



HOW TO KNOW GOD EXISTS

SOLID REASONS
TO BELIEVE IN GOD,
DISCOVER TRUTH,
AND FIND MEANING
IN YOUR LIFE

JOSH D. McDOWELL
THOMAS WILLIAMS

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How to Know God Exists: Solid Reasons to Believe in God, Discover Truth, and Find Meaning in Your Life

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To Dr. Robert Saucy:

*Your knowledge and insight helped me to know more
about God's existence and also his loving character.*

Thank you so much.

JOSH D. McDOWELL

To Greg and Heidi Hargis:

*For your deep and cherished friendship, which has
never failed to reflect the loving character of God.*

THOMAS WILLIAMS

CONTENTS

PREFACE Questions Everyone Wants Answered 1

1 An Odd Thing Happened When We Got
Rid of God 7

PART ONE Digging Down to Bedrock

2 The Need for Rock-Solid Standards 33

3 The Troublesome Wall of Reality 55

4 The Elephant in the Room 79

5 The Mystifying Mystery of Morality 99

PART TWO Exposing the Myths of Naturalism

6 The Mind-Bending Mystery of Origins 123

7 The Hotel That Charlie Built 145

8 Reason's Exiled Ally 177

PART THREE Raising the Curtain on Transcendence

9 The Unquenchable Desire for Camelot 199

10 The Key to Reveling in Beauty and Joy 219

11 The Path to Knowing God 241

Acknowledgments 265

Notes 267

About the Authors 277

PREFACE

QUESTIONS EVERYONE WANTS ANSWERED

Where did I come from? What is the meaning of life? How can I know right from wrong? What will happen to me after I die? Does God exist? These questions are embedded within each one of us. Trending generational differences may have shifted the emphasis, and the growing dominance of a secular outlook has attempted to override them. Yet these primal concerns are still shared by everyone on the planet.

In the past few decades it has been fashionable to categorize how Americans think by analyzing the beliefs and attitudes of the generations in which they were born. As with any such categorization, there are differing opinions about how to sort the generations, and there will always be exceptions and overlap between groupings. Still, a brief overview can provide a point of reference for understanding how our values and beliefs have changed over time.

Let's start with the Silent Generation, born during the

HOW TO KNOW GOD EXISTS

Great Depression and World War II. Members of this group are typically conservative, religious, and financially secure. Next are the Baby Boomers, born after the war, many of whom rebelled against social norms and instigated the countercultural protests of the 1960s. Members of Generation X, born between 1965 and 1980, tend to be resistant to government and have liberal views on social issues. Millennials, born in 1981 and later, are usually better educated and more tech-savvy than earlier generations but less likely to endorse the norms of religion, race, sexuality, and politics of their predecessors. Members of Generation Z, which began with the year 1997, are commonly considered more independent, less social but more socially conscious, more inward-turned, and more technologically dependent.

We don't doubt that these characterizations of the general mindsets of the generations carry considerable weight. We can see the changes in the approach to life, beliefs, morals, and culture as we study the values adopted by each succeeding generation—changes affecting economics, communication, health, entertainment, government, education, and religion. The trend has been away from traditional values, religious belief, and social responsibility. It has moved toward hedonism, materialism, secularism, and self-sufficiency.

Yet those troublesome questions about origins, meaning, morality, eternity, and God's existence remain.

You may be holding this book because you have reached a place in your life where these questions have risen up to confront you. You may have begun to feel that the faith you

embraced in the past no longer has the answers you need. Perhaps the answers offered by secular culture seem as if they might better fit the realities you encounter. If this describes you—or if you are concerned about someone who is facing these questions—we urge you to accompany us on a journey to discover the answers. This is no mere excursion into trivialities dressed in platitudes written in typical religious-book jargon. We will lead you to solid answers that we will demonstrate to be firmly rooted in reality. We will show you that truth is a firm reality you can know with certainty and that meaning is possible when you align yourself with that truth.

We will begin our journey in chapter one by exploring the misconceptions inherent in secularism that have blocked off the light of truth from modern culture. Then in part one of the book, we will consider how to find and rely on the bedrock truths that have underscored successful and satisfying lives throughout the past twenty centuries. We will show that God is no fantasy and demonstrate undeniable steps of reason that can lead you to certainty that he is real.

In part two we will examine the weaknesses of several secular and naturalistic props to atheism, especially those explaining ultimate origins. We will demonstrate through reason, scientific evidence, and the writings of prominent scientists how secular origin theories often contradict science, reason, and observable reality.

(By the way, when we use the terms *naturalism* or *naturalistic*, we mean the philosophy that asserts that nature is all that exists, that there is no supernatural realm, and that there

HOW TO KNOW GOD EXISTS

is no transcendent God who exists outside or above nature. There may be shades of difference between naturalism, materialism, secularism, and atheism, but we will use naturalism as a convenient term to encompass these and similar beliefs that exclude God.)

In part three, we will turn a corner and focus on how belief in God provides the only viable foundation for meaning and embodies the truth that bathes the world in beauty and joy. In the final chapter, we will give you a brief overview of the essential foundations undergirding Christian beliefs and show that Christianity is not a fantasy but a demonstrable reality.

Lest you fear that we are about to bombard you with Bible verses and Scripture proof texts to support our claims, we assure you that we will not. In fact, you may find this to be one of the strangest Christian books you've ever read. Nowhere in these pages do we support our arguments with biblical references. We realize that biblical proofs would be meaningless if you are skeptical of religion. Instead, we make every attempt to rely solely on reason, observation, evidence, and common sense in supporting our propositions and reaching our conclusions.

This book began as an update of a previous work titled *In Search of Certainty*, written by the two of us in 2003. Perceiving a rising need to address the secular mindset that now dominates Western culture, we have added considerable new material and reframed much of the content. Essentially, we ended up with an altogether new book. As we tackle

JOSH McDOWELL AND THOMAS WILLIAMS

head-on the questions that people of all generations are beginning to ask, we trust that it will help you find stability in a society rapidly descending into chaos. More importantly, we believe that it will reassure you that God does indeed exist.

Josh McDowell
Thomas Williams

AN ODD THING HAPPENED WHEN WE GOT RID OF GOD

*Can we thrive in the disenchanted
world of postmodern secularism?*

It was Melissa's first day back in the office after spending a week in a hospital room with her critically injured husband. On the night of the accident he had slipped into a coma, and the doctors offered no hope that he would survive until morning. After four days on life support, however, he suddenly awakened. His vital signs stabilized, and the astounded doctors announced that he would recover completely.

As Melissa explained the harrowing ordeal at the morning coffee break, a friend asked what the doctors had done to induce her husband's dramatic turnaround. "It wasn't the doctors," she replied. "It was prayer. Our entire church prayed for Robert. It was a miracle that healed my husband."

Melissa's coworkers suddenly seemed completely engrossed in the contents of their coffee cups. One man finally responded, "Well, we're all glad your husband will recover,

HOW TO KNOW GOD EXISTS

Melissa. And you have a right to believe whatever you want. But surely there's a more rational explanation."

"Thanks, Jim," Melissa replied. "I appreciate your kind words. But don't you think it makes sense to believe God answers our prayers?"

"Well, it's just that in this day and age, a God who performs magic tricks on demand seems about as realistic as a genie in a bottle."

"Okay, Jim," said his supervisor. "This is probably not the best place or time for that discussion." Amiable conversation never regained its footing, and before long, everyone found an excuse to return to work.

Why does talking about God seem awkward, intrusive, or even offensive in everyday conversation? This question was posed recently on a Christian website. One woman responded, "It is quite hard to discuss how you feel about God and Jesus because many people now are ignorant of what it means to be a person of faith." She added that her friends often made comments like "Stop talking about random crap that didn't happen."¹ Another respondent wrote, "It's odd, isn't it? You can talk about the weather or work but you say 'God' and everyone runs away from you!"²

The underlying reason for today's reticence to engage in God-talk is no mystery. A robust belief in Christianity is so foreign to today's culture that even bringing it up in conversation is like ordering a hamburger at a Weight Watchers luncheon. Common reactions to religious belief go something like this: "How can anyone be so backward as to believe in

such a fairy tale?” “How can anyone put blind faith above solid reason and scientific evidence?” “In this day and age, no thinking person believes in creation over evolution.”

The dominant forces of Western culture no longer endorse belief in the supernatural. The concept of a transcendent realm existing above the natural world is seen as a hollow echo from humanity’s immature past, when superstition allowed gods to reign and angels to roam. The dominant voices of modern culture have largely discredited the idea of a supernatural God as a childish fable. Richard Dawkins put modern antipathy to religion in even stronger terms: “[Faith] is capable of driving people to such dangerous folly that faith seems to me to qualify as a kind of mental illness.”³ Secularity now saturates the cultural atmosphere, leaving religion little space to draw the breath of life.

Humanity’s Enchanted Past

There was a time when these positions were inverted. Before the advent of modernity, God or gods permeated human history. As Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor puts it, “People lived in an enchanted world, a world ‘charged’ with presences, that was open and vulnerable, not closed and self-sufficient.” He added that in such a world “atheism comes close to being inconceivable.”⁴

Taylor explains that in the ancient world, religion was so pervasive that disbelief was almost unthinkable. From their beginning, the ancient Hebrews believed tenaciously in a

HOW TO KNOW GOD EXISTS

single omnipotent deity. In the pre-Christian centuries, gods abounded, and belief in their existence was the default mode of almost all known societies. The Greeks and Romans had a god for every known human action and attribute—Mars, the god of war; Venus, the god of love; Pallas Athena, the goddess of wisdom; Apollo, the god of poetry. Athenian Greeks of the first century were so concerned about inadvertently offending deities that they erected a monument “to the unknown god” to be sure they honored all of them. Then, Christianity came along with its concept of one God, sweeping through much of the ancient world and eventually dominating the West. As a result, by late medieval times, belief in a supreme deity was woven so tightly into the fabric of reality that it was almost impossible not to believe. The Christian religion was the ether in which people lived, breathed, and had their being.

Nearly everyone accepted that the natural world was not the sum of reality. Nature was overlaid by a greater, supernatural dimension from which it drew its meaning. The pervasive belief was that nature was created, sustained, and guided by an omnipotent, supernatural being. Invisible, living intelligences attended this being, crossing the boundary between the natural and supernatural realms at will and influencing the affairs of humans for better or worse. As Taylor put it—using an engaging term which we will borrow throughout this chapter—the natural world was “enchanted.”

Through the whole of humanity’s past, belief in this enchantment of nature by supernatural presences of one kind

or another was universal, taken for granted, and assumed as the obvious structure of reality. For both the Christian and the pagan, a viable alternative to belief in God or gods could hardly be imagined.

The Rise of Secularism

You are no doubt aware that this is not the world we Westerners live in now. Belief in God is no longer the default position. The enchanted forest has been felled by the axe of secularism. Christianity, long the West's dominant proclaimer of God, is in retreat, fighting a rearguard, defensive battle against a culture dominated by institutions that no longer find God believable or relevant.

How did Christianity lose its grip on the West? It may seem that the change came quickly—within the past few decades. In fact, it was a change long in the making and impacted by many complex factors and events. It would be impossible to cover all of the influences thoroughly here, and we acknowledge that others might interpret them a little differently than we do. To provide a groundwork for our discussion, however, it will be beneficial to briefly consider those we feel have been most significant.

As Taylor points out, the shift began some five hundred years ago with the Reformation, a sixteenth-century movement instigated to purify Christianity but instead eroding it with unintended consequences.

Before the Reformation, the Catholic church dominated

HOW TO KNOW GOD EXISTS

European culture. Principled reformers such as Martin Luther, John Calvin, and John Knox, and less principled ones such as England's King Henry VIII, fractured the monolithic church into denominational splinters. Suddenly people were faced with theological choices. No longer subject to a single ecclesiastical authority, they became choosers, masters of their own theological destiny. This new and heady power of individual choice diminished the communal unity that came with shared belief. Like sheep escaping through a broken fence, believers exchanged the security of the flock for a new sense of personal freedom.

The enchantment—the sense of a world infused with supernatural transcendence—was further diminished by the rise of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment philosophers. René Descartes, John Locke, Immanuel Kant, and others promoted reason as the primary tool for determining truth. This move eventually demoted faith to the false position of unfounded belief. Then in the mid-nineteenth century, Charles Darwin's theories of evolution rendered God unnecessary even as Creator, making it possible for humans to live in a world completely free of any need for the supernatural. As Richard Dawkins says, "Darwin made it possible to be an intellectually fulfilled atheist."⁵

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, science and industry further dispelled the enchantment. In World War II, America turned out an unprecedented volume of military weapons, planes, and ships and developed atomic energy into a force that effectively ended the war. Brimming with

postwar power, the nation's booming factories immediately began producing wealth and economic opportunity for its citizens. Within a few decades, there was a car in almost every garage, a TV in every home, and scores of appliances to do the hard labor that formerly dominated humanity's waking hours. Modern medicine almost doubled human life expectancy. Today science, technology, and industry provide us not only with necessities, conveniences, and health, but also with luxuries and entertainment beyond our ancestors' most fevered imaginations.

These spectacular accomplishments put science on a pedestal, which the dominant scientific establishment used as a pulpit for proclaiming that nature is a closed system. Soon the idea that nothing exists outside the natural world became settled knowledge in secular education. As the late Carl Sagan put it, "The Cosmos is all that is or ever was or ever will be."⁶ This belief that nature is all there is became dominant. Most scientists boldly expressed confidence that mysteries that presently seem supernatural will in time be explained as one more cog in the self-originated, self-perpetuating machine that nature is. (We recognize, of course, that there are many scientists of faith, and even some secular scientists, who do not hold to this view.)

The dominant institutions of the West essentially accepted this disenchantment of the supernatural as reality. Education distilled it into curricula and disseminated it as settled knowledge. God became superfluous as man flexed his power to take charge of his own destiny. With the spirits

thus banished from the machine that is nature, we now live in a mechanistic world insulated from the supernatural. Thanks to the diligence of science and industry, we have at the flip of a switch, the pressing of a button, the turn of a dial, or the punching of a keyboard everything we need to make life worth living without reference to the God or gods of our ancestors. The enchantment is broken.

Living in the Disenchanted World

With the world thus disenchanted, we see nature differently than did our ancestors. The universe is now nothing more than a machine that burst into existence accidentally and chugs along blindly. With no creator to give it purpose, no meaning can be ascribed to it. It has no goal and no destination. It merely spins along in the circular orbits of atoms, planets, and galaxies. It is going nowhere. Therefore, we can no longer regard components of nature in terms of their ends—the *why* behind their existence. There can be no *why* in an accidental universe. With God excluded, we now see everything simply in terms of its functional mechanism.

This loss of meaning brought about a significant change not only in the way we see nature, but also in the way we live. Before the disenchantment, most of the Western world found meaning in the Christian God's promise of a transcendent eternity. Living under this promise placed responsibilities on us, and we dared not live as if we belonged solely to ourselves. We held virtue, truth, and morality to be God-ordained and

believed our lives should be ordered accordingly. Despite our many and spectacular failures to live up to this ideal, we believed that God's love remained intact and his plan of redemption atoned for our guilt. When modernity did away with the concept of a supernatural god, it extinguished this Christian expectation of eternity, leaving us to find meaning solely within the mechanized system of nature and within the human birth-to-death life span.

It might seem that we humans would find this change traumatizing. We are now isolated, alone, exposed, and unprotected in a cold universe that spawned us blindly and cares nothing for our destiny—a universe going nowhere and leaving us with nowhere to go. Gone is the comfort of knowing our lives are cradled in the arms of a loving creator who offers a glorious, eternal future. Humanity is now merely a collection of disparate individuals with no shared system of belief and no path to significance, living in an accidental universe without purpose or meaning. The sense of loss should be overwhelming.

A sense of loss did occur, but it was offset by a grand sense of accomplishment. In abolishing the transcendent supernatural realm, humans felt that they had done a courageous thing. It freed us to choose our own path, unshackled by the constraints of deity. The banishment of God freed us from the burden of virtue, the restrictions of morality, and the weight of truth. We no longer had limits on how we fulfilled our desires. We were now free to find meaning on our own terms and rebuild the world in our own image, according to our own liking. This is why prominent atheists like George

HOW TO KNOW GOD EXISTS

Bernard Shaw could purportedly quip, “I’m an atheist and I thank God for it.”⁷

To clear the ground for this new tower of humanism, modernity morphed into postmodernity. Modernism as a philosophy tended away from belief in the supernatural and based its concept of truth on reason applied to the findings of science and Enlightenment philosophy. Postmodernism eroded modernism by doubting the validity of any truth claim and asserting that our reasoning capacity is too limited and our defining narratives too subjective to be dependable. With the advent of postmodernity, all authority and all restrictions on our beliefs and actions were questioned. Absolute truth claims were now seen as intolerant. Man would henceforth determine truth for himself. Moral law lost its authority and became an intrusion on our right to pursue any pleasure. Virtually all human desires became normalized, and sexual freedom became the rallying banner of the new order. Moral restrictions on literature, movies, TV, and the Internet were loosened or lifted. Cohabitation, pornography, homosexuality, gay marriage, and transgenderism shed their centuries-old stigma and flowed into the mainstream. The right to abortion became a crucial underpinning of sexual freedom to protect against consequences formerly prevented by moral behavior.

As the twenty-first century began, this new secular order became thoroughly infused into the West’s most influential institutions, including government, education, media, entertainment, sports, and business. These institutions have done

much to eradicate God from Western culture and pave the way for us to assert ourselves as the masters of our own fate and captains of our own souls. As a result, any sense that we humans have an ultimate purpose has been largely eclipsed by the idea that this world itself can be ordered for our benefit without waiting for pie in the sky by and by.

The Downside of Disenchantment

While this brave new world exulted in the sunlight of its newfound liberty, deep in the shadows lurked an uneasy emptiness that secularism simply could not fill. Meaning and purpose—so easy to find under a transcendent God—disappeared in the closed-off universe of modernity. It soon became apparent that in the new secular order, meaning simply does not exist. Many now feel this emptiness, which is generating an increase in disillusionment, depression, and suicide. Perhaps you have felt this in your own life or seen it in the lives of those around you.

The rise in depression and suicide has been well documented. According to a Columbia University study, “Depression increased significantly among persons in the U.S. from 2005 to 2015, from 6.6 percent to 7.3 percent. Notably, the rise was most rapid among those ages 12 to 17, increasing from 8.7 percent in 2005 to 12.7 percent in 2015.”⁸ In 2020 the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) reported that US suicide rates increased by 35 percent from 1999 to 2018.⁹ Suicide is currently the twelfth leading cause of death in the US.¹⁰

To counter the temptation to seek meaning and purpose by reverting to religious belief, the new order has been diligent to reinforce the value of secularism. It does this by promoting stoicism, independence, and consumerism.

Stoicism: Buck Up

For the philosophically turned, secularism offers a sort of stoicism. Yes, we are told, the secular universe may lack meaning and purpose. It's true that our lives have no significance and are headed nowhere, but it's better to face and accept this hard reality than to seek false comfort in the fantasy that religion offers. As British philosopher Julian Baggini put it, "The reason to be an atheist is not that it makes us feel better or gives us a more rewarding life. The reason to be an atheist is simply that there is no God and we would prefer to live in full recognition of that, accepting the consequences, even if it makes us less happy."¹¹

We admire such stoic dedication to a less-than-comforting belief. To maintain that dedication, secularists must exert ongoing effort. They must continually remind themselves of their belief that modernity has discredited religion and that the natural universe is all there is. Therefore, purpose and meaning do not exist. They are illusions fobbed off on us by religion. Secularists must never stop reminding themselves that atheism is reality. Face up to it. Repeat it over and over. We must now be strong enough to live in a world without meaning—a world going nowhere.

Independence: Be Yourself

Secularism also reinforces the disenchantment by offering independence as an alternative to purpose and meaning. Assert your individuality. Be yourself. Create the person you want to be by exercising your freedom from the restrictive boundaries of religion. Since values no longer exist, choice is valued above what is chosen. It's not important that you choose the right thing (is there such a thing as right?) or that you choose the truth (is there such a thing as truth?). But it is crucial that you choose something in order to define yourself and give yourself a sense of control. "I choose, therefore I am." Choose your own politics, your own causes, your own morality, your own truth, your own sexual orientation, even your own sex. Choice attempts to validate the independent self by making each person his or her own agent in constructing a life without conforming to an ideal imposed from above.

We soon find, however, that individual autonomy is not sufficient to supply meaning. We seem to have not only a built-in need for independence, but also a corresponding need for community. The old fabric of a transcendent shared belief that formerly wove us together has been ripped away, and replacements are hard to come by.

This double-sided need for both autonomy and community has opened an enormous marketing opportunity for corporations and advertisers. To meet that need (and fatten their bank accounts), they induce us to autonomously

choose conformity. Advertising has succeeded in making us think we're asserting our independence when we choose to be like virtually everyone else. We are manipulated into accepting the illusion of individuality as we subconsciously choose the conformity of fashion—not merely the fashion of clothing, foods, cars, or hairstyles, but also whatever beliefs or causes are currently in vogue. Notice how popular causes come and go—causes that everyone with a social conscience must adhere to while they are popular. Next year the causes pursued so avidly today will lose their luster, and individuals seeking autonomy will flock en masse to new ones. Fashion counterfeits community by luring us into a fabricated conformity. The common ground of fashion enables us to make “self-expressive” choices that gain us acceptance by duplicating the choices of the group whose approval we value. Be yourself! Break from the herd and flaunt your individuality by purchasing this product that everyone else is buying.

Consumerism: Eat, Drink, and Be Merry

The masking of lockstep conformity under the guise of independent choice leads to the most common attempt to banish enchantment from the lives of moderns—consumerism. Consumerism feeds on an accelerated cycle of pop-up desires and transient fulfillments. It provides extended distraction from the emptiness left by the loss of transcendence. Eat, drink, and be merry. Fill your existence with sensation to obliterate the awareness of that gnawing hole in your life.

Awareness of this lack of meaning began to emerge during the youth rebellions of the 1960s. In 1969 the legendary Peggy Lee recorded her hit song, “Is That All There Is?” Each verse expresses extreme disillusionment with events in which she expected to find deep significance. As a child, she watches her house burn down; her father takes her to a circus; she grows up and falls in love. But none of these events gives her the depth of meaning she expected. So, after describing each, she sings the dreary repeating chorus, “Is that all there is? If that’s all there is my friends, then let’s keep dancing. Let’s break out the booze and have a ball—if that’s all there is.”¹²

In a disenchanting world, the best we can do is drown the craving for meaning in a sea of sensation. Calvin University philosophy professor James K. A. Smith states it more specifically: “Most of the time the best ‘salvation’ we can hope for is found in behaviors that numb us to this reality: drugs, sex, entertainments of various sorts.”¹³ These behaviors, however, are like packing with Bubble Wrap the space meant to hold a treasure. Everything we cram into the void turns out to be as empty as the void itself. With the loss of transcendence, we still lack meaning and direction. We are empty vessels heading nowhere.

The Dogged Persistence of Transcendence

Most secularists soon become aware that with the banishment of transcendence they have lost any hope of finding a valid concept of meaning and purpose. As we have noted, their

response to that loss may be admirable and courageous—face up to it and move on. They think that humanity’s freedom from the shackles of religion and independence in a world without God should be enough to bury the desire for meaning and purpose.

The problem, as so many have found, is that this desire will not stay buried. Banishing God from reality may be a momentous accomplishment, but it has left us with a gaping emptiness. As novelist Julian Barnes quipped, “I don’t believe in God, but I miss him.”¹⁴

Charles Taylor has noted that this emptiness often is felt most deeply in events we recognize as the most significant passages in life—birth, marriage, and death. The depth of meaning we expect to find in these milestones often is missing, leaving us with an emotional flatness. Like Peggy Lee, we ask, “Is that all there is?” Committed secularists may search for a way to ascribe meaning to such events, but their immersion in the disenchanted world of postmodernity precludes it. It allows them to see only the machine that is nature chugging blindly through its meaningless cycle, robotically churning out new life while endlessly discarding the old.

Yet death inevitably brings thoughts of eternity to even the most secular heart. The passing of a dear friend or family member throws secularists into a state of circular confusion with a persistent sense that the life that just ended could not just end. They may be convinced intellectually that the existence of their loved one has ceased forever, but something within resists such a fatalistic conclusion. The conviction that

she is obliterated forever pushes hard against the impossibility of thinking of her as no longer existing. And a sense that her existence had meaning pushes hard against the post-modern denial of meaning.

It's not uncommon for death to be a serious problem for atheists. One woman, seeking advice for dealing with death, wrote to an atheist website, saying,

I am afraid of dying. I am so afraid of dying that if I think about what it would mean, even for a second, I become fixated on the thought and have a panic attack where I reach the point of almost passing out. It only happens every once in a while, and I am a fully functioning person, but if I do think about it I can't function. . . . Deep down I wish I could believe in a god, just to make the fear go away. . . . I thought about therapy, but therapy would mean confronting it and I don't think I could, because what's the end result? Either I fool myself into thinking that there is paradise or another life waiting for me or I keep this knowledge hidden from myself, always waiting to reemerge as I've been trying to do all of my life.¹⁵

Facing such fears, we long for more than secularism can deliver. This woman can neither face down death nor ignore the question it raises about the afterlife she no longer believes in. Peter Steele, the late lead singer of the goth-metal band Type O Negative, put it this way: "When you start to think

about death, you start to think about what's after it. And then you start hoping there is a God."¹⁶

At such moments a yearning for eternity surfaces, and this yearning gives evidence that the desire for transcendence is neither childish nor superficial, as secularism proclaims it to be. We must either accept it as a realistic possibility or dismiss it as an illusion that has persistently haunted humanity from its beginning and refuses to be exorcised.

Secularism can bury the human longing for transcendence, but it cannot kill it. Nor can we dig a grave deep enough to prevent its reemergence. Eventually, it will claw its way out and present itself as a serious challenge to secular disenchantment. The self cannot endure the closed-off system of modernity indefinitely. Eventually, dissatisfaction with life shut out from meaning and purpose becomes unbearable.

The Secular Clash with Christianity

Christianity has always offered a clear and rational path to meaning and purpose. But the problem is that the principles of Christianity are radically out of sync with the new secular order. This means its attractions must be discredited and its influence curbed if secularism is to flourish. To prevent defections of disillusioned souls seeking meaning and purpose, secularists know they must root Christianity out of the dominant institutions of society and either silence it or confine it to the margins.

This explains why opposition to Christianity has become

increasingly intense in the past few decades. It explains why prayer, the Bible, Christmas, the Ten Commandments, and positive references to Christianity have been excluded from public schools, universities, government, courthouses, entertainment, and even many businesses. High schools and universities prohibit valedictorians from mentioning their faith. Many campuses bar Christian organizations from meeting in their facilities. Christian employees who express or act on their beliefs in schools or workplaces often face disciplinary action, fines, job termination, or lawsuits. Businesses have been boycotted, sued, and even forced to close when their beliefs no longer align with the changing standards of secular moralism.

When you look at Christianity from the secularist's point of view, it's easy to see why it is so vociferously opposed. Christianity is denounced as false because most scientists have proclaimed that the supernatural does not exist. It is denounced as irrational because it is accused of basing its beliefs on blind faith. It is denounced as evil because it is perceived as subjugating women, ignoring social justice, opposing sexual freedom, and discriminating against gays and transgendered persons. It is denounced as intolerant because it does not endorse the authenticity of other religions. It is denounced as politically incorrect because it insists that truth is real and absolute, which clashes with today's postmodern climate of fluid truth and self-determined morality.

Secularists oppose Christianity because it runs counter to the foundational principles they accept as real or as desirable

goals—the sexual revolution, self-autonomy, deep trust in the pronouncements of scientists, the fluidity of truth and morality. Secularism is the intellectual, political, and religious air we now breathe. To keep the cultural atmosphere pure, Christianity must be treated as a pollutant.

Breaking from the Lockstep

Today the dominant institutions of Western society actively promote the negative assessment of Christianity outlined above. Moreover, they are increasingly successful in bringing the populace around to their view.

It is true that Christianity holds to many principles that secularism does not endorse, and it rejects many principles that secularism does endorse. We assure you, however, that *authentic* Christianity is nothing like the distorted parody that secularism presents. As happens with any religion, political organization, or cultural conviction, some who claim to be committed proponents of their cause actually represent it very poorly. Christians who behave badly naturally lead people to accept as valid the current condemnation of Christianity. But Christianity's core beliefs contain none of the bigotry, intolerance, or judgmentalism it is accused of. If the misinformation thrust at you by entertainment, media, and education has led you to consider writing off Christianity, we can't blame you. If their claims reflected the truth about Christianity, we would reject it ourselves. We can understand why many today simply accept what the

dominant secular institutions feed them and feel no need to dig deeper. Without accurate information to guide them, they naturally join the rush to condemn what they see as an obstinate, backward-looking religion that refuses to board the progressive train. At some point, however, many on that train begin to realize it is progressing toward no definitive destination. It's going nowhere.

If you are a person of faith, perhaps you have been toying with the idea of abandoning your past belief system and boarding the progressive train. If so, in the following pages we will reassure you that God is real and give you solid reasons for continuing to trust in him. Or, maybe you have never endorsed a Christian belief system but find an emptiness in your life that causes you to wonder about secularism's claims. In the following pages, we will show you that the God of Christianity does exist and walk you through the sound reasons for believing in this monolithic truth. We understand that you may feel a strong resistance to what you have been culturally conditioned to reject. One of the most difficult tasks any of us can undertake is an honest reexamination of our own foundational beliefs. Yet if humanity's persistent craving for purpose and meaning has begun to eat at you, and if you have come to realize that secularism offers no valid fulfillment, what do you have to lose by exploring the foundations for belief in God?

Contrary to what our culture contends, the God of Christianity does not demand blind faith. Belief in his existence is rationally defensible. It stands or falls on the basis

HOW TO KNOW GOD EXISTS

of logical consistency and rational validation. Our claims that God exists, truth is real, and meaning is embedded in reality are testable. We challenge you to test them for yourself—to step back from the progressive train platform at least long enough to reconsider the possibility that supernatural transcendence may be a reality. Christianity offers a path that will guide you back from the nowhere of secularism to reality itself. It's a journey that will open vistas of meaning and purpose and reveal the hope-filled destiny awaiting you.

In the pages that follow we will present and explain the evidence for a thoroughly rational belief in a transcendent God. We will show how his existence validates our search for meaning. We will show that faith in God is neither an irrational leap into the dark nor a desperate hope without substance. Rather, it is utterly rational, soundly grounded, intellectually defensible, and emotionally fulfilling. We will show that the God of creation is the only complete and rational answer to humanity's religious and philosophic questions, and only by aligning with his truth can we make sense of the reality we experience. You don't have to check your brain at the door of the church to become a believer; you don't have to turn your back on life's joys. In fact, it is our passionate conviction that belief in God is the only cure for society's current malaise and the only source of real contentment and joy.

Just in case you are one of those readers who skips over a book's foreword, we will repeat an assurance we offered there.

If you fear that we are about to bombard you with Bible verses to support our claims, we assure you that we will not. In fact, nowhere in these pages do we support our arguments with biblical references, realizing they would be meaningless to you if you are skeptical of religion. Instead, we make every attempt to rely solely on reason, observation, evidence, and common sense in supporting our propositions.

Our ultimate hope is that this book will help you to see the glimmers of transcendence that break through the barrier of postmodern secularism. We will identify the source of these glimmers, attempt to reassure you that they are real, and—we hope—open your mind to accept the truth of an enchanted universe bathed in meaning, beauty, love, and joy.

QUESTIONS FOR THOUGHT AND DISCUSSION

1. Why does talk about God and Christianity tend to breed hostility in today's culture?
2. Why was disbelief in God or gods of some kind so rare in past ages?
3. How did industrial and scientific advances of the mid-twentieth century foster secularism?
4. Why did getting rid of God rob humankind of a sense of meaning and purpose?

HOW TO KNOW GOD EXISTS

5. What are some of the ways people try to deal with the loss of meaning and purpose? Have you ever felt this loss? How do you account for it? In what ways do you compensate for it?
6. Why has the rise of secularism fostered a rise in depression, anxiety, and suicide?
7. How do watershed events such as marriage, birth, and death shake our confidence in secularism?



PART ONE

**DIGGING
DOWN
TO BEDROCK**