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PREFACE

Millions of people around the world still believe in and pray to the God of the Bible. The Bible tells of an all-powerful, all-knowing being who exists outside space and time as we know it and who created the universe. This God is supernatural—that is, above nature—yet has personality and can intellectually communicate with humans, giving instruction, guidance, wisdom and comfort. His power sustains all the processes of the universe, including life, and even the laws of nature are subject to his will. Miracles can be wrought in our world by his power—that is, he can cause outcomes contrary to those predicted by the observed laws of science.

The Bible records many examples of miracles that occurred down through history which served to demonstrate that this supernatural power exists. In a number of instances the miracles occurred before a multitude of witnesses, such as the parting of the Red Sea by Moses and the raising of Lazarus four days after he died by Jesus.

The Bible also tells of the Creator's guidelines for how humans are to live (standards for morality). For example, we are told it is wrong to murder, to steal, to bear false witness or to have sex outside a vowed, lifelong, loving relationship with a member of the opposite sex. We are also told that God is seeking to have a

personal, loving, intellectual relationship with each one of us and that those who respond affirmatively to this invitation will live forever and enjoy fellowship with their Creator. Such an offer must surely be considered the most important matter we will ever have to decide in our lives.

Many scientists and academics, however, now teach that there is no supernatural God and that everything, including life, exists as a result of natural forces. In fact, there is a prevailing idea that this naturalism is part and parcel of science. This leaves no room for a supernatural God in our understanding of our existence. There is no God factor in our daily lives and no hope of having eternal life with God in heaven.

A few years ago, Oxford University professor Dr Richard Dawkins, in his Voltaire Lectures to the British Humanist Association, talked about religious belief as being a kind of virus in the human software. Dr Dawkins argued that belief in a supernatural God is essentially irrational.

Recently I picked up a book called *Think Big* written by Dr Ben Carson, Director of Paediatric Neurosurgery at Johns Hopkins University Hospital in Baltimore. Near the end of the book this highly successful brain surgeon writes of an answer to prayer during difficult surgery. While operating deep inside a patient's brain, an artery broke loose in an area he couldn't see. This resulted in vigorous bleeding. Because no one could see where the bleeding was coming from it looked as though the patient may be lost. Dr Carson started praying for God's help. Just then he did something that later seemed irrational. He placed the bipolar forceps into the pool of blood where the bleeding might be coming from and the blood started being sucked away. He prayed earnestly, 'God, you've got to stop this bleeding. Please, God, I cannot control it.' Dr Carson reports that, as strange as it may

seem, at that instant the bleeding stopped without his ever being able to locate the cause. Afterwards the patient awakened and recovered fully.¹

Dr Dawkins argues that religion is irrational, but Dr Carson's irrational action and the unexplainable event which followed saved the life of the patient. Dr Carson prayed because he could see no natural way of stopping the bleeding. When the natural means were exhausted he called on supernatural means—the God factor. While experiences such as this do not necessarily prove that God exists, the fact that a highly educated and eminently respected surgeon such as Dr Carson believes in God suggests that such a belief is not excluded by the findings of science.

In 1997 the leading science journal *Nature* published a survey of religious belief among scientists in the United States.² The authors found that nearly 40 per cent of the 1000 scientists surveyed said they believed in a personal God—'a God in intellectual and effective communication with humankind, i.e. a God to whom one may pray in expectation of receiving an answer'. This survey shows that despite a prevailing popular belief to the contrary, many highly educated people do believe there is a personal supernatural God. However, relatively little is known about the reasons such people believe and the experiences that have resulted from their faith.

Some academics, such as Dr Carson, reveal personal answers to these questions in books they have written. Others, such as Dr Robert Herrmann, Professor of Mathematics at the United States Naval Academy, explain the reasons for their faith in God on their personal Internet sites.³

The purpose of this book is to reveal the diversity of reasons why highly educated university academics believe in God. It opens the debate over the existence of God to a wider audience—not

with narrow and closed arguments but with a straightforward and wide-ranging analysis of the issues confronting both the scientific community and the general public. In this book 40 scientists and other academics explain their reasons for believing in a personal God. They include emeritus professors, heads of university departments, physicists, chemists, biologists, psychologists, engineers, medical researchers and mathematicians. The articles in this book are not exhaustive. The 40 academics who contributed to this effort gave their personal response as to why they choose to believe in the supernatural Creator God of the Bible, in the literal resurrection of Jesus Christ, in miracles and in answers to prayer.

No one was asked to write on a particular topic or from a particular perspective. However, I have arranged the final papers in two sections to allow for a developing discussion from two key perspectives: (1) Reason and Faith, and (2) Faith and Experience.

In the first section, examples are presented of the reasons why academics choose to believe. The authors describe the facts that sustain their beliefs and state the arguments to justify their faith, confidence, reliance and trust in the ability and goodness of God. They tell of the overwhelming impression of design in nature as evidence of a Creator's mind behind our existence; of the harmony of the mathematical functions that explain the various laws of nature and suggest organisation by an all-knowing intelligent mind; of the unique and precise astronomical position of our earth in the solar system which enables life as we know it to continue to exist; of the shortcomings of the theory of evolution such as its inability to account for the development of language capacity in human beings, the complex lifecycles of plants and the irreducible complexity of living cells; of the historical evidence of the authenticity of the biblical text; of the accurate fulfilment of biblical prophecy; of the tremendous good achieved in the world

by those dedicated to serving others as Jesus instructed us to do (such as the hundreds of mission hospitals that were set up around the world last century by dedicated Christian doctors); of the biblical principles that have underpinned the freedom we enjoy in Western democracies.

Some of the essays in this first section reveal rare intellectual insights by the authors and arguments not commonly encountered in the wider literature. To do them justice requires time to contemplate the issues they raise.

While all the authors confess a personal experience as a result of their faith in God, I have placed in the second section those chapters which, in my view, present a greater emphasis on the experiences that were a result of their faith in God. The authors tell of putting their faith to the test. They report the actual observations of the facts or events that have taken place because of their faith. These writers present the knowledge of God they have gained as a result of practical demonstrations of God's power in their own lives. They describe experiences of unexplainable healings in answer to prayer; of revelations that solved otherwise unsolvable problems; of experiences with evil spirits; of the blessings of faith that led to highly successful careers in service for God; of personal experiences of God's presence in traumatic situations such as heart bypass surgery; of unusual experiences of providence such as being saved from committing murder; of prayers that changed an abusive father and prayers that changed an adulterous husband; of finding God again after the tragic death of a child.

Throughout the chapters of this book, irrespective of whether I have included them in the 'Reason and Faith' or 'Faith and Experience' sections, there is a common consensus that faith in the God of the Bible leads to real personal experience of the power

and presence of God—empirical evidence that the God factor is real. These essays challenge the overall approach to conventional science education and are essential reading for academics, educators, politicians, parents and students.

John F. Ashton
Sydney, Australia



40 Scientists and Academics Explain Why They Believe in God

Does God exist? Are faith and science compatible? Can we experience God in the twenty-first century? 'Yes', say forty scholars with PhDs in the natural and social sciences.

Accomplished men and women, including professors, heads of university departments, physicists, chemists, biologists, engineers, medical researchers and mathematicians, tell their personal stories of how they encountered God.

For some, scientific evidence and intellectual insight were catalysts for their beliefs. For others it was practical experiences of God's presence in their lives. The diverse reasons these highly educated professionals offer for their faith form a comprehensive, empirical body of evidence for the existence of God.

This is essential reading for anyone who has ever wondered if believing in God is irrational and outmoded. These heartwarming and thought-provoking stories explain how the "God Factor" is the key to a life of both intellectual integrity and spiritual fulfillment.

Dr John Ashton is a research scientist and bestselling author. He holds prize-winning university degrees in chemistry and epistemology, and is a Fellow of the Royal Australian Chemical Institute. He is also the editor of *In Six Days: Why 50 Scientists Choose To Believe in Creation* and (with Michael Westacott) *The Big Argument: 24 Scholars Explore Why Science, Archaeology and Philosophy Haven't Disproved God*.



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