

THE WAY I SEE IT



TIM BAKER

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The Way I See It
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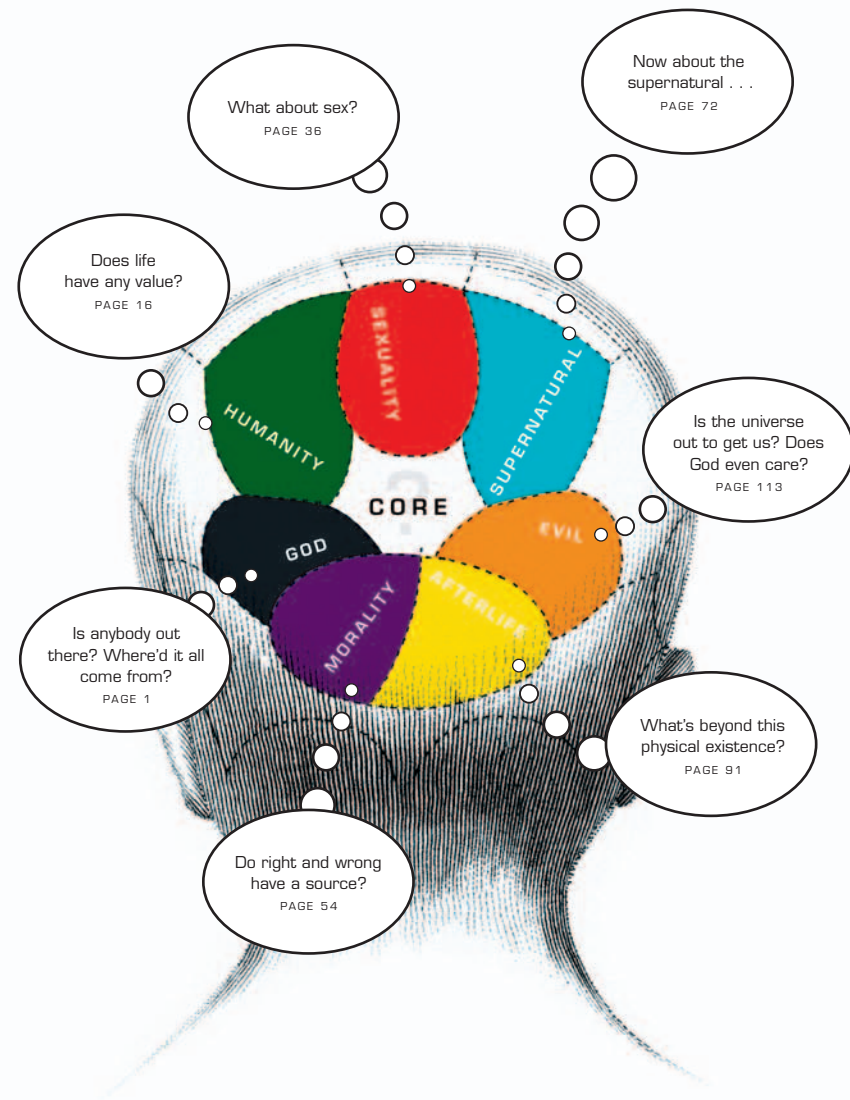
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WHAT IS AT YOUR CORE ?

FIND OUT NOW

your cozy bed

A D ON THE PHYSICS EXAM. Your part-time job with the boss who thinks you're his full-time slave. Another fight with your sister.

But the blanket makes all of that feel like a distant memory. Your flannel sheets, your soft pillow comfort you like hot chocolate on a sore throat. Warm, comfortable, and comforted. Drifting off to sleep, your head fills with thoughts of tomorrow, Saturday. Except for a few chores, you've got the day to relax and unwind.

The roar of the thunder wakes you up. The constant claps make you feel like you're in a miniwar. Now it's like someone is constantly taking your picture and won't turn off the flash. The sky thunders and bangs and fills with light over and over like one long explosion.



UNABLE TO SLEEP, YOU WANDER INTO THE LIVING ROOM and realize that you're actually the *last* person to wake up. Your family sits on and around the huge family couch. Candles light the room, making dancing shadows on the wall. Your mom gently runs her fingers through your sister's hair. You choose an empty spot next to your dad on the couch, and the four of you sit through the storm.

You talk, count the seconds between the lightning and thunderclaps, and spend most of the night reminiscing about family history. Vacations long gone. Christmas presents that were a complete miss. Birthday parties. Old family friends. Crazy relatives. Even with nature raging outside you're able to walk down long roads lined with awesome memories. It's the kind of moment you could never orchestrate, and the kind to savor.

Your parents drift off first. Even though sleeping on the couch isn't nearly as quality as your bed, you're too comfortable to move.

you're kidding, right?

your rude awakening

your aching head

"SWEETHEART," your mom says, holding a glass of orange juice, "don't you think it's time you get up?"

The room is bright. The smell of bacon hangs in the air. Your watch tells you it's almost ten. You've slept through the morning. Grabbing for your glasses, you notice that the room doesn't feel right. Things seem out of order. Confused and blurry. Not enough to make you dizzy, just enough to give you a little headache. *Man, I slept hard.*

But your dad's full of energy and spends the entire morning working in the yard. Midafternoon, he wanders into your room. By this time, your headache is full-blown and throbbing. With eyes that feel like they're going to pop out of your head, you just sit there and try not to look around too much.

"That storm really got to me," you say to your dad, hoping to deflect what you know is coming next.

He doesn't take the hint. "Gonna help me out?" He's standing at your door, but not looking at you.

You could say no and explain your headache, but that probably won't work. "Sure," you say, grabbing your shoes.

THE NEXT TWO HOURS ARE COMPLETE TORTURE. Your headache worsens. Your eyes feel like watermelons. The pain in your neck has moved to your back. Finally, as your dad is parking the lawn mower and you're loading the last of the branches into your pickup to haul off tomorrow, you decide to give up. Heading into the house, you plop your dirty body onto the couch you slept on last night. The one you believe is responsible for your misery.

"Hon, no dirty bodies on the couch?" your mom says, walking into the room.

You look up at her, wanting to tell her how bad your head hurts, when she continues.

"Funny. Reeaaalll cute."

You're confused by your mom's attempt at a joke. "Mom, my head hurts!" you say, rubbing your temples.

"Well, maybe you shouldn't wear your sister's glasses. That'd make my head hurt too."

Feeling ridiculous, you feel for the glasses. It all makes sense. The headaches and burning eyes. You must have picked up your sister's glasses this morning by mistake. On top of feeling really stupid, your head still hurts. And, you've spent an entire day in misery.

your miserable yard work

your cozy existence

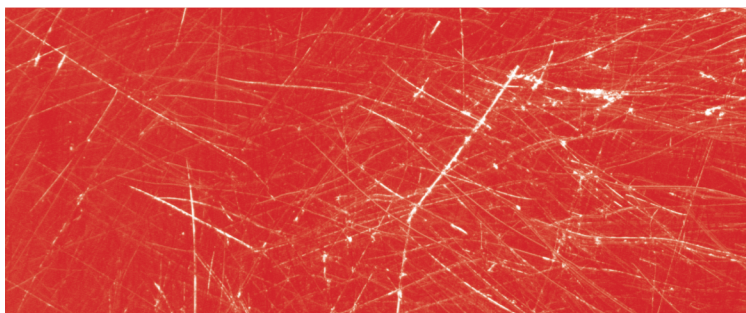
SO, THERE YOU SIT, this book in hand. School tomorrow, or maybe not. Yard work tomorrow. You'll go to sleep tonight in your nice, warm comfortable life. And if a storm does wake you up, big deal.

Here's what you won't do. You won't stay up late contemplating starving people in Africa. You won't be thinking about the unborn children three states over and whether or not they're protected from their abortion-minded parents. You won't drift off to sleep thinking, *I wonder if animals go to heaven?* or *Will plastic surgery really make me more popular?* You'll never be faced with having to choose whether or not to let your child live. You'll never be homeless. You'll never starve.

Your life is cozy. But then, there's a storm.

Okay, so it might not be a tree falling through your house. But your grandmother might die, your girlfriend might find someone else, your parents might divorce (maybe again) . . . something will happen to force you to think about your "glasses." You'll have to stop and consider what you think about the afterlife and what you think about world hunger (and why it's even a problem).

How do you know you know you?



WHEN A TREE FALLS IN YOUR LIFE, YOU BECOME A VICTIM. A victim of your lack of preparation. Really, you could have cut down the tree. Really, you could have asked your parents to cut off those weak branches. Really, you could have slept in another room. That way, even when the storm came and shook the tree you would've been okay.

Really, you could've been prepared.

Prepared like a schmutz who puts on his sister's glasses and gets a headache?

Exactly.

Our decisions on the major issues like whether God exists affect what we believe about things like the value of humanity. For example . . . if there's no such thing as a loving God, what gives humanity any value? If God does exist, how does that affect humanity's value? If humans do have value, how does that affect how we treat unborn children, homeless people, abused girlfriends, starving children, and AIDS patients?

How do you know if the homeless guy downtown has value? When you see the pregnant sophomore class president heading into an abortion clinic, that's okay, right? (*What makes it wrong?*) When your best friend gets his future read by a tarot card reader, it's groovy? (*Why wouldn't it be?*)

What makes unborn life so special? Why should sex be only for married people? Why does evil exist? Why should you believe 2,000-year-old tales about the afterlife? How can you know with certainty that God really exists?

REALLY, YOU COULD BE BETTER PREPARED. |

Hmmm...

your dismantled life

WHERE'D IT ALL COME FROM?

"EVERYTHING ELSE CAN WAIT, BUT THE SEARCH FOR GOD CANNOT." *GEORGE HARRISON*

2 THE WAY I SEE IT

EVERYTHING
ELSE CAN WAIT.



"God
is
dead."
Friedrich
Nietzsche

"Only fools say in their hearts,
There is no God."
Psalm 14:1

THE SEARCH FOR GOD CANNOT.

"Men of Athens, I notice that you are very religious in every way, for as I was walking along I saw your many shrines. And one of your altars had this inscription on it: 'To an Unknown God.' This God, whom you worship without knowing, is the one I'm telling you about. He is the God who made the world and everything in it. Since he is Lord of heaven and earth, he doesn't live in man-made temples." *THE APOSTLE PAUL, speaking to an audience in Athens, Greece (Acts 17:22-24)*

a fight with sticks

"IT'S ALL IN THE MACHINE," your professor says, looking over the class of eager faces. "You are a highly complex mechanism. A combination of chemical reactions, synapses firing faster than the speed of light, and emotions created by cause and effect. You are a perfectly formed, wonderfully evolved species. A self-existent, autonomous, high-tech machine."

He goes on and on. This is a speech he's obviously practiced a lot. It's the speech he gives to his freshman classes at the beginning of each semester. As you listen to his eloquent oration on the divinity of humankind, you're reminded of your youth pastor's words: "You are not a complex machine. You are not God. You are a miracle. You are loved by the Creator who carefully knit you together for a purpose."

And, without thinking, you stand in the middle of the professor's speech. Before you know it, the words "What if you're wrong?" fall out of your mouth.

Wearing an angry and confused expression, the prof turns in your direction. "Excuse me," he says, leaning against the dry-erase board. "Did you have something you wanted to share with the class?"

And, like you've been taught, you politely direct your comments to him. "No, sir. I was just saying, do you allow for the possibility that you might be wrong? A complex machine that doesn't know with certainty its origin has to allow for the possibility of doubt."

"Ahhhh, doubt. Yes, I've thought of this." The professor looks at the class. "Students, before you stands one machine challenging another machine. If we were to duel, who would win?"

From the back, one student yells out, "Whoever is smarter."

"No, no, no," the prof retorts. "Think deeper. If we were given sticks, who would win?"


Another student shouts, "The one with the bigger stick!"

"Exactly!" The prof continues the student's thought: "One of us certainly would win—the one with the biggest, strongest stick."

Looking over the class and then turning his attention to you, the prof takes on a mentor tone. "In all cases, the stronger machine wins. You are the stronger machine. Stronger than the other microorganisms who challenged you. Stronger than the elephants, tigers, and other animals you evolved with. Stronger than the other humans who challenged your ancestors. In all cases, the stronger survive. **You are the result of very lucky amoebas.**"

You're feeling a little conquered at this point. Walking right up to you, standing inches from your face, the prof stares into your eyes. "This I know with certainty. This I know without any doubt. In a fight with sticks, one always conquers. At the very core of it, this is the basic construct of evolution. This I know to be truer than the existence of any unseen divine being."

"So, we're divine?" It's all you can think to say, and it comes out half question, half statement.

"We're as divine as anything that has ever existed. We are the climax of nature. We are as divine as any other being. We are the perfection of evolution," he says, motioning for you to sit down and turning to write a few scientific "truths" on the whiteboard. 

THINK

How does the statement "Humanity is an evolved machine" contrast with "Humanity is created in the image of God"?

How does the concept of evolution affect the value of human life?

What does the statement "Humans are knit together by God's hand"

say about the value of humanity?

IT'S LIKE THIS...

Either God
exists **or**
he doesn't.

HUMANS ARE CREATED, EVOLVED, OR REBORN FROM A PREVIOUS EXISTENCE. Your answer to this question dictates the value you place on human life. How you answer the “Does God exist?” question affects **all** your other beliefs.

The brain generates 25 watts, enough to power a lightbulb.

The typical human scalp has 100,000 hairs.

Most of us make about 10,000 gallons of spit in a lifetime.

Nerve impulses to the brain travel as fast as 170 mph.

Most people breathe about 10 million times a year.

The human heart beats about 3 billion times in a lifetime.

The stomach produces a new layer of mucus every two weeks. If it didn't, it would digest itself.

The small intestine is about 22 feet long.

The human liver has about 500 different functions.

Each square inch of skin has about 20 feet of blood vessels.

Each cell in the human body contains about eight feet of DNA.

The average adult human has about 100 trillion cells.

Our bodies have about 650 muscles.

The average human has about 60,000 miles of blood vessels.

Skin is the largest organ and on average is about 25 square feet with about 45 miles of nerves.



the grand canyon

YOU'VE BEEN DOING THIS FOR YEARS. Each summer your family treks to the Grand Canyon. The first eight times it was thrilling. You're older now, less patient with the old pop-up. Less patient for cold lunch-meat sandwiches. Annoyed with the annual hike to the base of the canyon.

The crowd gathers for the ranger-led tour of the rim. Like last year, this tour goes over the formation of the canyon, including the history of the Colorado River and the millions of years it took for the river to form the famous geographic wonder.

"And this area shows the development of the canyon," the ranger continues. Until now you've not really paid attention. "Archaeologists have discovered that the development of the canyon began over 20 million years ago."

This piques your interest, and you want to pay closer attention, but the lady standing next to you won't stop talking to her husband.

"Humanity is amazing, isn't it, dear?"

"Yes, sweetheart. It's amazing to know that our ancestors saw this land before this canyon formed."

"Yes. Before we were walking. When humans weren't much more than amoebas."

Wow. "Whatever," you mutter under your breath. Unfortunately, it's just loud enough for the lady and her husband to hear.

"Dear, are you okay?" she asks, looking at you in a concerned way.

"I'm fine." You don't look up so she can't see you almost laughing from embarrassment.

"My husband and I were just remarking about how interesting all of this is. I'm not surprised that it took millions of years. It took time for us to learn to walk on two legs, and it took thousands of years for the frog to lose its tail."

You're not sure how to respond, so you continue to look at the ground. Unfortunately, the lady is persistent and won't leave you alone until you say something back.

"What do you think about all of this?" she continues to prod.

"Well," you begin, not knowing what you're going to say or how exactly you're going to finish your thought. "I'm not sure we can know everything that happened millions of years ago. Can we really trust scientists to tell us how old things are or when things happened?"

"Why, sure," the old lady says, looking at you with grandmotherly eyes. "We can trust them because they've got years of training. They've got equipment to test and prove their theories."

The lady's husband apparently overhears the two of you talking and can't resist joining the conversation. "What are you babbling about, Gloria?"

"We were just talking about theories, dear. My new friend here feels that . . ."

Her husband pats you on the head. "This is adult thinking. You believe what you want. You'll understand the truth someday." |

*Ummm...
THANKS.*

"It's important to acknowledge that there's another force somewhere. I don't know what shape it's in. I don't know if it's sitting on our shoulders. But something's there."

DENNIS FRANZ,
who plays a fallen celestial being
in *City of Angels*²

THINK

What does the concept of evolution say about the inherent value of the earth?

How does the statement "God created the heavens and the earth" affect our view of the earth?

Do Christians have to believe that God created the earth?

IT'S LIKE THIS...

"We believe, however, that traditional dogmatic or authoritarian religions that place revelation, God, ritual, or creed above human needs and experience do a disservice to the human species. Any account of nature should pass the tests of scientific evidence; in our judgment, the dogmas and myths of traditional religions do not do so." *HUMANIST MANIFESTO II*⁹

"Look, God is all-powerful. Who is a teacher like him? No one can tell him what to do. . . . See how he spreads the lightning around him and how it lights up the depths of the sea. God's voice is glorious in the thunder. We can't even imagine the greatness of his power. He directs the snow to fall on the earth and tells the rain to pour down. Then everyone stops working so they can watch his power." *JOB 36:22-23, 30; 37:5-7*

Either
the
Earth
was
created
by a
divine
being
or
it's the
result of
random
physical,
chemical,
and
biological
reactions.

There are
no other
choices.

All belief systems (science, Christianity, etc.) rely on faith to prove what they think is true about the world.