

LOVE THE LORD WITH HEART AND MIND



EDITED BY STEVE HAYS & JAMES ANDERSON

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PREFACE

Last year I (Steve Hays) sent out a questionnaire to a number of Christian intellectuals. The questionnaire was sent to Evangelicals with a particular area of expertise or breadth of experience which is relevant to the intellectual challenges facing believers today.

The questionnaire is an exploration in Christian experience. I sent it to Christian intellectuals, not because they have more spiritual experience than the rank-and-file (indeed, some of them have less spiritual experience), but for two other reasons:

- i) Intellectuals, Christian or otherwise, are more articulate in expressing themselves. In that respect they can also speak on behalf of others.
- ii) Due to their professional experience, they have been exposed to the intellectual challenges to the Christian faith, and have weathered those challenges.

Since Christian experience is a generic Christian trait rather than a sectarian Christian trait, I cast a fairly wide net in terms of potential respondents.

The aim of the book is twofold:

- i) To edify young, less experienced Christians, and/or to edify the rank-and-file;
- ii) To afford seekers a window into what it's like to be a Christian. What makes us tick? And how do Christian intellectuals, in particular, deal with stock objections to the faith or surmount the ups and downs of life to which we're all liable?

There are a number of other books that explore that general theme from different angles.¹ This collection differs in two respects:

- i) As a rule, these other works give the contributor a completely free hand in describing his intellectual development and spiritual pilgrimage. But while that's a worthwhile approach, I thought it would be instructive, for purposes of comparison and contrast, to see how *different* Christians answer the *same* set of questions.
- ii) I narrowed the range of potential respondents to contributors with an Evangelical bent.

As a final note, I didn't originally plan to contribute my own answers, but my coeditor cajoled me into answering my own questionnaire.

¹ E.g. P. Anderson, ed., *Professors Who Believe: The Spiritual Journeys of Christian Faculty*; J. Ashton, ed., *On the Seventh Day: Forty Scientists and Academics Explain Why They Believe in God*; K. J. Clark, ed., *Philosophers Who Believe: The Spiritual Journeys of 11 Leading Thinkers*; T. Morris, ed., *God and the Philosophers: The Reconciliation of Faith and Reason*; R. Varghese, ed., *The Intellectuals Speak Out About God: A Handbook for the Christian Student in a Secular Society*.

Q & A

JAMES ANDERSON

1. Have you been a Christian from childhood?

I was brought up in a loving Christian home, but as best I can tell I wasn't converted until my mid-teens.

2. Did you convert to the faith? If so, please describe your conversion experience.

I was scared into the kingdom of God! As I said, I was raised in a Christian home, so I was familiar with the Bible and the teaching of Jesus. But in retrospect the critical turning point for me was at age 15 when I attended a Christian summer camp for teenagers. I was involved in a late-night discussion about the end of the world: what would happen when Christ returned, how soon it would be, etc. In truth, I don't remember much about what was said (I suspect that most of it was little better than pop eschatology) but I do clearly recall thinking that *whatever* the details surrounding Jesus' return, it wasn't going to be good for those weren't on his side. And then the words of Luke 11:23 came vividly to mind: "He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me, scatters." I knew that I believed (at least formally) that Jesus was the Son of God, and that he had died in my place for my sins, but I realized that I also needed to put my full trust in him, to submit to his Lordship, and to commit to following him above all else.

3. Why do you believe in the existence of God?

I don't think I can put it better than C. S. Lewis: "I believe in Christianity as I believe that the sun has risen. Not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else."

4. Why do you believe in the inspiration of the Bible?

As the Westminster Confession of Faith puts it:

We may be moved and induced by the testimony of the Church to a high and reverent esteem of the Holy

Scripture. And the heavenliness of the matter, the efficacy of the doctrine, the majesty of the style, the consent of all the parts, the scope of the whole (which is, to give all glory to God), the full discovery it makes of the only way of man's salvation, the many other incomparable excellencies, and the entire perfection thereof, are arguments whereby it does abundantly evidence itself to be the Word of God: yet notwithstanding, our full persuasion and assurance of the infallible truth and divine authority thereof, is from the inward work of the Holy Spirit bearing witness by and with the Word in our hearts. [WCF 1.5]

I think this is a biblical and defensible account of why I and other Christians believe that the Bible is divinely inspired. But obviously I wouldn't appeal to the inner testimony of the Holy Spirit as an *argument* for the inspiration of Scripture, since that would be question begging in an apologetic context. Rather, I would argue for the inspiration of the Bible as one essential element of the 'package deal' of Christian theism, the worldview that *as a whole* makes the best sense out of human experience.

5. How do you deal with Bible criticism?

In the first instance, by identifying and critiquing the epistemological and metaphysical presuppositions of the critics. More often than not I find that criticisms of the Bible (its divine authorship, historical accuracy, moral authority, etc.) simply take for granted, without any argument, the falsity of the biblical worldview. But clearly this is question begging by the critics.

Since I'm not a biblical scholar by training, I also consult the relevant scholarly commentaries and other relevant literature, with a view to identifying an interpretation (of the text or of the historical context) that does best justice to the text while also comporting with my broader theological commitments. I have yet to come across any biblical difficulty that posed a serious threat to the reasonableness of historic Christianity.

6. How do you deal with scientific objections to the faith?

First, I check the facts. Often such objections are predicated on debatable ‘facts’ or draw conclusions that far outstrip what is warranted by the facts on which they claim to be based. It’s also important to realize that scientific investigation and inference is as much shaped by underlying philosophical presuppositions as any other scholarly discipline (e.g., history, psychology, and politics). In other words, there are no scientific ‘facts’ that are mere givens, floating free of any interpretive framework.

What most people consider to be ‘scientific facts’ are really probabilistic inferences from sense data coupled with various substantive philosophical assumptions (and I should add that there’s nothing intrinsically wrong with such inferences). As such, any particular ‘fact’ can be reinterpreted by challenging one or more of the assumptions that have framed it. Christians who are submissive to the Bible ought to pursue scientific theories that do best justice both to the underlying natural phenomena and also to the grammatical-historical sense of Scripture (insofar as biblical teaching bears on the theories in question). The relationship between natural revelation and special revelation is not a simple one, but I’d argue on theological grounds that the latter must always enjoy an epistemological priority.

7. What other challenges to the faith would you like to comment on?

In my view, the two most difficult issues for Christian apologists (at least today) are the problem of evil and the so-called problem of divine hiddenness. I’m persuaded, however, that there are intellectually satisfying answers to these problems which show that they need not (and normally *should* not) function as defeaters for Christian beliefs. In fact, the impact of these issues on the viability of faith is not so much epistemological as psychological; so in practice the approach of the apologist needs to be pastoral as well as philosophical.

8. At this stage of your spiritual journey, would you now give different reasons for your faith than when you began your pilgrimage?

Yes. Early on, I would have taken a naïve evidentialist approach to the rationality of my Christian beliefs. Now I take a more sophisticated (I hope!) presuppositional approach, recognizing that (as Van Til put it) one cannot talk endlessly of ‘facts’ without addressing the foundational question of one’s ‘philosophy of fact’. That said, I still maintain that empirical evidences have an important role to play in a biblical apologetic.

9. Looking back over your life as a Christian, how would you say that your faith has evolved over time? How, if at all, does your lived-in faith differ from when you were younger?

I’d say that my faith is more robust, better informed, and more coherent than it was in the early years of my Christian life. It is also more holistic: I understand now better than ever that the way of Jesus Christ has profound implications for every aspect of life.

10. Unbelievers often point to the elusiveness of God. In your personal experience, including your experience with other Christians, can you point to any examples of God’s providential presence?

Yes, I can. Mostly these are instances of answered prayer, often in response to trials (whether in my own life or in the lives of loved ones) and often striking in their specificity and timeliness. When I consider the blessings and privileges I have today, in light of all my flaws and limitations, I am amazed at God’s grace and providential direction in my life. In retrospect I can see that some of the most significant events in my past have turned on what seemed at the time to be insignificant coincidences that cannot be attributed to the will or wit of man.

11. Since you've been a Christian, have you undergone a crisis of faith? If so, how did you work through it?

Not really. I confess there have been moments when the thought has crossed my mind: "Perhaps I'm completely mistaken and self-deceived about all of this!" But then I pause, recall the fundamental reasons why I hold the worldview I do, consider the implications of the alternatives, and reassure myself that only Christian theism makes sense of everything I take for granted about the world I inhabit. I also reflect on God's past providential faithfulness (see previous answer); sooner or later doubts give way to thanksgiving.

I would also add that when such crises arise, I try to examine my heart to see whether unconfessed sin is a contributing factor. A first-person reading of Psalm 51 can do wonders for the soul!

12. In your observation, why are most unbelievers unbelieving?

At the surface level, most unbelievers I know are unbelieving because (i) they are ignorant or misinformed about biblical Christianity and (ii) they value too much the pleasures of this world (cf. 2 Tim. 4:10; 1 John 2:15-17). At the deepest level, however, they do not believe because they are spiritually blind and spiritually dead (John 9:35-41; 1 Cor. 2:14; 2 Cor. 4:4-6; Eph. 2:4-5). How wonderful, then, that we worship a God who delights to heal the blind and to raise the dead!

13. In your experience, what's the best way to witness to unbelievers?

I'm uncomfortable giving advice to others on witnessing, since my own efforts in this area are so unimpressive. But in my experience, you first need to show an unbeliever that his own house is uninhabitable before he'll even consider relocation. So you need to explain why his professed beliefs and unquestioned philosophical assumptions do not comport with—and in fact undermine—everything he takes for granted in his day-to-day interaction with the world. This strategy can often unsettle unbelievers and spur them into thinking more critically about

their beliefs and the grounds for those beliefs; it can open them up to a more sympathetic and considered assessment of the Christian alternative (which obviously needs to include a clear presentation of the gospel).

It should go without saying that an effective Christian witness has to walk the talk. We've often heard that witticism, "You think the church is full of hypocrites? Well, come on in, there's always room for one more!" True enough; but witticisms are no substitute for a transparent life of humility, integrity, and holiness.

14. Christian apologetics tends to settle into certain stereotypical arguments and formulaic emphases. Do you think there are some neglected areas in how apologetics is generally done today?

I agree that some apologists have tended to adopt a one-size-fits-all approach to argumentation. One of the aspects of presuppositional apologetics I most appreciate is the fact that it can take any aspect of the unbeliever's life—his goals, his values, his interests, his anxieties, his objections—and use that as a launching pad for an apologetic argument. When I have opportunity to teach apologetics, I try to emphasize the underlying principles and strategies that can be creatively applied to any number of concrete scenarios (scenarios which often cannot be predicted in advance) rather than memorizing and regurgitating stock arguments.

I also think apologists need to be more creative in developing arguments (cf. Plantinga's "Two Dozen (or So) Theistic Arguments").² For example, I'm convinced there must be an "argument from music" which has yet to be formulated; sad to say, I'm too musically illiterate to do the job myself!

² <http://www.homestead.com/philofreligion/files/Theisticarguments.html>

15. What do Christian parents, pastors, seminary and/or college professors most need to teach our young people to prepare them for the walk of faith?

This is perhaps the toughest question here! I'd venture that young people most need to be taught (both by word and by example) the basic spiritual disciplines, i.e., the cultivation of practices and habits that lead to Christlikeness and deeper communion with God. Don Whitney has written some excellent material on this topic.

Other than that, an introductory course in logic and critical thinking would do most young people a world of good! Any material that introduces the concept of worldviews, and their influence on our reasoning and behavior, would also prepare them to engage productively with the various manifestations of non-Christian thought they'll meet in life.

16. What devotional or apologetic reading would you recommend for further study?

For devotional reading, you can't beat the Puritans (among whom I include Jonathan Edwards). I recommend Banner of Truth's "Puritan Paperbacks" series as an introduction. On the contemporary end, I've been greatly edified by John Piper's sermons and devotional material.³

As for apologetics reading, there is so much good material out there (both in print and on the web) that it's hard to know where to begin with recommendations. However, I'll say this much: I do believe it is important to think about apologetic methodology from the outset, so as to give some context and direction to one's study in this area. Zondervan's *Five Views on Apologetics* (ed. Steve Cowan) is a good place to start; the five contributors are all reliable spokesmen for the different apologetic schools they represent.⁴ (*Faith Has Its Reasons* by Ken Boa and Robert

³ <http://www.desiringgod.org>

⁴ One caveat: it's questionable whether Reformed Epistemology constitutes a distinctive approach to apologetics, but nevertheless Christians should be aware of the apologetic implications of Reformed Epistemology.

Bowman covers similar ground, but far more comprehensively.) A sensible next step would be to study some of the literature cited or recommended by the other contributors to this volume.

DARRELL BOCK

1. Have you been a Christian from childhood?

No.

2. Did you convert to the faith? If so, please describe your conversion experience.

Yes. This is a long story. The short version is that several people were important in witnessing through their life and interaction to the truth of the gospel. Those people came from Baptist, Presbyterian, Young Life and Crusade backgrounds.

3. Why do you believe in the existence of God?

Several elements go into this. The complexity of the creation, the nature of the Christian historical witness, and my own experience with God all play a part in this.

4. Why do you believe in the inspiration of the Bible?

The Scripture's testimony and its general credibility on complex points combine to speak to its inspiration. Nonetheless, I hold that one does not come to this by evidentiary proof, which can only yield plausibility. Ultimately as one draws closer to Jesus, one comes to embrace His view of Scripture, which is expressed with unquestioning confidence in it.

5. How do you deal with Bible criticism?

I interact with it at two levels. 1) I seek to engage it, trying to show how a view that respects historical evidence and Scripture properly understood can work together in a very plausible manner. 2) I note that having a naturalistic worldview, as much criticism does, automatically puts one at odds with Scripture and its claims, making criticism a highly adversarial undertaking.

6. How do you deal with scientific objections to the faith?

It depends on what they are and the evidence for them. These I assess on a case-by-case basis.

7. What other challenges to the faith would you like to comment on?

None.

8. At this stage of your spiritual journey, would you now give different reasons for your faith than when you began your pilgrimage?

Absolutely. I know much more about Scripture and history than I did.

9. Looking back over your life as a Christian, how would you say that your faith has evolved over time? How, if at all, does your lived-in faith differ from when you were younger?

I am more patient to trust God for timing.

10. Unbelievers often point to the elusiveness of God. In your personal experience, including your experience with other Christians, can you point to any examples of God's providential presence?

Yes, I have several examples when His hand was strangely at work in the circumstances of life.

11. Since you've been a Christian, have you undergone a crisis of faith? If so, how did you work through it?

Not really. I was five years coming to faith, so when I finally responded I had already worked through a great deal.

12. In your observation, why are most unbelievers unbelieving?

Often the hypocrisy of the church puts them off. Their own desires and lifestyle often also are the most significant obstacles.

13. In your experience, what's the best way to witness to unbelievers?

There is no one-size-fits-all here. Relate to them, be a great listener-engager, and live as consistent a caring life as you are able. Do not preach at them but engage their questions and

concerns honestly. Each person has their own issues that need to be engaged.

14. Christian apologetics tends to settle into certain stereotypical arguments and formulaic emphases. Do you think there are some neglected areas in how apologetics is generally done today?

Yes. The internal debate on presuppositionalism versus evidentialism is overplayed. It is impossible for a person to embrace Scripture without being open to Jesus. We often get the argument reversed and as a result do not get to Jesus.

15. What do Christian parents, pastors, seminary and/or college professors most need to teach our young people to prepare them for the walk of faith?

Far more than they are. People need to know about what is in the Bible and factors around the formation of the Bible. People who only work with what is in Scripture miss the fact that for many Scripture is the question. But it is not so difficult. People who see what is in Scripture as basically on target can be brought to thinking about Jesus. The closer they get to Him, the closer they will get to respecting Scripture more.

16. What devotional or apologetic reading would you recommend for further study?

No specific recommendations.

JOHN BYL

1. Have you been a Christian from childhood?

Yes.

2. Did you convert to the faith? If so, please describe your conversion experience.

No.

3. Why do you believe in the existence of God?

How did I come to believe? Through regeneration by the Holy Spirit. Through God's grace I comprehend that Christianity is the only worldview that makes proper sense of reality and gives genuine hope for the future. Alternatives such as naturalism and post-modernity are ultimately incoherent and self-contradictory.

4. Why do you believe in the inspiration of the Bible?

Again, by God's grace I believe the Bible is God's revealed Word to us. The Bible itself makes claims consistent with this. Since it is God's Word, and since God is all-knowing Truth, I believe that the Bible is fully inerrant and authoritative in all that it asserts. Either the Bible in its entirety is God's Word or it is not—there is no defensible middle ground. If we can't believe everything in the Bible, how can we be sure of anything in it?

Professing the inerrancy of the Bible is meaningless unless we commit ourselves to objective means of establishing what the in fact Bible says. This entails embracing hermeneutical principles consistent with a high view of the Bible. Thus the Reformers stressed (a) that Scripture should interpret Scripture, the clearer passages shedding light on the more difficult ones and (b) that we should accept the natural reading of the text unless internal evidence indicates otherwise.

5. How do you deal with Bible criticism?

Criticisms of the Bible are often based on the criteria of hostile worldviews. In that case I would examine the nature of the presuppositions upon which the criticisms are based. Criticisms of the Bible may also be based upon misunderstandings of the Biblical message. In that case the Biblical message should be clarified. Criticisms of the Bible may further consist of alleged contradictions within the Bible. Here I would defer to published works explaining the various alleged discrepancies in the Bible. Criticisms may also concern textual variances, although textual difficulties seem to be very minor. Here, too, I would defer to believing experts.

6. How do you deal with scientific objections to the faith?

First, it must be pointed out that in science we must distinguish between the observational data, which are primary, and theories that are constructed to explain or extend the data. Many different theories can be constructed to explain/extend the same set of data. The choice as to which theory one prefers is largely subjective, ultimately based on philosophical considerations derived from one's worldview. Only the observational data can be considered as factual.

Second, scientific objections to the faith generally concern Biblical assertions about the (scientifically) unobserved past, future, or non-physical realm rather than about any current observational data. Hence all such objections are not factual but strictly theoretical. Since the data are primary, any theory should be consistent with the data. From a Christian perspective, Biblical facts have the same primary status as observational facts. Consequently, any clash between Biblical fact and scientific theory falsifies that theory. Often, the underlying issue is whether natural events must always have entirely natural causes or whether supernatural forces can play a role in altering the normal physical processes. Natural “laws” are descriptive of what usually happens rather than prescriptive of what must always happen.

Any Christian will concur that, concerning Christ's resurrection or our personal future resurrection, the Biblical facts trump any scientific objections. Unfortunately, such consensus is lacking when it comes to origins. The prime scientific objection to Genesis is the claim that the earth is billions of years old. Most Christian intellectuals (mistakenly) accept this as factual and, hence, engage in dubious exegetics so as to avoid the natural reading of Genesis 1-2. This raises questions regarding Biblical authority, epistemology and hermeneutics. Consequently, many Christian theologians have re-interpreted much of Genesis 1-11, undermining an historical Adam. This in turn raises doubts about original sin and Christ's atonement, which is the heart of the Gospel. We should, on the contrary, be consistent in boldly proclaiming God's Word, which trumps any alleged scientific objections, also regarding origins.

7. What other challenges to the faith would you like to comment on?

The problem of evil is a major challenge concerning apologetics. Many Christian apologists go astray here. One error is to embrace some form of the "free-will defense". This asserts that human sins are a necessary risk of God creating men with libertarian free-will. However, libertarian free-will undermines God's sovereignty and omniscience. A second error, caused by rejecting the traditional interpretation of Genesis 1-11, places "natural evil" (i.e., diseases, suffering, violence, death) before Adam's fall, thus breaking the link between natural evil and sin.

8. At this stage of your spiritual journey, would you now give different reasons for your faith than when you began your pilgrimage?

At this stage I am certainly better able to articulate the reasons.

9. Looking back over your life as a Christian, how would you say that your faith has evolved over time? How, if at all, does your lived-in faith differ from when you were younger?

My faith is deeper. A deeper knowledge of God's Word, a deeper awareness of my own failings and sinfulness, and a deeper appreciation of God's love and mercy towards us.

10. Unbelievers often point to the elusiveness of God. In your personal experience, including your experience with other Christians, can you point to any examples of God's providential presence?

I can certainly testify to God's faithfulness and protection in my life.

11. Since you've been a Christian, have you undergone a crisis of faith? If so, how did you work through it?

No major crises.

12. In your observation, why are most unbelievers unbelieving?

As outlined in Romans 1—original sin. In our fallen state our inclination is to rebel against God. We are slaves to sin unless the Holy Spirit regenerates our hearts.

13. In your experience, what's the best way to witness to unbelievers?

The transcendental method is very powerful, but unbelievers often react by digging in their heels—nobody likes to be shown to be wrong. A more effective way is probably through showing love and concern to unbelievers who are in crisis, then pointing the way. Of course, we can do no more than plant seeds.

14. Christian apologetics tends to settle into certain stereotypical arguments and formulaic emphases. Do you think there are some neglected areas in how apologetics is generally done today?

N/A

15. What do Christian parents, pastors, seminary and/or college professors most need to teach our young people to prepare them for the walk of faith?

They must teach our young people to trust God, to study His Word, and to walk in His way. This includes teaching a comprehensive Christian worldview that can be applied to all of life, including academics. They must learn to discerningly test the spirits, to critically examine ideas and norms in terms of their worldview presuppositions and to consistently build upon a solid biblical foundation. On a practical level, this requires active prayer, daily devotions, and righteous living.

16. What devotional or apologetic reading would you recommend for further study?

For devotions, in addition to the Bible, Spurgeon's "Morning and Evening". For apologetics, works by Cornelius Van Til, Bahnsen, and Rushdoony.

PAUL COPAN

1. Have you been a Christian from childhood?

Though I grew up in a loving pastor's home, I didn't take the Christian faith seriously until I was in high school.

2. Did you convert to the faith? If so, please describe your conversion experience.

I appreciated my parents' faith, and they provided an accepting, nurturing environment for me and my six siblings. However, it was only as a teenager that I started to discover the wisdom of Scripture, the amazingly attractive person of Jesus, and the strong foundations for the Christian faith. I came to see that the Christian faith is objectively true and that it could deal with intellectual questions and challenges. It was during this time that I started to become more serious about studying the Bible and praying, and I began to consider how God might be able to use my life in his service.

3. Why do you believe in the existence of God?

First, I can testify to an inner awareness of the reality of God—a sense of the divine (*sensus divinitatis*), an inner witness of God's Spirit. In addition, there are a number of publicly-accessible indicators or pointers to God's existence: the origin of the universe a finite time ago; its remarkable fine-tuning and precisely-calibrated bio-friendliness; the emergence of first life; the existence of consciousness; the remarkable beauty that pervades the universe—a beauty unrelated to survival; the existence of objective moral values and human rights and moral responsibility; the existence of free will; the capacity to reason and seek the truth, etc. All of these features of our universe make far better sense if God exists than if he does not. For example, why think the non-conscious matter could produce consciousness? How could valueless, unguided, material processes bring about valuable, truth-seeking human beings? As

the philosopher Alvin Plantinga said, God's existence makes sense of things, and without God we would be left with conundrums and "otherwise intractable questions."

4. Why do you believe in the inspiration of the Bible?

Jesus affirms that the Old Testament is God's Word, and there are a number of good reasons for taking the New Testament books to be God's continued reliable witness to the fulfillment of what he has accomplished in Christ.

5. How do you deal with Bible criticism?

Scholars can approach biblical criticism with different presuppositions—some destructive, others constructive. However, this discipline does not have to undermine confidence in the integrity of the Scriptures nor their divinely-inspired nature. The Bible is a kind of written "incarnation": (a) it displays both the Spirit's inspiration and human personalities as well as writing styles and processes, and (b) God's inspiring Spirit can superintend the human process of writing. For example, the Spirit can work through a human's research of ancient documents and records as with Moses' editorial work on Genesis and in Chronicles or in Luke's documenting and corroborating traditions pertaining to the life of Jesus (Luke 1:1-4).

6. How do you deal with scientific objections to the faith?

I see no ultimate conflict between science and the Christian faith. God's two "books"—his Word and his works—converge. The two greatest discoveries of the twentieth century—the Big Bang and the discovering of the fine-tuning of the universe—served as strong confirmation of God as Creator and Designer. Though I'm not an evolutionist, I think that evolution itself wouldn't undermine the existence of God. Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species* refers to the "Creator" as necessary to get life going. The real problems come when scientists refuse to allow for supernatural explanations—that science can only be a naturalistic enterprise. This is pure philosophical prejudice.

7. What other challenges to the faith would you like to comment on?

The problem of evil is certainly the dominant objection to the Christian faith. That said, one must still ask what evil is in the first place. If evil is a deviation from what is good or from the way things ought to be, then where does this standard come from? The problem of evil actually points us in the direction of the solution. God has not stood idly by but has acted in history—especially in Jesus of Nazareth—to overcome evil. Every worldview must come to grips with evil. A worldview may explain evil away as cosmic bad luck or even illusory, yet such efforts strike me as inept, shallow, and counter-intuitive.

8. At this stage of your spiritual journey, would you now give different reasons for your faith than when you began your pilgrimage?

As I began to take the Christian faith more seriously as a teenager, one of the motivating factors was that there are good, objective reasons exist for being a Christian. I still believe this, but I also see that reasons for embracing the good news of the gospel are much more holistic and wide-ranging: a loving Christian community, the display of Christ-like character, beauty, hope, the attractiveness of Jesus of Nazareth, mystery, and wonder are part of the larger picture for taking the Christian faith seriously.

9. Looking back over your life as a Christian, how would you say that your faith has evolved over time? How, if at all, does your lived-in faith differ from when you were younger?

In my Christian pilgrimage, I've come to realize increasingly a number of things: that grace is more powerful than law in transforming a life; that my pride and self-centeredness seem to be more and more apparent to me; that we all need grace and encouragement from others—and that we need to be dispensers of grace and encouragement to others as well; that cultivating loving and trusting relationships as we interact with non-

Christians is crucial; and that the Christian faith is a religion of gratitude.

10. Unbelievers often point to the elusiveness of God. In your personal experience, including your experience with other Christians, can you point to any examples of God's providential presence?

The Scriptures indicate that God both reveals and hides. While each person is different, I think that much of the problem comes because we aren't *looking* or *earnestly seeking*—or perhaps because we want to be in control of the parameters of exactly how God should reveal himself to us. Maybe some people think God must show himself with 100% clarity, or else they won't believe. This is the very reverse of what should be true if God is Lord of the universe. He calls the shots rather than arrogant human beings. The more penetrating question is whether are willing to humble ourselves and receive whatever glimmers of light God chooses to give.

Jesus' parable of the rich man and Lazarus reminds us: "If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be persuaded even if someone rises from the dead." Indeed, mounds of evidence don't produce what God is ultimately interested in—a loving Father-child relationship with us. Ancient Israel had plenty of evidence for God's existence—the parting of the Red Sea, manna each morning, a pillar of cloud by day and fire by night in the midst of the camp—yet they were stubborn and rebellious. Even the demons believe God exists (James 2:19).

Yes, in my life I have experienced glimmers of God's presence—as I read and hear the Scriptures, listen to the music of Johann Sebastian Bach or Michael Card, enjoy the sweet company of family and Christian friends, and observe the astonishing world that God has created. As I look back on my life, I have seen God's providential care not simply in giving me a loving home and remarkable opportunities for education and

ministry, but I've seen God's faithfulness through discouraging times, painful experiences, and circumstantial difficulties.

11. Since you've been a Christian, have you undergone a crisis of faith? If so, how did you work through it?

I suppose that whether a person goes through “a dark night of the soul” or simply faces ongoing challenges—whether situational or intellectual—these have the capacity to stretch us and deepen us. I would say that the latter has been my experience, but I certainly sympathize with those who have undergone a dark night of the soul. These experiences can create an inner conflict, as we're called to trust in God when things look dark on the horizon. I regularly remind people (and myself!) that there is more to who we are than how we are presently feeling. We must exercise our will to place our confidence in God though he seems absent. We may not feel as though God is there, yet we are called to trust his promises that he is there and look to his good character and his faithfulness in the past. We may at times be like the father who says to Jesus, “I believe. Help my unbelief!” (Mark 9:24). This is simply how relationships work: we live out our commitments to friends or siblings, say, even though feelings (or circumstances) may be up and down.

12. In your observation, why are most unbelievers unbelieving?

The short answer is, as Stephen said in Acts 7:51, that people are “always resisting the Holy Spirit.” I think of the atheist philosopher Thomas Nagel, who confessed that he doesn't want there to be a God. I suspect that there are a lot of atheists who feel this way but may not be quite as outspoken. Now, I don't deny that some unbelievers (as opposed to *disbelievers*) have honest intellectual questions. God knows their hearts, and I entrust them to God. However, I have come to see that there may be deeper, personal issues or “baggage” behind the rejection of God (whether in the form of atheism or a stubborn agnosticism that says, “I don't know, and you can't know

either”). These reasons don’t disprove atheism, but that doesn’t mean such reasons aren’t relevant. (See for example, Paul Vitz’s *Faith of the Fatherless*, in which he shows how the most noted hard-core atheists and skeptics have had negative or non-existent relationships with their fathers. Does this disprove their arguments? No, but it does suggest that the fixation on psychoanalyzing belief in God is misdirected.) Christian philosophers like Paul K. Moser and Michael Murray have done an excellent job of addressing these sorts of questions about unbelief and divine hiddenness.

13. In your experience, what’s the best way to witness to unbelievers?

The best way is a personalized and contextualized approach rather a canned methodological procedure. Each person has particular concerns and is differently situated in life. Jesus varied and personalized his approach, say, with Nicodemus (John 3) and with the Samaritan woman (John 4). Or consider the difference between Peter’s sermon at Pentecost (Acts 2) and Paul’s sermon at Mars Hill (Acts 17). Different audiences require different approaches. Paul said that he became a Jew to the Jews and a Greek to the Greeks so that he might win some. There is both an art and a science to witnessing as well as to defending our faith. We need more than good answers or a good presentation. We need wisdom and discernment, a listening ear, and a gracious spirit.

In general, 1 Peter 3:15 reminds us of our three-fold obligation: we must first be submitted to Christ’s Lordship (which will include depending upon him and praying for our unbelieving friends and relatives); we must also be prepared to give reasons for the hope we have within us; and, finally, we should communicate our faith with “gentleness and respect.”

14. Christian apologetics tends to settle into certain stereotypical arguments and formulaic emphases. Do you think there are some neglected areas in how apologetics is generally done today?

In the past there was a great divide between, say, “presuppositional apologetics” and “evidential apologetics.” More recently, it has become apparent that both sides don’t capture the fuller picture, but they offer helpful points about the role that theological assumptions play in discussing reasons for belief, on the one hand, and the place of evidence, on the other.

Also, in the past the question has been whether apologetics is a “one-step” or a “two-step” process. That is, should we give reasons for believing in God before we start talking about Jesus? This kind of framework need not be “canned,” but I think that another consideration needs to be figured in—namely, the topic of truth. I have found that moving from epistemology to theism to Christianity is helpful. That is, truth is an important topic to deal with these days—well before we get to God and Jesus.

Furthermore, while Christian apologetics is typically concerned with intellectual or rational answers, I believe that we must take a holistic approach. For example, Jesus did say that people would know that we are his disciples if we love one another (John 13:35). Furthermore, certain arguments such as the aesthetic (beauty) argument or the argument from reason has long been neglected; such reasons should be further developed.

I also think that relationality while doing apologetics goes a long way. I find that there are some Christian apologists who may excel at giving answers or syllogisms, but they lack grace and love—and unnecessarily turn people off. Also, there is the common danger of putting trust in our arguments rather than in God, who can use those arguments. C. S. Lewis’s “Apologist’s Evening Prayer” is a helpful reminder of this point.

15. What do Christian parents, pastors, seminary and/or college professors most need to teach our young people to prepare them for the walk of faith?

We must do the following with the next generation: live lives of integrity before them; encourage a passionate love for the triune God, not simply accumulating information about God; teach them to be biblically and theologically literate; model community and relationality and stress the importance of the local church, despite its problems; teach them to show a welcoming, open-hearted grace to those who don't know Christ; encourage them to ask questions about their faith and provide resources for answering those questions; instruct them to think Christianly—to love God with all their minds.

16. What devotional or apologetic reading would you recommend for further study?

Devotional:

- John Baillie, *A Diary of Private Prayer*
- Johann Sebastian Bach's music/chorales/oratorios
- Michael Card's music
- Devotional works by Puritan writers
- Dietrich Bonhoeffer's writings
- J. I. Packer, *Knowing God* and *The Quest for Godliness*
- John Stott's writings (esp. his commentaries, which helped me as a young Christian)
- Dallas Willard's writings
- C. S. Lewis's writings

Apologetic:

- *The Apologetics Study Bible* (B&H Publishing)
- William Lane Craig's writings

- Gary Habermas's writings
- C. S. Lewis's writings
- J. P. Moreland's writings
- Paul K. Moser's writings on divine hiddenness and idolatry
- Lee Strobel's writings
- N.T. Wright's writings

In addition, I've also written and edited a number of books related to the defense and intellectual integrity of the Christian faith, and in many of them I have tried to make this available at a popular level: *Loving Wisdom; True for You, But Not for Me; That's Just Your Interpretation; How Do You Know You're Not Wrong?; Finding God at Starbucks; Passionate Conviction; The Rationality of Theism; Philosophy of Religion: Classic and Contemporary Issues*.

JOHN M. FRAME

1. Have you been a Christian from childhood?

From about 12-13.

2. Did you convert to the faith? If so, please describe your conversion experience.

I heard the Gospel through the youth ministry of my church, and through the ministry of music. The music drove the words into my heart. I can remember several times when I was challenged to make it personal, to make a decision, and I usually took those challenges seriously. It's hard to tell when and how God worked in my heart, but I would say that at age 10 I went to church mainly to play with my friends and to make fun of everything; at 14 I went there to glorify God and to grow in Christ.

3. Why do you believe in the existence of God?

If this question means, what caused my belief in God, I would say the Holy Spirit. If it means, what are the reasons why I believe in God, I'd say that there is variation: sometimes one argument seems more impressive, sometimes another. Fairly constant through my life, however, has been the thought that the impersonal cannot account for the personal; and if it cannot account for the personal, it cannot account for anything else, for our knowledge of all reality is inevitably personal: (1) Knowledge presupposes norms that are ethical in character, but only a person can warrant ethical norms. (2) Everything we know is based on the disposition of our personal intellectual faculties, which in turn are dependent on all other aspects of our personality: will, emotions, etc.

Apart from argument, though, there is the intuitive sense that the Bible is true and that the starry heavens reveal the Lord. That may be more fundamental than any argument. As Plantinga says, it is legitimate to believe in God without argument. God's revelation just gets through.

4. Why do you believe in the inspiration of the Bible?

Again, there is something intuitive about this, what theologians call the “witness of the Spirit,” what some apologists have called the “ring of truth.” Of course the Spirit witnesses to the truth in the Bible itself, and that truth forms the logical ground of my belief. To expound that a bit: (1) Only Scripture, of all “holy books,” teaches a fully personal God. (2) Its Gospel rightly shows how a holy God must regard my own sinful heart, and it presents the only possible way to divine forgiveness. (3) That way of salvation involves written covenants. The covenant community has a written constitution that must be honored by its members. Scripture is in effect that covenant constitution.

5. How do you deal with Bible criticism?

(1) Much of it presupposes a naturalistic, impersonal view of the world, and I dismiss it appropriately. (2) Other times it is helpful in showing us the conventions of ancient writing, warning us not to impose our modern conventions on it. (3) Still other times, by showing me problems I cannot resolve, it encourages my intellectual humility.

6. How do you deal with scientific objections to the faith?

Science is not my long suit. To me it is important that (1) science, like all human thinking, is not neutral or objective, but makes presuppositions. (2) Many Christians with scientific training and good understanding have dealt effectively with the science/religion conflicts. I don’t follow any particular school of thought here. Sometimes I’m impressed by arguments of the Creation Science movement, other times by Hugh Ross, other times by John Polkinghorne and others. I do not believe in the easy separation of religion and science into two spheres that never overlap. Scripture is authoritative in all matters about which it speaks, including matters of interest to science. (3) As I look at popular expositions of most recent science—string theory, etc., it impresses me that much of it is counter-intuitive (though that does not, of course, necessarily make it wrong). That makes me wonder how much more of the conventional

wisdom in science may one day be questioned. Science in 2006 is vastly different from science in 1906; why shouldn't science in 2106 be similarly different? That warns us against taking present science as some kind of final or ultimate knowledge.

7. What other challenges to the faith would you like to comment on?

Most challenges to the faith arise out of ideology: postmodernism, neo-paganism (Peter Jones),⁵ and evolutionary scientism being three examples. They all presuppose that the God of the Bible doesn't exist, and they present paradigms which, taken consistently, overthrow all human knowledge.

8. At this stage of your spiritual journey, would you now give different reasons for your faith than when you began your pilgrimage?

When I began as a teenager, I assumed, as I had been taught, that the Bible was true, and that there were people in the church (John Gerstner was my hero at the time) who could answer those who thought otherwise. So my reasons for faith came from Scripture itself. That is still true, though I believe I can now articulate the Bible's epistemology, and can answer the objections of unbelief, better than I could back then. But as I said above, the specific arguments that most impress me have varied from one point to another in my life.

9. Looking back over your life as a Christian, how would you say that your faith has evolved over time? How, if at all, does your lived-in faith differ from when you were younger?

God has given me more humility, more knowledge. I have always been awkward in many kinds of social situations, and that has made it difficult for me to share the gospel with people. That is still a problem for me, but I think that God has been working with me on it, very gradually. Although there have been ups and downs, I think my faith has become more and more inseparable from my thoughts and actions. I have also

⁵ <http://www.cwipp.org>

become more and more comfortable with the Reformed way of thinking, but more and more at odds with those who are unwilling to test Reformed ideas by the Bible.

10. Unbelievers often point to the elusiveness of God. In your personal experience, including your experience with other Christians, can you point to any examples of God's providential presence?

It's hard to identify the hand of God precisely, when, like me, you believe that everything comes by his hand. But I've seen some remarkable "coincidences." For example, there was a "perfect storm" of factors that gathered in 1999 to move me to RTS, a move that made my ministry far more fruitful: Among other factors, (1) drawing to the end of some ministries we were involved in, (2) need to make some changes for the children, (3) negative factors at my previous place of employment, (4) a remarkable welcome by Reformed Theological Seminary.

Often the hand of God is more visible in hindsight. God didn't provide a wife for me until age 45, but looking back on that, and on our family life since then, I can see that that was just the right time for it all to start.

11. Since you've been a Christian, have you undergone a crisis of faith? If so, how did you work through it?

Not really. I've had my ups and downs. I had my hardest times during seminary and grad school years. Not really a crisis, but doubts about my place in the Kingdom—doubts more about myself than about God. My response was just prayer and pressing on. Eventually the fog lifted.

12. In your observation, why are most unbelievers unbelieving?

Because they want to maintain their own autonomy: intellectual, ethical, emotional.

13. In your experience, what's the best way to witness to unbelievers?

I really have never been very good at it, frankly. My best witnessing is done in books, and by helping potential evangelists to respond to the questions of unbelief. But in California we did show hospitality to many non-Christians, even having them stay in our home. We practiced friendship/hospitality evangelism. The results were not humanly impressive, but seeds were sown. I still think that to reach non-Christians today it's important to befriend them, not just to bombard them with arguments. But if they want and need arguments, we should address those as they come. If all they need is evidence of the Resurrection, for example, I would provide them with that. If they want or need to talk epistemology, I would get into presuppositions and such.

14. Christian apologetics tends to settle into certain stereotypical arguments and formulaic emphases. Do you think there are some neglected areas in how apologetics is generally done today?

My fellow presuppositionalists need to learn to present evidences without embarrassment, and without ten pages of epistemological prolegomena. We also need to learn to write winsomely, with literary skill, like Pascal or C. S. Lewis. In oral conversations, I think apologists should learn better to go with the flow—to interact with the twists and turns of someone's thought as it moves along. Sometimes we will need to deal with the inquirer in a personal or psychological way, sometimes with a syllogism. Sometimes we need to help the non-Christian see how beautiful it would be if the Christian faith were true—then deal with his objections. Tim Keller is very helpful here.

The “intuitive” sense that God is real, which I mentioned above, can possibly be communicated more vividly and persuasively through novelistic or poetic writing, rather than argumentative prose. More Christians should attempt that.

15. What do Christian parents, pastors, seminary and/or college professors most need to teach our young people to prepare them for the walk of faith?

Young people need to learn the Bible, first of all. But they need to learn how to apply it to all aspects of life. The Navigators' Topical Memory System was a good beginning for me in that respect. Further, young people need to know their enemy, and how to respond to the challenges of our time. Most of all, kids need to have godly examples, people who are able to disciple them in intellectual and practical areas.

16. What devotional or apologetic reading would you recommend for further study?

Well, my own books, of course! And those of Van Til and other presuppositionalists. Some will benefit greatly from C. S. Lewis and Francis Schaeffer, as I did, though aspects of their thought need correction. Devotionally, I've been helped much lately by books of John Piper⁶ and C. J. Mahaney.⁷ One presuppositional writer who deserves more attention is Bill Edgar,⁸ who is culturally aware, and who has a disarming, thoughtful way of representing the Reformed Faith.

⁶ <http://www.desiringgod.org>

⁷ <http://www.sovereigngraceministries.org/about/bio/cjmahaney.html>

⁸ <http://www.rpwitness.com/deregnochristi/#edgar>

W. WARD GASQUE

1. Have you been a Christian from childhood?

I was brought up a nominal Christian (United Methodist), dropped out of church after my father died (at age of 12), got into some fairly serious delinquency, and came to faith at the age of 14 (just shy of 15) through attending a city-wide (Southern Baptist) Crusade, led by Howard E. Butt, Jr. Immediately began to organize my peers into Bible study, hospital and prison visitation, and evangelistic activities.

2. Did you convert to the faith? If so, please describe your conversion experience.

See above. I came home from a time of ‘riotous’ living [Lk 15:13] at the beach to get some clean clothes and money. Stayed to attend this meeting. The second night, walked forward, and the rest is history. Radical change of direction and have only once been attempted (shortly after my conversion) to look back.

3. Why do you believe in the existence of God?

Christian experience plus Christian teaching (makes sense) plus Christian community.

4. Why do you believe in the inspiration of the Bible?

Makes sense. After 50 years of careful Bible study, it still makes sense.

5. How do you deal with Bible criticism?

See it as an aid to understanding. Follow in the footsteps of my mentor, F. F. Bruce (see his article on the subject in the NBD and also in one of the early issues of *Christianity Today*).⁹

⁹ F.F. Bruce, “Criticism and Faith,” *Christianity Today* 5 (1960/61): 145-8.

6. How do you deal with scientific objections to the faith?

Seems mostly prejudice. But I listen respectfully and seek wisdom from dedicated Christians who are actually research scientists and know more about the subject than my theologian and Bible scholar friends. I have been privileged to know many leading scientists (internationally) who are men and women of faith.

7. What other challenges to the faith would you like to comment on?

The biggest challenge I have is the fact that Christians are so often not particularly different from non-Christians, that most Christians seem to follow the prejudices and life-style of their social group rather than the Bible and the call to discipleship.

8. At this stage of your spiritual journey, would you now give different reasons for your faith than when you began your pilgrimage?

A bit more. In the early days, it would have been basically my conversion experience. Today, it would be more nuanced (as [per] the references to experience plus teaching plus community).

9. Looking back over your life as a Christian, how would you say that your faith has evolved over time? How, if at all, does your lived-in faith differ from when you were younger?

N/A

10. Unbelievers often point to the elusiveness of God. In your personal experience, including your experience with other Christians, can you point to any examples of God's providential presence?

Looking back, I can see God's hand in my own personal history. But only looking back.

I have sought to be faithful, have not focused on accumulation of wealth (rather the reverse), but He has continued to provide for our needs. I wouldn't want to lay too great a stress on this, for

he has His people in Congo and Sudan and Burma, etc. and some of them die young and tragically, and all live in (what seems to us) virtual poverty.

11. Since you've been a Christian, have you undergone a crisis of faith? If so, how did you work through it?

When I was doing doctoral studies at Basel (my degree is from Manchester, but I spent a year in Basel), immersing myself in German theology and criticism, I found the culture (which assumed that no intelligent person could really believe in things like, say, the resurrection of Jesus) very oppressive. My wife prayed for me, which probably brought me through. It did not hurt to know people like Profs Bo Reicke and Oscar Cullmann, who were also men of faith who believed in the resurrection of Jesus.

12. In your observation, why are most unbelievers unbelieving?

Many different reasons. Most have never had the opportunity to seriously consider the faith. Others who have had bad experiences with Christians or church. Some have been brought up in non-Christian religions (Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, etc.) and are a part of a broad culture that blends religion with traditions and community.

13. In your experience, what's the best way to witness to unbelievers?

Be there when they need you. Listen to them. Offer to help when needed. Share the good news when invited. Live your faith consistently.

14. Christian apologetics tends to settle into certain stereotypical arguments and formulaic emphases. Do you think there are some neglected areas in how apologetics is generally done today?

I think the old style apologetics, with the accent on reason, is virtually ineffective today. Understanding the culture and presenting the gospel in fresh terms (following the example of

Paul in Acts 17) seems much more effective. And being involved in a welcoming community that is able to assimilate new Christians is also very helpful.

15. What do Christian parents, pastors, seminary and/or college professors most need to teach our young people to prepare them for the walk of faith?

Teach them to be real; to be honest about their faith and lives; to learn to relate to people naturally; to be open to learn from people, whether Christians or not (image of God in man; creation mandate [Gen 1:28]; general revelation). Live your faith and then share as the opportunity arises. Leave the saving to God.

16. What devotional or apologetic reading would you recommend for further study?

I still like C.S. Lewis. And F. F. Bruce's *New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable?* [Eerdmans, 2003].¹⁰ For moderately well educated adults, I would highly commend John Schwarz's *A Handbook of the Christian Faith* [Bethany, 2004], the best general introduction to the whole faith in its essence that I know of.

¹⁰ <http://www.worldinvisible.com/library/ffbruce/ntdocrli/ntdocont.htm>

DOUGLAS GROOTHUIS

1. Have you been a Christian from childhood?

No. I had limited Sunday School and my parents were not active churchgoers.

2. Did you convert to the faith? If so, please describe your conversion experience.

See my essay “My Story and the Gospel of Jesus Christ” [see below].

3. Why do you believe in the existence of God?

The existence of God best explains the origin, design, and moral character of the universe. The evidence also supports Jesus as God Incarnate. Other explanations fail to fit the facts. Further, my own spiritual experiences—including conceptual experiences of arguments for Christianity—have confirmed my beliefs.

4. Why do you believe in the inspiration of the Bible?

The Bible is uniquely credentialed among sacred texts. It is historically reliable, wise, and contains supernatural confirmation. The gospel is utterly different from any other view of human liberation offered among the world’s religions.

5. How do you deal with Bible criticism?

Higher criticism is based on methodological naturalism, which begs the question against miracles. It is also very speculative. As C. S. Lewis said, the higher critics are so busy reading between the lines that they don’t read the lines themselves.¹¹ However, evangelicals can benefit from a consideration of the sources of the gospels and their relationship to one another. I find nothing injurious to biblical authority to speak of a possible Q document, for example.

¹¹ http://www.lrc.edu/rel/blosser/Lewis_on_Biblical_Criticism.htm

6. How do you deal with scientific objections to the faith?

That is a very broad question. One must try to align the book of Scripture and the book of nature, as Jonathan Edwards put it, since God is the author of both. There is no reason to fight for a young earth. The Big Bang cosmology is well established and gives us a 13-15 billion year old universe which came into being out of nothing (Genesis 1:1)! That has great apologetic value.

However, we should fight Darwinism, since it is based on methodological naturalism and since it cannot cogently explain design in nature.

7. What other challenges to the faith would you like to comment on?

The problem evil and religious pluralism are the two most significant challenges for Westerners. The subjects are too big to comment on here. I will address both at length, Lord willing, in my next book, *What Matters Most* (IVP). There are many good treatments of these issues. For a thoughtful introductory treatment of both issues, see Kenneth Samples, *Without a Doubt* (Baker, 2004).

Islam is a tremendous challenge worldwide. On Islam, see A. Saleeb and Norm Geisler, *Answering Islam* (Baker, 2002).

8. At this stage of your spiritual journey, would you now give different reasons for your faith than when you began your pilgrimage?

Yes, I have taught apologetics for 13 years and written ten books on the subject. I have many reasons for belief and am not afraid of intellectual challenges.

9. Looking back over your life as a Christian, how would you say that your faith has evolved over time? How, if at all, does your lived-in faith differ from when you were younger?

I am more sensitive to evil and suffering than when I was a young man. I yearn more for God's supernatural power to heal and restore broken lives.

10. Unbelievers often point to the elusiveness of God. In your personal experience, including your experience with other Christians, can you point to any examples of God's providential presence?

I saw this in the facts surrounding my conversion and have perceived God's unique presence in many settings. However, the problem of evil still vexes me. Nevertheless, I know that Christianity better explains good and evil and gives more hope that good will win out than any other worldview.

11. Since you've been a Christian, have you undergone a crisis of faith? If so, how did you work through it?

Yes, related to a loved one's chronic illness. This coping with suffering is ongoing, but I am learning how to hope and deal with it. And I hope and pray for healing.

12. In your observation, why are most unbelievers unbelieving?

Too many reasons to state, but:

1. Ignorance of the gospel and of the reasons for faith.
2. Pride.
3. Viewing Christianity as irrational.

13. In your experience, what's the best way to witness to unbelievers?

Pray for them, listen to them, love them, answer their questions as best you can, give them literature to read.

14. Christian apologetics tends to settle into certain stereotypical arguments and formulaic emphases. Do you think there are some neglected areas in how apologetics is generally done today?

1. Pascal's anthropological argument, presented in my book *On Pascal* (Wadsworth, 2003). 2. The argument from the good effects of Christianity in the world.

15. What do Christian parents, pastors, seminary and/or college professors most need to teach our young people to prepare them for the walk of faith?

1. Incorporate apologetics into sermons and Christian education.
2. Encourage Christians to be more studious about their faith. That means less TV, video games, etc., and more reading!
3. Have special classes and seminars for students about to go to college on how to develop and retain their Christian worldview.

16. What devotional or apologetic reading would you recommend for further study?

Oh my! There are so many.

Basic worldview issues: James Sire, *The Universe Next Door*, 4th Ed (IVP, 2004)

Apologetics: J. P. Moreland, *Scaling the Secular City* (Baker, 1987); William Lane Craig, *Reasonable Faith* (Crossway, 1994); Ken Samples, *Without a Doubt* (Baker, 2004)

Postmodernism: Doug Groothuis, *Truth Decay* (IVP, 2000)

Intelligent Design: William Dembski, *Intelligent Design* (IVP, 1999)

Jesus as a philosopher: Doug Groothuis, *On Jesus* (Wadsworth, 2003).

Religious pluralism: Harold Netland, *Encountering Religious Pluralism* (IVP, 2001).

That's a very short list.

My Story and the Gospel of Jesus Christ

By Douglas Groothuis

I encourage you to consider the claims of the one who revolutionized my life thirty years ago. During my first year in college I studied many different philosophies and religions only to find myself very confused and hopeless. Then I began to give

Christianity a chance after speaking with some very alive and compassionate Christians in a college dorm in Boulder. (I had gone to Sunday school for a few years and had a vague belief in God, but I had never taken the issues raised by Jesus Christ very seriously.) Before leaving Colorado I began to read books by Christians and to think seriously about the whole issue of the existence of God and my relationship to him.

When I returned to Anchorage in the summer of 1976 I spoke with many of my old high-school friends who had become Christians while I was away in school in Colorado. Many of them had gotten off of drugs and had a new sense of purpose and meaning in life. As I sensed my own need for answers in life, I then began to read the Bible and seek God as best as I knew how. After a few weeks of searching and struggling, I put my faith and trust in Jesus Christ at a public meeting. I realized that I was lost without God in my life and that I needed him. I didn't know very much about the Bible at the time, but I prayed that Christ would come into my life to forgive my sins and to be my Lord and Savior. I committed myself to Jesus Christ publicly.

My life did not change immediately, but over a few months I saw the difference that Christ was making in my life. I was no longer interested in drugs or alcohol (I wasn't addicted to either, but I had abused both), I had a desire to understand the Bible, and God gradually began to give me a sense of peace and joy I had never before experienced.

Having known Christ for thirty years, I've seen how he has led me and protected me, despite real struggles with discouragement and loss. I have been involved in teaching, preaching, and writing about the truth of Christianity ever since I graduated from college in 1979. God has led me to write ten books which defend the truth of Christianity against the challenges of non-Christian viewpoints. I haven't shied away from the intellectual challenges brought to bear against the claims of Jesus Christ. As a philosophy professor and as a public speaker I must deal with them. In fact, I enjoy doing so.

I remain convinced that Jesus of Nazareth was and is God in the flesh, that he lived a perfect life, died on the cross to pay the penalty for our sin, that he rose from the dead in space-time history three days later (Easter) and that he always lives to love and forgive and make new those who come to him in simple faith and trust. It makes sense to conform our lives to his will, to let him work within us for his good purposes, and to deny ourselves and follow him. He is also the One before whom all of us will one day appear, either to be welcomed in to his eternal kingdom or to be cast out forever (Philippians 2:10-11; Matthew 25:31-46).

The beauty and wonder of the message of Jesus is that God cared so much about his creation that he sent his Son into the world to rescue us from the penalty of our wrongdoing. God knows that we fall short of his perfect standard of goodness. God knows that we have violated our own consciences and that we cannot undo the wrong we have thought and done. He knows we can't deliver ourselves from our own true moral guilt before him. That is precisely why Jesus came into the world. Without a vital relationship with Jesus, we have no hope for forgiveness and heaven. And we remain lost in this world as well.

One of my favorite stories from the Gospels is that of the criminals who were crucified next to Jesus. One criminal mocked Jesus and challenged him to free himself from the cross if he was God's Son. He was rebuked by the other criminal who said that Jesus had done nothing wrong but they, as thieves, were getting what they deserved. The repentant criminal then turned to Jesus who was bleeding and suffering on the cross and said "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." Jesus' response was amazing. He said, "I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise." (This event is described in the Gospel of Luke, chapter 23, verses 26-43. I hope you will get out a Bible and thoughtfully consider it.)

The repentant criminal recognized that he was a sinner in the presence of a sinless man. He realized he was guilty before God and man. But he called out to Jesus in faith. Jesus saw the thief's

sincere faith and assured him of paradise with him that very day. All that Jesus required of the man was the recognition of his own sin and sincere faith in Jesus himself. That's all. It wasn't too late for this pathetic man. He lived and died as a criminal, but he would spend eternity as a saint with God! Why? It is because he reached out to Jesus. Jesus did not refuse him. This is God's grace in action, his mercy manifested in the real world.

The Bible teaches that while we may not be thieves, we have all sinned against God and have fallen short of his perfect standards. We are all guilty before him. You can't find a single culture on the face of the earth that doesn't attempt to deal with guilt and shame in one way or another. We can try to cover it up, we can pretend it isn't there, or we can try to do enough good things to make up for the bad ones. But none of this works. Neither do religious rituals. Our guilt remains and God knows it. Only faith in what Christ has done on the Cross can give us forgiveness and the assurance of heaven. Let me give you a few verses from the Bible on this. Jesus said:

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.

Gospel of John, chapter 3, verses, 16-18.

Jesus said: "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

Gospel of John, chapter 14, verse 6.

You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God

demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Book of Romans, chapter 5, verses 6-8.

These and so many other verses show that God is concerned about our eternal condition. This is not a fairy tale. My research has convinced me that the Bible is a historically reliable and philosophically credible book. More than that, the Jesus of the Bible, the living Christ, has transformed the lives of countless millions around the world. He changed my life and he can change your life as well. It's never too late to choose to follow him by admitting your need for forgiveness and by turning to him in simple faith that he can reconcile you to God through his death on the Cross.

We don't need the Bible to tell us that we are mortal, that these bodies of ours are decaying and that we all must die. But there is something else ahead. To those who come to the loving Christ by faith there awaits an eternity of joy and peace in the presence of God himself. He promised it.

But the Bible also speaks of those who are lost because they refuse to admit their failures, to turn away from wrongdoing, and to turn to Jesus as Lord and Savior. We can either come to know Jesus as our Lord and Savior in this life or we will know him as Judge in the next (which means hell). No one can merit heaven by their own deeds. We all come up far short. Without Christ as our Savior we are lost and condemned. There is no other way.

I give this short testimony out of conviction, compassion, and a sense of urgency for your own well-being, both now and for eternity. I hope you will ask God to reveal himself to you and by actively seeking him by reading the Bible, especially the New Testament. But remember, if Christ is who the Bible says he is (as I believe with all my mind and heart), and you fail to accept him on his terms, the consequences are frightening.

When I became a Christian in 1976 I said a simple prayer, a prayer that God heard and honored. I hope you will pray

something like this yourself. God will hear and honor it if you mean it.

Lord Jesus, I know that I have sinned against you. I'm guilty and lost without you. I'm sorry, Lord. I ask you to forgive me of my sin and to come into my life as Lord and Savior. I will follow you and obey you Lord, as you give me the strength. I turn from my sinful ways and turn toward your way of life. Thank you for your love, your forgiveness, and for heaven.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

GARY R. HABERMAS

1. Have you been a Christian from childhood?

I was raised in a Christian home, but during my teen years I began to go through a long period of gut-wrenching religious doubt that lasted for more than ten years.

2. Did you convert to the faith? If so, please describe your conversion experience.

When I was eight years of age, I grew convicted of my sin on more than one occasion and responded by committing my life to God in faith, making Jesus Christ the Lord and Savior of my life.

3. Why do you believe in the existence of God?

During my time of doubt, it seemed like all of my earlier beliefs were open to questioning. Even while believing in God, I wondered whether there was a solid basis for doing so. The result of decades of study has convinced me that there are many good and worthwhile arguments for God's existence, both theoretical as well as practical.

4. Why do you believe in the inspiration of the Bible?

I think the strongest reason for believing in the inspiration of Scripture is because this view was plainly taught by Jesus Christ, who not only is the Son of God, but gave ample evidence of this teaching by being raised from the dead. Over and over in the New Testament, various writers explain that Jesus' resurrection was the chief indicator that our doctrine is true. I can't think of a better reason for taking Jesus at his word than the sign of the resurrection.

5. How do you deal with Bible criticism?

By biblical criticism, I'm chiefly referring to what is often called "Higher Criticism." I think such general approaches are exceptionally subjective, as indicated repeatedly by the

interaction between these scholars themselves. From the outset, I think that these approaches have serious issues. Further, I think there are many additional evidential indications that the critical hypotheses themselves are simply mistaken. Lastly, I prefer a different approach, one that I call the “minimal facts methodology.” Here I argue that even if I were to use only those historical data that were arrived at by the vast majority of critical scholars, due to the strong evidence that accompanies each one, there would still be enough of a basis to argue that Jesus was raised bodily from the dead. In other words, I think biblical criticism is ultimately mistaken. I would also suggest “minimal facts” approaches to the data in other areas besides the resurrection alone.

6. How do you deal with scientific objections to the faith?

Actually, I think that the strongest arguments for God and His revelation to us are empirical in nature, so I conclude that science is actually a huge ally to faith. At any rate, I don’t think there any scientific issues which militate strongly against the central doctrines of Christianity.

7. What other challenges to the faith would you like to comment on?

Ever since the years I spent in doubt, it has come to my attention that the chief challenges to faith are generally not factual, but are emotional and volitional in nature. For example, I think our own emotions, our propensity to sin, and our being strongly affected by peer pressure are much more influential in our lives than factual issues.

8. At this stage of your spiritual journey, would you now give different reasons for your faith than when you began your pilgrimage?

Yes, I would provide a much greater array of reasons for Christianity than I would have many years ago. But one thing has stayed the same—I have long thought that the resurrection of Jesus was the chief evidential claim in Christianity, and I definitely still think so today.

9. Looking back over your life as a Christian, how would you say that your faith has evolved over time? How, if at all, does your lived-in faith differ from when you were younger?

I have found that after working through the years of doubt, I need to spend far more time nourishing my heart (as in Proverbs 4:23-27). As I have told my students from the beginning, the heart needs to be nourished at least as much the head does. This is especially so if I'm correct in my answer to question #7, that the strongest challenges to faith come from areas that often have very little to do with factual evidences.

10. Unbelievers often point to the elusiveness of God. In your personal experience, including your experience with other Christians, can you point to any examples of God's providential presence?

Since this was one of the areas with which I struggled during my time of doubting, I have paid special attention to those moments when God has graciously worked out a situation in my life that cannot be explained in any other way. I also take note of these situations in the lives of others. In fact, I just finished a book on the subject of God's silence (not due out until 2009) that begins with a dozen ways that God makes Himself known—both evidentially as well as personally.

11. Since you've been a Christian, have you undergone a crisis of faith? If so, how did you work through it?

I've already described my ten plus years of religious doubt. I stacked up evidence after evidence, while not realizing that my doubts had become emotional in nature, as it seems that the majority of human doubt does. I didn't gain significant relief until I treated the emotional side of the struggles. In my books on the subject, I have tried to point out that this may be the single area that doubters need to address most of all.

12. In your observation, why are most unbelievers unbelieving?

Just like believers, I think that most unbelievers who struggle with their lack of faith do so not primarily for factual reasons, but for emotional or volitional ones. Therefore, for similar reasons, they also may tend to keep responding to factual data when they need to treat their own emotions or lifestyle issues.

13. In your experience, what's the best way to witness to unbelievers?

While I think that evidences are quite often very relevant, I keep looking for opportunities to explain the emotional and volitional sides, as in the previous question. If these are not treated, then I think that much of our discussions of the “facts” will be in vain. One other crucial element is that I think we need to develop friendships with unbelievers. Presentations of the case for Christianity are far more significant in an atmosphere of friendship and give-and-take discussion.

14. Christian apologetics tends to settle into certain stereotypical arguments and formulaic emphases. Do you think there are some neglected areas in how apologetics is generally done today?

Yes, absolutely. As I've tried to point out through the process of answering these questions, evidences may be necessary, but they are too often insufficient to get the job done because we are looking in the wrong places for our answers. If we misidentify the problem, the chances are that the prescription will not work!

15. What do Christian parents, pastors, seminary and/or college professors most need to teach our young people to prepare them for the walk of faith?

I think there's no substitute for learning the most central Christian theology, including many of the key reasons why Christians believe it. But as I've said, right along next to all the evidences and the “proper” theological responses, we really need to teach the power of our emotions and sinful decisions.

16. What devotional or apologetic reading would you recommend for further study?

Good works on evidences are fairly easy to locate. In my opinion, Christianity today is more specialized and better equipped to answer the tough questions that we have ever been in the past. So I would certainly point out some of those works. But I would also recommend that we train our hearts with recent works such as these: Packer's *Knowing God*, Piper's *Desiring God*, Bonhoeffer's *The Cost of Discipleship*, Kreeft's *Heaven: The Heart's Deepest Longing*, and William Backus and Marie Chapien's *Telling Yourself the Truth*.

STEVE HAYS

1. Have you been a Christian from childhood?

Probably not, although there's a subliminal dimension to Christian identity. I was a conventionally pious child, but I suspect that was due, in large part, to my semireligious environment.

My grandmother lived in the area until my teens, and she was a godly woman with a powerful personal witness. I'm sure her prayers had a lot to do with my conversion. And she lived to see me come to the Lord.

My mother was a god-fearing woman as well, but she suffered a quandary common to preacher's kids. She didn't receive systematic religious instruction as a child, because it was assumed that she would learn by osmosis.

Also, she—along with some of her siblings—became alienated from the family denomination when their father was shafted by his parishioners. So she had drifted by the time I was a growing. At that time her natural piety was a bit unfocused and uninformed. In later years she engaged in a rigorous regime of Bible studies, but that was after I came to the faith.

My aunt Grace had been a missionary to Africa. She was a linguist—knew ten languages—and had a doctorate in linguistics from the University of London. Since we all lived in the Pacific Northwest, we would see each other from time to time.

So I grew up around some strong, pious women, and I'm sure that had some effect. Incidentally, I think this goes to the fact that God calls families as well as individuals. Mind you, election and reprobation cut across family lines. But there's a

tradition of ministry in my family—at least on my mother’s side—several generations deep.¹²

I suspect one reason I’m a Christian is that it was my turn to assume the torch. God has placed a calling on my family. Called us apart to be his witnesses—from one generation to the next.

However, a boy doesn’t identify with his mother or grandmother in the way he identifies with his father. Moreover, my mother and grandmother didn’t have the answers. So I wouldn’t be looking to them for spiritual guidance.

For better or worse, the father is the role model of manhood. That’s the yardstick by which a son measures himself, and my father, at least when I was growing up, was agnostic. And I could tell the difference.

I lost my nominal faith during adolescent. My natural cynicism and intellectual pride took over.

Mind you, my adolescent infidelity was just as ignorant as my childish faith. It was more attitude than anything. Projecting the image of a worldly sophisticate—like George Sanders.

I wouldn’t chalk this up to teenage rebellion, because I wasn’t that rebellious as a teen. I was always a headstrong lad. I didn’t hesitate to argue with my teachers in grade school. I had no difficulty dominating class discussion. Given my streak of intellectual independence, there was no need to rebel when I reached adolescence, for I never was all that submissive.

2. Did you convert to the faith? If so, please describe your conversion experience.

When I was 16, going on 17, I felt led to read the Bible. I began with the OT, but at that time it was like a thicket. Impenetrable. So I stopped reading the Bible.

¹² Such as my forebear, the Rev. Frederick Shoots (1794-1855), a Baptist minister from Kentucky.

But I still felt led to read the Bible. This time around I began with the Gospels, which were more accessible. I came under conviction from reading the Sermon on the Mount.

When I picked up the Bible, I was an unbeliever—and when I put it back down, I was a believer. Faith came as I read. Came unconsciously—like coming out of a coma.

It was a textbook conversion, but at that time I hadn't read the textbook, so I wasn't conforming to some cultural expectation. Indeed, the churches we attended when I was a child were hardly evangelistic.

In a way, conversion is a process of subtraction rather than addition. It's a literally sobering experience. It breaks the intellectual stupor of original sin.

I'm reminded of those fairy tales in which a witch has cast a spell on the victim. The world never changed. The world was there all along. But it's only after the victim comes out of his trance that he sees the world for the first time—as it really is.

3. Why do you believe in the existence of God?

There's a difference between reflective and prereflective knowledge. I begin my intuitive sense of God's existence.

In apologetics, we try to explicate our intuition—turn tacit knowledge into a thoroughly articulated and reticulated argument. This process is always incomplete, for we always know more than we can put into words. In that respect I agree with Basil Mitchell, Cardinal Newman, and Michael Polanyi.

So, in that respect, apologetics can be misleading. For it only scratches the surface. There's far more in reserve.

In some ways this makes me a bit hesitant to give reasons for my faith. There's so much I'm bound to leave out.

One thing I'd do is to turn the question around. What reason do I have not to believe in God? And the short answer is none.

If, for example, presumptive materialism is your default setting, then theism must overcome that hurdle. But since I never found materialism plausible, that was not a reason to disbelieve in God.

At one level, my belief in God is spontaneous. I believe in God the way I believe in time, other minds, the external world, and so on. It's an irrepressible belief.

More than a belief—a distinct apprehension of God's pervasive reality. It's something I go to bed with, dream about, awaken to, and carry along with me throughout the day.

We're aware of many things we never attempt to prove. Things so ubiquitous that we take them for granted. Things so familiar that we scarcely notice them.

It that respect, some of the most obvious things are the hardest things to prove. For those are the things we use to prove anything else. And that is, in a sense, its own proof.

Likewise, the evidence for God is omnipresent—pressing in on every side. Consider, for example, the concentric complexity of the world. Smaller complexes nested within larger complexes, at all scales—from microscopic to macroscopic—like a Chinese puzzle box.

It's extremely counterintuitive to suppose that such concentric complexity would be able evolve from simple to complex in stepwise increments. For all these complexes comprise sets of things in which several things must coexist for any one thing to exist. And they also form a larger, part/whole relation of ascending and interlocking subsets.

This is exactly what you'd expect in creation *ex nihilo*—where the whole is prior to the part. Where the world was instantiated as a unit, by God's indivisible fiat.

I also don't believe that knowledge is limited to the five senses. There are many persuasive case-studies of telepathy—among

men and animals alike.¹³ There's more to reality than meets the eye. And we can register the existence of things that fall outside the range of our sensory relays. We're dimly aware of other minds. And altered states of consciousness can intensify that awareness.

I'm also reminded of a short story by Ray Bradbury—"There Will Come Soft Rains"—about an automated house that continues to do the housework long after the family was vaporized by an atom bomb. It makes meals and washes dishes every day.

Planet earth is like that automated house. As if it was waiting for us to take up residence. As if it "knew we were coming"—in Freeman Dyson's evocative phrase. That's exactly what you'd expect if Genesis is true. If God prepared the world for human habitation.

There are unbelievers who try to explain this away. Dawkins is a case in point. He admits that natural artifacts appear to be designed, but treats this as a global illusion. Our smart genes are tricking us into believing the illusion of design.

That, of itself, is pretty pathetic. Right up there with Mary Baker Eddy.

I'm also impressed by the metaphorical dimension of the natural world. We use natural metaphors all the time to express a multitude of feelings and truths. But why would the world have this semiotic resonance unless the material order is, indeed, an emblem of the moral or spiritual order?

Right now I'm merely discussing the impression that the world makes on me. I'm not trying to elaborate this into a formal argument—which is well beyond the scope of a questionnaire.

¹³ Cf. M. Beauregard & D. O'Leary, *The Spiritual Brain* (HarperOne, 2007), chap. 6;

<http://www.sheldrake.org/Articles&Papers/papers/animals/index.html>

<http://www.sheldrake.org/Articles&Papers/papers/telepathy/index.html>

<http://www.sheldrake.org/Articles&Papers/papers/staring/index.html>

Finally, I think Plato was on to something when he viewed the world of time and space as a fluent mirror of eternity. As a pagan, he lacked the metaphysical resources to properly ground this intuition, but in the age of modal metaphysics, Christian metaphysicians have been presenting detailed models of how necessity and possibility are embedded in the nature and will of God (e.g. Robert Adams, Richard Davis, Brian Leftow, Alvin Plantinga, Alexander Pruss, Greg Welty).

4. Why do you believe in the inspiration of the Bible?

I have various reasons for believing the Bible. Here I'd evoke the same distinction I drew with reference to God—between reflective and prereflective knowledge. In addition, my belief in God is bound up with my belief in Scripture, and vice versa.

There's a difference between evidence and argument. At one level, I believe the Bible because the Bible is evidently believable. It simply has that effect on me.

And this is irrespective of a Christian's ability to formulate the evidence. His reasons may be many, but he may lack the natural aptitude to explain himself.

Religious experience is the ground floor for all born-again Christians. The experience of God's grace and providence in our lives.

The degree of religious experience varies from one Christian to another. And experience is the ground floor, not the ceiling. A Christian intellectual will be able to draw on many supporting arguments above and beyond his personal experience.

I often find that religious experience is defined as some sort of mystical encounter. But this is far too narrow. Religious experience is just a subset of experience in general. As one philosopher explains:

Let us define "experience" as simply an event or occurrence that one consciously lives through (whether

as a direct participant or as an observer) and about which one has feelings, opinions, and memories.¹⁴

Thus, *religious* experience would simply be the particular subset of those general events or occurrences that happen to be specifically religious in character. Of course, whether a given experience is, indeed, religious, is open to interpretation, but the way we classify *any* experience is open to interpretation. So this doesn't put a *religious* experience at any disadvantage.

At an existential level, reading the Bible is like bumping into an old friend you haven't seen for many years. He knows you. He knows what you're going to say before you say it. He can read your heart. He can predict your behavior.

The Bible is like that. It's not so much that I know the Bible, but the Bible knows me; knows me better than I know myself; knew me long before I knew the Bible.

James compares the Bible to a mirror (Jas 1:23ff.), and he's right. You can find yourself in Scripture. Reading the Bible is an act of self-discovery. The shock of recognition.

To some extent this ties in with the traditional appeal to the inner witness of the Spirit. As one author put it,

Yet the highest and the most influential faith in the truth and authority of the Scriptures is the direct work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts.

The Scriptures to the unregenerate man are like light to the blind. They may be felt as the rays of the sun are felt by the blind, but they cannot be fully seen. The Holy Spirit opens the blinded eyes and gives due sensibility to the diseased heart; and thus assurance comes with the evidence of the spiritual experience.

When first regenerated, he begins to set the Scriptures to the test of experience; and the more he advances, the more he proves them true, and the more he discovers

¹⁴ S. Davis, *God, Reason, & Theistic Proofs* (Eerdmans, 1997), 122.

their limitless breadth and fullness, and their evidently designed adaptation to all human wants under all possible conditions.¹⁵

I myself wouldn't use the word "test." I'm not putting the Bible to the "test" of experience—as if it's just a hypothesis. Rather, I'm saying that, as a matter of fact, one reason I believe the Bible is true is because the Bible is true to my experience. When we are true to Scripture, Scripture comes true in our lives.

And this isn't limited to my own immediate history. For I can see the impact of God's Word in the lives of others I know. I can see the difference between nature and grace—between the graceful and the graceless. When you look at some older believers, it's like an old lamp that shines brighter because the lampshade has worn thinner.

Moreover, I'm impressed with the psychological realism of Scripture. In book after book of the Bible, there is never a false note. We are treated to a series of highly individualized individuals, not stock characters. And they never act out of character. There's always a natural link between their motives and their deeds. Put another way, this maps onto human nature as I see it today, all around me. Its description of believers and unbelievers alike is just as true to today's counterparts as it was in Bible times.

I'm also impressed by the thematic consilience of Scripture. This is similar to the argument from prophecy, but I understand it in a broader sense of unfolding OT motifs that foreshadow their fulfillment in the NT.¹⁶

Although the creative process varies from one writer to another, a novelist will often write a novel backwards in the sense that he knows how the story is going to end before he begins, and he

¹⁵ A. A. Hodge, *The Confession of Faith*, 36-37.

¹⁶ E.g. T. Desmond Alexander, *The Servant King*; R. T. France, *Jesus and the Old Testament*; J. A. Motyer, *Look to the Rock*; O. Palmer Robertson, *The Christ of the Prophets*; John Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative*.

writes the story with the end in view. Everything is leading up to the denouement.

And the Bible reads as if it were written from back to front rather than front to back. You could explain that on naturalistic grounds if the Bible were the work of one human author. But when you're dealing with an anthology of documents, penned at different times and places, under different circumstances, by different writers, the narrative teleology of Scripture is inexplicable unless it is, indeed, the work of a single mind—the mind of God.

Ironically, the stock objections to inspiration are one of my reasons for believing in inspiration. I expect a book which was written so long ago to contain a number of obscurities for a modern reader.

But if the Bible were, in fact, uninspired, then there ought to be far more apparent errors, anachronisms, and contradictions than we encounter in the pages of Scripture. The problem is not how an inspired document from the past has a few obscurities, but how an uninspired document from the past has so few.

There are also a number of specific phenomena that evidence the veracity of Scripture. In the Fourth Gospel, for instance, there are a number of occasions when John will gloss a saying of Christ (e.g., 1:38, 42; 2:17, 22; 4:2; 6:6, 10, 46, 64, 71; 11:13; 20:16).¹⁷ Now, if the Evangelist were making up these speeches, you wouldn't have a direct quotation followed by an editorial aside. Rather, the Evangelist would build his own interpretation into the very form of the statement and then put the whole thing in the mouth of Christ. So these parenthetical comments presume that John is transcribing what Jesus really said, and then putting it in context for the benefit of readers who, unlike himself, were not on the scene.

¹⁷ Cf. A. Köstenberger, *Encountering John*, Excursus 3: Asides in John, 250-52.

For a Synoptic example, cf. Mk 5:41. Peter, James and John were in the room when Jesus spoke these very words and raised the daughter of Jairus from the dead. One of them then reported this miracle to Mark, who reproduces it verbatim. Note also the extraneous detail of her age (v42). The healing of the deaf-mute supplies still another such instance (Mk 7:34).

The Synoptic Problem furnishes another line of evidence. The various parallels between the Synoptic Gospels suggest some internal relation of literary dependence. The basic argument is that if a teacher received three student papers as similar as the Synoptics, he'd suspect that his students had collaborated. And this is generally resolved in favor of Markan priority, partly because Matthew and Luke never agree to disagree with the order of Mark, which indicates that Matthew and Luke used Mark as their point of departure. (It should be unnecessary to point out that there's nothing inherently dishonest about sharing information. Historians constantly use and reuse primary and secondary source material.)

Now this supplies an external check on how Matthew and Luke edit their sources. And when we compare the three we see an extremely conservative transmission of primitive tradition. From time to time, Matthew and Luke touch up Mark's syntax or add some background detail for Matthew's Jewish audience and Luke's Gentile audience. What stands out is dull, dutiful fidelity over marked originality.

Conversely, Matthew and Luke supply an external check on Mark, for they both had independent sources of information and corroboration. Matthew as an apostle, while Luke likely had contacts with the dominical family and founding members of the mother church. So they, in turn, vouch for the historicity of Mark.

The same reasoning extends to the Fourth Gospels as well. As Craig Keener observes,

Despite the interest of my doctoral mentor, D. Moody Smith, in the question of John and the Synoptics, I had

not pursued that question in any detail until examining some parallel pericopes in the early stages of preparing this commentary, an examination undertaken merely in an effort to be somewhat thorough. What surprised me was that, where John could be tested against the Synoptics, he recounted earlier traditions in the same basic idiom in which he covered ground otherwise unfamiliar to us. While current historical methods cannot locate John precisely on the continuum of historical reliability, they can demonstrate that, where we can test him, John is both historian and theologian.¹⁸

Finally, in perennial debates over the relation between faith and reason, Christian philosophers and theologians have often had difficulty working revelation into their epistemology. It tends to be grafted onto a secular epistemology.

But I would argue, on a transcendental basis, that revelation is a truth-condition of sense knowledge. The problem is that, left to our own devices, we lack an intersubjectival knowledge of the sensible world, for we lack direct access to the sensible world. Sensation cannot be a source of knowledge if sensation is the only source of knowledge. We need something over and above sense knowledge to have sense knowledge.

Sense knowledge involves a triadic relation between Word, subject, and object.

In addition, there's a distinction between concrete and abstract objects. Abstract objects can be known by intuition. And a knowledge of abstract objects is another precondition of sense knowledge. Sortal and causal relations aren't presented to our audiovisual field. Rather, that's an inference we bring to the raw data. If we didn't have the benefit of an innate classification scheme, we couldn't bootstrap our categories from observation alone.

¹⁸ *The Gospel of John*, 1:46.

But even though that's a necessary condition of sense knowledge, it's insufficient. Only revelation can bridge the gap between subject and object—the private world and the public world. For the Bible is not dependent on sense knowledge to describe the sensible world. Rather, this is the Creator's inspired description of his handiwork. Scripture makes us privy to a God's-eye view of the world.

5. How do you deal with Bible criticism?

Like any human endeavor, Bible criticism isn't all of a piece. It's a collaborative effort. Different men, with differing motives, contributed to Bible criticism. In many cases they developed valid methods for the wrong reasons.

For example, many Bible critics are atheistic. They operate with a secular outlook. They deny divine revelation. God doesn't speak or act in human history.

With that underlying assumption, Bible criticism then becomes a detective exercise. Since the Bible writers didn't get their ideas from God, they must have gotten their ideas from the surrounding culture. Since the events reported in Scripture never happened, what's the real source of the story? This leads them to concoct hypothetical reconstructions—which vary from one critic to another. A jungle of complicated, mutually exclusive conjectures.

We should challenge that type of Bible criticism. We should challenge its secular underpinnings.

There is also a deep-seated prejudice in a lot of Bible criticism against textuality. The default assumption is orality. The raw material allegedly passed through a long, creative process of oral transmission before it was ever committed to writing.

Bible critics often act as if the Jews were illiterate or preliterate. That's another assumption we need to challenge.

On the other hand, the primary aim of Bible criticism is to hear an ancient text the way an ancient audience would have heard that text. And that is a sound principle.

Left to our own devices, we default to our own culture as our point of reference, for that is what we know. It's striking how much of Scripture we can grasp without any background knowledge. However, one can go seriously awry by assuming that Scripture meant whatever it means to a 21C reader.

Ontologically speaking, the world of the Bible is the same world we live in today, but culturally speaking, when we read the Bible we are entering a very different world—a world with its own unspoken rules, literary conventions, and cultural code-language.

Although Bible criticism has frequently been used to attack the inerrancy of Scripture, it can also be used to defend the inerrancy of Scripture. So many “errors” and “contradictions” in Scripture are generated by the unbeliever when he superimposes his anachronistic preconceptions onto Scripture. Many unbelievers are just as wooden as a backwoods preacher. Faithless fundamentalism.

Consider how the average unbeliever deals with the talking serpent in Gen 3. For him, the word “snake” conjures up associations with a kind of reptile you'd find in your backyard or buy at the local pet store—or see at the zoo, or watch on some nature show. That's his frame of reference.

But that is not how the text would be heard by the original audience. We're entering a world of ophiolatry and ophiomancy, where a snake may be, or represent, a numinous, occult being. Consider the uraeus in Pharaoh's crown, and the use of serpentine symbolism in Moses' confrontation with the Egyptian magicians.¹⁹

In addition, the Hebrew word for snake is probably a pun. Not only were snakes used in divination, but the word itself carries divinatory connotations.²⁰ This is also true in Egyptian usage.²¹

¹⁹ J. Currid, *Exodus: Chapters 1-18*, 161.

²⁰ Cf. V. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 1-17*, 187.

²¹ Cf. R. Ritner, *The Mechanics of Ancient Egyptian Magical Practice*, 40-41.

And remember that Genesis was addressed to a bunch of former Egyptian slaves. So the talking serpent in Gen 3 would trigger a very different set of associations for the original audience.

Likewise, critics treat the cursing of the serpent as an etiological fable of how snakes lost their legs. But as one scholar points out, serpentine imprecations are a standard feature of ancient Near Eastern culture, and carry a very different significance:

Some spells enjoin the serpent to crawl on its belly (keep its face on the path). This is in contrast to raising its head up to strike. The serpent on its belly is nonthreatening while the one reared up is protecting or attacking.²²

Or take the flood. Critics of the flood account raise all sorts of logistical problems with a global flood. Yet this is quite anachronistic. They have a mental picture of the world which they are superimposing on the text. An Apollo 11 image of the world.²³

But, of course, the original audience didn't share that mental picture. It would construe the geographical landmarks in light of ancient Near Eastern cartography, not satellite cartography.²⁴

Likewise, many critics talk about the "triple-decker" universe in Scripture. But this ignores the fact that Bible writers are modeling the world on sacred space—as if the world were a cosmic temple. This is meant to foreshadow the tabernacle, as well as the ark as—a floating tabernacle.²⁵

6. How do you deal with scientific objections to the faith?

It's striking to me how many scientific critics of the Bible jump right into the scientific evidence without bothering to first address themselves to metascientific issues.

²² J. Walton, *Genesis*, 224-25.

²³ My immediate aim is not to take a position on the extent of the flood, but to merely point out that the critics haven't done their exegetical spadework before they proceed to attack the flood account.

²⁴ Cf. W. Horowitz, *Mesopotamian Cosmic Geography*.

²⁵ Cf. G. K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission*.

For purposes of attacking the Bible, scientific critics take scientific realism for granted. But this sidesteps the realist/antirealist debate within the scientific community. The truth-value of scientific theories is a hotly contested issue.

Or take the age of the universe. Dating involves the measurement of time, which—in turn—involves a temporal metric. Yet there's a debate, going back to Poincaré, between metrical objectivism and metrical conventionalism.²⁶ If metrical conventionalism is correct, then the universe has no “real” age. The age we assign to the universe is an artifact of our metrical conventions.

Now, since this debate has been raging for decades, with distinguished philosophers of science on both sides of the issue, you might suppose that this would eventually figure in the debate over Biblical chronology. Yet I've never read anyone discuss Biblical chronology in relation to this ongoing debate.

Or take sensory perception. Empirical science is based on observation. Even mathematical and theoretical physics extrapolate from experimental knowledge.

Yet perception is only as good as your theory of perception. What is the relation between appearance and reality? What is the real world really like? The answer will vary according to naive realism, direct realism, indirect realism, phenomenalism, and idealism.

How you answer this question may well foreclose the answer to the potential truth-value of scientific theories. For example, indirect realism will undermine or at least underdetermine scientific realism. For we lack direct access to reality. Instead, the relation is more akin to:

distal stimulus → proximal stimulus → percept

We can't directly compare the percept to the distal stimulus. So we can't say to what degree, if any, the one resembles the other.

²⁶ Cf. R. Le Poidevin, *Travels in Four Dimensions*, chapter 1.

Many critics of the Bible also attempt to equate the scientific method with methodological naturalism. But that begs the question.

Suppose that Gen 1 is an accurate description of how the world was made. The author is describing a world which his audience would recognize. If they saw the world on the seventh day, it would resemble the world they themselves saw in Egypt or Mesopotamia or Canaan.

Yet this world was made in six days. How can you detect the difference when an extraordinary process gives rise to an ordinary result?

7. What other challenges to the faith would you like to comment on?

I think the primary challenge to the faith consists in false preconceptions about the faith. So many professing believers have very crude and unrealistic expectations about the implications of their faith.

They have a very wooden concept of inerrancy, so that any apparent mistake or textual variant knocks them off their pins. They fancy that they should be exempt from natural evils. They rip Scriptural promises out of context, then blame God if he doesn't make a Maserati materialize in their garage. They imagine that they should be privy to heavenly guidance for all their daily decisions—big and small—then get mad at God when they make an imprudent decision. They have a massive sense of entitlement.

8. At this stage of your spiritual journey, would you now give different reasons for your faith than when you began your pilgrimage?

I don't think my tacit reasons have changed, but my arguments have become more sophisticated. There's a sense in which, the more my arguments improve, the less they mean to me. Although I continue to refine my arguments, I feel less need of them since I also have the benefit of Christian experience to fall

back on. Reason and experience have both been developing on parallel tracks.

When I was a newborn believer, the arguments were more important to me. But 32 years down the pike, I'm in a situation where I have much better arguments, but they're much less important to be than when I was younger.

However, it's possible that if I had allowed the intellectual objections to accumulate and go unanswered, that would have had a corrosive effect on my faith.

We are subject to different influences at different times of life. More open to certain voices at one stage than another. We become less impressionable as we mature. We outgrow certain thinkers. One writer refers us to another writer, who refers us to another writer.

9. Looking back over your life as a Christian, how would you say that your faith has evolved over time? How, if at all, does your lived-in faith differ from when you were younger?

My belief-system is more internalized. Experience contributes a larger component. What I used to know by description has, in some measure, germinated into knowledge by acquaintance.

At an emotional level, I need it more than I used to. I lean on God's grace more than ever. Over time you lose your youthful resilience. You don't bounce back from every loss. The dents add up.

The world becomes wearisome. You yearn for the world to come. You acquire a certain detachment, for your attachments lie on the other side of the grave.

You also reach a point in life where, if you study hard, you're quite unlikely to undergo an intellectual revolution. You know all the arguments and counterarguments down pat.

It's still possible to be emotionally vulnerable. And it's possible to undergo a sea-change in your worldview due to rather than

intellectual factors. At the same time, seminal misconceptions predispose you to react the wrong way.

No matter how smart you are, everyone has the same emotional makeup. The same longings and insecurities. We're not just brains-in-a-vat. Intellectuals can be just as unstable as your average adolescent.

Saving faith is like an oak tree. A living, growing thing. The acorn puts down roots and branches out. It varies with the seasons, losing old leaves to make room for new leaves. It's buffeted by storms, but luxuriates in the sun of God's grace.

10. Unbelievers often point to the elusiveness of God. In your personal experience, including your experience with other Christians, can you point to any examples of God's providential presence?

In the nature of the case, the recognition of providence is retrospective rather than prospective. You only see a pattern begin to emerge over time with the benefit of hindsight. It's like climbing a wooded hill. You can't see where you're going until you reach the summit and look back. From the summit you can see the trail. See the countryside.

In some ways, the walk of faith is like walking at night. God takes you by the hand. When the new day dawns, you can look back over your shoulder and observe how treacherous the journey was—like a narrow, winding trail, hugging the hillside. One misstep and you would plummet to your death.

Ironically, you wouldn't have the nerve to make the journey in daylight. But under cover of darkness, God guides your every step.

One of the nice things about aging in the faith is that I can take the long view of things. I can see God's providence in my life and in the lives of those who went before me. It's a pity I haven't kept a journal over the years.

Life is a winnowing process. Some people start out strong, with a head start and a good steed—only to drop out of the race on the backstretch.

Others make a late start, must overcome many obstacles, yet pick up speed as they progress and make a strong finish. They may falter and fall, but they get back up, while others never recover from a tumble.

Many folks fail to perceive the presence of God in their lives because they have a misconception of what to find and where to look. If you're looking for the wrong thing, you'll be looking in the wrong place.

It's like giving someone the wrong directions. He may accidentally stumble across his destination, and yet he walks right by it because it wasn't what he was expecting to find. He is lost in plain sight of his destination.

A man may die of starvation if he believes the orchard is poisonous. He's surrounded by nutritious food, but in his mind's eye, a single bite is fatal.

God is in the little things as well as the big things. His hand is in the ordinary as well as the extraordinary. In seedtime and harvest as well as portents and prodigies. In a child's laughter and a mother's love.

Some folks never see the light because they were searching for a candle at noonday. Sunshine doesn't count. Unless the light takes the form of a comet or solar eclipse, then all is darkness and night. Never expecting to find the Lord in their own backyard, they end up overlooking God as they stumble over God every step of the way.

This is not to deny that God can be present in more miraculous ways—I can testify to that in my own observation. But we miss the day of visitation when we wait for the grand entrance while a child is born in a manger.

I have accentuated Christian experience in my answers because the questionnaire is an exploration of Christian experience, and

what I say is true to my own experience. But the level of spiritual experience varies from one Christian to another, and we must never neglect the fact that the primary way in which we experience the Lord in this life is through his Word. Our religious knowledge is first and foremost a knowledge by description rather than acquaintance. God never promised that he would favor us with signs and wonders, theophanies or angelic apparitions. And to the extent that we know God by acquaintance, knowledge by description is the common conduit. It is only as we live in his Word and live out his Word that our head knowledge may blossom into heart knowledge.

11. Since you've been a Christian, have you undergone a crisis of faith? If so, how did you work through it?

I wouldn't say I ever underwent a crisis of faith. I've been blessed with a very equitable and effortless faith.

In some ways I may be too cynical to become disillusioned. My natural cynicism immunizes me from certain forms of disappointment.

And it would be hard for me to undergo an intellectual crisis at this stage of the game. I know all the arguments and counterarguments.

But at one time I did suffer an emotional crisis of sorts. A number of things took place about the same time. I was turning forty. My health was in decline. I was still a bachelor. I was moving out of state. My father died a month before. I had some additional responsibilities in the wake of his demise.

It was a bit overwhelming. Too many losses. Too many demands. Too many separations and dislocations. Too little stamina. Too few compensations.

There may also have been an element of occultic oppression at work. At the time I was living in the San Luis Rey River valley, in the shadow of the Rosicrucian compound. And right down the coast was a Hindu compound—in Encinitas.

Over the years I've brushed up against the paranormal on a number of occasions. I'm inclined to interpret such phenomena in occultic terms. So I'm sensitive to this sort of thing. Attuned to that frequency. Of course, it could all be a trick of the mind, but certain details make me think otherwise. Sometimes the devil is quite literally in the details.

I'd add, at the risk of stating the obvious, that the dark side is also evidence for the existence of God. Just as you know a man by his enemies, the diabolical realm ironically testifies to existence and character of the God it would have us deny.

None of this had any direct affect on my faith, but it did have an affect on my emotional well-being. It created a certain sense of isolation amounting to alienation.

Thankfully, though, the Lord delivered me from that situation so that I was able to experience a season of healing. All my problems didn't disappear. But they became manageable.

Some crises are triggered by external circumstances. You overcome the crisis by changing your situation. That isn't always possible, but that's the straightforward remedy.

12. In your observation, why are most unbelievers unbelieving?

There are various reasons people disbelieve. It's often quite personal. The reasons they give are ex post facto justifications.

They had a bad experience with the church. Or they find Christian sexual ethics too inhibiting.

In addition, most folks are social chameleons. They blend into whatever environment they're placed in. They say and do what they need to say and do to fit in.

Certain beliefs have a sociological function apart from their truth or falsity. If you want to belong to the club, that's the price of admission.

There's also a self-reinforcing quality to unbelief. In many cases, they don't believe because they're ignorant, and they're

ignorant because they don't believe. They prejudice the faith, as a result of which they don't invest the time and effort to learn about the faith, since they're sure that would be a waste of time. Their repudiation of the faith is a premature, snap judgment in light of hostile, thirdhand caricatures.

In a sense, they never rejected the Christian faith, but only the legend. This does create an opportunity. This is not like burnt over ground, where an unbeliever turns his back on the faith with a clear-eyed knowledge of what he's repudiating. People like that are impervious to reason. By contrast, the average, know-nothing unbeliever is fallow ground for the gospel.

Other folks reject the faith for lack of spiritual experience. It's unreal to them. Of course, this tends to move in a vicious circle. They absent themselves from a spiritual environment, then cite their lack of spiritual experience as a reason to stay away.

13. In your experience, what's the best way to witness to unbelievers?

That depends on the unbeliever, as well as the forum. It's the difference between bridge and poker. When I'm dealing with a public enemy of the faith, my priority is to defend the faith rather than persuade him. In general, those who publicly attack the Christian faith aren't interested in having a conversation. So, in that case, I do it by the book. It's about winning the argument.

People tend to forget that blogging is a very anonymous medium. It's the same mistake they make when they identify with a celebrity. Because the celebrity is well known, they act as if they know the celebrity, when they only know about the celebrity. The celebrity is not their friend.

If, on the other hand, I'm talking to an unbeliever mono-a-mono in a private setting, then I play to the man. In that situation, you are trying to convince them and convert them.

One way to witness to unbelievers is to ask them leading questions. Unbelievers take a lot for granted. By asking them

the right questions, rather than telling them what to believe, you draw them out and enable them to see for themselves the inadequacies of their own position. It's more effective to guide them into the answers rather than tell them the answers.

Use an individual's personal experience as the springboard—the way Jesus did in John 4. If you're tactful about it, directed discussion is less likely to get them on the defensive. They like to talk about themselves, and they like people to ask them their opinion.

Of course, sometimes you have to create an opportunity for dialogue. You can't necessarily wait for the right moment—you may need to create a situation in which the right moment will present itself.

For example, you might wear a cap or T-shirt with a provocative slogan. Don't go out of your way to be offensive. But be a walking billboard with a snappy slogan that's a conversation starter. It doesn't have to be offensive. It can be witty.

Another possibility is to work as a team. Two Christians may invite an unbeliever to lunch—say, a coworker or classmate.

The Christians stage a conversation. They arrange for one of them to ask the other certain questions. The third party merely overhears their conversation. This isn't explicitly directed at him, so there's no reason for him to take umbrage.

I also think we have more responsibility for folks we know. This is where friendship evangelism comes to the fore. Take some of my old classmates from junior high or high school. Because they know me, I have a certain entree with them.

Perhaps, after high school graduation, we went our separate ways. But we still live in the same area. I should reconnect with some of them. Befriend them or renew the friendship. Pick up where we left off and take it from there.

I don't have to witness to them, *per se*. Rather, I bring them into my life. Introduce them to Christianity by making them a part of my life.

14. Christian apologetics tends to settle into certain stereotypical arguments and formulaic emphases. Do you think there are some neglected areas in how apologetics is generally done today?

One of the limitations of apologetics is that we like to focus on things we can prove. Things we can assign a probability-value to. And this works better for impersonal truths. Laws of nature and that sort of thing.

But many of our most important beliefs are unquantifiable. As a result, the personal dimension is often neglected in apologetics.

Ironically, I think the very existence of unbelievers is one of the best arguments for Christian belief. And that's because unbelievers are so unreasonable. Their hostility to the faith is often disproportionate to any conceivable provocation or any superior alternative.

Anticlericalism was more plausible during the Enlightenment, back when the church was venal and powerful. It was easier to blame social ills on ecclesiastical meddling or antiquated theology.

But since that time, secularism has been road-tested on many different gradients and terrains. It's had a chance to put its own sociological theories to the test. It can't keep blaming its failures on Christian theology or ecclesiastical corruption.

This is like a man in his prime who continues to blame his failures on his aged and enfeebled father. You can't fault the old man in the wheelchair for all your problems. A bedridden man in a nursing home doesn't present a very convincing threat to your way of life. He isn't the one who's making you miserable.

Many unbelievers are oddly passionate about their unbelief. Indeed, there's an evangelistic urgency to their faithless creed, as if they had this wonderful alternative to Christianity. As if your immortal soul depended on your renunciation of God.

But secular humanism is just a fancy funeral home. It comes down to your choice of a coffin. Will a pine box do? What about

a Cherry casket? How about Mahogany? Or copper, perchance? Prefer a bronze coffin with satin lining and a box spring mattress?

15. What do Christian parents, pastors, seminary and/or college professors most need to teach our young people to prepare them for the walk of faith?

Several things come to mind.

First off, Scripture has given us an inspired a code of conduct for teenage boys. The Book of Proverbs. Now, as Dr. Johnson once said, nature and passion never change. Nothing has changed in 3000 years. So boys on the cusp of adolescence should study Proverbs—using a good commentary.²⁷

This is also relevant to girls. Although Proverbs is an ethics manual for boys, it also talks about girls—since boys have been known to take an interest in girls.

It's important for girls to understand how boys think and feel. What makes a teenage boy tick. Girls often take their lead from the boy in their life—eager to please—so they need to study Proverbs just as much as any boy. In addition, Proverbs has a lot of generic advice which is equally applicable to both sexes.

Second, professing believers—whether nominal or genuine—generally stumble because they entertain false expectations. It's very important to correct false hopes and expectations—since these are invariably dashed by harsh experience.

They need to have a sound theodicy.²⁸ They need to have a sound theology of prayer.²⁹ They need to have a nuanced model

²⁷ T. Longman, *Proverbs* (Baker, 2006); B. Waltke, *Proverbs 1-15* (Eerdmans, 2004); *Proverbs 16-31* (Eerdmans, 2005).

²⁸ “Must God Create the Best?” R. Adams, *The Virtue of Faith and Other Essays in Philosophical Theology*, 51-64; “Existence, Self-interest, and the Problem of Evil,” *ibid.* 65-76; A. Plantinga, “Supralapsarianism, or ‘O Felix Culpa’,” P. van Inwagen, ed., *Christian Faith and the Problem of Evil*, 1-25.

²⁹ D. A. Carson, ed., *Teach Us to Pray*; Richard Longenecker, ed., *Into God's Presence*; J. I Packer & Carolyn Nystrom, *Praying*; N. T. Wright, *The Lord and His Prayer*.

of inerrancy.³⁰ They need to have a reasonable method of decision-making.³¹ They need to be grounded in Christian apologetics (see below).

Third, they should read some good Christian biographies (see below). I constantly hear how life is tougher today for the younger generation than it was for former generations. Balderdash!

By definition, the young don't have much life-experience under their belt. So they need to be exposed to the experience of other Christians who went before them. Men and women who had to overcome many trials and adversities.

Finally, we read a lot about the problem of teen sexuality. Actually, the problem is not so much with teen sexuality, but with premarital sex. Our economic system discourages young folks from marrying young. They are pressured to postpone marriage until after they complete their education—and the educational process is increasingly strung out.

The problem is that nature has no regard for our economic priorities. Moreover, our economic priorities don't necessarily correspond to Biblical priorities either. We should begin with Christian doctrine of the family, and structure our economic arrangements around that point of reference.³²

In our focus on the spiritual, we may neglect the natural. But unless our natural needs are supplied and satisfied, that will impede the process of sanctification.

³⁰ E.g. Craig Blomberg, *The Historical Reliability of the Gospels*; V. Philips Long, *The Art of Biblical History*.

³¹ Bruce Waltke, *Finding the Will of God*.

³² Ken Campbell, ed., *Marriage & Family in the Biblical World*; Richard Hess & Daniel Carroll, eds., *Family in the Bible*; Andreas Köstenberger, *God, Marriage, and Family*.

16. What devotional or apologetic reading would you recommend for further study?

Christian Biography

Joyce G. Baldwin, *Esther: An Introduction & Commentary*

Theodore Beza, *The Life of John Calvin*

George A. Blackburn, *The Life Work of John L. Girardeau*

W. Garden Blaikie, *David Livingston*

A. Bonar, *Robert Murray McCheyne*

William Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation*

John Bunyan, *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners: John Bunyan's Autobiography*

David Bryson, *Queen Jeanne and the Promised Land*

D. A. Carson, *Memoirs of an Ordinary Pastor*

Faith Cook, *Samuel Rutherford and His Friends*

_____, *Selina: Countess of Huntingdon: Her Pivotal Role in the 18th Century Evangelical Awakening*

Diane D'Amico, *Christina Rossetti: Faith, Gender and Time*

David Daniell, *William Tyndale: A Biography*

Arnold A. Dallimore, *A Heart Set Free: The Life of Charles Wesley*

_____, *George Whitefield: The Life and Times of the Great Evangelist of the Eighteenth Century*

_____, *Spurgeon: A New Biography*

_____, *Susanna Wesley*

Iain M. Duguid, *Living in the Gap Between Promise & Reality: The Gospel According to Abraham*

_____, *Living in the Grip of Relentless Grace: The Gospel in the Lives of Isaac & Jacob*

Eifion Evans, *Daniel Rowland and the Great Evangelical Awakening in Wales*

Christine Farenhorst, *Wings Like a Dove: The Courage of Queen Jeanne D'albret*

John S. Feinberg, *Where is God? A Personal Story of Finding God in Grief & Suffering*

Ernest Gordon, *To End All Wars*

Gary Habermas, *Forever Loved: A Personal Account of Grief and Resurrection*

Antony Harrison, ed., *The Letters of Christina Rossetti*, vols. 1-5.

W. Andrew Hoffercker, *Piety and the Princeton Theologians: Archibald Alexander, Charles Hodge, and Benjamin Warfield*

Philip E. Howard and Jonathan Edwards, *The Life and Diary of David Brainerd*

Sharon James, *Elizabeth Prentiss: "More Love to Thee"*

Karen Jobes, *Esther*

Kathleen Jones, *Learning Not to Be First: The Life of Christina Rossetti*

John Knox, *History of the Reformation of Religion within the Realm of Scotland*

C. Everett Koop & Elizabeth Koop, *Sometimes Mountains Move*

Bethan Lloyd-Jones, *Memories of Sandfields*

Sean Michael Lucas, *Robert Lewis Dabney: A Southern Presbyterian Life*

George M. Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life*

W. R. Moody, *The Life of Dwight L. Moody*

Iain H. Murray, *A Scottish Christian Heritage*

_____, *David Martyn Lloyd-Jones*

_____, *The Forgotten Spurgeon*

_____, *Jonathan Edwards: A New Biography*

_____, *The Life of Arthur W. Pink*

John Newton & Bruce Hindmarsh, *The Life & Spirituality of John Newton: An Authentic Narrative*

Heidi L. Nichols, *Anne Bradstreet: A Guided Tour of the Life & Thought of a Puritan Poet*

J. I. Packer, *A Grief Sanctified: Through Sorrow to Eternal Hope: Including Richard Baxter's Timeless Memoir of His Wife's Life and Death*

_____, *Faithfulness and Holiness: The Witness of J. C. Ryle: An Appreciation*

Mary Rowlandson, *The Captive*

J. C. Ryle, *Christian Leaders of the 18th Century*

John Sargent, *The Life & Letters of Henry Martyn*

Kenneth Silverman, *The Life and Times of Cotton Mather*

H. Spurgeon, *Autobiography*

John W. Stewart & James H. Moorhead, eds., *Charles Hodge Revisited: A Critical Appraisal of His Life and Work*

Ned Stonehouse, *J. Gresham Machen*

Lehman Strauss, *In God's Waiting Room*

Moody Stuart, *The Life of John Duncan*

George Whitefield, *George Whitefield's Journals*

Quest for the Historical Christ

Paul Barnett, *Finding the Historical Christ*

_____, *Jesus and the Logic of History*

_____, *Jesus & the Rise of Early Christianity*

Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses*

_____, *The Testimony of the Beloved Disciple*

Craig Blomberg, *Jesus and the Gospels*

Darrell Bock, *Breaking the Da Vinci Code*

_____, *Jesus According to Scripture*

_____, *Studying the Historical Jesus*

_____, *The Missing Gospels*

Markus Bockmuehl, *This Jesus: Martyr, Lord, Messiah*

Marcus Borg & N. T. Wright, *The Meaning of Jesus*

F. F. Bruce, *Jesus & Christian Origins Outside the New Testament*

David Catchpole, *The Trial of Jesus; A Study in the Gospels and Jewish Historiography from 1770 to the Present Day*

Bruce Chilton & Craig Evans, eds., *Authenticating the Activities of Jesus*

_____, *Authenticating the Words of Jesus*

_____, *Studying the Historical Jesus*

Paul Copan & Ronald Tacelli, eds., *Jesus' Resurrection: Fact or Figment?*

Paul Eddy & Gregory Boyd, *The Jesus Legend: A Case for the Historical Reliability of the Synoptic Jesus Tradition*

Craig Evans, *Fabricating Jesus: How Modern Scholars Distort the Gospels*

_____, *Jesus & His Contemporaries*

Craig Evans & N. T. Wright, *Jesus, The Final Days*

Donald Guthrie, *A Shorter Life of Christ*

E. F. Harrison, *A Short Life of Christ*

Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Real Jesus: The Misguided Quest for the Historical Jesus and the Truth*

Timothy Jones, *Misquoting Truth*

Ed. Komoszwski et al., *Reinventing Jesus*

Richard Longenecker, ed., *Life in the Face of Death*

Peter Moore, ed., *Can A Bishop Be Wrong? The Scholars Challenge John Shelby Spong*

Stanley Porter, *The Criteria for Authenticity in Historical-Jesus Research*

Adolf Schlatter, *The History of the Christ*

Robert Stein, *Jesus the Messiah*

Ned Stonehouse, *The Witness of the Synoptic Gospels to Christ*

Robert Strimple, *The Modern Search for the Real Jesus*

Lee Strobel, ed., *The Case for Christ*

Lee Strobel, ed., *The Case for the Real Jesus*

Graham Twelftree, *Jesus the Exorcist*

_____, *Jesus the Miracle Worker*

B. B. Warfield, "Jesus Christ," *Works*, 3:149-77.

David Wenham, *Paul: Follower of Jesus or Founder of Christianity?*

Michael Wilkins & J. P. Moreland, eds., *Jesus Under Fire*

Ben Witherington, *The Jesus Quest: The Third Search for the Jew of Nazareth*

N. T. Wright, *Judas and the Gospel of Jesus*

_____, *The Challenge of Jesus: Rediscovering Who Jesus Was and Is*

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HAROLD W. HOEHNER

1. Have you been a Christian from childhood?

No.

2. Did you convert to the faith? If so, please describe your conversion experience.

I was raised in a liberal Congregational church and came to faith the first time I heard the gospel, two months before I graduated from high school in an evangelistic meeting.

3. Why do you believe in the existence of God?

Because God's Word states it so and according to Romans 1 natural revelation indicates God's power and deity.

4. Why do you believe in the inspiration of the Bible?

Because God's Word states it so.

5. How do you deal with Bible criticism?

I think it has value when used with correct presuppositions. Hence, I use textual criticism, form and redaction criticism with the presupposition of biblical inerrancy.

6. How do you deal with scientific objections to the faith?

I take God at His Word while realizing that the Bible is not a scientific textbook. It may speak on science inexhaustively but truthfully.

7. What other challenges to the faith would you like to comment on?

Some of these new proposals of many orthodoxies in the early church need to be answered.

8. At this stage of your spiritual journey, would you now give different reasons for your faith than when you began your pilgrimage?

Yes, because I am more acquainted with the Word of God and have great trust in its veracity.

9. Looking back over your life as a Christian, how would you say that your faith has evolved over time? How, if at all, does your lived-in faith differ from when you were younger?

I really believe in Gods faithfulness and power. I must not rely on education or anything else to win the battle minds and viewpoints.

10. Unbelievers often point to the elusiveness of God. In your personal experience, including your experience with other Christians, can you point to any examples of God's providential presence?

I can attest to His faithfulness and power. I notice it often.

11. Since you've been a Christian, have you undergone a crisis of faith? If so, how did you work through it?

I have had some minor crisis (certainly I have not had to suffer as many Christians suffer in the world today) and I found that praying and discussing the issues with other Christians has been very helpful.

12. In your observation, why are most unbelievers unbelieving?

Often they have not been confronted with the claims of the gospel. Others make the excuse that they see so much hypocrisy within the Christian community.

13. In your experience, what's the best way to witness to unbelievers?

By confronting them with the gospel in word and deed.

14. Christian apologetics tends to settle into certain stereotypical arguments and formulaic emphases. Do you

think there are some neglected areas in how apologetics is generally done today?

I am not in apologetics directly. I do think we need to understand the mindset of postmodern thinking. I do not think we need to fear it because the Bible is always relevant. We must not be caught in using the arguments of [the] Enlightenment that has not been favorable to Christianity.

15. What do Christian parents, pastors, seminary and/or college professors most need to teach our young people to prepare them for the walk of faith?

One needs to walk with the Lord in integrity. Every generation will listen to people who are real and to be able to see faith lived out in our lives and families.

16. What devotional or apologetic reading would you recommend for further study?

A thorough knowledge of the Scriptures as well as books that understand the present-day thinking so that we can relate to people in this generation.

JAMES B. JORDAN

1. Have you been a Christian from childhood?

Yes. Baptized and brought up in the faith.

2. Did you convert to the faith? If so, please describe your conversion experience.

I had a standard evangelical conversion experience at 17 after reading Billy Graham's book *World Aflame*. This was not conversion from unbelief, of course, but a closing with Christ in a new and more individual way. Conversion from childhood to adolescent faith. This is, in truth, what most "conversions" really are.

3. Why do you believe in the existence of God?

There are no answers to "why" questions except the answer that God causes it. I don't believe in the existence of "God" in the Westminster Shorter Catechism sense, because I'm not a unitarian who also happens to believe in the trinity. With the Athanasian Creed, I worship one God in trinity and trinity in unity. That is the only "God" there is. I suppose I accept that reality because the alternative is impossible. But behind that, I believe in this God because the Spirit causes me to.

4. Why do you believe in the inspiration of the Bible?

The alternative is impossible. The Bible is either the entirely trustworthy word from the Father, Son, and Spirit to mankind, or else it is nothing but a set of religious opinions. There is no middle ground.

5. How do you deal with Bible criticism?

Higher criticism is simply the way anti-Semites and Christ-haters seek to eliminate all residual authority that the Bible might have in their circles and lives, by making the Bible later than Greek philosophy. It is also a cloak for sexual sin, 99% of the time. I don't deal with it. I simply ignore it or condemn it. It

is a game for people who cannot think consistently, who want to hang around the Church rather than be consistent and become atheists or Hindus. It is for really stupid people, and when I've debated people on it, I usually laugh at them and show how stupid their opinions are. Treating higher criticism seriously is a big mistake.

6. How do you deal with scientific objections to the faith?

By asserting the chronology of the Bible and demonstrating that everything posited by "science" fits perfectly well with a 6000 year old universe. See my *Creation in Six Days* [Canon Press 1999].

7. What other challenges to the faith would you like to comment on?

I think the main challenge is "feminized" worship, which fails to see that liturgy is warfare. This is seen in the tone of worship, the use of women leading in parts of worship, the kind of music used. It is also seen in the ease with which men choose to ignore what Jesus said to do in connection with the Supper, coming up with their own fantasies about how to do it: standing or kneeling, having only one prayer, having people wait to eat and drink together, using grape juice, etc. This low view of Jesus' authority; this low view of the shaping character of liturgy and ritual; this pansified kind of worship; these are far more destructive to Christendom than all the higher criticism ever written.

8. At this stage of your spiritual journey, would you now give different reasons for your faith than when you began your pilgrimage?

Of course. We move from child to adult.

9. Looking back over your life as a Christian, how would you say that your faith has evolved over time? How, if at all, does your lived-in faith differ from when you were younger?

As a child, I believed in the context of my family. As an adolescent in college and until I was about 30, it was "me and

Jesus.” I was still playing the academic game and seeing information as the most important thing people need. As an adult, I discovered the church. I began to realize experientially that Jesus did not come to bring ideas, Christianity, but to set up a kingdom, Christendom. The USA, being an adolescent (Baptist) civilization, has not understood the church, and has focused on “me and Jesus” religion. I try to live my faith in the church, but in the US that is hard to do, since Reformed churches, at least, tend to be Gnostic intellectualistic sects.

10. Unbelievers often point to the elusiveness of God. In your personal experience, including your experience with other Christians, can you point to any examples of God’s providential presence?

Yes. But such things are seen by faith alone.

11. Since you’ve been a Christian, have you undergone a crisis of faith? If so, how did you work through it?

Yes. I just hung on, like Job. I found Peter’s words, “Where else can we go?” [John 6:68] to be helpful. My book *From Bread to Wine* spends a lot of time on the mid-life abandonment that most Christians experience, and what this death-resurrection sequence means. A lot of this comes from my own experience.

12. In your observation, why are most unbelievers unbelieving?

Because of the pansification of the Church. There is no bright light, no forceful trumpet. Accommodation to culture destroys the witness.

13. In your experience, what’s the best way to witness to unbelievers?

Set forth the whole story of the Bible. I think a modified “Four Spiritual Laws” is best, because it tells the story. But really, it depends on who the unbeliever is, of course. For many today, the initial witness is the invitation to come into a family of people who will care about you, God’s family, and grow from there.

14. Christian apologetics tends to settle into certain stereotypical arguments and formulaic emphases. Do you think there are some neglected areas in how apologetics is generally done today?

As I say, I think that a no-nonsense, grown-up, liturgical-warfare kind of Church, with all the psalms in use, the sacrament done obedientially, etc. is the best apologetics. Faced with Islam, the Church must either become adult or perish.

15. What do Christian parents, pastors, seminary and/or college professors most need to teach our young people to prepare them for the walk of faith?

The Bible and how to chant and sing the Psalter. Chanting 3-4 psalms every day in chapel service over the course of 3-4 years would be the most important thing. Students should have all 150 pretty much memorized at the end of training.

16. What devotional or apologetic reading would you recommend for further study?

That's too broad. I'm Vantillian, so in apologetics, I'd be recommending Frame and other Vantillians. People should read Girard, Rosenstock-Huessy, Rushdoony, and get to know Bach, Messiaen and Shostakovich.

CRAIG S. KEENER

1. Have you been a Christian from childhood?

No, I was converted from atheism. I was not raised in a church or with any religious orientation.

2. Did you convert to the faith? If so, please describe your conversion experience.

Some fundamental Baptists shared Christ with me; I argued with them at length, and indeed, some of their arguments were weak. But their message about Jesus, stated from the Bible, penetrated my heart. I had been saying that I thought Christianity had only about a 2% likelihood of being true, but I did not want to stake my eternity on even a 2% chance of being wrong, and had secretly begun to ask that if there was a deity, and if that deity heard me, that the deity would reveal the truth to me. I argued with these people, yet afterward walked home convicted by God's Spirit. When I got to my bedroom, I was so overwhelmed with God's presence that there was no way for me to deny God while claiming to care about truth or what was right. I had wanted empirical evidence, but God provided an evidence that, while personal to me, was more tangible than any external evidence I could have received at that point. As soon as I surrendered, I was overwhelmed with such a sense of God's presence within me, and something rushing through me like I had never felt before, that I jumped up, astonished and not a little scared!

3. Why do you believe in the existence of God?

Initially it was through my own encounter with God. Now I would add to that the structure and complexity of the universe—though when I was an atheist I thought the opposite (and as a young Christian would not have hinged anything on it; I have realized how severely my cultural presuppositions shaped my plausibility structures, and how I was buying into a nonsensical

worldview that was simply predicated on presupposed atheism). Many other factors (such as witnessing or having evidence from witnesses for fairly clear miracles) also support this confidence.

4. Why do you believe in the inspiration of the Bible?

Once one believes in a supreme God, it makes sense to look for God in history where God was first believed, in the history of Israel. The prophetic message that repeatedly challenged ancient Israel leads naturally to God's revelation in Jesus and the activity of the Spirit reported in earliest Christianity, more than in later rabbinic legal debates or Islamic holy wars or, for that matter, much of later Christendom. Once one believes in Christ (my initial experience of God was distinctly predicated on the message of Christ; moreover, we have very solid historical reasons for trusting the message and resurrection of Jesus), one also wants to heed the Scriptures that Jesus treated as authoritative, and what remains extant of the reports, understanding and spiritual experience of Jesus' earliest commissioned followers.

5. How do you deal with Bible criticism?

Most of traditional biblical criticism is historically-oriented. Historical analysis rests on probabilities based on extant information and the reliability of one's methodologies. Some methods (such as the negative use of the form-critical "criterion of dissimilarity") have rightly fallen on hard times because they are not in fact very logical criteria. (Why in the world would anyone assume that the only reliable reports are where Jesus contradicted his culture and his disciples disagreed with him?) But other methods are legitimate so long as we understand that we are engaged in historical dialogue based on the limited methods on which we can minimally agree. No one would say that only those things that we can "prove" historically actually happened (a standard that would obliterate the vast majority of history); few scholars would claim that historical criticism comes to perfect conclusions. But it is an area of dialogue where scholars of different religious persuasions (Christian, Jewish,

agnostic, atheist and other) can come together and say, “Based on these methods, what can we say?” As long as it is not employed in a minimalist way (claiming that nothing happened outside what our methods can reconstruct), it is useful for discussion. We should never confuse its minimal methodological assumptions with truth, however: for example, public criticism normally works from the standpoint of methodological naturalism. But if one does not presuppose either atheism or deism, one is not obliged to exclude the activity of God from consideration any more than that of any other personal historical “cause” or “agent.” In years past I sometimes made that mistake; my background in atheism predisposed me to be skeptical whenever possible. That is not where examination of evidence has led me, however, and now that I better understand the philosophic presuppositions behind different approaches, I no longer feel any compulsion to indulge what are essentially atheistic presuppositions, since I am not an atheist!

6. How do you deal with scientific objections to the faith?

As an atheist, I thought that I could explain the universe without recourse to the hypothesis of a deity. I was terribly naïve, assuming an infinite and eternal universe (both of which have since been thoroughly demonstrated to be impossible). I appreciate the work that has been done on necessary parameters for life in the universe and its fine-tuning so that intelligent life can exist. Regarding biology, we may get too hung up on debates over “evolution,” which is defined too many different ways. Obviously, if one defines “evolution” as “purposeless” in such a way that presupposes atheism or the lack of God’s involvement, it is virtually tautological to point out that evolution is incompatible with theism. To define evolution that way, then to say that scientific evidence supporting development proves evolution, is to elide two different definitions of evolution. Christians debate whether evolution in a different sense occurs (I think most support microevolution), but those who believe in evolution would not see it as purposeless.

Genetic mutations are so commonly harmful that any development from simpler life forms to human intelligence strikes me as presupposing teleology—which is not purposeless and suggest intelligent design. (Radical mutations would make mating too difficult—unless the entire gene pool of a species mutated, which seems difficult to explain without some sort of intelligent design, even if you come up with a “mechanism” designation for it.) A large proportion of philosophers of religion today advocate theistic positions; there is no valid a priori reason for philosophers of science or historiography to deny the possibility of divine activity. To do so is simply prejudice and holding over assumptions from the radical Enlightenment (I think here of, say Hume, rather than, say, Locke).

7. What other challenges to the faith would you like to comment on?

On college campuses some bigger “postmodern” issues have been charges that Christianity is racist, sexist, and imperialist. While Christian history unfortunately does offer plenty of attestation to the doctrine of human depravity, the Scriptures and a number of examples in history point in different directions. I have tried to deal with these issues in *Defending Black Faith* (InterVarsity, 1997, coauthored with Glenn Usry) and, more controversially, *Paul, Women & Wives* (Hendrickson, 1992). Glenn and I also addressed some Islamic challenges raised against the faith in the African-American community (we are both part of the Black Church tradition, though I am white).

8. At this stage of your spiritual journey, would you now give different reasons for your faith than when you began your pilgrimage?

Yes, as noted above. Because I worked day in and out with historical critical methods and usual academic epistemologies, my faith is now strongly rooted in historical evidence for early Christianity. That rigorous approach was painful at times, but is part of my discipline. At this point I feel fully justified in

questioning whether that epistemological approach is the only valid one, but it is also fair to say that I have multiple reasons for my faith at this point.

9. Looking back over your life as a Christian, how would you say that your faith has evolved over time. How, if at all, does your lived-in faith differ from when you were younger?

Definitely my faith has evolved. When I was first converted, I assumed that long-term Christians, who were in touch with the living God, all had supernatural powers and could look into my heart. Then I learned that Christians gossiped and committed other sins, and was quite astonished. I also learned, as we say in the Black Church, that “God doesn’t always come when you want Him to, but He’s always right on time.” Suffering in this world is heartbreaking; learning the God of the cross, the God who is present in suffering and weakness, is essential. I have seen miracles; I have also witnessed God’s power in our brokenness. Though my conversion should have been enough to teach me this principle, I think I am learning increasingly that God is the one in charge, and does things we don’t expect. Yet God’s ultimate purposes get accomplished. Trusting God’s love in the midst of hardship is a major element in growing our faith. My wife lived for 18 months as a refugee in her country, Congo-Brazzaville. Some people lost faith, but others clung closer to the only Help they had, who did make a big difference for them.

10. Unbelievers of ten point to the elusiveness of God. In your personal experience, including your experience with other Christians, can you point to any examples of God’s providential presence?

I could point to many. Let me give a couple random ones. One day when I was about to do my doctorate, someone took everything I had except the \$10 in my pocket. Yet God provided, so that I never went hungry (unless I was deliberately fasting), and the day before I was going to call the Ph.D. program and tell them I couldn’t come, someone who did not know my situation provided the funds. Or when I graduated and

did not yet have a teaching position: I determined how much money I would need to live on that year and wondered how I could possibly come up with it. The next day a publisher called me about my manuscript (what became *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament*, 1993) and offered me an advance—to the dollar what I’d decided the night before I needed to live on. On another occasion, I began to feel like God wanted me to propose a work about Revelation or the end-times to Zondervan. Not having written for them before, and being busy with my John commentary, I did not get around to proposing it, and a couple months passed. An editor from Zondervan called and asked if I would consider writing a commentary in the NIV Application Series on Revelation, since the previous writer had cancelled. My Revelation commentary came out in 2000.

11. Since you’ve been a Christian, have you undergone a crisis of faith? If so, how did you work through it?

I certainly struggled with faith as a young Christian. I went through a period of reexamining everything I had been taught in the church piece by piece, and not everything withstood examination. Happily, the heart of the faith certainly did. It was painful, but it was also brutally honest and by the time I was done I felt secure in my faith. Later I had a devastating experience that shook my faith not in God’s existence but whether God was actually with me. Yet God’s presence did not leave me, and regularly over the next few years grace put me back together.

12. In your observation, why are most unbelievers unbelieving?

In some parts of the world, people have not heard about Christ. Here in the U.S., some people take Christ for granted—because Christianity appears to cost so little, some treat it cheaply. When I was an atheist, my main reason was a very poor one philosophically but what seemed a natural one at the time: 80% of the people in the U.S. claimed to be Christians, yet I could

not tell from how most of them lived that it made a difference in their lives. True Christianity rises or falls not on Christians, but on Jesus Christ. But it was not till I met Him that I understood that. In some communities, the main objection to Christian faith is not other religions or even suffering in the world, but Christian leaders who commit adultery and steal money, or Christians who gossip, slander and are divided from one another. We could evangelize more effectively if we did better discipleship of the people who already claim to follow Christ.

13. In your experience, what's the best way to witness to unbelievers?

If it's someone you will know long-term, sharing gradually or at opportune moments in the context of a genuine, respectful relationship is important. If it's someone you won't, it's still not wrong to share straight-up (again, respectfully). If nobody practiced the latter, I wouldn't have heard the gospel.

14. Christian apologetics tends to settle into certain stereotypical arguments and formulaic emphases. Do you think there are some neglected areas in how apologetics is generally done today?

As I mentioned earlier, sometimes we are not answering the questions people are asking. I do not suggest that we neglect the traditional approaches. But when you have Christians behaving unethically in the public square, that raises an apologetic (and discipleship) issue. When suffering drives people to seek help beyond themselves, we should have already laid a theological groundwork addressing that. When people charge that Christianity is racist, sexist and imperialist, we need to be ready to answer from history and Scripture (which is certainly not difficult to do if we prepare ourselves). For that matter, Christians are often misrepresented in public not only because of Christians not living like Christians but because of selective portrayals of the evidence. Sadly, I know both some international situations (where I have informants on the ground) and situations in the U.S. (where I know persons misrepresented

by selective portrayals in some media) that fit this bill. Calling people to truth requires dealing with a lot of fronts. Again, I think we need to deal with the traditional areas, too. But we need more teaching across the board.

15. What do Christian parents, pastors, seminary and/or college professors most need to teach our young people to prepare them for the walk of faith?

Again, answers may differ depending on the circles we are in. But we need to prepare them for a real world of suffering, to know a God who is faithful in suffering (and who embraced our suffering in the cross). We also need to prepare them to think critically regarding the intellectual challenges to the faith that may come their way, providing resources. We also need to do a better job than it appears we often do in being respectful toward those who disagree with us. That is true no matter what we feel is at stake; Jesus didn't need Peter to take up the sword to defend Him. Our goal is not just to critique outsiders; our commission is to love them and reach them with good news that Christ died for them, rose again, and offers them new life. Some churches focus on experience; some focus on tradition; some focus on the contemporary culture; I pray that all churches would come back to our foundation in God's Word and hear God afresh. It's valuable to have apologetic resources, but what nourishes our faith most is to fill ourselves with Scripture, witnessing how God has worked throughout history. That helps us put our own lives in a much bigger and more important context.

16. What devotional or apologetic reading would you recommend for further study?

I love the Bible, and use most of my other study time to help me understand it better (e.g., background material). But having said that, I also grow a lot by reading biographies of Christians elsewhere in history (often missionaries). Their sacrifices and struggles challenge and encourage my faith. It is good to get out

of my own situation and hear how God has worked in others' lives, then bring those lessons back to my own.

MARTIN G. SELBREDE

1. Have you been a Christian from childhood?

No.

2. Did you convert to the faith? If so, please describe your conversion experience.

Yes. At 18, I had no intellectual objections to Christianity, but dragged my feet about committing my life to Him (I phrase it this way so I'm not wise after the fact in describing it as I then understood things, versus how I as a Calvinist would now recast that subjective experience).

3. Why do you believe in the existence of God?

From the impossibility of the contrary.

4. Why do you believe in the inspiration of the Bible?

Its self-attestation and Authorship establish this.

5. How do you deal with Bible criticism?

Pop the hood on the critics' presuppositional baggage.

6. How do you deal with scientific objections to the faith?

Pop the hood on the vicious circularity of rationalism and its inability to account for the facts of experience (uniformity of nature to secure valid induction, etc.); marshal the defects in the actual reasoning (on their own principles) governing the critics' position, and then posit a contrasting position consistent with the Bible and corresponding to the empirical evidence when thus framed.

7. What other challenges to the faith would you like to comment on?

I'm concerned about the continued pull into Roman Catholicism that raids our Reformed ranks—the collapse of sola Scriptura, as it were.

8. At this stage of your spiritual journey, would you now give different reasons for your faith than when you began your pilgrimage?

Yes.

9. Looking back over your life as a Christian, how would you say that your faith has evolved over time? How, if at all, does your lived-in faith differ from when you were younger?

Moved away from pietism, evidentialism, antinomianism, pessimistic eschatology, etc., into a full-orbed application of Scripture to all aspects of my life and practice.

10. Unbelievers often point to the elusiveness of God. In your personal experience, including your experience with other Christians, can you point to any examples of God's providential presence?

Not sure how to reply to this, since God is simultaneously immanent and transcendent. Psalm 11:4 affirms that God tries men with his eyelids (i.e., by being afar off and nonresponsive/undetectable), to test us, and I find this fact more significant than fallible “experiences” that God is “nigh.” Moreover, if the indwelling of the Holy Spirit doesn’t constitute God’s providential presence in some sense, I’ve surely missed the point of the question entirely.

11. Since you’ve been a Christian, have you undergone a crisis of faith? If so, how did you work through it?

No.

12. In your observation, why are most unbelievers unbelieving?

Self-interest in keeping themselves enthroned and their autonomy sacrosanct—they can’t serve two masters and know it.

13. In your experience, what's the best way to witness to unbelievers?

Define “best.” If we mean “most effective,” how can we know that except on presumption that our converts are genuine and not feigned? I think Van Til has hit a valuable insight here: our obligation is to testify to the truth, and be faithful in the broadcasting of that truth (no compromise, no psychological thumbscrews à la Finney, etc.).

14. Christian apologetics tends to settle into certain stereotypical arguments and formulaic emphases. Do you think there are some neglected areas in how apologetics is generally done today?

I don't think we've properly extended the Van Til-Bahnsen line of attack. I perceive that the keepers of those flames have distinctively different agendas than their mentors, so the original lines of thought go undeveloped in their original form.

15. What do Christian parents, pastors, seminary and/or college professors most need to teach our young people to prepare them for the walk of faith?

Isaiah 8:20 is the explicit litmus test, and is cast as such by Isaiah.³³

16. What devotional or apologetic reading would you recommend for further study?

Van Til's Apologetic [P&R 1998], by [Greg] Bahnsen, is recommended. I'm unaware of any devotional material written from a presuppositionalist outlook, so I look to [Benjamin B.] Warfield for devotional reading: *Saviour of the World* [Banner of Truth 1991], *Faith and Life* [Banner of Truth 1999], etc.

³³ “To the teaching and to the testimony! If they will not speak according to this word, it is because they have no dawn” (ESV).

ERIC SVENDSEN

1. Have you been a Christian from childhood?

No.

2. Did you convert to the faith? If so, please describe your conversion experience.

I was born into a nominal Roman Catholic family, attended a Roman Catholic school through my elementary school years, went through all the required sacraments, served as an altar boy, and weekly attended post-elementary school catechism classes. Once I reached my mid teens, I shunned all things religious and adopted a Hedonistic philosophy of life. At about 20 years of age, prompted by a discussion about prophecy with an unbelieving neighbor—who nevertheless knew a thing or two about the Bible—I decided to read the Revelation for the first time. From the opening words, I was captivated by the seriousness and urgency of the book’s tone, and struck by its authority. I remember vividly that there was no doubt in my mind that what I was reading was truth. Over the course of the next four years, I fell under heavy conviction about my way of life and certain consequential destiny. During that stint, I resolved (unsuccessfully) to clean up my life gradually, and then to seek God’s forgiveness. The more I attempted that course, however, the worse I seemed to become, till finally it became clear my strategy was not going to work. Concurrent to that, I began finding—and reading—gospel tracts that had been placed at locations I was forced to frequent as a young bachelor living on my own (laundromats, grocery stores, etc.). They went a long way toward clarifying the gospel for me, and in particular just why my “clean up your life and then seek God” strategy was not working so well. I also began reading the New Testament again, this time starting with Jude (I had already read Revelation, and the books on the right side of the Bible seemed so much shorter and more manageable than the books on the left side) and

working my way left through the epistles. By the time I had reached mid-way through the New Testament, and with the aid of the gospel tracts I had found, I realized I not only needed Christ for salvation, but now desired Him in my life. No longer caring that I would lose all my friends (which did indeed happen), and no longer fearful of impending condemnation but thankful for his patience with me through all my insolence and rebellion, I wept before him and committed my life to Christ.

3. Why do you believe in the existence of God?

For me, the existence of God has always seemed the most rational way of explaining why there is something instead of nothing. Even before my conversion I believed in God's existence. I recall one instance, during field maneuvers when I was in the military, lying in my sleeping bag looking up at the stars late at night and asking myself "how in the world did all that get there if there is no God?" However, once I became a Christian and was faced by the agnosticism of certain people with whom I came into contact, it was reaffirming to discover there are so many more compelling and sophisticated evidences for theism (both philosophical and biblical) than my feeble late-night musings. The Bible assumes there are no truly indigenous atheists—men talk themselves into atheism—and it even points to the fact there is something rather than nothing as the very thing that will render all men without excuse. The fact that most otherwise-disconnected cultures everywhere share a common belief in a creator is not insignificant, and affirms the biblical belief that "He has set eternity in the hearts of men" [Ecclesiastes 3:11].

4. Why do you believe in the inspiration of the Bible?

I think it's the logical outworking of the combination of the general reliability of the Bible and the claims of its authors. The Bible itself claims to be authored and "breathed out" by God [1 Timothy 3:16]. If the Bible is a reliable document and trustworthy in the areas where we can verify or falsify it through historical and archaeological investigation (dates, locations,

placement of cities, the existence of certain civilizations, etc.), then it seems to me that accepting the claims of its authors in areas that cannot otherwise be verified or falsified (things like spiritual realities, and the inspiration of the Bible itself) is not an unreasonable step. The irrefutable evidence for the Resurrection, to my way of thinking, validates the claims of Jesus, one of which was that the Scriptures hold unequivocal authority over man because they are in fact the words of God.

5. How do you deal with Bible criticism?

I assume you mean biblical criticism and not criticism (skepticism) against the Bible, so I will answer accordingly. It depends on what type and to what degree. Take redaction criticism as an example. The full-feathered version of redaction criticism states that the gospels were not authored by the individual writers traditionally attributed to those books, but by later theological “schools” or “communities” (e.g., the “Johannine” school wrote the Gospel of John as a theological polemic against the Jewish community, the “Lucan” community wrote the Gospel of Luke as a corrective against the belief of the Markan community that there would be only a short delay before the parousia, etc.). The main problem with biblical criticism is that it takes otherwise sound observations about the text (there are indeed different, not to say conflicting, theological emphases among the gospel writers) and posits unwarranted conclusions about them (they were written by communities rather than individuals, and they were written to modify the target community’s errant theology).

6. How do you deal with scientific objections to the faith?

So long as we are defining science as “knowledge” or “known facts,” and understand it as something that can be reproduced in a lab, then I know of no “scientific” objections to the faith. If instead we are referring to the interpretation of facts, then we must recognize that for what it is—an interpretation, nothing more.

7. What other challenges to the faith would you like to comment on?

N/A

8. At this stage of your spiritual journey, would you now give different reasons for your faith than when you began your pilgrimage?

In short, I think I would give much the same reasons but in a much more reflective way.

9. Looking back over your life as a Christian, how would you say that your faith has evolved over time? How, if at all, does your lived-in faith differ from when you were younger?

Well, I was fairly legalistic as a younger Christian. I like to think I overcame at least that much. I think I now have a much keener awareness of grace and mercy than I did when I was younger—not only in terms of God’s grace toward me, but my grace toward others in response. Similarly, I have come to a much clearer understanding that Christianity is much more about how one thinks than about how one acts. The former will always result in the latter, whether good or bad. If I have the “mind of Christ” [1 Cor 2:16], and I view myself as a mere vessel of Christ to be used up and disposed of at His good pleasure, then I have cause for rejoicing in all circumstances, and the way I live and act will reflect that mindset.

10. Unbelievers often point to the elusiveness of God. In your personal experience, including your experience with other Christians, can you point to any examples of God’s providential presence?

This question is difficult—not because I cannot think of examples, but because it is difficult for me not to see God’s providential hand in every situation.

11. Since you've been a Christian, have you undergone a crisis of faith? If so, how did you work through it?

Oh yes, many times of course. These situations are always much-needed opportunities to draw closer to Christ and reestablish my own reliance on Him and his provision. The only “work through” that is reasonable to me during those situations is falling on my face before God and crying out to Him.

12. In your observation, why are most unbelievers unbelieving?

I think we can make a distinction here between the reason given by the unbeliever and the actual reason why they don't believe. The reasons given in the former category are many, and all are standard fare (no evidence for believing, Christianity is represented by hypocrites, Christianity is full of religious nuts, etc.). The actual reason, in my view, is spiritual blindness. Paul tells us in 2 Cor 4:4 that the reason some don't believe is because the god of this world has blinded their minds.

13. In your experience, what's the best way to witness to unbelievers?

I don't think there's any one right way to do this. I think the best way is to meet each one on his own ground. Is he an atheist? Then meet him on that ground. Is he a member of a cult? Appeal to what is common ground and build from there. I do not think the goal of evangelism is always conversion—though that is certainly the most favorable goal. The other goal of our witness, and one that is just as important, is to confirm the reprobate in his condemnation. The gospel is a two-edged sword. We are the fragrance of life to those who are being saved, and the stench of death to those who are perishing. I am a presuppositionalist at heart, but an evidentialist in practice when evidence is needed to convince or to confirm someone in unbelief. One thing I do not do is wring my hands over someone's rejection of my witness—as though if I had just said it differently he might have been saved. I have learned that God uses our weaknesses and our

awkward stumbling more than our polished presentations. We are called to proclaim the gospel; but only the Spirit can save.

14. Christian apologetics tends to settle into certain stereotypical arguments and formulaic emphases. Do you think there are some neglected areas in how apologetics is generally done today?

I'm a big fan of a blended approach to apologetics. I do not fall into any "school" per se because I see value in a variety of approaches.

15. What do Christian parents, pastors, seminary and/or college professors most need to teach our young people to prepare them for the walk of faith?

As one who has held all three of those roles, I think I can speak to this. For the Christian parent, establishing the concept of spiritual discipline is of first importance. But is it also important to share with our children our own spiritual struggles, weaknesses, and failures. Let them know even mature Christians are real people. If they see perseverance through these struggles, it will go along way toward establishing the fact that there is no quick payoff when one is a Christian. It requires sustained discipline and persistence. Also, spending time daily in the word of God, and helping them to establish a daily reading habit is key. Teach them to love Christ and his word, and to rely on him for all things. As a pastor or seminary professor, I don't think this focus would change. A youth group should not focus on perpetuating youth. It should focus on taking youth from childhood to spiritual adulthood. As for seminary, that experience too often results in a real disconnect between knowledge and living. Seminary professors must communicate not only the knowledge necessary for preparation of ministry, but also just how that knowledge should be applied practically. In an environment where the goal is a degree, this is, of course, easier said than done.

16. What devotional or apologetic reading would you recommend for further study?

Since my area of expertise is NT studies, I'm not sure I'm the most qualified to make recommendations for apologetic works, particularly regarding some of the more recent works that have come out (which, I confess, I have not kept up on), so I will defer on that category. As for devotional works, I am more inclined to recommend the classics, such as [John Bunyan's] *Pilgrim's Progress* or Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*, than I am more recent works. Also, books on the lives, martyrdom, and writings of missionaries such as Jim Elliot are very inspiring to me.³⁴ I'm sure there are very good works out there that are of more recent publication; but for me nothing compares to reading about lives lived and died for Christ and his kingdom.

³⁴ E.g. E. Elliot, *Shadow of the Almighty: The Life and Testament of Jim Elliot* (HarperSanFrancisco 1989); *Through the Gates of Splendor* (Tyndale House 1995); *The Journals of Jim Elliot* (Revell 2002).

GRAHAM H. TWELFTREE

1. Have you been a Christian from childhood?

I was fifteen and a half when I was converted.

2. Did you convert to the faith? If so, please describe your conversion experience.

I have always gone to church; I can count on my fingers the number of times I have missed church—they were when I have been too unwell to attend. So it was rather a surprise to discover in my mid-teens that I was not a Christian. In my early teens I had gone to a youth camp and, I assume, God touched or spoke to me, as they say, for I remember being somewhat troubled (in a positive way) by the speaker. I began to read the Bible at that point (and have done so every day of my life, although there was an occasion, in more recent years, when I left my Bible at Heathrow and could not read it for a day). In taking up the Bible, I assumed that answers I unconsciously sought to unframed questions would be in there. However, there were no answers, even though I read it right through more than once; the Bible was incredibly boring and did not offer me any help.

At the age of fifteen I left school to go farming with my father in one of the wheat belts of South Australia. Since there were few books in our home, a book by Catherine Marshall, *Beyond Ourselves*, loaned to my mother by a friend and left around the house, was of considerable interest. Two things struck me about that book (which I have never finished). One was that she wrote as if she knew God. I was puzzled that, having been to church all my life, I did not seem to know God, at least not as intimately as she described. The other thing was that she knew that she was forgiven. If anything, this frustrated me for, even though I had done some things for which I was deeply sorry, and at the same time had done my best in life, I did not feel the forgiveness about which Catherine Marshall wrote. It was February 17, 1966, three days after decimal currency was

introduced into Australia. My father and I were ploughing, taking shifts in turn on the tractor; long hours every day. After lunch, while I waited for my mother to drive me to where the machine was working, I sat down for a few minutes to read Marshall's book. A little while later—agitated by what I had been reading—as I travelled in the passenger seat of the truck (we called it a utility or ute), I sensed a struggle inside of me, though only in retrospect can I articulate it. It was as if God was saying, "Will you stop and let me give you what you are struggling for?" Having read the Bible, I knew of Peter's threefold denial of Jesus. Now, in some way attempting to reverse what I sensed was the denial of my whole life, looking out the window to where a header (combine harvester) was reaping late in the season and with my mother driving me the few miles to where I would spend the afternoon driving the tractor, I said, "Yes Lord, I will! Yes Lord, I will! Yes Lord, I will!" Knowing there was something significant about the moment I asked my mother the time. Unaware of the great transaction that had taken place in my life she said, "It's twenty past twelve."

When we arrived where dad was working on the tractor he explained what gear he was working the tractor, how fast he was running the engine and how deep the machine was going. I climbed up, adjusted all the levers and set off ploughing for the rest of the afternoon, around and around a small 80 acre paddock. After everything was in order and I had settled the thought came to me, "I'm a Christian!" Immediately I felt a great weight—of which I had been quite unaware—lift from my life. It was as if I had been bowed down by an insidious incapacitating weight that was now being taken off so that I could stand tall and upright for the first time in my life. So great and tangible was the relief that I began to cry. Driving through tears, I cried all afternoon. (When I arrived home that evening my mother asked what was on my face. I did not know. But when I looked in a mirror I could see that it was a patch of mud, a mixture of tears and dust from the machinery.) Notably, from

that day on, I found the Bible quite interesting and full of practical help.

3. Why do you believe in the existence of God?

To begin with, I think that one of the aspects of our human condition that needs greater acknowledgement is that we experience limitations. At a philosophical level, one example is that we are excluded from establishing a kind of certainty about many things we might wish, including about God's existence. Put another way, in such matters we do not have an intellectual fulcrum against which to place the lever of our minds with which we could turn the subjectivity of our experience into the certainties of objective knowledge.

Nevertheless, in the course of daily life, my belief in God's existence seems as certain as other beliefs or knowledge of the kind, such as love and beauty, and hate and evil. As I analyze this belief it seems to rest on no one thing in particular but on a number of factors that, taken together, seem unassailable. I recognize that they are not of equal intellectual appeal or value, but I list them in the order that they appear significant to me.

First are the experiences that seem best explained as that of Another making himself known to me or intervening in my life in various ways. For example, apart from my conversion experience, I recall starting to fall from high up a wall of a shed on the farm. Upon silently, though desperately, calling out for help, I felt what seemed to be a hand holding me up so that I was able to climb down unhurt from where I had been working. On another occasion, one afternoon while driving the tractor I began to doze off—a dangerous thing to do! As I nodded off, I heard a voice say, "Graham, watch out!" I looked around thinking that someone, perhaps my father, had called to me. However, at that moment I realized that I would not have been able to hear a human voice above the noise of the engine and, recalling the voice itself, I sensed that it was God's. Moreover, almost a year after my conversion, I had a near death experience in which, at the very boundaries of life and death, I experienced

what I took to be something of the afterlife as well as both a voice and a hand encouraging me back to this life (see Graham H. Twelftree, *Life After Death*, London: Monarch, 2002). Then, in later years (from August 1994), a considerable number of people in the large traditional church of which I was the senior pastor experienced a corporate yet individual coming of the Spirit that was remarkably reminiscent of that described in Acts 2. It was a coming for which I do not think we had particularly prayed or wished. Nevertheless, the experience was sufficiently like that of the book of Acts, and people with the most reasonable minds and dispositions were so deeply and positively changed, that it seemed difficult to conclude other than that the God of the New Testament had come to, or visited, us. Finally, at a more mundane and less easily established level, there have been such coincidences in life that it is tempting to suggest that a god has had some hand in their orchestration. For example, when we were contemplating taking a job at Regent University, a relatively new Christian who had never rung me before and could not have known what we were considering, called to suggest tentatively that in his praying he thought God had said that I was considering something new and, also, that God's hand was on it. In light of these kinds of experiences, it has seemed reasonable for me to conclude that God exists and that he has been, in some way, involved in my life.

Following from this, secondly, is the small but important point that the perceived correlation between the character or nature of the God depicted to be behind the stories of the New Testament and that of the Being I consider to be the source of my experiences bear such a remarkable resemblance to each other that it seems reasonable to consider that such a Being or Person as described in the New Testament exists. Similarly, although there are many atheists, some with great minds and a great interest in human welfare, there is such a great number of people with equally great minds and practical interest in the human condition who believe in God that, even though it cannot be conclusively shown that God exists, the reasonableness of my belief seems to be protected.

Thirdly, although there are good arguments to refute the philosophers who argue for the existence of God, the very strength of those arguments for his existence suggests the reasonableness of believing in such a being. Further, even though the rather impersonal being argued for by some philosophers is not much like the God of the Bible, especially the New Testament, at least the reasonableness of my believing in some kind of God appears to me to be established.

Fourthly, I am slightly attracted to the view that the very desire and search for God that is found across religions and in so many, though not all, cultures posit not his creation by our minds but his separate and prior existence. For, as the argument goes, just as thirst and hunger point to the existence of water and food, and the ear and eye point to the existence of sound and light, so our propensity to search for God points to his existence.

So, to repeat what I said a moment ago, taken together these points seem to me to make it reasonable—though, I admit, not finally provable—for me to believe in the existence of God, the God of the New Testament.

4. Why do you believe in the inspiration of the Bible?

Perhaps it is a matter of elimination that leaves me with “inspired” as the best way to describe the Bible. The difficulty of finding a word to describe the Bible is that, while prophecy or gospel or letter or apocalypse, for example, are used for parts of it, as a whole it does not offer a description of itself. Also, the terms generally used to describe the Bible, such as inspiration, along with infallible, inerrant and reliable, are words that we attribute to it rather than being self evidently required by it.

The great value of each of these words is that they are, in their own ways, various attempts at affirming or protecting what has come to be accepted as the irreplaceable value and importance of the Bible. But there are great difficulties with two of these terms in particular. Inerrant, or without error, is often used for the text of the Bible “as it was originally written,” for it is generally agreed that there are problems with some parts of the

text as it has come to us. However, to describe the text of the Bible as inerrant is really to employ theoretical language, for it refers to a text that has probably, in all parts, evolved during its use rather than had a single writer. It also refers to a text which we do not have, may never have and may not recognize if we had it. Similarly, to deem the Bible infallible may be useful in affirming that it can be trusted, notably in matters relating to faith. However, this term also really involves using a faith statement that is difficult to test as being otherwise.

More seriously, even though the words inerrant and infallible express the laudable intention to give the Bible, or maintain it in, a high place in Christianity—as well as encourage it being taken seriously—this vocabulary has the potential to describe the Bible in ways that displace Jesus or detract from perceiving his centrality and importance for the Christian faith. It is he and he alone whom the Christian wishes to affirm as the single complete incarnation or perfect reflection of and message from God. The Christian does not want to confuse the Word who became flesh with the words which became descriptions of him.

Whatever expression we use to describe the Bible and, by implication, how it is to be used, I would like it to help us maintain its irreplaceable value for the Christian and the church in telling us about and understanding Jesus, as well as how to respond to him. Yet I want to be able to describe the Bible in a way that does not cause me to think that the central and essential element of Christianity is either a book or words, or even words about a person. For it is not words, but rather a Person who brings, and encounters us in, the powerful presence of God himself. For me that word can be “inspired” which could be seen to include the idea of the Bible being reliable. It is reasonable that we should use the term inspired, since a Christian writer in the New Testament (2 Timothy 3:16) uses it of holy books of his time. Embodied in the word is the affirmation both of the presence of God in the process of writing—in a way that we can understand from the way we experience God using people—as well as the undeniable

humanness of the text. (See William J. Abraham, *The Divine Inspiration of Holy Scripture*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981, chapter 3).

5. How do you deal with Biblical criticism?

So important is the Bible and what it might have to say to readers that there should be no bounds to the questions put to it nor limits to the answers that can be accepted. Biblical criticism of all kinds should not be feared but actively welcomed. In spiritual terms, we want to hear the Bible as clearly and, if we may use the metaphor, with as wide a bandwidth as possible.

Nevertheless, as with any interaction with an ancient document that is supposed to carry a message, there needs to be a correlation between the tools and the anticipated results, or between types of questions asked and types of answers expected. For example, as has been long pointed out, form criticism is not an appropriate tool for establishing historicity. Similarly, establishing or denying the historicity of a story or elements of it may not determine or destroy its message. Further, in attempting to locate an author's message the critic will select literary tools to elucidate meaning rather than those tools of the historian used for evaluating historicity. I like what, I think, Spurgeon said somewhere, that to defend the Bible is a little like defending a lion. Both can take care of themselves.

6. How do you deal with scientific objections to the faith?

Two things come to mind. First, from daily experience and taking into account the reports of others—both in our time and in the past, it seems reasonable to approach the entirety of knowledge as having a unity. That is, in an ideal world we could expect that all the elements of our knowledge would fit with and be consistent with all others. From this it seems to me that any inconsistencies we now sense between our various pieces of knowledge are either only apparent or temporary, waiting for better understanding or the uncovering of further knowledge. The end result being that, one day, given an infinite amount of time (and suprahuman intellectual capacity), we would grasp the

unity of all knowledge, including that between faith- or religion-based and science-based knowledge.

The other point that comes to mind when considering scientific objections to the faith is that it is unconscionably arrogant for any one area of knowledge or a particular specialist to think that his or her field is able to describe the entire breadth of human knowledge and experience or determine what can be established in or by another field. In particular, although each will have a contribution to make to the other, a theologian is no more equipped to assess theories of the origin of the universe than a physicist is able to assess the meaning of that universe. Put another way, inherent in this suggestion is the idea that there is great danger in either Christians attempting to capture all knowledge through the “eye of faith” or in scientists supposing that they can capture all knowledge in their own terms and theorems.

7. What other challenges to the faith would you like to comment on?

None!

8. At this stage of your spiritual journey, would you now give different reasons for your faith than when you began your pilgrimage?

Yes. Initially there were no reasons for faith. From one perspective, even though I was searching for something, in that God revealed himself to me there was no need for reasons for faith; faith was little other than the sense of responding to the powerful presence of God. Now, forty years on, reasons have become allies to that unavoidable response.

9. Looking back over your life as a Christian, how would you say that your faith has evolved over time? How, if at all, does your lived-in faith differ from when you were younger?

Perhaps I have both oscillated and increased in understanding. In the early days, experience may have been exclusively important for me with the uninformed assumption that other

factors would support my faith. Then, even though I could not articulate them eloquently, I think I went through a period when rational and scientific arguments were seen as the most important factors supporting faith. Now, it seems that, while experience is very important, it is the interaction and interweaving of reason with experience that makes the fabric of faith credible.

To flesh this out I would say that experience and what I have taken to be reliable reports of the seeming powerful presence of God in the lives of others has changed the way my faith seems to be assembled. Returning to the New Testament with these experiences and reports in mind—they might be called elements of “pre-understanding”—I have become surprised how important the existential is to the nature of Christianity: forgiveness, reconciliation, love, healing, exorcism, visions and other ecstatic phenomena including encounters with the powerful presence of God. Of course, there are those who continue to argue that such a view of Christianity has to be left behind in “apostolic times.” However, these arguments always seem to me to be predetermined and lack any force. Moreover, it seems to me that one of the very reasons Luke was writing his two volumes was to argue that the kingdom of God—God’s powerful presence—had invaded ordinary human life and, through human cooperation, ought to be allowed to go on doing so! Also, some of the assumptions behind Paul’s letters are along these same lines. In other words, it seems difficult to argue other than that the miraculous was intended or, better, assumed by the writers of the New Testament to be an ongoing part of Christianity. So, for me, the sense of the importance of the experience of the presence of God as the very essence of Christianity has increased as I have examined the text of the New Testament.

Also, I now take the centrality of Jesus for Christianity to be more important than I once did. Indeed, the canon (the Bible) evolved in an early Church that looked back across the history of God’s dealing with people and saw not a flat plane of

indistinguishable features but a theological mountain range as varying and complex as the Himalayas; Jesus towering over the range of religious figures and periods as the Everest. Nevertheless, the foothills of the Hebrew Bible were required to approach the dominant feature of the spiritual landscape and the epistles, for example, were needed to connect the heights of religious history with the experience of everyday life.

I hesitate to make the next point for I may express it poorly and be misunderstood. It is that I no longer see my Christian faith as depending on a Book. For, I have come to conclude that Christianity is not a religion of the Book; it was not so in its early days and it ought not to be so now. Christianity is a religion based and focused on a Person who is no less encountered today than in the early first century C.E.. It is not that I love the Book less; I read it every day! But I love the Person more and see that he is not locked in a Book but is encountered today in experiences both profound and ordinary. Christianity is not about words but about the Word.

Concomitantly, I now see Christianity as having a more relational dimension than I once did. It is not only that the essence of Christianity for the individual is having a forgiveness-based relationship with Jesus but also that one of the most tangible expressions of Christianity is the corporate forgiveness-based and relationally infused body of Christ, the church. Students of both the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament know that there is no such thing as a relationship with God divorced from its realization or expression in the community of God's people.

Further, I have come increasingly to see that the mission of the church is evangelism and evangelism alone! That is, the mission of the church is nothing more than so demonstrating and explaining the consequences of the good news of the coming of Jesus that people can be forgiven, know him, join his body the church and, at times, experience healing. (I make this last point hesitantly in an attempt to make sense of the relatively limited experience we have of physical healing in light of praying for

the sick.) Rather speculatively, it seems to me that, the more an aspect of the human condition is intertwined with or determined by living this side of heaven, the less frequently it appears that complete freedom from it is experienced. In other words, forgiveness by God can (almost?) always be experienced because its reception comes (almost?) entirely independent of our human condition. However, freedom from physical sickness which is so interconnected with our humanity is less frequently experienced. Given its acceptance in the twenty-first century, perhaps the frequency of the experience of freedom from the demonic comes somewhere in between.

To return to my main point here, although the realization of the gospel has profound social implications, the mission of the church is evangelism, not social action or justice. To put it bluntly, whereas we preach the gospel to each other in church on Sundays, and tell people in the community to live justly and fairly, the early church (most obviously in Acts) preached and demonstrated the gospel in the community and made sure members of the church lived justly and fairly with each other. Thus, as unpopular as this view is, whereas I would once have seen the mission of the church to consist of evangelism as well as social action, I am increasingly convinced this is not the view of mission portrayed in the New Testament documents. For the writers of the New Testament, mission=evangelism (often involving the miraculous), nothing less, nothing more.

As the years have gone by I have also changed in my understanding of worship. Despite what I have just said about the primacy of evangelism in terms of the mission of the church, I have come increasingly to see that this arises out of the fundamental purpose of the church—the people of God, to worship or to respond appropriately to the worth of God. That is, as we consider not how we feel or respond to circumstances around us but recognize who God is, as well as what he has done, is doing and will do, our lives can only be ones of worship—seven days a week!

10. Unbelievers often point to the elusiveness of God. In your personal experience, including your experience with other Christians, can you point to any examples of God's providential presence?

Yes. I think I have covered a number of them a moment ago.

11. Since you've been a Christian, have you undergone a crisis of faith? If so, how did you work through it?

There was a minor crisis of faith for me when there was what we took to be the powerful coming of the Spirit on our church (from August 1994) in a way that echoed stories in the book of Acts. In light of the strength of that experience my reading of the New Testament could not remain the same. Now, for me, the miraculous and the ecstatic were probably not to be locked behind first century doors of myth and symbol and left with those of supposed less critical or discerning minds than those of the twenty first century! God appeared to be interacting with people in a way that resonated with the New Testament reports of his activity in the first century C.E..

Other than this rather positive crisis, I cannot say that I have experienced a specific or profound crisis of faith. Even if I have rarely understood him well, God has never been other than securely and profoundly real for me. However, I would suggest that, for the person attempting to be honest both to life experienced and to our knowledge of what the New Testament leads us to think ought to characterize the Christian life, *the life of faith is one of continual crisis*. In light of the love and power of God reported in the New Testament we are constantly dealing with the problem of our own short comings, our inability to live as whole people (see Romans 7). In other words, in light of living in a period of (Christian) history when, since the incarnation and gift of the Spirit, God's presence is known—but not fully, we frequently deal with the crisis of our own powerlessness and not seeing him in all the ways we may wish and will one day (at the end of history) experience. Nevertheless, as we remain open and trusting towards this good

God, we also experience his forgiveness, empowerment and ability to carry out his requirements and mission—at least for some of the time!

12. In your observation, why are most unbelievers unbelieving?

I think the matter is complex. It is tempting to start by talking about spiritual warfare, or rebellion or blindness. However, it is more appropriate to begin by saying that, as a Christian, frail and half-hearted in his willingness to take the risk very often of living the kind of life God asks of me and supports me in, I need to shoulder considerable blame for those around me remaining unbelievers! Extrapolating from this—I hope not arrogantly—undoubtedly, most people remain unbelievers because we Christians are such poor representatives of the faith—the good news of the coming of Jesus. Our readiness to preach at people, matched by an unwillingness to allow God’s forgiveness and requirements of us to have repercussions in our daily lives and work places, short changes those around us in having the opportunity to see what it could be to live as a Christian. That is, our dysfunctional family lives, our failing and failed marriages, the way we raise our children and our lack of integrity at work, do not give sufficient evidence that God can make a difference in the lives of ordinary people.

Added to this is a ghetto mentality among us Christians; we relate almost entirely to other Christians, resulting in the inability of unbelievers to get to know us as Christians. The church is gathered too many days and evenings of the week. Christians need to be released and encouraged to live in the community.

At another equally damaging level, I dare to suggest that we have exchanged the model of Christianity (the one I have already talked about that is reflected in the New Testament) for one that is characterized by mere words and propositions. Thus, for example, our theological and ministerial training institutions—dominated by those (like myself!) who love words

and books—are based on the idea that Christianity is, at base, a word and propositional phenomenon. The unspoken agreement is that increasing a person's propositional knowledge and word skills is what is required to enhance that person's grasp of Christianity and what will fit that person for mission and ministry.

It is not that there should be a decrease in the place given to careful academic learning in preparation for Christian ministry and leadership. However, there needs to be a radical and profound change in the assumed model of both the nature of Christianity and also what is, therefore, required for the preparation for ministry. In whatever way that model is described it needs to involve seeing that the ability to lead as well as perform ministry is the end product, not the ability to pass examinations set by cloistered professors—as indispensable as they are! That is, if we take our sense of direction from the New Testament, ministry is to be understood not simply as an ability to perform certain ecclesiological functions. Rather, ministry is the ability to be led, directed and empowered by God so that an individual is working in concert with God in order that people can become followers of Jesus and belong to a nourishing Christian community. However, for there to be effective training and preparation for this ministry, those already involved in it need to be invited to play a more influential role in ministerial education so that students can be mentored and apprenticed by these people in the context of their thorough and rigorous academic training.

So, to come back to the question, I suggest that unbelievers remain so primarily because we peddle a so-called gospel that is little more than pleasant words, giving slight evidence of, or witnessing to, the kind of dynamic and holistic Christianity that gave rise to the New Testament.

13. In your experience, what's the best way to witness to unbelievers?

Relationships! So live as part of the community and be such an authentic Christian that it is possible to invite the non-believer to be a genuine friend and a part of one's circle of Christian friends. Further, to take up the point in the previous question, the Christianity that we grasp, experience and express needs to be nearer that seen on the pages of the New Testament, for it alone—and not the diluted propositional form hawked by too many—is able to express the breadth of the love God has for people, and is able to meet the range of human needs and hopes.

14. Christian apologetics tends to settle into certain stereotypical arguments and formulaic emphases. Do you think there are some neglected areas in how apologetics is generally done today?

Apologetics is not my field so what little I say should be with genuine humility. First, from my limited experience, the stereotypical arguments and formulaic emphases seem to be the results of far too many academics being trapped by their traditions, failing to listen to both their experience as well as other traditions (both theological and other branches of knowledge) or, sadly, failing to think for themselves. Second, to take up a point that has come up time and again in this interview, in so far as the apologist sees his or her task as able to be carried out in terms of or confined to words or propositions alone, to that extent will the apology be diminished and inadequate. The Christianity that is propounded in the words of the New Testament is more than words!

15. What do Christian parents, pastors, seminary and/or college professors most need to teach our young people to prepare them for the walk of faith?

In light of having already said some things that would contribute to answering this question, let me concentrate on the aspect relating to Christian parents. If Loyola was correct about the importance of training the young, parents are the most

significant people in helping the young to become and live as Christians. In that it seems, by and large, children follow the heart rather than the activities and admonitions of parents, if parents want their children to be followers of Jesus they need to be followers of Jesus. In this parents need to be people of moral and intellectual integrity so that their children can see and discuss with them how to think, speak and act in society.

On what is probably a more sensitive issue, those who want their children to learn how to function successfully as Christians in society need to think carefully about home schooling children. Of course, there will be exceptions. However, if a Christian parent (modeling and discussing moral and intellectual integrity) can help a child on a daily basis meet the rigors of living as a Christian in a secular school that child will be more likely to function as a strong adult Christian in society and have a better understanding of the world in which the Christian is to carry out the mission of Jesus.

16. What devotional or apologetic reading would you recommend for further study?

Apologetics is incredibly important; devotion to Jesus is incredibly important. Yet, it seems to me, Christianity does not need more apologetics—more words; Christianity does not need more devotional literature. What it probably needs, at least in relation to reading is Christians who read the very best books in their field and constantly attempt to live an integrated life.

More importantly, Christianity needs more people who are willing to live as Christians and put into practice the kinds of Christianities reflected in the New Testament that are not based on “words” but on the demonstrable powerful presence of God that, of course, may need words for its explication. With that in mind there are a number of books, including biographies, I have found helpful in attempting to live as a Christian.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together* (San Francisco, CA: Harper and Row, 1954)

Eberhard Bush, *Karl Barth: His Life from Letters and Autobiographical Texts* (2d rev. ed.; trans. John Bowden; Munich: Christian Kaiser Verlag, 1976)

Gordon MacDonald, *Ordering Your Private World* (Nashville, TN: Oliver Nelson, 1985)

Thomas Merton, *Elected Silence* (London: Hollis & Carter, 1949)

Lesslie Newbigin, *Unfinished Agenda: An Autobiography* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1985)

A. G. Sertillanges, *The Intellectual Life: Its Spirit, Conditions, Methods* (1920; Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1998)

James Sire, *Habits of the Mind: Intellectual Life as a Christian Calling* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2000)

Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy: Rediscovering Our Hidden Life in God* (San Francisco, CA: HarperOne, 1998)

John Wimber, *Power Evangelism* (San Francisco, CA: Harper and Row, 1986)

ROBERT W. YARBROUGH

1. Have you been a Christian from childhood?

Only sort of. I heard the gospel and responded at age nine. But I didn't get serious about it until my early twenties.

2. Did you convert to the faith? If so, please describe your conversion experience.

I was not brought up in a religious home, but my mother took us to Sunday School at a Baptist church. An evangelist visited our 9-12 year old class and presented the message of Jesus' saving death. I realized my guilt, asked God for forgiveness, and, to the extent possible at that age and level of understanding, entrusted my soul to him who died for me. This turned out to be more of a radioactive implant, taking effect later, than something immediately explosive.

3. Why do you believe in the existence of God?

The Bible tells me it's because God's Spirit has opened my eyes to the truth of Christian Scripture. From my human point of view, I would point to the existence and grandeur of creation, the testimony of conscience to the fact of right and wrong in human hearts and societies and therefore the plausibility of a lawgiver, and the comparative inadequacy of other religious or intellectual systems to account for the world as we know it.

4. Why do you believe in the inspiration of the Bible?

It claims that status for itself. Biblical prophets consistently affirmed the God-giveness of their utterances ("Thus says the Lord ...") which Scripture contains. Jesus affirmed it. It is a core doctrine of historic Christianity.

5. How do you deal with Bible criticism?

Some aspects of it have aided our understanding of the Bible, so it is not to be demonized. Yet careful study of "biblical criticism" since the Enlightenment suggests that in its skeptical

forms it has much bigger feet of clay than the Book it claims to debunk.

6. How do you deal with scientific objections to the faith?

It depends on how one defines “scientific objections to the faith.” But overall I observe that many scientists are Christians, and some of the most brilliant thinkers of history affirmed (and still affirm) personal faith in Christ. And many great scientists and intellectuals have turned out to be astonishingly evil and destructive people. So I doubt that I should be too demoralized by the fact that some or even most scientists reject Christian claims. What they succeed in calling in question does not, in my estimation, nullify things about which Christ and Scripture leave no doubt.

7. What other challenges to the faith would you like to comment on?

I think that the existence of evil (as seen in disease, genocide, the general downward spiral of world affairs and human welfare), and the tenacious presence of sin even in Christian lives, are examples of things that are a constant challenge to living and honest faith.

8. At this stage of your spiritual journey, would you now give different reasons for your faith than when you began your pilgrimage?

Certainly. When I started (age nine) I had no idea; I was just responding to stimuli of which I had little comprehension. While I still cannot give an exhaustive account of the miracle of forgiveness of sins and assurance of eternal life, I feel I can now at least sketch aspects of a rationale.

9. Looking back over your life as a Christian, how would you say that your faith has evolved over time? How, if at all, does your lived-in faith differ from when you were younger?

In general, the older I get the more gratifying it becomes to know God through faith in Christ, not least because this enriches immeasurably all other areas of my life. At the same time, the

difficulties of loyal service to Christ, to the extent that I may ever approximate it, seem to grow thornier. Jeremiah said the human heart is deceitful and sick [Jer 17:9]. I'm afraid that I become personally ever more acutely conscious of this about myself as time goes by.

10. Unbelievers often point to the elusiveness of God. In your personal experience, including your experience with other Christians, can you point to any examples of God's providential presence?

The pages of Scripture are replete with such examples, and I think they are the best pointers to God's reality. To point to God's elusiveness is not a challenge to but an affirmation of Christian teaching, which makes clear that God in his grace and holiness is not accessible to those who do not primarily seek him but scoff at him.

11. Since you've been a Christian, have you undergone a crisis of faith? If so, how did you work through it?

How about a few hundred of them? I have learned: to keep affirming confidence that God is at work in this wide world, among his people, and in my soul; to stay active in everyday service to others within my church; to remain tenacious in observing a daily time of Bible study and prayer; and to allow daily family life to convict me of my selfishness and egoism (a function which spouse and children serve in amazing ways).

And then: Jesus urged faithfulness in little things as they key to "success" in big spiritual matters. So I try to take care of the little things day in and day out. Looking back I see that this has helped ensure that faith did not grow to seem too unbearably unreal nor God too distant.

12. In your observation, why are most unbelievers unbelieving?

I confess that the mystery of unbelief is as inexplicable to me as the mystery of why some affirm true and living faith. These matters are in divine hands.

13. In your experience, what's the best way to witness to unbelievers?

Of course so much depends on just who these “unbelievers” are and what one’s interface with them is. Is the “unbeliever” a spouse? An aging parent? A colleague at work? A child down the street? Employed youth in the inner city? The billions of non-Christians in other world religions?

Different strategies are called for. Consistent elements of effective witness are a prayerful and faithful life, growing knowledge and wisdom regarding Christian doctrine, love for people who are without saving knowledge of Christ, and the willingness and guts to speak up for the truth when God gives occasion.

14. Christian apologetics tends to settle into certain stereotypical arguments and formulaic emphases. Do you think there are some neglected areas in how apologetics is generally done today?

Undoubtedly; but I am not an expert in formal apologetics, and there are experts who have written books about this. So I defer to them. I will say that I suspect every generation realizes afresh that a very great deal of the most effective apologetics comes about through the regular, faithful activity of believers in and through their churches.

And if the quality of our faith is such that we fail to pass it along to our children, the conversion of a bunch of others may be a Pyrrhic victory.

15. What do Christian parents, pastors, seminary and/or college professors most need to teach our young people to prepare them for the walk of faith?

There is no substitute for passing along an infectious fear of and love for God (Father, Son and Holy Spirit), compassion for people, and inquisitive zeal for the Scriptures through which Scripture’s transforming message arises.

16. What devotional or apologetic reading would you recommend for further study?

I am finding that more and more people don't really know the Bible itself. They don't learn it at church anymore, nor do churches necessarily find ways to encourage people to make some level of Bible mastery a priority for Christian living. Parents don't read it to their kids like they should, and kids don't see parents poring over God's Book. (I know I'm generalizing. But I fear the generalization is largely accurate.) If Christians lose touch with God's Word, it doesn't matter much what else they do or don't read.

Personally, among explicitly Christian works that made a big impression on me at various stages of life have been (in chronological order):

Halley's Bible Handbook

Josh McDowell, *Evidence that Demands a Verdict* [Nelson 1999]

Richard Baxter, *The Reformed Pastor*

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together*

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*

Jonathan Edwards, *Religious Affections*

Martin Luther, *The Bondage of the Will*

Augustine, *On Christian Doctrine*

Thomas a Kempis, *The Imitation of Christ*

Adolf Schlatter, *Do We Know Jesus?* [Kregel 2005]

CONTRIBUTORS

JAMES ANDERSON

Curriculum Vitae

Research Fellow at Centre for Communication Interface Research, University of Edinburgh (1995-2008). Assistant Professor of Theology and Philosophy at Reformed Theological Seminary, Charlotte, NC (2009-).

Ph.D., Philosophical Theology, University of Edinburgh, 2005; M.A., Philosophy and Apologetics, Trinity Theological Seminary, 2002; Ph.D., Computer Simulation, University of Edinburgh, 1999; B.Eng. (Hons.), University of Edinburgh, 1995.

Website: <http://www.proginosko.com>

Select Bibliography

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DARRELL BOCK

Curriculum Vitae

Research Professor of New Testament Studies and Professor of Spiritual Development and Culture (CCL) at Dallas Theological Seminary.

B.A., University of Texas at Austin, 1975; Th.M., Dallas Theological Seminary, 1979; Ph.D., University of Aberdeen, 1983; postdoctoral study, Tübingen University.

Dr. Bock has earned international recognition as a Humboldt Scholar (Tübingen University in Germany) and for his work in Luke-Acts and in Jesus' examination before the Jews. He was president of the Evangelical Theological Society (ETS) for 2000–2001, and serves as corresponding editor for Christianity Today. His articles appear in leading journals and periodicals, including many secular publications such as the Los Angeles Times and the Dallas Morning News. He has been a New York Times best-selling author in nonfiction, and is elder emeritus at Trinity Fellowship Church in Dallas.

Website: <http://web.mac.com/darrellbock>

Blog: <http://www.bible.org/bock>

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The Missing Gospels: Unearthing the Truth Behind Alternatives Christianities (T. Nelson, 2006).

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Blasphemy and Exaltation in Judaism and the Final Examination of Jesus: A Philological-Historical Study of the Key Jewish Themes Impacting Mark 14:61-64 (Mohr Siebeck, 1998).

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JOHN BYL

Curriculum Vitae

Professor of Mathematics and Head of the Department of Mathematical Sciences at Trinity Western University, Langley, British Columbia, Canada.

Ph.D., Astronomy, University of British Columbia.

Select Bibliography

God and Cosmos: A Christian View of Time, Space, and the Universe (Banner of Truth, 2001).

The Divine Challenge: On Matter, Mind, Math & Meaning (Banner of Truth, 2004).

Website: <http://www.csc.twu.ca/byl/>

PAUL COPAN

Curriculum Vitae

Pledger Family Chair of Philosophy and Ethics and Associate Professor of Philosophy and Ethics at Palm Beach Atlantic University.

Ph.D., Marquette University, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, 2000;
M.A., Trinity International University, Deerfield, Illinois, 1987;
B.A., Columbia International University, Columbia, South Carolina, 1984.

Website: <http://www.paulcopan.com/>

Select Bibliography

Routledge Companion to Philosophy of Religion (Routledge, 2007).

How Do You Know You're Not Wrong?: Responding to Objections That Leave Christians Speechless (Baker, 2006).

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JOHN M. FRAME

Curriculum Vitae

Professor of Systematic Theology and Philosophy at Reformed Theological Seminary.

A.B., Princeton University; B.D., Westminster Theological Seminary; M.A., M.Phil., Yale University; D.D., Belhaven College.

An outstanding theologian, John Frame distinguished himself during 31 years on the faculty of Westminster Theological Seminary, and was a founding faculty member of WTS California. He is best known for his prolific writings including ten volumes, a contributor to many books and reference volumes, as well as scholarly articles and magazines. Rev. Frame is a talented musician and discerning media critic who is deeply committed to the work of ministry and training pastors.

Website: <http://www.frame-poythress.org>

Select Bibliography

Salvation Belongs to the Lord: an Introductory Systematic Theology (P&R, 2006).

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W. WARD GASQUE

Curriculum Vitae

President of the Pacific Association for Theological Studies, is the principal consultant of CITE. His experience has included the co-founding of Regent College, Vancouver, Canada, where he served for more than 20 years; founding president of New College Berkeley, California; first provost of Eastern University, Saint Davids, Pennsylvania; and Vice President and Academic Dean at Tyndale Seminary, Toronto, Canada, at a time of transition. He has also been a visiting scholar at Princeton Theological Seminary and the University of Lausanne (Switzerland).

Dr. Gasque has graduate degrees from Fuller Theological Seminary (B.D., M.Th.) and Manchester University in England (Ph.D.). He is also a graduate of Harvard University's Institute for Educational Leadership (1993).

He has written two books, edited four collections of essays and more than 20 commentaries; he has also published nearly 200

articles and many book reviews. He is the New Testament editor of the multi-volume New International Biblical Commentary (Hendrickson), and has served as an editor-at-large of Christianity Today.

Select Bibliography

Fear Not Da Vinci: Using the Best-Selling Novel to Share Your Faith (Living Ink Books, 2006).

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Sir William M. Ramsay, Archaeologist and New Testament Scholar: A Survey of his Contribution to the Study of the New Testament (Baker, 1966).

DOUGLAS GROOTHUIS

Curriculum Vitae

Professor of Philosophy at Denver Seminary. He is a member of the Evangelical Theological Society, Evangelical Philosophical Society, and Society of Christian Philosophers.

Dr. Groothuis received a Ph.D. and B.S. from the University of Oregon, and an M.A. in philosophy from the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

He has served as adjunct professor at Seattle Pacific University, visiting instructor in apologetics for Westminster Theological Seminary, and instructor at the University of Oregon.

Website: <http://www.DougGroothuis.com>

Blog: <http://www.theconstructivecurmudgeon.blogspot.com>

Select Bibliography

He is the author of *Unmasking the New Age, Confronting the New Age, Revealing the New Age Jesus, Christianity That Counts, Deceived by the Light, Jesus in an Age of Controversy, The Soul in Cyberspace, Truth Decay, On Pascal, and On Jesus*. He has written for scholarly journals such as *Religious Studies, Sophia, Research in Philosophy and Technology, Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society, Philosophia Christi, Trinity Journal*, and *Asbury Journal* as well as for numerous popular magazines such as *Christianity Today, Moody Magazine, The Christian Research Journal, Christian Counseling Today, Modern Reformation* and *Perspectives*. He has also written editorials for a variety of newspapers.

GARY R. HABERMAS

Curriculum Vitae

Distinguished Research Professor and Chair, Department of Philosophy and Theology, Liberty University.

Ph.D., History and Philosophy of Religion, Michigan State University, 1976; M.A., Philosophical Theology, University of Detroit, 1973; B.R.E., William Tyndale College, 1972.

Website: <http://www.garyhabermas.com>

Select Bibliography

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STEVE HAYS

Steve Hays is a Christian blogger, creative writer, contributor to the Chalcedon Report, and Teaching Assistant to John Frame at Reformed Theological Seminary. He double-majored in History & Classics at Seattle Pacific University. He's an MAR candidate at Reformed Theological Seminary.

Website: <http://triablogue.blogspot.com>

HAROLD W. HOEHNER

Curriculum Vitae

Distinguished Professor of New Testament Studies at Dallas Theological Seminary.

B.A., Barrington College, 1958; Th.M., Dallas Theological Seminary, 1962; Th.D., 1965; Ph.D., Cambridge University, 1968; postdoctoral study, Tübingen University and Cambridge University.

Dr. Hoehner has written for scholarly journals and publications. He is especially well regarded for his work on biblical chronology, including the time aspects in and around the life of Christ, the rule of Herod Antipas, and the period between the Testaments. He has traveled and ministered in Hungary, Czech Republic, Ukraine, the Near East, Russia, South Africa, and Indonesia. Along with his many professional memberships, he serves on the board of Jews for Jesus.

Select Bibliography

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Herod Antipas (Zondervan, 1983).

Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ (Zondervan, 1978).

JAMES B. JORDAN

Curriculum Vitae

James B. Jordan is founder and director of Biblical Horizons, a Christian research and publishing institute located in Niceville, Florida. Jordan graduated from the University of Georgia in 1971 with a degree in Comparative Literature and studies in music and political philosophy. After serving four years in the Air Force as a military historian, he attended Reformed Theological Seminary in Jackson, Mississippi, and finished his master's degree in theology at Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia. During the 1980s Jordan directed Geneva Ministries and the Geneva Study Center in Tyler, Texas, before founding Biblical Horizons in 1988. He was awarded the D.Litt. degree from the Central School of Religion, England, in 1993.

Since 2000, Jordan has been head of the department of Biblical Studies at Biblical Theological Seminary, St. Petersburg, Russia, where he teaches Old Testament and Eschatology.

Jordan was ordained in the Association of Reformation Churches in 1982 and served as a pastor at Westminster Presbyterian Church, Tyler, Texas, for five years, leaving the pastoral ministry in 1987 to pursue teaching and writing. He continues to preach as a guest in many different kinds of churches within the wide orbit of the Reformed branch of Christendom.

Website: <http://www.biblicalhorizons.com>

Select Bibliography

Jordan is the author of several books, including *The Sociology of the Church* (1986); *Through New Eyes: Developing a Biblical View of the World* (1988); *Creation in Six Days* (1999); and several books of Bible exposition, including commentaries on the laws of Exodus and the books of Judges, Daniel, and Revelation, as well as several books on worship and liturgy. He is currently at work on a commentary on Zechariah.

CRAIG S. KEENER

Curriculum Vitae

Dr. Keener is Professor of New Testament at Palmer Theological Seminary of Eastern University.

Ph.D., New Testament and Christian Origins, Duke University;
M.Div., Assemblies of God Theological Seminary; B.A.,
Central Bible College.

Prior to his arrival at Palmer, Keener taught Bible at Hood Theological Seminary, the seminary of the A.M.E. Zion church. He has preached and has taught and trained ministers in various parts of Africa, primarily Nigeria, Cameroon, and Kenya.

Keener is especially known for his work as a New Testament scholar on Bible background (commentaries on the New Testament in its early Jewish and Greco-Roman settings). He has authored 14 books, some for academic and some for general audiences.

He has also published numerous articles in various journals and magazines, including *The A.M.E. Church Review*, *Christian History*, *Christianity Today*, *Evangelical Quarterly*, *Pneuma Review*, *Journal for the Study of the New Testament*, *Expository Times*, and *Prism*.

Keener's professional experience includes pastoral ministry, mostly as an associate pastor. He has served in charismatic and

National Baptist circles, and has several years of campus ministry experience. He currently serves as an associate minister at Enon Tabernacle Baptist Church (dually aligned, National and American Baptist).

Website: <http://drckeener.googlepages.com/home>

Select Bibliography

The Gospel of John: A Commentary (2 vols., Hendrickson, 2003).

Gift & Giver: The Holy Spirit for Today (Baker, 2001).

Revelation (Zondervan, 2000).

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IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament (IVP, 1994).

MARTIN G. SELBREDE

Curriculum Vitae

Martin Selbrede, a National Merit Scholar, is the inventor of UniPixel's core TMOS technology and has served as Chief Scientist of UniPixel (stock symbol: UNXL.OB) since November 2000. Mr. Selbrede co-founded Continental Imaging Center, Inc., a privately held Los Angeles-based computer graphics company, in 1977, and also participated in the founding of CTXT Systems, Inc. (1985) and Ticom Technologies, Inc. (1990), serving as Chief Technology Officer for both companies. Mr. Selbrede holds more than a dozen domestic and international patents in the fields of flat panel display system technology, microelectromechanical systems, and color image generation methods.

A symphonic composer with nearly 100 opus numbers to his credit (including five symphonies and seven concertos), Mr. Selbrede served as Assistant Conductor for a 65-piece

symphony orchestra in Los Angeles prior to moving to Texas in 2001.

Martin Selbrede is also Vice President of Chalcedon, as well as an Elder in the PCA. He has been an advocate for the Chalcedon Foundation for a quarter century, specializing in the polemics of Christian Reconstruction, presuppositionalism, theonomy, and postmillennialism, and is set to take over the scholarly responsibilities of R. J. Rushdoony in research and writing. He has contributed important articles to the *Journal of Christian Reconstruction* since 1982, is a featured writer for Chalcedon's main periodical *Faith For All Of Life* (formerly *The Chalcedon Report*), and is a regular lecturer for the Chalcedon Foundation. He has written the Forewords to several major Chalcedon publications and became the technical editor for the ongoing posthumous publication of R. J. Rushdoony's works beginning with the *Commentary on Leviticus*. Although heretofore focused on nonfiction writing for Chalcedon, his first novel, a science fiction book that promotes theonomy, presuppositionalism, postmillennialism, and applied Calvinism, is scheduled to be published by Chalcedon in 2008—a book that deliberately breaks with virtually all the accepted conventions of contemporary Christian fiction (thereby serving to reconstruct the genre).

ERIC SVENDSEN

Curriculum Vitae

Founder and Director of New Testament Research Ministries and a Tutor in New Testament at Greenwich School of Theology, U.K. Eric holds a B.A. in Biblical Studies from Tennessee Temple University and the University of Tennessee, an M.A. in New Testament Studies from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, and a Ph.D. in New Testament from Greenwich School of Theology / North-West University. Eric is

a member of the Society of Biblical Literature, and has authored several books on Roman Catholicism and bible study.

Website: <http://www.ntrmin.org>

Select Bibliography

Upon this Slippery Rock: Countering Roman Catholic Claims to Authority (Calvary Press, 2002).

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Evangelical Answers (Reformation Press, 1999).

The Table of the Lord: An Examination of the Setting of the Lord's Supper in the New Testament and its Significance as an Expression of Community (New Testament Restoration Foundation, 1996).

GRAHAM H. TWELFTREE

Curriculum Vitae

Distinguished Professor of New Testament at Regent University, Virginia Beach, VA.

Ph.D., University of Nottingham; M.A., University of Oxford; B.A., University of Adelaide.

Dr. Twelftree is well-known for his work on exorcism and miracles. His current research projects include books on Luke and the church, and miracles in Paul. He pastored in Australia for 18 years, including planting and pastoring a Vineyard church. In January 2002 he and his wife moved to Virginia Beach to help start the School of Divinity's Ph.D. program at Regent. He is a member of *Studiorum Novi Testamenti Societas* and is also on the editorial board of the *Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus*.

Select Bibliography

In the Name of Jesus: Exorcism Among Early Christians (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007).

Thinking Clearly About Life After Death (London: Monarch, 2002).

Jesus the Miracle Worker: A Historical and Theological Study (Grand Rapids, MI: IVP, 1999).

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Jesus the Exorcist: A Contribution to the Study of the Historical Jesus (Tübingen: Mohr, Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1993).

ROBERT W. YARBROUGH

Curriculum Vitae

Chair of the New Testament Department and associate professor of New Testament at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in Deerfield, Illinois. He has been at Trinity since July 1996. He is the editor of Trinity Journal.

Dr. Yarbrough came to Trinity from Covenant Theological Seminary in St. Louis, Missouri, where he was associate professor of New Testament for five years. Before that, he taught biblical and theological studies at Liberty University and New Testament studies at Wheaton College. Dr. Yarbrough also has been involved in educational initiatives overseas at sites in Cairo, Egypt; Cluj-Napoca, Romania; Khartoum, Sudan; and elsewhere. He currently lectures regularly in the theological and exegetical department of Emanuel University in Oradea, Romania, as well as in the Center for Biblical Studies, Khartoum.

Dr. Yarbrough received the Doctor of Philosophy degree in New Testament from the University of Aberdeen, Scotland, the Master of Arts degree in theological studies (New Testament)

from Wheaton College Graduate School, and the Bachelor of Arts degree (majors: English and Religion) from Southwest Baptist College in Bolivar, Missouri. He also studied at the University of Tübingen and the Albrecht-Bengel-Haus, Tübingen, Germany.

Dr. Yarbrough's areas of expertise include New Testament theology and backgrounds, Greek exegesis, and post-Enlightenment German New Testament research. He has particular research interests in the life and work of Adolf Schlatter. He is a member of the Evangelical Theological Society, the Institute of Biblical Research, the Society of Biblical Literature, Tyndale Fellowship, and the Verein zur Foederung der Erforschung freikirchlicher Geschichte und Theologie.

Select Bibliography

Dr. Yarbrough is the author of *The Salvation-Historical Fallacy? Reassessing the History of New Testament Theology* (Deo, 2004). Other published works include a commentary on the Gospel of John (Moody, 1991) and a widely used New Testament survey, *Engaging the New Testament* (with Walter Elwell; Baker, 1998). He compiled and coedited (with Walter Elwell) *Readings from the First-Century World: Primary Sources for New Testament Study* (Baker, 1998). He has contributed chapters or articles to books such as *Justification and Variegated Nomism: A Fresh Appraisal of Paul and Second Temple Judaism* (ed. D. A. Carson, P. O'Brien, and M. Seifrid), *Hell Under Fire* (ed. Chris Morgan and Robert Peterson), *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Background Commentary* (ed. Clinton Arnold), and numerous reference works. He has published articles in journals such as *Themelios*, *Bulletin for Biblical Research*, *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, *Perspectives in Religious Studies*, *Perichoresis*, and *Trinity Journal*.

He has translated from German a number of books and articles by various authors, among them Eta Linnemann, Gerhard Maier,

Werner Neuer, Roland Deines, Rainer Riesner, and Adolf Schlatter.