such thing as being born with a clean slate. We don't reach the age of 1 without ignoring our conscience about something. "Warped" comes as close as anything to describing our native state.

Sorry, I guess. Especially if you're a humanist! Get a better cosmology, pal.

5 witness of creation

ever been overwhelmed by the wonder of the world?

THE HEAVENS DECLARE THE GLORY OF GOD; THE SKIES PROCLAIM THE WORK OF HIS HANDS. DAY AFTER DAY THEY POUR FORTH SPEECH; NIGHT AFTER NIGHT THEY DISPLAY KNOWLEDGE. THERE IS NO SPEECH OR LANGUAGE WHERE THEIR VOICE IS NOT HEARD. THEIR VOICE GOES OUT INTO ALL THE EARTH, THEIR WORDS TO THE ENDS OF THE WORLD.

PSALMS 19:1-4

Creation just *preaches*. Wherever you look, everything that has been fashioned by the hand of God declares the glory of it's Maker and Master. Ever studied how our eyes process light and distance and movement? How they recognize familiar features? How they focus near and far without conscious effort on our part? How the stereo imaging they're capable of keeps us from ricocheting off walls? Even the spiritually confused Charles Darwin looked at the eye and saw a major problem with proposing an accidental solution to the problem of the origin of species.

And the eye is easy: don't get me started on how our throats know to send air to the lungs but food to the stomach as they come down the same chute. . .

In many ways, we're at a disadvantage in our age of computer screens, movie screens, TV screens and hand-held-device screens. Why would I say that? *Because we spend our time in front of secondhand information.* Much of what reaches our perception is already hearsay. We don't smell the strong aroma of wet dirt, don't see the distant grey blue of the hills, don't hear the brave song of the house wren, don't marvel at the myriad starry points of fierce light in the night sky. We're cut off from creation, which sings a continual song of it's Creator.

There's no surer way of feeling like big stuff than frying a planet-load of virtual space aliens with a joy stick and a down-arrow key. And there's no better way to get a real read on how small and fragile we are than to sit on your back porch and watch a thunderstorm sweep in over the neighborhood. We need to get away from a backlit screen and sit quietly watching a backlit sky.

Naturalism is the belief that there is no Creator, that this nebulous force/concept of

“nature” produced the cosmos and everything in it accidentally using just the laws of science. The naturalist is widely respected in our society. So much so that to gainsay a naturalist means that you must be anti-science! Don’t get me started on that one. So which will it be, believe your own lyin’ eyes that tell you the universe was created by God, or the textbook in which the naturalist explains that everything came about naturally by mere natural accidents in an infinite natural universe? Careful. You don’t want to be called anti-science, do you?

We place a ton of confidence in scientific truth in our society, which is fine up to a point, but then we badly misplace that same confidence in the scientists themselves. When a scientist claims the Bible can’t be true because of something they discovered, before we do anything else, we should consider the possibility that the scientist is wrong. After all, a scientist is a human being with grant money to apply for, a party line to toe, an agenda to defend and a distinct bias brought on by long study in atheistic higher education. And the Bible? Well . . . it’s *the Bible*.

Take evolution: an example of a scientific theory. Where’s the data set? What are the assumptions necessary to fill in that data set? What is the rationale for making those assumptions? Is the theory of evolution proven? Is it even provable? What would it take to prove it? Can it be replicated? Falsified? Can it accurately predict a future event? Is evolution science or is it philosophy?

There’s a tendency in our society to categorize the Bible as faith and to categorize scientific theory as fact. The reality is quite the opposite. We can more reliably count on the findings of the Bible than on the theories of macroevolution, man made global warming or cooling, alchemy, phlogiston, spontaneous generation, the four humors, vitalism and atomic particles known as gluons. In case you missed some of those things, they used to be the “facts” of science. They really did.

If a space alien experienced both witch doctors and naturalistic scientists, they might conclude that there’s no *practical* difference. Both receive blind acceptance by their respective hangers-on and both achieve their “results” in ways none of the rest of us can follow. Naturalistic scientists don’t deserve more (or less) respect than any other profession deserves. As sentient beings, we ought to apply our own tests as we assess the witness of the universe around us. Creation preaches to us in plain and inarguable sermons of the greatness and glory of God.

Watery tissue inside our skulls can receive stereoscopic sensory input from sounds, light and smells, process those signals, and determine such things as how good supper will be, whether or not a camera will require a flash, and how close an oncoming wall is to our face. Other tissue within our skulls can control the production of cells in our bodies, tell our teeth when to chew and when to open for certain vowel sounds while singing, cause our heart valve muscles to involuntarily pump blood through our bodies, and get our lungs to hold our breath behind a smelly tractor trailer on the highway. Still other tissues within our skulls can help us balance when we’re standing up, understand abstract concepts like calculus and

maps, and not only think something's humorous but instruct the abdominal walls of the trunk of our bodies to contract rhythmically in laughter. Tissue inside our skulls can remember, imagine, love, and solve complex problems. We've just begun to describe some of the phenomenal things skull tissue does, and yet, if you separate the skull tissue from what we simplistically call life, none of the functions can continue. Our Creator somehow animates the tissues in our skulls to do all these spectacular things. Skull tissue does skull-tissue-bending things.

Yet we get so excited when our cell phone can react half intelligently to a clear vocal command. Did the cell phone get this ability from sun rays? From rocks in hot water? From exploding gas over eons of time? No? *Then why think skull tissue did?!*

Creation screams, "God made me! I am purposeful, beautiful and meaningful! I have the signature of my Maker! Pay attention and give the Creator great praise!"

Creation makes a fool of a naturalist without really trying.

6 natural law

why does everyone seem to know certain things?

FOR SINCE THE CREATION OF THE WORLD, GOD'S INVISIBLE QUALITIES: HIS ETERNAL POWER AND DIVINE NATURE, HAVE BEEN CLEARLY SEEN, BEING UNDERSTOOD FROM WHAT HAS BEEN MADE, SO THAT MEN ARE WITHOUT EXCUSE.

ROMANS 1:20

"Natural law" is not the law that governs nature, but *the laws mankind naturally ought to know and obey*. The dictionary defines natural law this way: a body of unchanging moral principles regarded as a basis for all human conduct. The Constitution of the United States plainly invokes "the laws of nature and of nature's God" as justification for the action taken by the British colonies in the Revolutionary War. There were no *national* laws that applied to a collection of colonies rejecting the rule of a mother country. Therefore, the writers of the Constitution appealed to a *universal* law acknowledged by all of mankind: natural law that comes from God.

As a corollary, those that blather on about "separation of church and state" must not realize that there would be no "state" if the framers did not appeal to natural law which proceeds from God himself as the trump card over all other law. Natural law is the only universally recognized morality.

Natural law is self-evident and produces such "self-evident" truths as this: all men are created equal. By the very nature of our making, we are all God's creatures, equal in his sight and equally protected and constrained by the laws of nature and nature's God. The Constitution goes on to say that each of God's created people are

endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights such as life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. These are rights that are immoral for a society to deny its citizens. A contract (such as citizenship) can abridge natural law and a person can sign away their commonwealth rights for a consideration, but this is not natural law. The new contract may circumscribe a new set of agreed behaviors, but these would not be *rights* under natural law, rights that are self-evident, rights that come straight from God. Rights not found under natural law include welfare, healthcare, gay marriage, abortion, a minimum wage, the Great Society and so on. These are the constructs of people determining how they will co-exist, not natural law.

The interesting thing about natural law is that people acknowledge it who do not live by it. When people are caught stealing, they never say it's OK to steal, they always explain why their particular case is the *exception*. They do not challenge natural law, they instead rationalize why, in this special case, natural law does not apply. That in itself is a tacit admission of the jurisdiction and universality of the intrinsic morality of natural law.

No one taught societies this morality: it's understood, self-evident, inarguable. Oddly, these laws, while universally acknowledged, aren't universally *followed*. This is a fascinating conundrum: we all know what to do, whether or not we in fact do it. Cultures from around the world and throughout time have valued the same virtues and frowned upon the same transgressions. It's as if our individual consciences extended into society around us.

That's why Madeline Murray O'Hare in the 1960's was so successful in her diabolical takedown of prayer and the Ten Commandments in public: America was tired of being reminded that we do not abide by God's natural law. We now have people scream, "Separation of church and state!" when what they are really saying is, "God can't tell *ME* what to do, only the government!" But we can't just brush God off or make him go away. He's a little too large. A little too in charge.

Here's the truth: everybody knows God has *lawful demands* of our behavior. Natural law is the universal morality that every society in every age has intrinsically known to be in force: marriage between man and woman, protection of the young, rights of private property, the right of standing before one's accuser to refute the accusation, honoring the elderly, telling the truth, not taking innocent life, doing what you say you'll do, being willing to fight to protect your family and your neighbors and your country from enemies, and so forth. There has not been a healthy and intrinsically good society where precepts such as these were not held virtuous and naturally expected of all people in that society.

Natural law proves the existence and goodness of The Natural Lawgiver.

7 miracles

doesn't God know he can't violate laws of science?

JESUS DID MANY OTHER MIRACULOUS SIGNS . . . WHICH ARE NOT RECORDED IN THIS BOOK. BUT THESE ARE WRITTEN THAT YOU MAY BELIEVE THAT JESUS IS THE CHRIST, THE SON OF GOD, AND THAT BY BELIEVING YOU MAY HAVE LIFE IN HIS NAME.

JOHN 20:30-31

Jesus did miracles for a specific reason: so that a stubborn and stiff-necked people would know that *he is God*. Brokenness to wholeness. Water to wine. Sickness to health. Tormented to sane. Tempest to mirror calm. Lunchbox to banquet.

I've heard it said that the reason primitive people believe in miracles is because they don't understand science like we do today. Just stop it. There's never been anyone who thinks you can be born of a virgin. Nobody has ever thought you could step on the surface of a lake and walk unless it's frozen. And nobody has ever believed that it's natural to rise from the dead and be able to walk through walls and travel at the speed of thought.

But there *are* people all around us who sincerely believe that the universe came about from exploding hydrogen gas and life arose from rocks in hot water over time! These are the people who don't understand science! These are the people who believe in the wildly miraculous while mocking others for doing so. "Primitive" people would find them extremely amusing.

Some people can hear the gospel and just believe. Others want God to perform a miracle before they'll listen. A miracle is NOT a natural process we don't yet understand -- *it's a contradiction to a natural process we know very well*. It's not a miracle for a match to light, or for a plane to fly, as amazing as those are. But it *would* be a miracle for a brilliant shining star to remain in place over a stable in Bethlehem Ephrathah and guide 3 wealthy and wise amateur astronomers from Arabia to the birthplace of a Baby who turns out to be the King of kings.

We can't chalk up the miracles in the Bible as being mass delusions or misunderstandings of ordinary processes we understand today. The Bible describes events that no one in their right mind would claim or believe. Unless they actually happened. Which they did!

Enoch really *did* go straight to heaven without dying. Noah really *did* survive the destruction of the antediluvian world in a wooden boat God told him how to build. The Red Sea really *did* part to let the Israelites walk through on dry ground and came back together to drown the Egyptian army. The walls of Jericho really *did* fall. Joshua really *did* stop the sun in the sky. The Assyrian king Sennacherib really *did* attack Jerusalem and woke up to find 185,000 of his soldiers had died in their sleep.

Elijah really *did* stop the rain for three years and really *did* call fire down from heaven. Isaiah and Ezekiel really *did* see God on his heavenly throne and angels covered with eyes and flying with gyroscopes.

The disciples really *did* watch Jesus heal crowds of sick, blind, crippled and demon-possessed people and raise Lazarus to life after 3 days of being dead and decaying in a tomb. They also talked and touched Jesus for 40 days after they saw him dead and buried -- neither ghost nor zombie, but so full of life that he rose up to heaven one day as they were watching him. Miraculous indeed! It doesn't matter how much you know or don't know, miracles still happen.

God is in the miracle business. It's nothing for him to make time go forwards or backwards, to cause damaged cells to be repaired in the blink of an eye or for the stars of heaven to flame out and fall to earth. God works miracles with both his hands tied behind his back.

Miracles insult and invade our complacent and cynical sensibility. They bear unmistakable witness to our miracle-working God who made the inviolable rules of the universe and then, at his whim and fancy, stomps gloriously all over them.

Speaking of miracles, have you heard of the Scriptures?

• THE SCRIPTURES

where do we find truth in black and white?

THEN WE WILL NO LONGER BE INFANTS, TOSSED BACK AND FORTH BY THE WAVES, AND BLOWN HERE AND THERE BY EVERY WIND OF TEACHING AND BY THE CUNNING AND CRAFTINESS OF MEN IN THEIR DECEITFUL SCHEMING. INSTEAD . . . WE WILL IN ALL THINGS GROW UP INTO HIM WHO IS THE HEAD, THAT IS, CHRIST.

EPHESIANS 4:14-15

There is truth that cannot be trumped. Transcendent truth. Ultimate truth. Unchanging, reliable, stable truth that doesn't bend and sway with the winds of passing fads. That truth is found in the Bible. What the Bible says is absolutely right for Adam, for Moses, for St. Peter, and for you and me. On the truth meter, the Bible not only pegs -- it breaks the needle off and keeps going around.

Why do we say that the Bible is authoritative? Because Psalms 138:2 says, ***“You have exalted above all things your Name and your Word.”*** In John 10:35, Jesus proclaims: ***“Scripture cannot be broken.”*** Saying, *“It is written,”* Jesus quotes Scripture continually to crowds, to his disciples, and to the Scribes and Pharisees. He employs it to

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