



the
reasonwhy.

by Robert A Laidlaw Founder of FARMERS

The Reason Why
Published by Castle Publishing Ltd
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Auckland, New Zealand

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www.castlepublishing.biz

Castle NZ Edition © 2002

ISBN 0-9582124-3-0

Text Revision: Andrew Killick

Design: Source Design & Print
sales@source.co.nz

Printed in New Zealand by Wentforth Print

All scripture quotations are taken from the
HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION. NIV.

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Written by a Christian businessman to the members of his staff ...

A young man gave his fiancée an expensive diamond ring. He put it in a small box that the jeweller threw in for free. He couldn't believe it when she said, "Sweetheart, this is a lovely little box. I'll keep it wrapped up safely so it doesn't get damaged."

Ridiculous, isn't it? But it's just as ridiculous for men and women to spend all their time and energy on their bodies, rather than their souls which will persist long after their bodies have crumbled to dust. Our souls are of infinite value.

Jesus Christ asks, "What good is it for a [person] to gain the whole world, yet forfeit [their] soul?"¹ So, in Christ's estimate, the human soul is something incomparably more valuable than the whole world.

I'd like to look at some of the basic things that relate to our most valuable asset. For instance:

Does God exist?

Is the Bible true?

Is there divine forgiveness and do we need it?

These are some of the problems that perplex anyone who thinks seriously about their life...

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In the past I tried to find reasons why God does not exist. I wanted to believe that there was no God, but a kind of inner voice troubled me again and again in life's lonely moments. When I looked at others I realised how many people were looking for God, seeking in "religion" or "spirituality", or through trying to find some kind of satisfaction, to silence the same voice that spoke in me.

There are some people who don't believe in God. But to me the problems of unbelief are greater than the problems of belief. To believe that dead matter produced mind, for example, that mind produced conscience, and that the chaos of chance produced the universe and the indescribable workings of nature, seems to call not for faith but for gullibility.

The president of the New York Scientific Society once gave eight reasons why he believed there was a God. The first was this: Take ten identical coins and mark them one to ten. Place them in your pocket. Now take one out. There is one chance in ten that you will get number one. Now replace it, and the chances that number two will follow number one are not one in ten, but one in one hundred. With each new coin taken out, the chances are multiplied by ten, so that the chance of ten following nine, is one in 10,000,000,000.



George Gallup

That's why George Gallup, a famous American statistician once said, **"Take the human body alone – the chance that all its functions would just happen is a statistical monstrosity."**

Imagine we're standing at an airport watching a 767 landing. I say to you, "A lot of people think that plane is the result of someone's carefully designed plans, but I know better. There was really no intelligence involved at all. In some strange way the metal came out of the ground, and turned into flat sheets. And then the metal sheets slowly started to grow together and formed the body and wings and tail. Then after a long while the engines slowly grew in place, and one day some people came along and discovered the plane, all finished and ready to fly."

You would probably think I was some kind of weirdo and move further into the crowd to escape, because you know that where there is obviously a design, there must be a designer.

Despite that, there are highly educated, professional people who tell us that the entire universe came into being by chance and that there was no higher intelligence at work on it. All that atheists can offer is the puzzle of design without a designer, of creation without a creator, of effect without cause. Some believe that nature itself is divine.

On the other hand there are also many people who believe in a God who is transcendent: that is, while we can see the evidence of him in nature (in that nature's laws and principles are evidence of his planning, power and wisdom), he himself is creator of the universe, and therefore exists outside of it.

Most people can see that there is a series of causes and effects in nature, each effect becoming the cause of some other effect. The acceptance of this as fact logically implies that there must be a beginning to any series. There could never have been a first effect if there had not been a first cause. As far as I'm concerned, that first cause is God.

Although many of the laws that govern electricity have been discovered, scientists still can't really define it. But we believe it exists because we see the evidence of it in our homes and industries and streets. Although I don't know where God came from, I have to believe he exists, because I see the evidence of him everywhere around me.

Dr. Werner Von Braun, former director of NASA research and developer of the rocket which put America's first space satellite into orbit said, **"Many people seem to feel that rapid advances in the field of science render such things as religious belief old-fashioned. But with every new answer unfolded, science has consistently discovered at**

least three new questions. Anything as well ordered and perfectly created as our earth and universe must have a maker, a master designer. Anything so orderly, so perfect, so precisely balanced, so majestic as this creation can only be the product of a divine idea.”



Henry Schaefer

Henry “Fritz” Schaefer, Professor of Chemistry and Director of the Centre for Computational Quantum Chemistry at the University of Georgia, five-time nominee for the Nobel Prize, said, **“The significance and joy in my science**

comes in those occasional moments of discovering something new and saying to myself, ‘So that’s how God did it.’ My goal is to understand a little corner of God’s plan.”



Charlie Townes

Charlie Townes, who won the Nobel Prize for his discovery of the laser and was nominated again for the first observation of an interstellar molecule, says, **“You may well ask, ‘Where does God come into this?’ To me,**

that’s almost a pointless question. If you believe in God at all, there is no particular ‘where’ – he is always there, everywhere ... God is personal yet omnipresent. A great source of strength, he has made an enormous difference to me.”

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ANYTHING
SO ORDERLY,
SO PERFECT,
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God exists whether or not we choose to believe in him. The reason why many people don't believe in God isn't so much that it is intellectually impossible to believe in God, but because belief in God forces us to face the fact that we are also answerable to God.

But why did God create us and our world? And how can we know him?

First there is the process of reason. Just as a good detective can tell you about my skills, habits and character by examining something I've made or handled, we can learn a lot about God by carefully examining the universe.

But the detective who only examines what I've made can never say he knows me. He knows some things about me, but before he can say he knows me, he has to meet me. I have to tell him what I think, how I feel and what my future goals are. And in the same way, if God is ever to be known and his thoughts, desires and purposes perceived, he has to take the initiative and communicate with us.

The Bible claims to be a message from God, telling about him and his purpose for us. It is a book of such historical and cultural impact that it is definitely worth a close look.

I think the importance of the Bible's claims justify spending some time reading the sixty-six books that make it up. Some of those books are just a few pages long, others longer. They were written by at least forty different people, some well educated, some less educated, some kings, some peasants. They were written over a period of 1600 years in places as far apart as Iraq and Italy. With such diverse authorship you would expect to find a messy collection of contradictory statements. The unity of the Bible's message is therefore especially amazing – each contribution in the Bible complements the others.

When I thought about this, the reality of what Peter (one of the first followers of Jesus) wrote dawned on me. “[People] spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit”.² In other words, God gave people the ideas and words that were written in the Bible. That's why the different parts complement each other. This realisation was confirmed as I read prophecy after prophecy in the first part of the Bible (called the “Old Testament”) which had come true hundreds of years later. For instance, Isaiah chapter 53 foretells the death of Christ with incredible accuracy more than 700 years before he was crucified.

By now, the difficulties stopping me from doubting the Bible seemed to be greater than those stopping me from believing it. I had to be honest with myself

and admit that the problems were all on the side of unbelief. Then I went even further and said, “I believe the Bible contains the words of the living God. I can’t account for it any other way.”

My admission brought me face to face with a serious difficulty because the Bible set a standard for my life that I hadn’t reached. It stated that anything short of God’s standard was “sin”. Remembering that the God the Bible talks about knows all your secret thoughts, just measure yourself alongside this standard: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment.”³

No one can honestly claim such perfection. Every honest person echoes what the apostle Paul said, “There is no one righteous, not even one ... for all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God.”⁴ We’ve all failed to reach God’s standard. My conscience and my common sense more or less forced me to admit that I’d fallen short of God’s standard and that I was a “sinner”.

I understood it like this: The law in New Zealand says that all drivers have to drive on the left-hand side of the road, while in America the road rules demand that a driver has to keep to the right-hand side. Imagine that I go driving in New Zealand and drive on the right-hand side. And then when I get charged with

dangerous driving, I say, “This is stupid. In the United States we’re allowed to drive on the right-hand side.”

The judge would say, “But you’re not being judged by the laws of America; it doesn’t matter what the laws of other countries are, you should have thought about the laws which apply here.”

In the same way, as far as God was concerned I was lost, and at the end of the day God’s standard was the only thing that I’d be judged by. I was hopelessly lost. I began to realise that it didn’t matter what I thought, or what my friends told me. The judgment would be based on what God said. And, because in God’s judgment we’re all sinners, there was no use looking anywhere else for help.

To my incredible relief, I discovered that the same Bible, which had made me so painfully aware of my sin, also told me about a man called Jesus Christ, who claimed to be the Son of God. Jesus saw that everyone was lost and that they were being controlled by sin. His life was sinless and perfect. And he was willing to put himself in place of us, and take our punishment, so that we could be free.

You may have heard the famous words of Jesus, “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.”⁵

If Jesus Christ is in fact the Son of God, then we can be sure that we can be saved from our punishment. But is Jesus Christ really the Son of God?

As far as I can tell, Jesus can only be one of three things – the Son of God (as he claimed), a blatant conman, or an essentially honest but deluded man.

In the Bible, we find Jesus meeting some of the most educated people of his day. They were sent by religious leaders to trap him, make him contradict himself or make some shocking admission. He answered so wisely that they didn't dare try to trap him with questions again.⁶ When we consider the wisdom of his statements from an intellectual point of view, we can clearly see that these are not the ravings of a madman.

Was Jesus' intellect and wisdom so great that he was using it to deceive the people? Have you ever heard of anyone associating with con artists and criminals and by trying to be like them actually becoming upright and honest? It couldn't happen. But I know a young man who, by following the teachings of Christ, has been changed from the worst kind of living to the best. I just can't believe that allowing a trickster to influence you could transform your life for good.

Most people and most major world religions say that Jesus was at least a good man. If he was a good man,

then he was an honest man, and if he was honest then he must have been what he claimed to be: the Son of God, sent to give his sinless life in place of our sinful lives. This is a belief shared by many people from all kinds of professions and walks of life.



Michael Jones

Michael Jones, All Black rugby legend, says, **“God is no wimp. He’s the biggest hero. The greatest love and the greatest deed is to give up your life for someone else. That’s what God did through his son**

Jesus Christ for me. And to follow him and to live like he did, one needs to be a real man; to be focused, single-minded and undivided in one’s dedication to Christ – like an athlete to his race.”



Linda Vagana

Linda Vagana, former New Zealand Silver Ferns Netballer, says, **“I found myself overwhelmed by this yearning and cried out to God. I quietly asked God to be my first love and asked him to lead me**

directly to where he wanted me to go. It was a simple prayer but it changed my life.”



Wynton Rufer

Wynton Rufer, voted FIFA’s Oceania Player of the Century, says, **“Goals will be scored, teams will win and lose. Despite my own personal achievements with the beautiful game, today I’m so grateful**

for the balance the Christian faith gives me,

knowing Jesus as my personal Saviour. His peace, and guidance make the difference to everything I do in life, including my soccer.”



Lois Dickinson

Lois Dickinson, business consultant and chairperson of World Vision NZ, says, **“When Jesus Christ claimed Lordship of my life I was called to be an agent of grace in the world. Because I know my**

faith is the source of my life I seek in my day-to-day walk to live a life which demonstrates that God’s redemptive power is still alive and well in the world.”



Inky Tulloch

Inky Tulloch, managing director of one of New Zealand’s largest transportation companies, says, **“For the first 30 years of my life I knew about God without knowing him. Since coming to know him**

I have found him to be completely relevant for every area of life. God doesn’t promise that living as a Christian is easy but I have always found him to be the best advisor and friend that there is.”



John Grisham

John Grisham, who has authored 14 bestsellers, says, **“I was in the third grade when my mother led me to Jesus ... My faith has served as my moral compass since the day I gave myself over to the Lord. When I was actively practising law,**

there were cases and clients I refused because of my faith ... It will all be over one of these days; the books will stop selling for whatever reason. What will matter most then? The same as matters now – God, my family and helping other people.”



Arthur L
Schawlow

Arthur L. Schawlow, Professor of Physics at Stanford University, and winner of the Nobel Prize for Physics, says, **“It seems to me that when confronted with the marvels of life and the universe, one must ask why and not just how. The only possible answers are religious ... I find a need for God in the universe and in my own life.”**

By now I was convinced that the Bible was true, and that Jesus Christ was the Son of God. I now believed that he willingly came, that God so loved me that he willingly sent him to suffer the penalty of my sin so that I could be free. I knew that if I was going to retain my self-respect after making these discoveries, I would have to personally trust and follow Jesus Christ as my Saviour and Lord. So I did.

But just because I trusted Jesus, why should you trust him as well? Although it is plausible that the Bible is true, aren't alternative views also possible?

When I told a friend about my discovery, he replied,

“It seems to me that it doesn’t matter so much what a person believes, so long as they’re sincere in their belief.” Maybe he had a point. Then again maybe not.

One fine Sunday morning a neighbour of mine took his family on a picnic. Travelling north, he eventually came to a railway crossing and, sincerely believing that there would be no trains running on Sunday morning, he tried to drive across. He was killed on the spot by a train. One son had an arm broken and his little daughter was in a cast for months. Did his sincere belief save him?

I know a nurse who sincerely believed she had the right medication in her hand, but she was wrong. In twenty minutes her patient was dead in spite of frantic efforts to save him.

Of course we need sincerity, but we have to sincerely believe truth, not error. Believing an error can be the very thing that finally destroys us. The Bible leaves no room for doubt about what is true. Jesus said, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father [God] except through me.”⁷ The apostle Peter stated, “Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to us by which we must be saved.”⁸

The real reason we wish there was some other way is because Jesus’ way is humbling. We have to admit



our guilt, and we're too proud. But we have to remember that no one suffered such a humiliating experience as Jesus, the Son of God, when he was crucified like the lowest criminal for crimes he didn't commit. Paul said, "Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death – even death on a cross!"⁹

BELIEVING
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DESTROYS US

Some people have suggested that all a person needs to do is sincerely reform, do better in the future, and make up for past mistakes by leading a good life. But will it work?

God's standard demands that no past account can be considered settled until it has been fully paid. A murderer can cover his crime and live the life of a good person for ten years after his crime, but when it comes to light, the court will still dish out a harsh penalty. Even though he hasn't murdered anyone for ten long years, the law still judges him guilty.

To hide past sin (thoughts, words or actions) by what

seems to be an absolutely perfect life, still leaves us as sinners in the sight of God. We can't clear the books by ourselves. The Bible says that Jesus is the only one who can pay the penalty for us. "We were reconciled to him [God] by the death of his Son".¹⁰ Jesus Christ gave up his life in place of ours so that we could be released. Our past sin is paid for. And God has given us a receipt showing his satisfaction with the payment by bringing Christ back from the dead. Christ was once crucified but now he is our living saviour. He died to save us from the penalty of sin and now he lives to deliver us from the effects of sin.

But why did Christ need to die? Couldn't he have saved us without dying?

We, and everyone who came before us, have broken God's law and the penalty of that is death. So how could Christ completely set us free without meeting our full penalty? If he had paid anything less than the full price there would still be a punishment for us to face. But because he died in our place, God's law doesn't condemn us anymore. "Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."¹¹

It doesn't matter if there are sins in my life that I've forgotten. I'm not afraid of any one of them, because I am sure that Jesus Christ suffered the greatest penalty that any law can dish out, the death penalty, in my place.

On the basis of the greatness of Jesus Christ's sacrifice, some have suggested that if Christ died for everyone, everyone must be saved. But God says there is salvation for all who believe.

Imagine it's a bitterly cold winter and unemployment is skyrocketing in the city. Many don't have enough money for food, so the city council provides free meals. You meet a hungry man on the street. You wonder why he doesn't take advantage of the free food, advertised all over the city. He'll remain hungry, unless he goes and gets what's been provided for him.

Even though the death of Christ is sufficient for everyone, only those who personally trust Christ and believe that he died in their place are actually saved.

But how could Jesus Christ's one life possibly be the substitute for the lives of billions of people?

That seems a fair question – but the answer can be demonstrated with calculations on paper. Christ was God in human form so his life was infinite. Get a sheet of paper and write down all the big numbers you can think of, then add them up. Now you have an even bigger number. Then multiply it by 10, 100 or by a million, if you like. Cover pages and pages of paper with numbers and you'll still have a finite number – a number that has limits, a beginning and an end, regardless of how big it is. By adding finite things

together no one has ever been able to make something infinite. The infinite life of Christ is more than sufficient to save everyone who depends on him as the one who died for them.

But how could Christ die for my sins when they were committed 2000 years after he died?

God knows everything, and is eternal (outside of time). God calls himself "I AM",¹² and Christ said, "Before Abraham was, I AM".¹³ In other words, to a God who knows everything and is never-ending, there is no past or future, but one continuous present. Things that will happen in 2000 years are as clear to him as things that happened 2000 years ago, and both are just as clear to God as things happening now.

But why didn't God make people so that they were incapable of disobeying him and unable to sin?

In some ways, that's like asking why doesn't God draw a crooked straight line or a round square, or make an object black all over and white all over at the same time. People have the power of intelligent choice, so the question really is: Why didn't God make people with the power of intelligent choice and yet without the power of intelligent choice?

If I could hypnotise my children, I could steal their power of intelligent choice, and then say, "Sit on those



chairs until I return” – “Sit at the table and eat” – “Stop eating”. I could hypnotise my wife, and say, “Kiss me” and unfeeling arms would go around my neck, and unresponsive lips would be pressed to mine. I would have prompt and perfect obedience to my every command, but would it mean anything?

God doesn't want puppets that jump when the string is pulled. He doesn't want humanoid robots that are hard-wired or programmed to obey his will. God desires our voluntary love and decisions to please him.

Humans are amazing. The way we're made and our abilities are so much greater than animals. Even though the genetic difference superficially seems to be small, there's a vast gap between the most intelligent animal and humans, because God has created humans as persons with the incredible capacity of being able to say no to God as well as yes.

Why does God care about Earth compared with the vastness of the whole universe?

In our solar system, the planet Neptune is 30 times as far away from the sun as Earth, so it takes 164 of our years to make one of Neptune's. Beyond our solar

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WILL

system are other suns with planets revolving around them. Why is Earth important to God? We humans are like dust mites in a huge universe.

An astronomer searched the sky with his telescope. And as he searched, the vastness of the universe stole his faith in God. How could God possibly care about humans? Because he could only use his telescope at night, during the day he studied microorganisms. And as he looked through his microscope, tiny worlds as complex as the universe opened up, and slowly his faith began to return.

He realised that a God who could attend to the minute details of making a drop of ditch water throb with life was sure to be interested in humans. The man found balance in the universe instead of bias, and the balance brought him back to God.

But is faith logical?

It's a mistake to think that faith is the opposite of reason and logic. Reason, to a great extent, is dependent on faith, because without knowledge it's impossible to reason, and knowledge is a matter of faith in human testimony.

For instance, I believe morphine administered in a large enough dose will kill a person, but I've never seen the experiment performed. I have faith in what

experts say and I wouldn't take a large dose of morphine for anything.

If you think about it, 90 percent of the things you "know" are a matter of faith in what other people say or write. Why then do we have so much trouble believing the testimony of the closest followers of Jesus who wrote the accounts about him in the Bible, and the millions of Christians who have personally discovered the transforming power of the message of the Bible?

Why should God judge my sins as worthy of death?

Because God is infinitely holy, he refuses to leave sin unpunished. In some countries, murder warrants the death penalty. In other places it means life-imprisonment. In the past, injustices like slavery and racial discrimination were acceptable. Today these things are frowned upon and punished.

The acts are the same in both contexts, but the punishments vary. The difference comes down to perspective and understanding. A crime, like slave-trading, which was once considered acceptable, would now cause the offender to be sent to prison for years. By the same logic, sin which seems minor to us looks much different to an infinitely holy God.

“

Salvation by Substitution – The Innocent Bearing the Penalty for the Guilty

THE ENTIRE
PAYMENT HAS
BEEN MADE

We've considered reasonable evidence that God exists and that he has revealed in the Bible his holy claims on men and women. We've been shown that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God".¹⁴ We've been faced with Jesus Christ, God's Son, who came to this earth to die for our sin. We've also considered some of the objections that can be raised.

Now I want to tell you about the wisdom and wonder of God's plan of salvation.

If God was only loving, he would have simply forgiven us for our sin, but God is also perfectly righteous. How to reconcile God's perfect righteousness and love is a problem no human philosopher has solved, but divine wisdom and mercy find their highest expression in the solution – the suffering and death of Jesus. God the Son dying in our place.

But how can the Bible argue for this idea of substitution? Substitution doesn't seem just. It makes Christ, who was innocent, bear the penalty for the guilty and lets the guilty go free. That's totally against our idea of justice. We believe that justice should protect the innocent and bring the full penalty on the guilty.

But God's perfect justice and mercy are revealed in the death of Jesus. God doesn't take the innocent Jesus and force him to bear the penalty of the guilty.

Two young men studied law together. One of them became a high court judge and the other one got involved in crime. He was eventually charged and brought before his old friend. The lawyers present wondered what kind of justice would be administered by the judge under such difficult circumstances. The judge sentenced the man to the heaviest penalty the law allowed, then paid the fine himself and set his old friend free.

God also passed the heaviest penalty – the death sentence – on sin. Then, in mercy, in the person of his Son, took the sinner's place.

God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit are one God. The same God that we sinned against passed the judgment, paid the penalty, and now offers us a full pardon. That's why the apostle Paul writes, "I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes ... For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed..."¹⁵ I'm not ashamed of the gospel either, because no one can honestly find a flaw in the righteousness offered by God. You can have that not-guilty status now too, at this very moment, if you accept it.

But is accepting Christ's death in my place all that I need to save me forever? Yes! I admit the simplicity of it seems hard to grasp. But if I owe \$50,000 and a friend pays the entire debt as a gift to me, I don't have to make any more payments. Jesus Christ gave his life in place of mine. He said, "It is finished", which means that the entire payment has been made.

"But I just can't see it," said a certain cabinet-maker, as his friend tried to explain all this to him. At last an idea came to his friend, who, lifting an electric planer, made as though he was going to plane the top of a polished table nearby.

"Stop!" cried the cabinetmaker. "Don't you see that's finished? You'll ruin it if you use that planer on it."

"That's exactly what I've been trying to show you about what Christ did," answered his friend. "It was finished when he died and rose from the dead, and if you try to add anything to that you'll only spoil it. Just accept it as it is – his life for yours, and you go free."

How can I trust and follow Jesus Christ as my Saviour and Lord?

If I know that my sin means I deserve death, and that I am alienated from God and if I believe, in a cold mechanical way, that Jesus Christ died for me will that give me eternal life? Definitely not!

”

Imagine a young woman meets a wealthy man and is attracted by his money. He gives her expensive gifts, a luxury car, diamond rings and nice clothes. She decides she's onto a good thing, even though she doesn't really feel anything deep for him. So when he asks her to marry him she agrees. She becomes, according to the law of the land, the rich man's wife. But does she really love him?

HE IDENTIFIES
WITH US
COMPLETELY
BECAUSE HE'S
BEEN IN OUR
SHOES

You see it now, don't you? If a man and a woman want to be together for life, they have to love each other with a commitment that wants to receive each other into the innermost recesses of their hearts in a deep way that they can't fully express in words.

We all have that innermost recess of ourselves, which is sacred to us, where emotions stir, that no other human can truly understand. Jesus Christ, God's Son, because of his love for us, claims the right to enter there. The love he's shown for us entitles him to that place and he identifies with us completely because he's been in our shoes.

When I think that Christ's love for me was so strong that he came to earth, becoming human to suffer and die in my place to give me eternal life, my heart softens towards him.

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NOW I'M
FACE TO FACE
WITH JESUS
CHRIST

If I am lying helpless in a burning building and a friend rushes in to save me, and wraps a fireproof blanket around me, and is critically scarred and burned about the face and arms for me, wouldn't my heart be moved by his sacrificial bravery? God knows it would!

And now I'm face to face with Jesus Christ. I see him suffering in the Garden of Gethsemane in anticipation of his imminent death. I see him in the judgment hall of the Roman governor; the

soldiers have been mocking him and punching him in the face. I see them pushing a crown of six centimetre long thorns onto his head. Despite being unable to find him guilty of any crime, they take him bleeding and bruised to the place of execution, where they hammer spikes through his wrists and feet into a wooden cross.

The cross is lifted up and planted in the ground. He hangs there, left to die between two criminals, and the people gather around to mock him again. Then I begin to understand what self-sacrificing love really means as I hear him cry, "Father, forgive them - they don't know what they're doing."

But even if we could enter sympathetically into the physical suffering of Christ, until tears streamed

down our faces, and that was all, we would still have failed miserably to comprehend the true significance of this torture and death.

We read in Paul's second letter to the Corinthians that "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."¹⁶ Come with me with a humble heart, and let us, if we can, enter into the soul-sufferings of Christ the Son, and of God the Father, as that Holy One, who loathed sin, is "made sin for us."

If it's true in nature that the greater the complexity of the physical organism the greater the capacity for pain, then the greater the purity of the moral character, the greater the capacity for soul-suffering.

Imagine a respectable old gentleman, proud of his good name – a man who would rather lose his right hand than use it to do something dishonourable. His son goes astray and murders someone in a drunken fight. The old man lives in shame, and soon his soul-suffering drives his grey head in sorrow to the grave.

If that is possible, think what sin must be like in all its awfulness to a holy God! Now we can understand why, in the Garden of Gethsemane, Christ turns in the face of the sin of the whole world and cries in agony of soul, "My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will."¹⁷

“

In spite of that agonised cry, “God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son” to be “made sin” for us, “that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life”.¹⁸

I HAVE ONLY
ONE OPTION,
AND I HAVE
TO TAKE IT

Can you understand now why I said that I couldn't possibly reject someone who has endured so much for me? My intellect has reasoned it all out; my emotions have been deeply stirred; and now they both appeal to my will for a decision. To be true to God, myself and my future I have only one option. I have to take it. Jesus Christ is my personal Saviour and the Lord of my life.

Because he loves me and because I am sure that I will live forever in heaven, my deepest desire is that you share what I enjoy. Christ has done it all. He has suffered the penalty of sin; he has been brought back to life by the power of God; now he presents himself to you. Will you trust him as your Saviour from sin and follow him as the Lord of your life?

You're saying, “It all seems so mysterious and weird; I don't really get it.” I'm not asking you to understand the whole mystery of it. I can't understand the whole mystery myself. I'm asking you to be happy that it's a fact.

You and I don't worry about the mystery of electricity when we cook dinner or watch TV. You know people can be changed into new people in Christ. You've probably even seen it happen to someone you know. Won't you let the facts you've seen for yourself influence you? It's as simple as switching on a light.

Say to God, "I can't understand the mystery of it all. I can't understand why you cared for me enough to send Jesus to suffer the penalty of my sin. But with all my lack of understanding, I'm willing to give myself to you, absolutely. I trust in the fact that Jesus died for me and the promise that you've made 'that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life'."

Just as you leave the mystery of the electric current with the physicist or the electrician and take the benefits of the light for yourself, so leave the mystery of salvation with God and take the infinite benefits of a personal saviour. Give yourself to him now. Say it and mean it, "I'm yours, Lord Jesus, I give myself to you, body, soul and spirit and you are mine." Then give witness to the deal by signing the following declaration.

MY DECISION

Before God, who knows all the secrets of my soul, I trust Jesus Christ as my Saviour from sin and will follow him as Lord of my life. I give myself absolutely to him. I know, based on his word, that I have everlasting life, because he says, "I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life."¹⁹

Signed: _____

Date: _____

A Further Word

Most people resent being pressured into a hasty decision on important subjects. If they feel like they're being pressured, many people become more and more determined not to make a decision.

Some people decide not to go against the flow and not to go with it. They just drift, slowly, down the stream of time. But we will all have to face this issue someday before we die. Then why not now?

If you've decided, read this little booklet again. It will seem clearer now. If you don't have a modern version of the Bible, ask somebody to help you get one. Then start reading in the gospel of John in the New Testament.

If you have trusted Christ as your Saviour and decided to follow him, go and tell someone. Don't be embarrassed to "confess". After all, Jesus just saved your life; and that's pretty exciting news! In the Bible you'll read, "If you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord', and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved."²⁰

I've tried to write what I believe is God's truth, so that I can look him, and you, in the face. I end this booklet with the sincere prayer that God will use it for you and your eternal future.

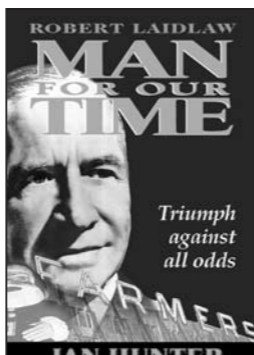
The testimonies of Wynton Rufer, Michael Jones and Linda Vagana were provided by Athletes in Action New Zealand, a sports ministry of Campus Crusade for Christ, PO Box 8786 Auckland, www.aianz.org.

Other testimonies were taken from www.godandscience.org, acct.tamu.edu/smith/science.htm, and Challenge: The Good News Paper Issue No 13.

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| ¹ Mark 8:36 | ¹² Exodus 3:14 |
| ² 2 Peter 1:21 | ¹³ John 8:58 |
| ³ Matthew 22:37,38 | ¹⁴ Romans 3:23 |
| ⁴ Romans 3:10,23 | ¹⁵ Romans 1:16&17 |
| ⁵ John 3:16 | ¹⁶ 2 Corinthians 5:21 |
| ⁶ Matthew 22:46 | ¹⁷ Matthew 26:39 |
| ⁷ John 14:6 | ¹⁸ John 3:16; |
| ⁸ Acts 4:12 | 1 Corinthians 5:21 |
| ⁹ Philippians 2:5-8 | ¹⁹ John 5:24 |
| ¹⁰ Romans 5:10 | ²⁰ Romans 10:9-11 |
| ¹¹ Romans 8:1 | |

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As a young man of 25, Robert Laidlaw launched a small mail-order business. With daring courage he overcame world wars, economic depression and tragic loss to build the largest retail chain in New Zealand. Laidlaw's success with the Farmers Trading Company made him one of the most innovative and successful businessmen in the history of New Zealand.

His approach to business was firmly rooted in his strong Christian faith. He established a generous staff welfare fund and gave extravagantly to charities and Christian organisations.

Around the world, he is best known for the booklet *The Reason Why*. He first published this to explain his faith to his employees but it was quickly found to have a much wider application. *The Reason Why* has been translated into over 30 languages and it has been estimated that over 50 million copies of the booklet have been printed.



ISBN 0-9582124-3-0



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