



Isn't Christianity Bad for the Environment?

(How to use Green Issues to Share the Gospel)

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Solas Centre for Public Christianity

www.solas-cpc.org



www.solus-cpc.org



An Environmental Crisis?

- Loss of biodiversity and growing extinction rates
- Deforestation
- Sea level rise
- Pollution, especially plastic in the oceans



“What signatures our species will leave in the strata! We remove whole mountain tops to plunder the coal they contain. The oceans dance with hundreds of thousands of tons of plastic waste, slowly settling into sea-floor sediments. Weaponry tests have dispersed artificial radionuclides globally. The burning of rainforests for monoculture production sends out smog-palls that settle into the soils of nations. A nitrogen spike, indicated in ice-cores and sediments, will be one of the key chemical insignias of the Anthropocene, caused by the mass global use of nitrogen-rich fertilizers and by fossil-fuel burning. Biodiversity levels



nations. A nitrogen spike, indicated in ice-cores and sediments, will be one of the key chemical insignias of the Anthropocene, caused by the mass global use of nitrogen-rich fertilizers and by fossil-fuel burning. Biodiversity levels are crashing worldwide as we hasten into the sixth great extinction event, while the soaring number of a small number of livestock species ensures the geological posterity in the fossil record of sheep, cows, and pigs. We have become titanic world-makers, our legacy legible for epochs to come.”

Robert Macfarlane





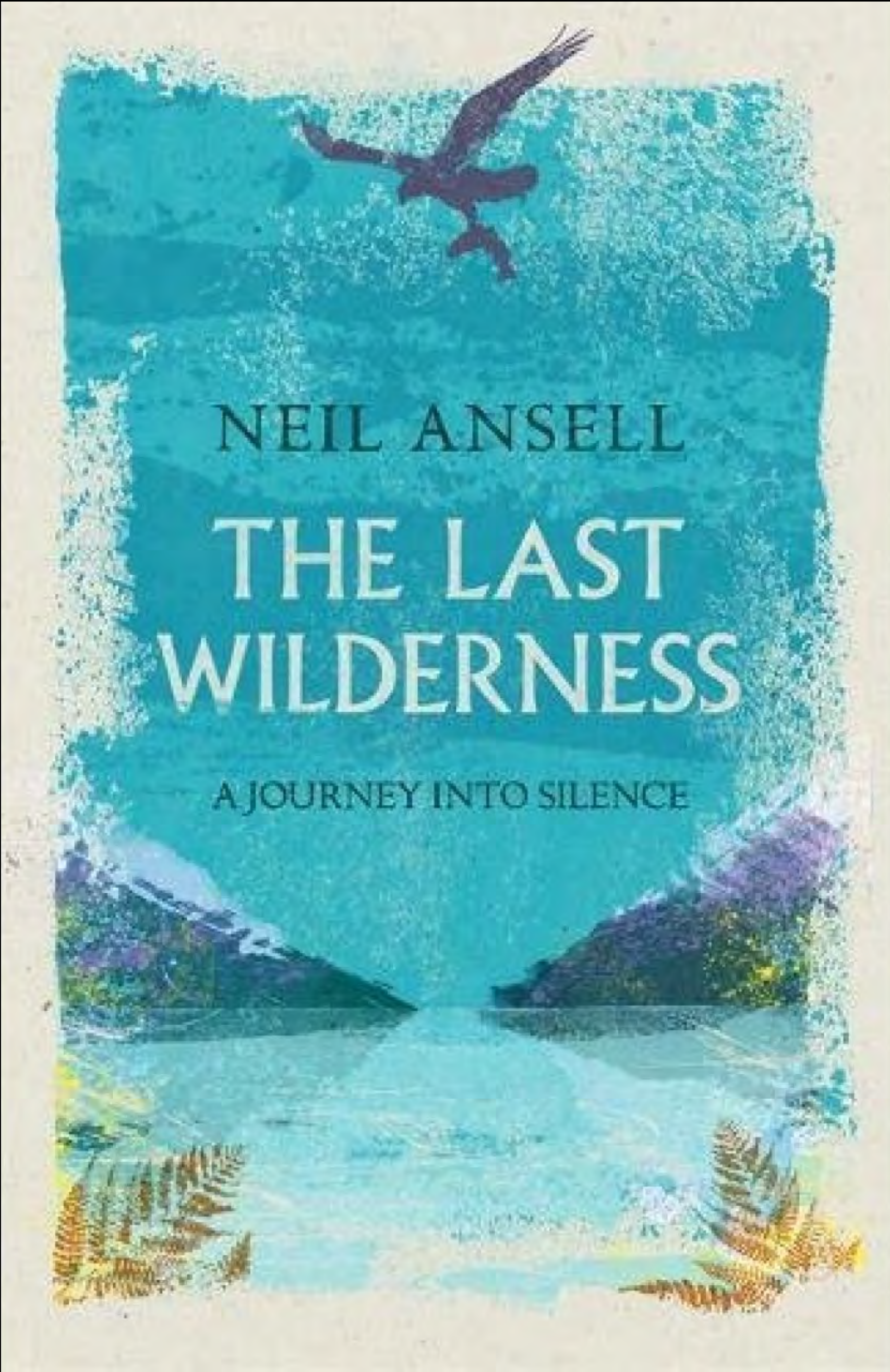
Lynn White Jr
(1907-1987)

“We shall continue to have a worsening ecologic crisis until we reject the Christian axiom that nature has no reason for existence save to serve man ... Both our present science and our present technology are so tinctured with orthodox Christian arrogance toward nature that no solution for our ecologic crisis can be expected from them alone. Since the roots of our trouble are so largely religious, the remedy must also be essentially religious, whether we call it that or not. We must rethink and refeel our nature and destiny.”

Lynn White Jr

‘The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis’, *Science* 155.3767 (1967) 1206-1207





NEIL ANSELL

THE LAST WILDERNESS

A JOURNEY INTO SILENCE

“I was surprised to come upon a man in the depths of the woods. He had a shotgun cocked in the crook of his arm, and was wearing a deerstalker. He asked me if I had seen a big grey fox, and happily I was unable to help him. The ‘pine marten lady’ had warned me that many people locally had a relationship with wildlife that consisted almost exclusively of killing it it is a rather biblical outlook, to see the world solely as a resource placed there for our own benefit.”

Neil Ansell

The Last Wilderness: A Journey into Silence (London: Tinder Press, 2018) p182-183



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Group Discussion

1. From where might some people have got the idea that Christians don't care about the environment?
2. Is it true evangelical Christians have sometimes been tempted to neglect talking about the environment? If so, why might that be?



“I know who made the environment and he’s coming back and going to burn it all up. So, yes, I drive an SUV.”

Mark Driscoll

Catalyst Conference in Dallas, Texas, 2013

Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.”

Genesis 1:26 (RSV)

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Genesis 1:26 (RSV)





A scenic landscape featuring a calm lake in the foreground that perfectly reflects a row of tall, dark evergreen trees. In the background, a range of rugged, dark mountains rises against a clear blue sky. The slopes of the mountains are covered in green grass, and a winding path is visible on the right side. The overall scene is peaceful and majestic.

And God saw that it was good.

Genesis 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25



“Aren’t two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father’s will.”



Why All of This Matters

Why All This Matters

If we love God, we will care about what He cares about

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not die, but have eternal life.”

John 3:16 (NIV)

Why All This Matters

If we love God, we will care about what He cares about

Challenges our materialism and consumerism

“You are God-made. We have forgotten that we have far more in common with a honeybee than we do with our SUV or DVD.”

J. Matthew Sleeth

Serve God, Save the Planet: A Christian Call to Action (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007) p60



Why All This Matters

If we love God, we will care about what He cares about

Challenges our materialism and consumerism

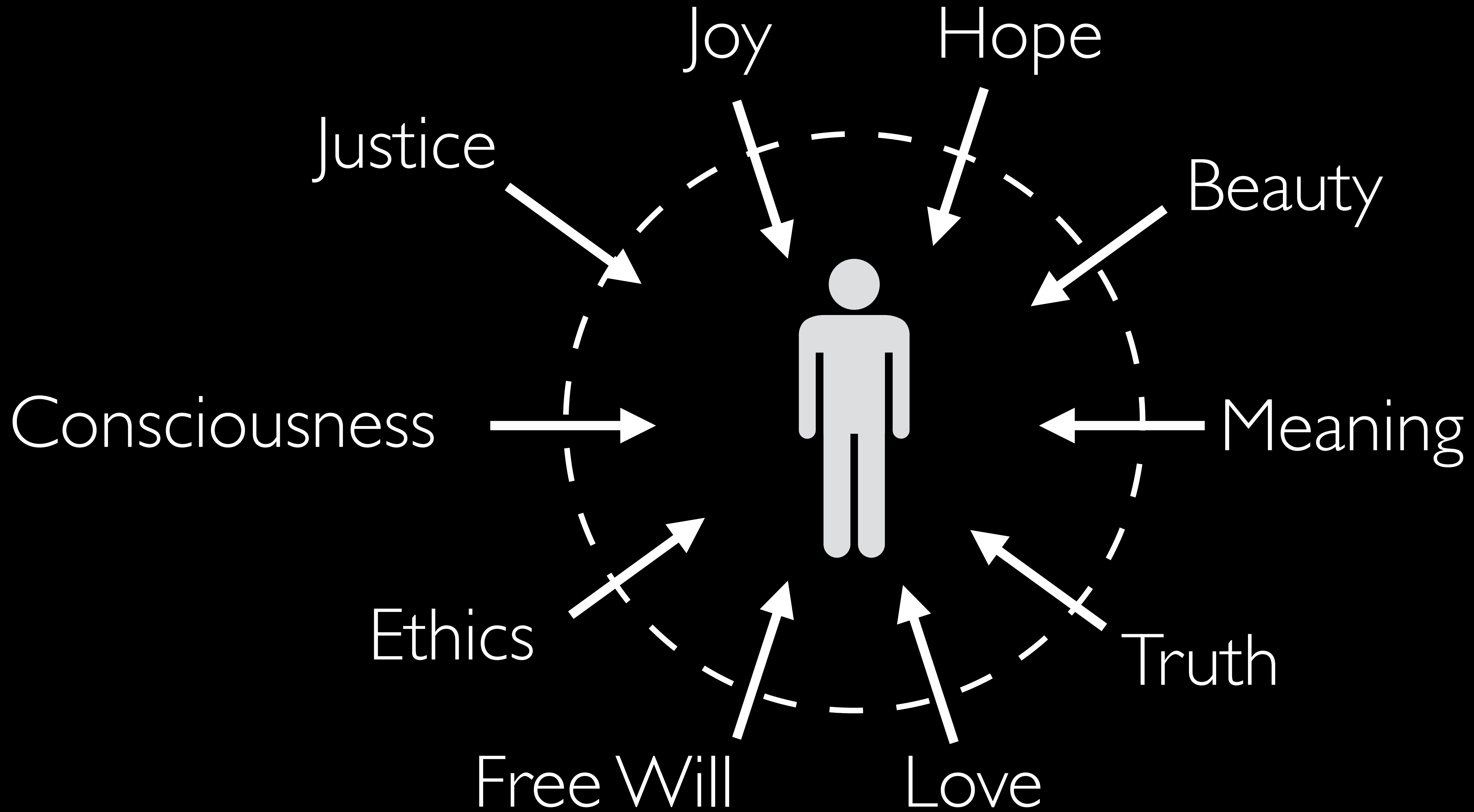
Why All This Matters

If we love God, we will care about what He cares about

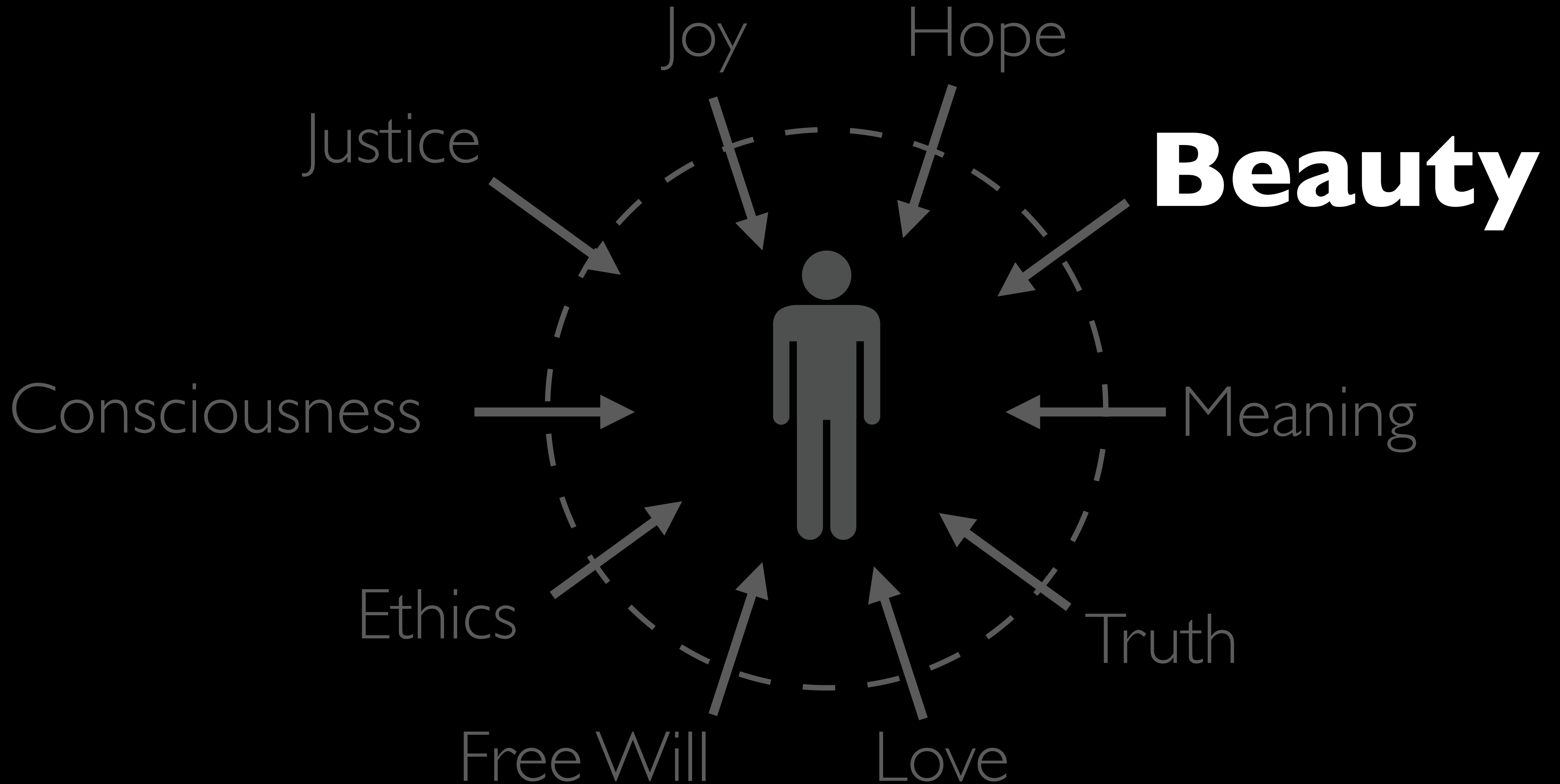
Challenges our materialism and consumerism

Helps us make gospel connections for our friends

The “Ghosts of Transcendence”



The “Ghosts of Transcendence”



“Beauty is unbearable, drives us to despair, offering us for a minute the glimpse of an eternity that we should like to stretch out over the whole of time.”

Albert Camus

Notebooks 1935-1951 (New York: Marlow & Company, 1963) p6



Why All This Matters: Six Responses

If we love God, we will care about what He cares about

Challenges our materialism and consumerism

Helps us make gospel connections for our friends

Why All This Matters: Six Responses

If we love God, we will care about what He cares about

Challenges our materialism and consumerism

Helps us make gospel connections for our friends

Ignore nature and people will drift into weird spiritualities

The book cover features a detailed illustration of a fox with a white chest and belly, perched on a thick, gnarled tree branch. The fox is looking towards the viewer. The background is a lush forest with many trees and a ground covered in green grass and small blue flowers. The overall style is that of a classic children's book illustration.

As heard on
**BOOK OF
THE WEEK**
BBC RADIO 4

The Nature of
Spring

Jim Crumley

Jim Crumley

“I decided Iona next day would be my respite. Go as a pilgrim, supplicating my God whose name I spell Nature. I have written before that I discarded churches years before, found what I needed in Nature. But Iona was extraordinary, and if the appropriate word for the defining characteristic of the place is not “spirituality”, then I don’t know what else it could be.”

Jim Crumley

The Nature of Spring (Salford: Saraband, 2019) p101



Why All This Matters

If we love God, we will care about what He cares about

Challenges our materialism and consumerism

Helps us make gospel connections for our friends

Ignore nature and people will drift into weird spiritualities

Only Christianity says why we should care about nature



But **why** should we care?



www.solas-cpc.org

Foundations for Environmentalism

Secular Attempts to Solve the Problem

- Appeal to emotion



THUNBERG



SAVE OUR SEALIFE

SENTINELS OF THE SOUND BEACH CLEANUP

WEST SEATTLE ALKI BEACH

Saturday June 14, 2014 9:30am - 12:30pm

(meet at Statue of Liberty, Alki Ave and 61st Ave SW, please RSVP @ sealsitters.org)

Many thousands of marine animals die each year from derelict fishing gear, marine debris and pollution. They are entangled and drowned by nets and gear. Strangled and contaminated by plastics.

Make a difference and join us to remove litter from Alki Beach.

POLLUTION HAS A FACE

Sandy, a tiny seal pup, was rescued by Seal Sitters from a West Seattle beach in August of 2011. She was rehabilitated at PAWS Wildlife and, finally healthy, released back to the waters of Puget Sound.

Sandy was found dead sixty-six days later, entangled in derelict fishing line.

LET'S CLEAN UP OUR ACT

Help save sea birds, turtles and marine mammals. Pick up trash - protect wildlife and our fragile Salish Sea.



PAWS WILDLIFE AND RECOVERY

photos: PAWS
learn more about Sandy at www.slutberblog.org



Foundations for Environmentalism

Secular Attempts to Solve the Problem

- Appeal to emotion
- Show how environmental care benefits us







Foundations for Environmentalism

Secular Attempts to Solve the Problem

- Appeal to emotion
- Show how environmental care benefits us
- Claim that “we owe it to future generations”
- Point out that we are closely related to animals



96% of our DNA in common



Carbon atoms in common



60% of our DNA in common

Group Discussion

1. Do you agree that there isn't really a secular foundation for environmentalism?
2. How as Christians would we answer the question "Why should I care for the environment?"
3. How might we connect this issue to Jesus and the gospel?

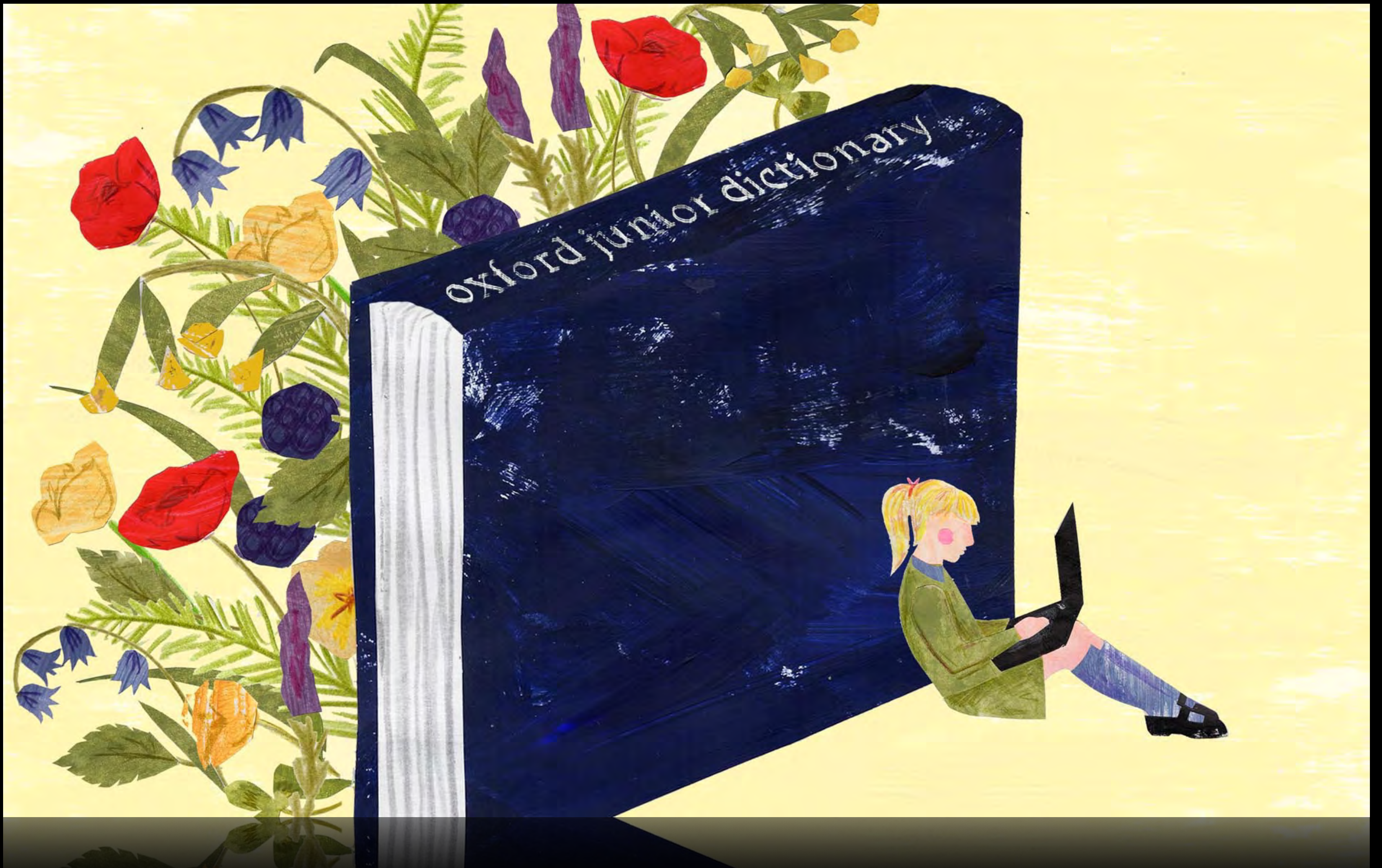


Environmental Claims are Moral Claims



www.solas-cpc.org

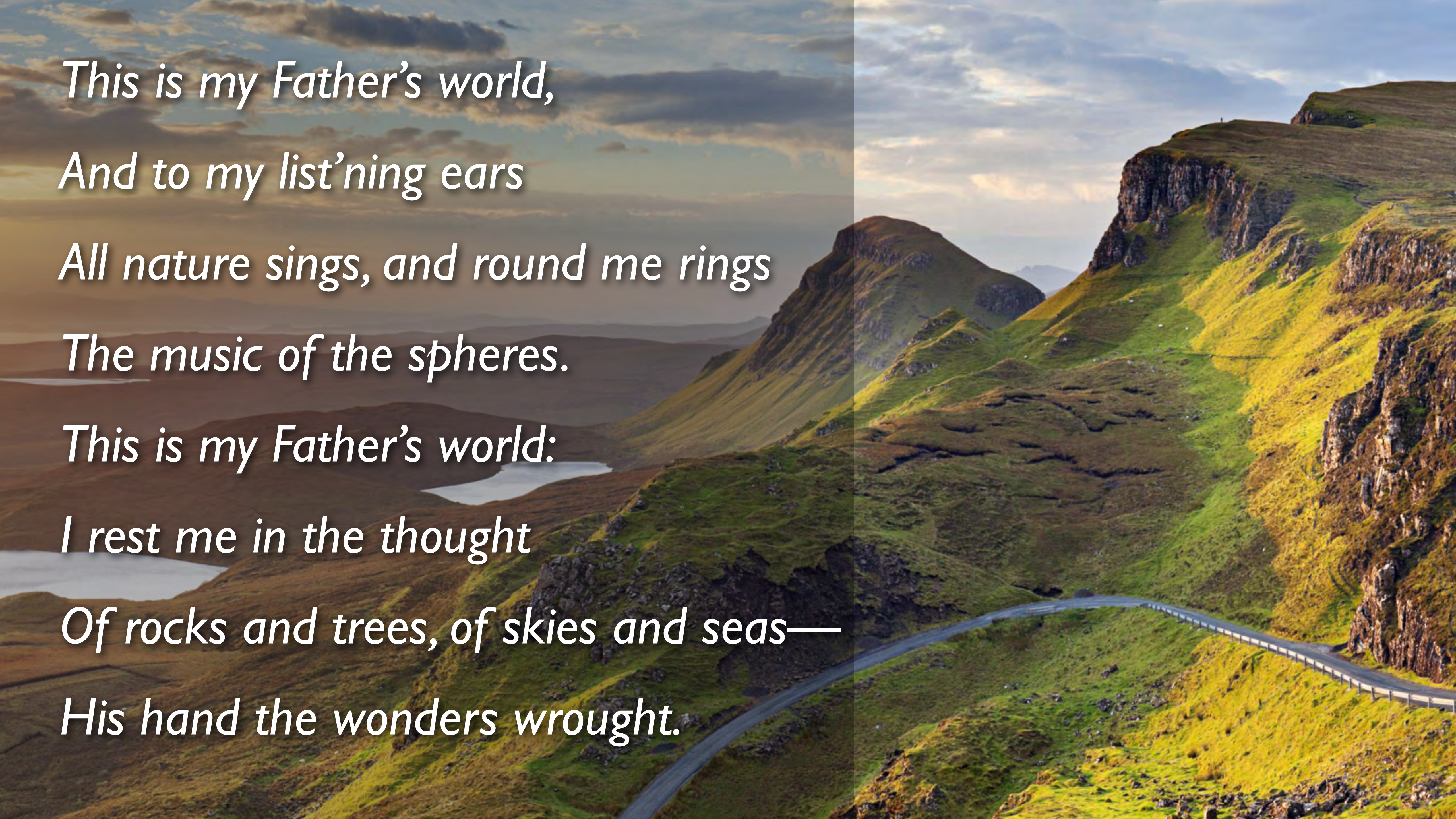
Gratitude



The heavens declare the glory of God;
the skies proclaim the work of his hands.
Day after day they pour forth speech;
night after night they reveal knowledge.
They have no speech, they use no words;
no sound is heard from them.
Yet their voice goes out into all the earth,
their words to the ends of the world.



Maltbie Davenport Babcock
(1858-1901)



*This is my Father's world,
And to my list'ning ears
All nature sings, and round me rings
The music of the spheres.
This is my Father's world:
I rest me in the thought
Of rocks and trees, of skies and seas—
His hand the wonders wrought.*

*This is my Father's world:
The birds their carols raise,
The morning light, the lily white,
Declare their Maker's praise.
This is my Father's world:
He shines in all that's fair;
In the rustling grass I hear Him pass,
He speaks to me everywhere.*



This is my Father's world:

Oh, let me ne'er forget

That though the wrong seems oft so strong,

God is the ruler yet.

This is my Father's world,

The battle is not done:

Jesus who died shall be satisfied,

And earth and Heav'n be one.





Gus Speth

“I used to think that the top environmental problems were biodiversity loss, ecosystem collapse and climate change. I thought that thirty years of good science could address these problems. I was wrong. The top environmental problems are selfishness, greed, and apathy, and to deal with these we need a cultural and spiritual transformation. And we scientists don’t know how to do that.”

Gus Speth







“My Father’s World”: Three Responses

Gratitude

“My Father’s World”: Three Responses

Gratitude

Hope

“In that coming together, the ‘very good’ that God spoke over creation at the beginning will be enhanced, not abolished. The New Testament never imagines that, when the new heavens and new earth arrive, God will say, in effect, ‘well, that first creation wasn’t so good after all, was it? Aren’t you glad we’ve got rid of all that space, time and matter?’”

N.T.Wright

Surprised by Hope (London: SPCK, 2007) p271



“My Father’s World”: Three Responses

Gratitude

Hope

Love

“Can you identify a greater number of trees or cars? If the Bible says God knows every flower and bird, why do we spend so much effort knowing the names of man-made items. Maybe we’re paying attention to the wrong things. Maybe this is why life seems so hard. If this is our Father’s world, maybe we should pay more attention to it.”

J. Matthew Sleeth

Serve God, Save the Planet: A Christian Call to Action (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007) p61





God saw all that he had made,
and it was very good.

Genesis 1:31

Short/Answers

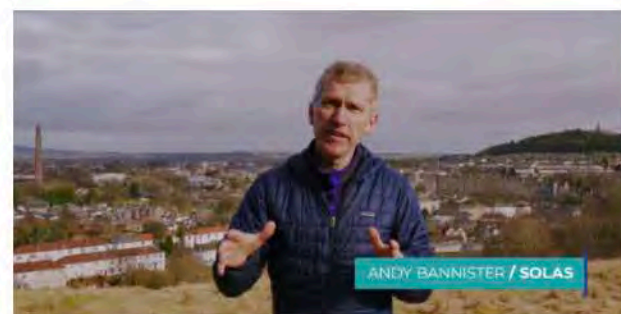
Webinars

Talks

Other Videos



Why is God Against My Sexual Freedom?



Doesn't Christianity Impede Moral Progress?



Why Are There So Many Different Bible Translations?



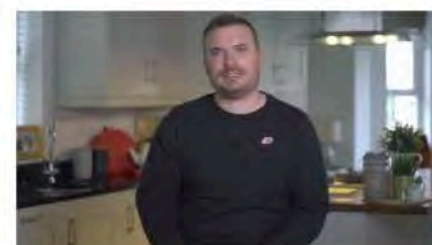
If God is Good, Why is There Natural Evil?



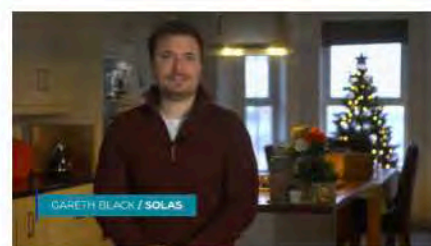
Isn't Teaching Your Faith to Your Children "Indoctrination"?



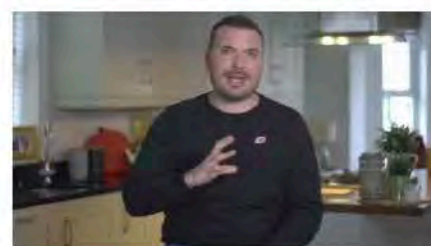
Would The World Be A Better Place Without Religion?



Is the God of the Old Testament a Moral Monster?



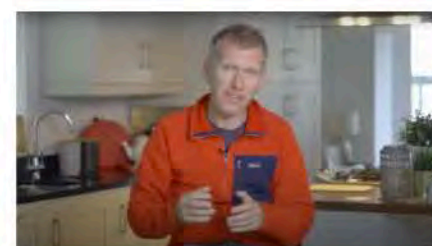
Is Christmas Cancelled?



Why Would God Allow Me to Have Depression?



Why Are Some Atheists So Afraid of Changing Their Minds?



Can We Find Hope in Life Without God?



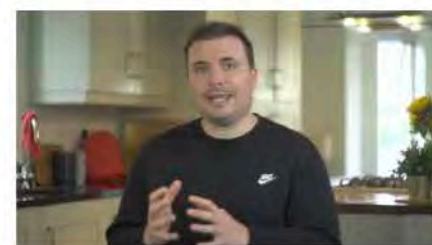
Why Do You Christians Force Your Beliefs On Others?



How Can I Know the Presence of God in Dark Times?



What About Those Who Haven't Heard of Jesus?

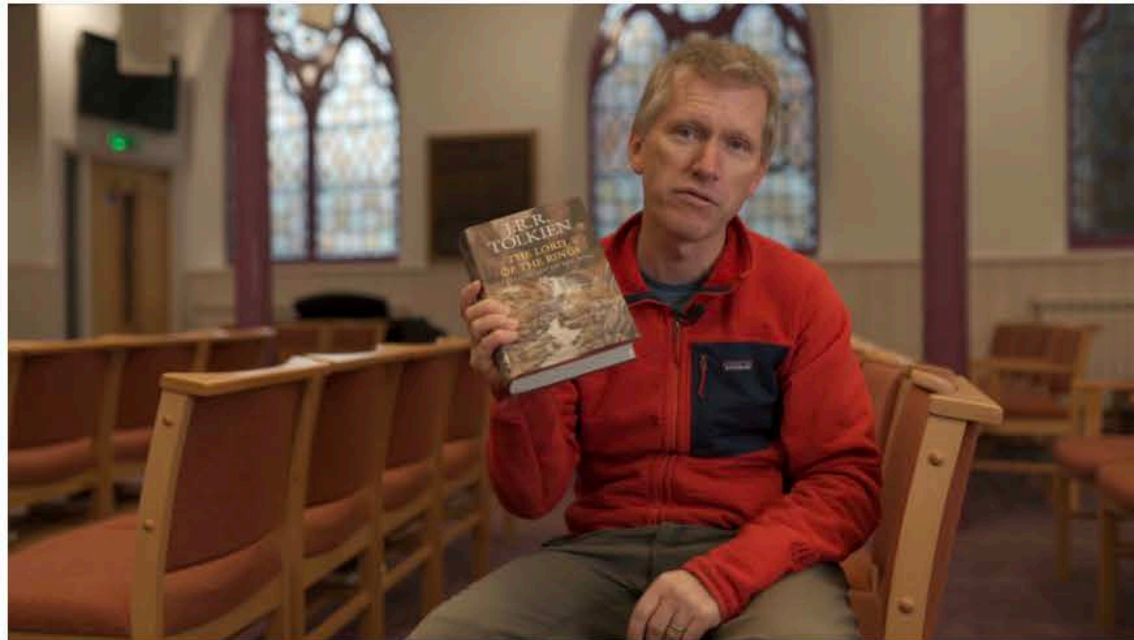


Can I Become a Christian If I Still Have Questions?

Short Answers

www.solas-cpc.org/shortanswers

Have You Ever Wondered?



What Is Love?



Have You Ever Wondered Why the Best Stories Are About Good and Evil?



Have You Ever Wondered Why We Long for Happiness?



Why Are Human Beings So Curious?



Did Jesus Actually Exist?

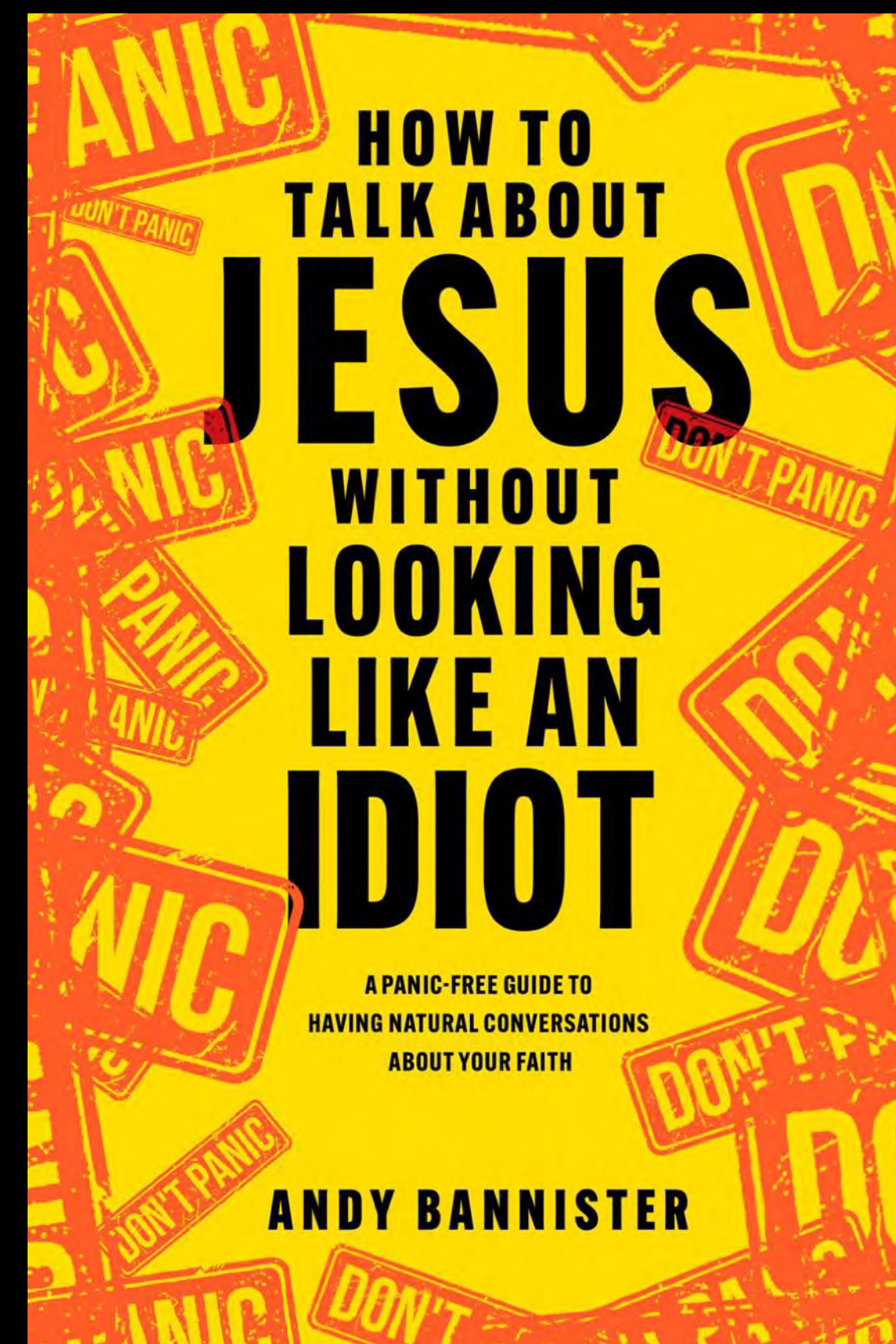
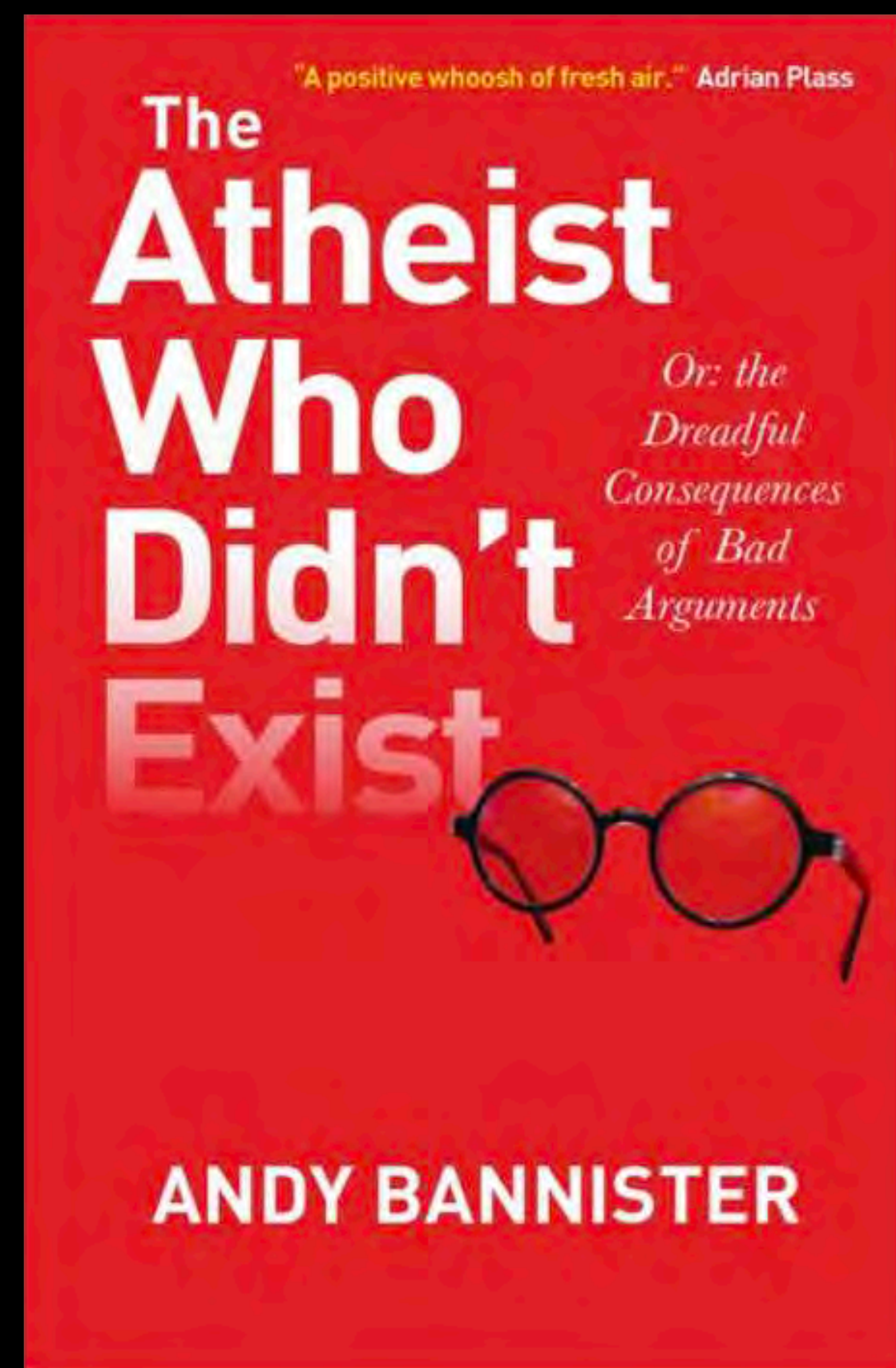
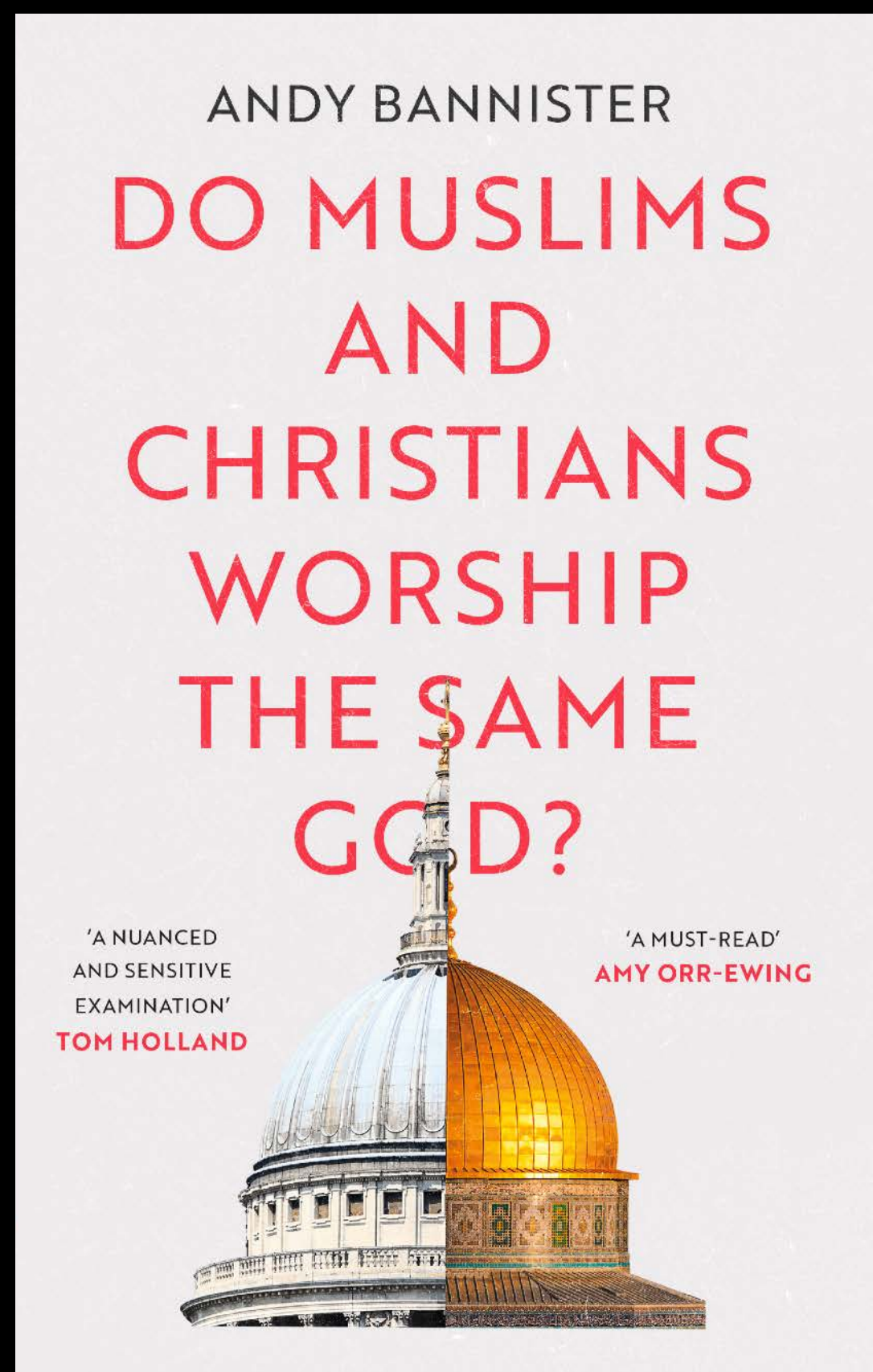


Have You Ever Wondered Why We Long For Justice?

Why Are Human Beings So Curious?

Did Jesus Actually Exist?

Have You Ever Wondered Why We Long For Justice?



Support Solas for the price of a coffee
and enjoy a **great read** as a gift

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