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THERE ARE ABSOLUTES

Some things never change

SECULAR HUMANISM

And its place in the Endtime

IN SEARCH OF INSPIRATION

A composer's odyssey

PERSONALLY SPEAKING



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How the world has changed in the last 100 years! We've gone from horse and carriage to space shuttles, from the one-room schoolhouse to surfing the Internet, from the family farm to a global economy. But all this advancement has come at a cost. Some would argue that it's costing us our collective soul. William Pfaff, writing for the *Los Angeles Times Syndicate* (1999), explains it this way:

"The West continues to be the conceptual, economic, industrial, and scientific dynamo for the world, setting the terms by which all the rest function. The West has generated the most important forces in modern political and economic history: imperialism, nationalism, Marxism, liberalism, capitalism, ideological totalitarianism—and now globalism, considered as an ideological movement of global economic deregulation and integration.

"However, the West has changed in one significant respect. In contrast to the 19th century, there no longer is general deference to [God], or serious acknowledgment that such a deity might exist. This is a fundamental change because it means that the West today no longer acknowledges the existence of an external rule-giver or moral authority. It regards mankind as entirely autonomous, existing within a moral framework entirely of its own creation, responsible only to itself."

Take an honest look at the world today, and you can see where this "new morality" is taking us.

Will the world see the error of its ways and change?—According to the Bible, no. This move away from God and godly values is given as one of the signs of the Endtime—meaning things will continue to get worse until Jesus returns to set them right.

But what about you? Just because the world is going one direction doesn't mean you have to. Ask God to show you which end is up, and He will. Then head that way.

Keith Phillips
Keith Phillips
FOR THE ACTIVATED FAMILY

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THE caterpillar

THAT *didn't* WANT

TO *fly* 



“You will
leave your
little bush
behind,
glide on
the wind,
and see
the world
as it really
is.”

WINSTON HAD JUST HATCHED FROM HIS EGG—a new hairy caterpillar born into a hairy new world. But Winston was smart. He would survive. No, he would thrive. Winston had a voracious appetite and grew quickly.

Once in a while Winston would cease his incessant munching to look around. Above the bush on which he lived was a wide blue sky, below only dirt. He had no idea where he had come from. He supposed he had just happened by chance. Or perhaps he had created himself.

Sometimes he thought he saw shadowy figures flitting about, but he dismissed them as figments of his imagination. They clearly didn't belong to his bush-bound world.

Then one day one of those shadowy figures alighted next to him. A startled Winston looked up from his munching. “Who are you?” he blurted out.

“Don't you recognize your own kind? I'm a butterfly. So will you be one day. You will leave your little bush behind, glide on the wind, and see the world as it really is.”

“Me? A butterfly? Nah,” Winston protested. “I'm a caterpillar. Period. Now if you will excuse me...”

“It works like this,” the butterfly patiently tried to explain. “First you spin a cocoon around yourself. Then you go to sleep for a few weeks. Then you wake up feeling tingly all over. That's the juices flowing into the wings you grew while you slept. You wiggle

your feet and discover that instead of the dozens you had before, you're down to six—but they're *way* longer! Then you start to feel claustrophobic in your cocoon—*really* claustrophobic—so you push your way out of it. You check out your new self, flap your wings a few times, and soon you are airborne.”

“Nonsense!” Winston retorted. “Do you take me for an idiot? I'm a caterpillar!”

The butterfly tried every form of reason and persuasion, but eventually gave up. “Have it your way,” he said sadly as he took flight.

In the days that followed, whenever Winston remembered the butterfly, he would smirk and say even more confidently than the time before, “Nonsense!!”

Then one day Winston thought he heard a whisper. “Spin a cocoon.” The voice was coming from *inside*, but it wasn't his. *This is crazy!* he thought. And he shrugged it off.

And that brings us to the sad end of our story. Winter came, the leaves that Winston loved so much withered and died and fluttered to the ground, and soon poor Winston joined them.

Does any of this sound familiar? Some people are like Winston—so dead sure that their perception of life is all there is that they miss the real thing.

CURTIS PETER VAN GORDER IS A FULL-TIME VOLUNTEER WITH THE FAMILY INTERNATIONAL IN THE MIDEAST.



**T H E R E
A R E
A B S O L U T E S**

absolutes

BY DAVID BRANDT BERG

**Contrary
to modern
thought**

i'VE BEEN THINKING ABOUT THE STATE OF THE WORLD and how so many of the younger generation have lost respect for God and humanity. I believe that modern education is largely responsible for this downward trend because young people today are taught that there are no absolutes. That's the underlying principle of modern education: "There are no absolutes—nothing is certain."

I'm convinced that the whole purpose of this principle is to destroy confidence in God—the Absolute! Look at how the secularists have attacked each major field that proves the existence of a perfect God. The first thing they attacked was religion itself, and their attack was subtle: "No religion is necessarily wrong; therefore no religion is necessarily right. Various religions are just religions, probably fabrications of man anyway, so how can anyone say which is right or which is wrong?" In other words, there are no religious absolutes. The whole idea is aimed, of course, at destroying faith in God.

Having gotten rid of God and religion, the next step was to debunk philosophy, to try to prove there was no perfect philosophy, that no particular philosophy was either right or wrong.

History is another area of study that proves the existence of God. God's law of retribution, as seen in the rise and fall of empires because of their righteousness or wickedness, is one of the surest proofs that God exists and has rules. So the secularists had to debunk history. In history books it is now popular to say that men and women who have previously been considered great were really villains, to debunk the godly, heroic characters of history.

They also took the certainty out of mathematics. "Two and two don't necessarily make four, because two isn't necessarily two and four isn't necessarily four. Let's suppose now that two is possibly three, so that two and two may actually make six,

except that other two may not be three. Maybe that other two is four. ..." In other words, there are no absolutes, no order, just total uncertainty and confusion!

The same was even done with music, to the point that music was no longer music—it was just noise. It didn't have to be harmonious; it didn't have to be pleasant. There was no such thing as good or bad music, because there were no more rules.

Look at art. Modernistic art is total confusion—no rules, no beauty, no nothing! Just absolute confusion! It doesn't even have to mean anything. It doesn't have to have any sense or meaning or order. See, if they can destroy the meaning, if they can prove to people that there's no meaning to a thing, then there's no order, there's no purpose and no plan, therefore there's no Planner.

Art and music used to follow very strict rules to produce real beauty, but now the trend is to abandon those rules. In both fields, the avant-garde—the supposed leaders and "free thinkers"—have thrown away the laws, and the result is confusion and crudity. Music no longer needs to be melodic, and much of it is just sound, noise, bedlam! Art no longer needs to be artistic, and much of it is no more than chaotic splotches of color and ugly, meaningless forms.

They attacked creation in the same way: They had to try to prove there were no laws, no plan, and no purpose; therefore there was no Planner. Creation became meaningless, chaotic evolution. "It all just happened by accident!"

Everything that has any rules or order or plan or purpose proves that there is some kind of Ruler who makes the rules and establishes the order and plans things with a purpose, and such things have to be attacked in order to destroy any faith in the absolute, and therefore in God. Their theme song is "It Ain't Necessarily So!" "The things that you read in that Bible, they ain't necessarily so! And history ain't necessarily so; religion ain't necessarily so; philosophy ain't necessarily so; Creation ain't necessarily so; music ain't necessarily so; art ain't necessarily so; nothing is necessarily so," they say, "because there ain't no so!"

If they can prove that each of these fields is imperfect, this supports their claim that the

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perfect doesn't exist—therefore God doesn't exist. It all goes back to the godless premise that if there are no rules, then there is no Ruler.

Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6). But if nothing is so, as some would have us believe, then nothing is true and there is no Christ! So to disprove the existence of God they had to disprove the existence of truth and rhyme and reason, order, plan, laws, rules, etc.

To get rid of God, they had to get rid of the absolutes, the right and the wrong and the meaning and reason for things; and the result is total chaos, insanity, madness!

Of course, the perpetrators of this crime against humanity would disagree with me on that, too, because a popular school of thought in psychology today is that "nobody is really sane or necessarily insane; they're just different from you or me. Who is to judge who is sane and who is insane?"

To have social order, you must have laws and rules; and to have laws and rules, the ones who make them and the ones expected to obey them have to believe that some things are right and some things are wrong; and if some things are right and some things are wrong, then there must be some ultimate Lawmaker or Rule-giver, which would have to be God.

So therefore the godless must eventually and ultimately become total anarchists who obey no rules or laws, recognize no order, find no meaning, follow no plan, and have no purpose—no nothing! In so doing, they are helping the Devil accomplish his ultimate purpose for creating all this chaos and confusion: the destruction of God's creation.

In the face of all this, a truly revolutionary education today would be a back-to-God education. We must go back to real faith in religion, back to Creation in science, back to genuine love in philosophy, back to a plan in history, back to truth in language, beauty in art, harmony in music, rules in math, right and wrong in behavior, order in government, and God—the Creator of all things, the Designer, the Planner—in everything, so that life again means something. God is the only One who can give real meaning to living, so let's get back to God in our education, in every subject and every field.



Let's get back to sanity and reasoning, back to a pattern for existence made by a divine Designer who makes the plans according to rules. He brings about order with government in the place of lawlessness and disorder. He gives meaning to the universe and purpose to the planets. He brings love to our hearts and peace to our minds and health to our bodies and rest to our spirits and happiness to our lives and joy to our souls, and He teaches us that "the fear [reverence] of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (Proverbs 9:10).

We must see God in everything to give it meaning, reason, purpose, plan, design, and a goal—the perfection of the kingdom of God! The godless would bring us to chaos and total destruction, but we, the faithful, must try to bring peace and order and the design for living given us by the Great Designer in His rules and laws, rights and wrongs and absolutes, without which there can be no peace or order or true happiness.

Thank God for the absolutes and the rules of the Ruler, that we may know the difference between right and wrong, and find happiness through His love and His loving laws and reasonable rules. May God help you to "know Him, whom to know is life eternal" (John 17:3)—and absolute! •

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WHAT IS SECULAR HUMANISM?

Simply defined, humanism is man's attempt to solve his problems independently of God.

—TIM LAHAYE, *THE BATTLE FOR THE MIND*

Humanism is the religion which deifies man and dethrones God.

—HOMER DUNCAN, *SECULAR HUMANISM*

Humanism is the viewpoint that men have but one life to live and that human happiness is its own justification and needs no sanction or support from supernatural sources; that, in any case, the supernatural does not exist.

—CORLISS LAMONT, *THE PHILOSOPHY OF HUMANISM*

Humanism is a preoccupation with man as the supreme value in the universe and the sole solver of the problems of the universe.

—JOHN EIDSMOE, *THE CHRISTIAN LEGAL ADVISOR*

Humanism is the placing of man at the center of all things and making him the measure of all things. It means man beginning from himself, with no knowledge except what he himself can discover and no standards outside himself.

—FRANCIS SCHAEFFER, *THE CHRISTIAN MANIFESTO*



PILLARS OF UNBELIEF

Just as there are “pillars of faith”—those who serve as role models for any particular religion—secular humanism has its leading thinkers, or “pillars.” Here is what some of them say:

- It is far better to be feared than loved.—NICCOLO MACHIAVELLI (1469-1527)
- The knowledge of the other world can be obtained here only by losing some of that intelligence which is necessary for this present world.—IMMANUEL KANT (1724-1804)
- In Christianity neither morality nor religion come into contact with reality at any point. Belief means not wanting to know what is true. —FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE (1844-1900)
- My object in life is to dethrone God.—KARL MARX (1818-1883)
- The true believer is in a high degree protected against the danger of certain neurotic afflictions; by accepting the universal neurosis he is spared the task of forming a personal neurosis.—SIGMUND FREUD (1856-1939)
- Things are entirely what they appear to be and behind them ... there is nothing.—JEAN-PAUL SARTRE (1905-1980)

ON “MORAL RELATIVISM”

Without God there's no reason to be good, no reason to be loving, because all goodness and all love comes from Him. When you shut God out, there's nothing left but just living for yourself and satisfying your own desires and wants. “The heart is deceitful

above all things, and desperately wicked” (Jeremiah 17:9). Eventually that's all you're going to be left with—wickedness! After all, if there's no God, what makes one person's sense of right and wrong any better than anyone else's? Who's to say what you should or

shouldn't do? People end up just doing what feels good and what they want to do. Look at the world today and you'll see where that kind of thinking leads to. It's scary!

—DAVID BRANDT BERG

SECULAR HUMANISM

and Its
Place

in the
Endtime



BY SCOTT MACGREGOR

IN TODAY'S MULTICULTURAL SOCIETY there is a growing trend toward what is known as "moral relativism." This means taking a nonjudgmental approach to what people believe and do because "everything is relative." Even things we might regard as repugnant and wrong might be acceptable according to the customs of others. It's certainly Christian to be understanding and tolerant of others, but to bow to beliefs or practices that are in direct contradiction to God's two great commandments (to love God and others) is to be deceived and led

astray. This moral relativism is a direct result of an atheistic philosophy called "secular humanism."

Modern humanism can be traced back to the Renaissance. Famous men of the Renaissance and the Enlightenment period that followed—Leonardo da Vinci, Isaac Newton, Desiderius Erasmus, and many others—are now regarded and did, in fact, regard themselves as humanists. To them "humanism" meant restoring a human dimension to the arts, science, and philosophy, whereas for hundreds of years these disciplines had been subservient to religion, which at the time was also riddled with superstition. However, all these pioneers of modern humanism each still proclaimed personal belief in God.

The secular humanism of today is quite different. Secular humanists maintain that any belief in God or religion is irrational and therefore has no place in their worldview. They believe that the natural is all there is—that there is no such thing as the supernatural; therefore man is his own god.

Humanists are also usually ardent apostles of evolution. The irony of this is that evolution is being continually proven to be a belief system and not—as secular humanists maintain—“science.” It is a belief in the unseen, because the processes of what is more correctly called “macroevolution”—the evolving of one species into another—and evidence for it, remain as invisible to the human eye as the spiritual world. The big difference, though, is that the processes and evidence for macroevolution are non-existent, whereas the spirit world is real and vibrant. More and more honest scientists are coming forward to proclaim that evolution has all the characteristics of a religion, a fact that makes the secular humanist as irrational in his belief as the religious person he so likes to ridicule.

Secular humanists believe that humans can solve their own problems. They also believe that religion has been the cause of much of the world’s problems. However, if you look at the institutions and people who are devoted to helping humanity, you will find that many or most are motivated at least in part by religious beliefs. Secular humanists are also fond of repeating the argument that religion is the cause of all wars. Although through the centuries some may have cloaked their motives for war in religion, the real reasons wars are fought are for territory and loot.

A belief in God or the divine has been considered an important part of human knowledge until recent times. In the last few generations atheism has gained a great following. It would seem that people would learn from recent history and the horrors that were committed by those who professed no belief in God. The last hundred years are awash with blood, much of it spilled by avowed anti-religious regimes—regimes that placed the belief that man was evolving into perfection at the center of their ideology.

How does this fit in with the Endtime? The Bible states that “scorners will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, and saying, ‘Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of

WHO’S RESPONSIBLE?

You can argue that the Inquisition and the Crusades came from Christianity, but you cannot defend either from Scripture. But you can easily defend Nazi and Communist behavior from evolutionary theory.

—TOM WILLIS

creation.’ For this they willfully forget: that by the Word of God the heavens were of old” (2 Peter 3:3–5), and “that Day [of Jesus’ Second Coming] will not come unless the falling away comes first. Because they did not receive the love of the truth ... God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie” (2 Thessalonians 2:3,10–11).

The adherents of secular humanism have had their hands on the controls for many years now, and their record is not good.

At the other extreme there are people who profess religion—even a belief in Jesus Christ—but whose actions belie their words, their lifestyle and governance being as different from what Jesus lived and taught as night is from day. Even the most casual observer could not help but notice that Jesus’ admonition to “love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you” (Matthew 5:44) has no place in these supposedly Christian leaders’ belief systems.

So where does that leave us? Well, that fulfills another verse about the Endtime—this time one of Jesus’ own predictions in His famous discourse on the signs of the End which is recorded in Matthew 24. “And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold” (Matthew 24:12).

And what are we to do? We are to be God’s witnesses, His agents of truth and salvation, now and till the very End, so that the verses that immediately follow can also be fulfilled: “But he who endures to the end shall be saved. And this Gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come” (Matthew 24:13–14). •

THE LEGACY OF JOHN PAUL II

Washington Post columnist E.J. Dionne Jr. observed that commentators on the pope “will inevitably debate the meaning of his legacy in the secular terms that so dominate our times. We should try to remember that these were not the terms on which he lived his life.”

What, then, were the terms on which he lived? Perhaps the late pontiff expressed it best when he said in response to pressure from critics to soften his stance on social and doctrinal issues, “I am not severe—I am sweet by nature—but I defend the rigidity principle. God is stronger than human weakness and deviations. God will always have the last word.”

CONSCIENCE IS GOD'S PRESENCE IN US

It's an amazing and wonderful thing that the world over, in nearly every culture and even in the most remote places, everyone seems to know the difference between right and wrong. People understand that certain things are sins, even if they don't use that word, and they have laws against them. God's basic moral standards are pretty universal.

The Holy Spirit is faithful and speaks to the hearts of all, telling them when they're doing wrong. They know the difference between good and evil. They may not know their Master or the whole truth, the Good News of salvation, but they know the difference between right and wrong. “God's laws are written within them; their own conscience accuses them, or sometimes excuses them” (Romans 2:12 TLB). God gives everybody *some* light, and God is going to judge each one according to how they follow the light he or she is given.

God created man as a free moral agent. He gives each of us the majesty of personal choice to choose between good and evil, between obeying the guiding voice of God and obeying the voice of Satan. Which will you do?

—DAVID BRANDT BERG

{ FEEDING READING }

Secular humanism and worldly wisdom

Man needs God's guidance.

Proverbs 14:12

Jeremiah 10:23

Much secular thought is godless or anti-God.

Job 21:14

Romans 1:28

2 Corinthians 11:3

Colossians 2:6–8

The wisdom of this world is actually foolishness.

Psalms 14:1

Jeremiah 8:9

Zechariah 7:11–12

Romans 1:21–22

1 Corinthians 1:18–21

1 Corinthians 3:19

False science—secular humanism's god—doesn't have the answers to life's big questions.

Isaiah 44:24–25

Jeremiah 2:27

Romans 1:25

1 Timothy 6:20

2 Timothy 3:7

Faith vs. natural reasoning:

1 Samuel 16:7

Psalms 118:8

Proverbs 3:5–6

Isaiah 11:3

Isaiah 55:8–9

Jeremiah 17:5

1 Corinthians 2:5

1 Corinthians 2:14

2 Corinthians 5:7

Being “smart” or highly educated is not a prerequisite to being used by God or being filled with His wisdom.

Psalms 8:2

Psalms 119:99

Luke 10:21

John 7:15

Acts 4:13

1 Corinthians 1:26–27

IT'S SO

BECAUSE GOD SAYS SO

BY VIRGINIA BRANDT BERG, ADAPTED



GOD'S WORD SAYS that He is "able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think" (Ephesians 3:20). People aren't always able, as you know, to fulfill their promises, but God is able. God stands behind His promises, so hold Him to them in your hour of need and He will not fail you.

Did you ever have a friend upon whom you could utterly depend, who was absolutely faithful to you even when things were going wrong? Such friends are few, but oh, how we value them! Someone has said, "There is a strange bond that links a man to that which he has found to be dependable and true. There is a tie that really binds you to the one you can depend upon in stormy weather." Just so, anyone who has tried and trusted the promises in the Bible when there was no other help, no other hope, or nothing else to lean on has found them to be utterly trustworthy. We know through experience that we can put limitless trust in every word and rest our full weight upon them.

All God asks is simple

faith—that you take Him at His word and accept His promises at face value. Many modern scientific-minded people think it utterly ridiculous and impossible to take God's promises literally, seriously, and cash them in at the Bank of Heaven for what we ask for—but that is exactly what God wants us to do.

There is some controversy, as you may have heard, as to whether or not it is possible according to the principles of aeronautical science for the bumblebee to fly because of the size and shape of its body in relation to its total wing area. Whether this is so or not, it matters not to the bumblebee. It just goes ahead and flies, regardless.

So it is that, in spite of all the skeptics and their philosophical reasoning, there are those of trusting and childlike faith who are daily doing things that those

doubting intellectuals say can't be done. Those of faith dare to take the promises from God's Word just as they are, appropriate them for themselves, and act upon them—and they are getting the most wonderful answers to prayer, problems solved, and needs met.

So let the philosophers tangle themselves up in a web of difficulties, doubts, and intellectual thought as they try to explain away our right to accept these great and precious promises. Just the same, we'll walk right in and enjoy the full riches of them all! They are there for you. God means them personally for you. God will not fail His Word. It's so because God says so. God will keep His Word!

WHO MADE IT?

The noted atheist Colonel Robert Ingersoll, during a visit with Henry Ward Beecher, admired a beautiful globe portraying the constellations and stars of the heavens. "This is just what I've been looking for," he said after examining it. "Who made it?"

"Who made it?" repeated Beecher in simulated astonishment. "Why, Colonel, nobody made it. ... It just happened."



FOR THE RECORD

ON SECULAR UTOPIA

I've been to the pinnacle of what secular Utopia has to offer. It's this kind of ... everything. I got money, fame, this, that, and the other, and it's all been [just handed to me]. And when I was younger, I got my proboscis out and dipped it into the fount and sucked it up. It didn't matter. It wasn't enough. It wasn't good enough. It's *not* good enough. It leaves you empty. The more you eat, the emptier you get.

I think everybody gets to a point in their life where that happens, where they get to the moment of truth and they [ask], "What is this all about? Am I going to jump? Am I going to go on? I don't want to do either. I don't want to live. I don't want to die." You ask yourself all those Hamlet questions and eventually you just have to say, "I'm not good enough to figure this out. I don't know. I just don't know. Help! If there is anything out there, help!" And if you're lucky, you'll recognize the signs of that help.

—MEL GIBSON, IN A TV INTERVIEW WITH DIANE SAWYER FOR *PRIMETIME SPECIAL EDITION*, FEBRUARY 16, 2004

Leaders of humanist thought conclude ...

It is a bit embarrassing to have been concerned with the human problem all one's life and find at the end that one has no more to offer by way of advice than "Try to be a little kinder."

—ALDOUS HUXLEY (1894-1963), BRITISH NOVELIST AND ESSAYIST

All my life I have been seeking to climb out of the pit of my besetting sins, and I cannot do it and I never will unless a hand is let down to draw me up.

—SENECA (4? BC- 65 AD), SPANISH-BORN ROMAN STATESMAN, PHILOSOPHER, AND DRAMATIST

All of the wisdom of this world is but a tiny raft upon which we must set sail when we leave this earth. If only there was a firmer foundation upon which to sail, perhaps some divine word.

—SOCRATES (469-399 BC), GREEK PHILOSOPHER

I am about to take my last voyage, a great leap in the dark.

—THOMAS HOBBS (1588-1679), BRITISH PHILOSOPHER AND POLITICAL THEORIST; LAST WORDS

The meager satisfaction that man can extract from reality leaves him starving.

—SIGMUND FREUD (1856-1939), AUSTRIAN PHYSICIAN AND FOUNDER OF PSYCHOANALYSIS

Men and women of faith say ...

Man finds it hard to get what he wants, because he does not want the best; God finds it hard to give, because He would give the best, and man will not take it.

—GEORGE MACDONALD (1824-1905), SCOTISH NOVELIST AND POET

God created man in His own image, says the Bible; philosophers reverse the process: they create God in theirs.

—G.C. LICHTENBERG (1742-1799), GERMAN PHYSICIST AND WRITER

We are not human beings having a spiritual experience. We are spiritual beings having a human experience.

—PIERRE TEILHARD DE CHARDIN (1881-1955), FRENCH PRIEST, PALEONTOLOGIST, AND THEOLOGIAN

Having a clear faith ... is often labeled as fundamentalism. Yet relativism—that is, letting oneself be carried here and there by any wind of doctrine—appears as the sole attitude good enough for modern times.

—POPE BENEDICT XVI

There are those who believe that a new modernity demands a new morality. What they fail to consider is the harsh reality that there is no such thing as a new morality. There is only one morality. All else is immorality.

—THEODORE ROOSEVELT (1858-1919), 26TH PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

If you begin to live life looking for the God that is all around you, every moment becomes a prayer.

—FRANK BIANCO, U.S. JOURNALIST AND PHOTOGRAPHER

You must live with people to know their problems, and live with God in order to solve them.

—P.T. FORSYTH (1848-1921), BRITISH CLERGYMAN

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.

—C.S. LEWIS (1898-1963), IRISH-BORN BRITISH CRITIC, SCHOLAR, AND NOVELIST

The Christian ideal has not been tried and found wanting. It has been found difficult and left untried.

—G. K. CHESTERTON (1874-1936), BRITISH WRITER

Words which do not give the light of Christ increase the darkness.

—MOTHER TERESA OF CALCUTTA (1910-1997), ALBANIAN NUN AND NOBEL LAUREATE

Faith is a higher faculty than reason.

—HENRY CHRISTOPHER BAILEY (1878-1961), BRITISH WRITER

Faith is different from proof; the latter is human, the former is a gift from God.

—BLAISE PASCAL (1623-1662), FRENCH PHILOSOPHER AND MATHEMATICIAN

SPEAK TO ME

Speak to me of faith.
Help me to believe
In what I cannot touch,
In Someone whom I do not
fully understand,
And yet,
Help me to put my faith
In Him
For now and forever.

Speak to me of hope.
Despair I can get anywhere.
I can buy pessimism
For the price of a newspaper.

Help me believe in tomorrow,
To know it has meaning,
Fulfillment, and purpose.
Help me believe in tomorrow
Because you will be there,
And
Because Jesus will be there.

—ATTRIBUTED TO ULRICH SCHAEFFER

in search of musical inspiration

Ever since I was a boy taking piano lessons, I knew that I wanted to be a musician.

At age 15, I switched to pop and jazz music. I also started writing songs—particularly to a certain young lady with whom I had fallen madly in love. Tragically she did not return my affections. But such is the life of a tortured young musician. Oh, well. ...

I took some jazz lessons and began to learn improvisation. Mostly, though, I taught myself through listening to records, practicing, and studying books. When I was 17, Don Burrows, one of Australia's top jazz players at the time, did a concert at my school. Some friends and I had put together a little band, and we played a few numbers for him after the concert. He told one of my friends to not tell me this, but I was one of the best teenaged jazz pianists he'd heard. I guess he didn't want me to get conceited. My friend told me

anyway, and sure enough I got conceited!

I soon got bored with jazz, though, so after finishing high school I took a year off to study classical piano again, hoping to get accepted into Australia's top music school, the Sydney Conservatorium of Music, as at that time I wanted to be a composer.

I studied quite hard on my own, composed, and eventually, to my great excitement, was accepted into "the Con," as the conservatory is casually referred to. Unfortunately the whole experience turned out to be a terrible letdown. I truly feel that only about five percent of what they taught us was useful—practical things such as piano lessons

and learning to write scores. Most of the rest was barely applicable. I learned more through private study and practice.

Visiting composers would give us long and senseless lectures about abstract theories of composition that had little or no bearing on actual music. There were also the things that were downright detrimental, such as so-called civilization classes, where we were taught atheistic and humanistic dogma as fact.

Then a few seemingly insignificant things happened to me, which turned out to be turning points. I went to a concert of Bach's *St. Matthew's Passion*, a musical rendition of the Crucifixion story from the Gospel of Matthew. I was deeply moved, not just by the music, but also by the words. Coming away from the experience, I kept repeating to myself, "I believe those words."

Shortly after this, I asked my composition teacher why it was that in the days of Bach they had composed such beautiful and harmonic music, but that in our time classical music had become ugly and discordant. I was referring especially to the avant-garde music promoted at the Con.

He looked at me sadly and replied, "Well, I suppose they had God in those days, but we don't have God anymore."

That answer echoed in my mind for a long time, and I began to wonder *why* we didn't have God. *Why couldn't we?*

After one and a half years of study, I was at the end of my rope. We were required to compose, and I'd spend hours doing everything I could think of to get inspired—sitting on the beach staring at the sea, spending nights lying in the middle of a field and gazing at the stars, or fasting and meditating for days on end.

Nothing worked. I found myself utterly devoid of inspiration, and not knowing where or who to look to. It had been easier when I was 15 and writing pop songs for a girl I had a crush on! Even when I managed to force myself to produce *something*, I was shocked and discouraged by what I heard coming back at me when I conducted it—a gray, bleak reflection of the sad, pointless world I lived in.

I looked at some of the depressed and empty middle-aged teachers and composers I knew

who were successful in their careers but who had no answers, and I thought to myself, *I never want to end up like that!* I felt that the humanistic approach to the arts that the Con promoted was leading nowhere. In fact, it was draining the very life out of me.

Then I got a letter from an old friend. He had just received Jesus and joined a Christian fellowship, which turned out to be the Family International. The day he wrote to me about his new life I walked out of the conservatory and never went back. I also received Jesus into my heart, and three weeks later I joined the Family. My years of depression and lonely introspection were over!

It was quite a big change. One day I was conducting an orchestra and analyzing the harmonic structure of Beethoven symphonies, and the next I was sharing the joy I'd found in Jesus with strangers I met on the street. It wasn't what I had expected and was sometimes humbling, but I had found what I wanted in life!

A few months later, the Lord told me that He'd use all the musical gifts He'd given me if I'd stay true to Him, and He's certainly fulfilled His end of the bargain, despite my ups and downs along the way. It took years for Him to teach me that my talent was a gift from Him and that my musical know-how was nothing without His Spirit and inspiration. Fortunately for me, I finally got the point.

I remember once, after going through a pile of songs that *I'd* written, asking the Lord to inspire me to produce only *His* music. I've repeated that prayer a thousand times since, and that is why I can truly say that *He* deserves the credit for anything good He accomplishes through me. It's not a result of my education—especially not the part that tried to leave Him out of the process.

The day I decided to follow Jesus, He told me that I'd never regret it. Twenty-two years of love, success, setbacks, songs, and service later, I can honestly say that I haven't. Not only is my life happy and full, but my musical creativity and understanding have improved manifold since I've learned to connect with the source.

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WHAT IS TRUTH?

That age-old question is being asked less and less these days. Some people don't ask because they're so wrapped up in gratifying their physical needs and desires that they never stop to consider their spiritual needs. Others don't ask because they're afraid they won't like the answer. But most people today don't ask because they've lost faith that there is an answer; their inborn hunger for truth has been dulled by the skepticism and notion of "relative morality" that pervade modern thought.

But does the truth cease to exist because people don't seek it or don't want to acknowledge it? Do God and the spirit world cease to exist because so many choose not to believe? Of course not! The truth is the truth, and it's not contingent on anyone believing it. Even if no one believed, it would remain more real and enduring than the world you experience with your five senses. What you consider reality is no more than a weak reflection of the real world—and that's the truth!

The truth is spiritual reality, and it's there for all who sincerely want it. I gave the keys to finding it when I said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. If you abide in My Word, you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you" (John 14:6; 8:31–32; Matthew 7:7). Open your heart to Me, and receive new life—eternal life. Let Me guide you into all truth. Let Me set you free!

