

HINDUS AND NEW AGERS IN SEARCH OF TRUTH

If you are a Hindu or a New Ager with a desire, or an openness, for greater spiritual truth,
then this booklet is for you. In your quest for truth don't fail to consider the one recognized sage and prophetic leader of all time who actually claimed to be . . . truth!

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by Timothy Cross

INTRODUCTION

In college many years ago, I took a comparative religion course taught by a very sincere Hindu instructor. He was obviously a kind and gentle person. I was aware as I took his course that the Eastern way of looking at reality was drastically different from my Western world view with its roots in Greek and Hebrew thought.

In the West our thinking processes have been shaped by such people as Plato, Aristotle, Socrates, Moses, Jesus, Paul, etc. Eastern thought can assimilate and tolerate, what to the Western mind would be, contradictions, paradoxes, and ambiguity. Westerners are inclined to think in blacks and whites, while Easterners often think in shades of gray.

It seems that in Eastern thought it is not so much a matter of *what* you believe, as much as *how sincerely* you believe what you believe. For example, Hinduism will tolerate other religions, so long as one is sincere.—Correct? If two runners were running, an Eastern runner would not be as concerned about the direction as about the effort being shown. The Western runner, on the other hand, would be more concerned about reaching a certain destination or goal. The Western runner might say, "What good does it do to run with all your heart if you're running in the wrong direction?" The Eastern runner would reply, "There is no wrong direction if you run with heart."

Why read this booklet? Because of truth. While you may be running with heart, do you *know* God? While it may seem presumptuous, I would like to tell you how you can know God personally. In Hinduism, Brahma (the Universal World Soul) is thought to be impersonal and unknowable. While such beliefs are sincerely held, I believe they are sincerely wrong. God is a God of love and holiness. He is infinitely personal, and can be known.

What I share, I share in love, with deepest respect for you and the beliefs I know you hold dear. My goal is not to rob you of belief, but to impart a gift: an even deeper belief. What I offer is not another set of religious beliefs, but rather a *relationship* with the living God. Doesn't your heart cry out for that? If so, please read on.

I will begin by discussing some of the foundational beliefs of Hinduism and the New Age Movement, and then present what I believe to be the truth. I don't ask you to agree, but to simply weigh the evidence and listen with your heart, for you may hear the voice of God quietly speaking to you. There are six questions I want to briefly address:

- 1.) Is this world illusion [*maya*], or is it real?
- 2.) Is Brahma [Universal Soul] impersonal?
- 3.) Is truth relative, subject to change?
- 4.) Can we know divine truth with certainty?
- 5.) Who are the Hindu gods you worship?
- 6.) Is Jesus more than just an *avatar*? Who is He really?

I apologize in advance if I in any way misrepresent Hinduism or the New Age Movement. I have tried to faithfully represent each belief system as I understand them. Obviously, you know them far better than I. I will focus primarily on Hinduism, for its teachings are foundational to the New Age Movement, which is Hinduism in Western garb.

IS THE WORLD ILLUSION [MAYA] OR REAL?

Hinduism teaches that the world is *maya* (illusion). Allow me to ask you some questions. If you believe that all is illusion (this life and everything in it), then how is it possible to *know* anything? How do you know you exist? More importantly, how do you know that your illusion is not an illusion?—Do you see the problem?

Are you real? Are you really reading this booklet, or is this too an illusion?—Of course you are reading this booklet. You *know* that. If someone walked up to you and kicked you on the shin (ouch), and you felt the pain, would that pain be real or an illusion? If you truly believe everything is illusion, would you be willing to give someone all your possessions so they could spend some of your illusionary money?—Why not? Because in your heart you *know* it is not an illusion, but real.

You may have heard the joke about the New Age guru who asked a small boy, “Where is your dad today?” The little boy said, “He is home sick.” The guru said, “Tell him he is not really sick. He only thinks he is sick.” The following week the guru saw the boy again and asked where his dad was. The little boy responded, “Oh, he only thinks he is dead.”—Real or illusion?

Our world is filled with pain, babies dying, people oppressing others, etc. Is this pain real or an illusion? If you were dying of cancer, would you like to be told, “This isn't really happening. It's all an illusion.”? Of course you wouldn't. To say that everything is an illusion is to minimize what we instinctively know to be true. For example, is evil real or an illusion? Was Hitler having several million people killed in concentration camps morally wrong and evil? Is a Satanist who kills an innocent baby wrong?—Or is evil just an illusion?—Deep down I think you know the answer. Suffering is real, and so is love. Evil is *not* an illusion, especially if it is happening to you.

I believe that God made us. Life is real, and we are accountable for what we do with our lives. To treat life as an illusion is minimize and potentially miss what God has purposed for your life. I believe life, real life, is an incredible gift. It is not illusion. You and I were put on this earth for a purpose. As you listen to your heart, doesn't your heart cry out, “Life is real. Life does matter.”—The love we show, the choices we make, are important. Why? Because life is real.

IS BRAHMA [UNIVERSAL SOUL] IMPERSONAL?

Hinduism teaches that Brahma, the universal world soul, is impersonal. Judeo-Christian thought teaches that God, the One who created this universe, is personal. So, is God personal or impersonal? Both answers cannot simultaneously be true. The answer is, is personal.”—How do I know?—Very simply. Think with me.

- 1.) “Can something come from nothing.”—No. *Nothing* cannot produce *something*. True?
- 2.) Following this line of reasoning, does it make sense to believe that a God without

intelligence could create people with intelligence? No. (Otherwise, where would the intelligence come from?) Therefore, God must be *intelligent*, incredibly so to create the world we see around us. By sheer observation, it isn't hard to figure out that God must also be *powerful* beyond belief to create a universe billions of light years across. Could a God without personality create people with personality? No. God has to be *infinitely personal* since God created love, joy, etc. which help make up personality. Along this same line of reasoning, why are Hindu temples filled with idols and gods?—Who are these gods you worship? If they are off-shoots of Brahma, how could these gods have derived personality from that which is impersonal? If human souls [*atman*] come from Brahma, how did we acquire personality? How could *something* [personality] come from *nothing* [impersonal Brahma]? It doesn't make sense.

Could a God without feelings create people who can *feel*? Could a God without sight, hearing, a sense of touch, the ability to taste, and the ability to smell, create creatures with these five senses? Again, the probable answer is “No.” It doesn't stand to reason that God would not possess these qualities in some fashion. In like manner, could a God who cannot *communicate* create a race of people who can communicate? Again, no.

3.) Let me interject one caution at this point. Using this line of reasoning, some wrongly conclude that if there is evil in the world then God must also be partially evil (which is the Hindu belief that Brahma has two natures, one good and one evil: Kali and Siva). I disagree for two reasons.

First, if God is all wise and all good, as I think God is, He would know all things, including how things would be if they weren't good. For example, I have never murdered anyone, but that does not mean that I lack the understanding of what murder is. That God should allow evil, as He obviously does, does not mean that He is evil. His allowing the possibility of evil is, I believe, the highest good. God created us as choice-makers with free wills so that we would not be robots. [I use the personal pronouns “He” and “Him” for God, even though I am aware God would supercede all sexual stereotyping. God would contain both male and female characteristics.]

To illustrate what I mean, what if I told you, “I'll take you out for lunch, and you can have whatever you want. You can have pizza, pizza, or pizza. What do you want?”—That is no choice. God, in like manner, could have said, “You have a choice. You can love Me, or you can love Me, or you can love Me.”—Again, that is no choice. For real love and goodness to exist, without us merely being robots, or like a computer, there had to be an alternative, a real choice—evil. The possibility of evil and suffering is necessary if we are to have real free will.

God gave mankind free will, with the ability to freely love or rebel, to do good or evil, with accompanying consequences. Sadly, mankind blew it, and our earth bears the marks of our collective choices. God's choice was good. Many of our choices have been bad. Just as we know right from wrong, God too knows right from wrong; which means that God is wise, not that He is partially evil. For an all-wise God to knowingly do evil doesn't make sense. I reject the notion that God is both good and evil. As popular as the notion is that God [Brahma] is some sort of impersonal “Force” who set things in motion and then stepped out of the picture, it does not stand to reason. God is much more than a “Force.” The God of Christianity, the God I worship, is holy and pure, with no evil whatsoever.—Logically speaking, doesn't that make sense?

The second reason God cannot be evil is that if God is God, then He wrote the rule book. By definition, God is the only one who can truly call good “*good*,” and evil “*evil*.” Whatever He says goes. Our judgments of Him matter little. If He created us, who are we to sit in judgment of Him? We would be using brains He created to criticize the One who made us. That would be like a character in a book criticizing the author for the way the book was written.

4.) Lastly, “If Brahma is impersonal, why should you or I want to give up our personalities and our personhood to be reunited with some *force* where we don't even know we exist?”—Think about it. Who wants to live in a state of unconscious nothingness? I don't.

IS TRUTH RELATIVE?

Hinduism, and much of the New Age Movement, views truth as an illusion, as relative [subject to change, not concrete, not absolute]. I disagree. I believe that truth is truth, no matter what anyone says. There are natural laws of science which we consider to be true [e.g., the law of gravity]. There are also spiritual absolutes which I believe are just as true. Good is good. Evil is evil. God is good. God opposes evil.

To say there are no absolutes is a logical fallacy.—Every argument used to say there are no absolutes depends on absolute truth existing. For example, to say “There are no absolutes,” is an *absolute* statement? To say, “There is no such thing as absolute *truth*” raises the question, “And you know this to be *true*?”

If we were born with a sense of right and wrong, as I think we were, it is because God knows right from wrong and created us with such knowledge.—If I had a candy bar and said, “Here, let me divide this with you” and I kept four-fifths for myself, you would probably say, “Hey, that’s not fair.” Automatically you would have appealed to a higher sense of fairness—of right and wrong. I have yet to hear someone say, “You’re correct. There is no such thing as right and wrong. Go ahead and take the bigger piece. It’s only illusion.”—Intuitively, you and I know better. We are moral and rational beings because a moral and rational God made us. How can we pretend otherwise?

The reason the scientific revolution began in the West was because of the Western view of God and of truth.—The early scientists believed that if God created the universe with wisdom and order, then the universe should reflect that order and wisdom. All of the first scientists, such as Newton, were theists (believing in God). Most held a Christian world-view. Scientific inquiry and the explosion of knowledge in such fields as physics, chemistry, mathematics, engineering, psychology, and modern medicine all had their origins in Judeo-Christian thought. Scientific progress would probably never have arisen had Eastern relativistic and pantheistic thinking been the predominant world views. Science and illusion don’t mesh well together.

As you observe life, does it appear to you that we live in an illogical world of illusion or a rational world?” Does $2 + 2 = 4$? Or, will any answer do as long as you are sincere?—Do you know that it is impossible to sanely live in a world where there are no absolutes?—Can you imagine going outside not knowing whether the law of gravity was going to work, that you might float into outer space? You will discover that if you act as if real truth and absolute scientific laws exist, life will work pretty well. Operate as if everything is illusion and relative, and you will end up in a mental hospital with a diagnosis of schizophrenia [out of touch with reality].

Whether you say we live in a world of illusion or not, I bet you *behave* as if the world is rational. Reason with me.—**One’s behavior is the greatest indicator of one’s beliefs.**—If I observe you *behaving* as if the world is rational, then regardless of what you say, I would say your actions speak louder than your words. **Your behavior shows what you really believe.** If I were a betting person, I’d bet you a million dollars that in your day-to-day life, you *act* as if you live in a rational world, not a world of illusion. Every time you step out your door you trust that the law of gravity is a real. When you go to the grocery store you buy real food with real money. The store keeper doesn’t take illusionary money.

If you insist on saying truth is relative, I would simply ask, “Then why should I believe anything you say? Why should I trust someone who is an illusion?—Would you trust a doctor who told you, “There are no absolutes. It doesn’t matter what medicine you take as long as you are sincere.” Would you keep going to that doctor? No, you wouldn’t. Why? Because in your heart and your mind *know* truth exists. To live any other way is to be insane.

CAN WE KNOW ABSOLUTE TRUTH?

Let’s pretend we take a panel of religious experts of differing faiths [Hindu, Muslim, Buddhist, Christian, atheist, agnostic, etc.] and we ask one question, “Does God exist, and if so what is God like?” As we interview each panel member we discover that there as many different opinions as

there are panel members. Assuming that truth is not *relative* (subject to change), then they could not all be right. For example, if one says that God is personal, another says that God is impersonal, and another says God does not exist, then obviously one or more of them must be wrong.

Question: “Who can say for sure what God is like?”—Answer: God.

The only One who can say for sure what God is like is God. As simple as this is, it is an important point to grasp. *Only God can give the final word on Himself.*

Now, what if one of the panel members stood up and said, “*To clear up all the confusion about God, I tell you, I AM GOD! I am THE way, THE truth, and THE life.*”? (Cf., John 14:6; emphasis mine.)

This gets into the verifiable. Anyone making such a claim would be one of three things: *psychotic* (with delusions of grandeur), a *deceiver* out to pull off the greatest hoax of all time, or he would be *God*.—Whether you realize it or not, this is exactly the claim Jesus made. Jesus taught and claimed to be God [not one of many gods, but the one, eternal God become flesh]. It is as if God had chosen to write Himself into His own story and become a man.

The answer to how I know truth is quite simple. If I can clearly show that Jesus was/is God, then whatever He stated is not merely one man’s opinion about God and life, but it is absolute divine TRUTH.—How can we know truth?—Because God became a man, and spoke the truth to us. [Read a little further and I will present you with some strong evidence to support Jesus’ claim to be God.]

WHO ARE THE HINDU GODS YOU WORSHIP?

According to the Bible, God created heavenly beings known as angels. One of them, Lucifer [often called Satan], rebelled against God. The Bible indicates that approximately one-third of all angels were deceived into following Satan’s rebellion. These fallen angels are evil and are in full rebellion against God. Many inhabit this world, and because they are spiritual beings, they can actually indwell people [called demonization or demon possession]. They can even attach themselves to idols and deceive the worshippers of those idols into believing the idols, or gods, are actually the ones answering their prayers. Demons can disguise themselves as spirits of the dead, as spirit guides, etc. Since they have been around for centuries, it is easy for them to impersonate people of the past.—In a trance do people really contact the spirits of the dead or spirit guides? No. I believe they contact demons.

Once I was working with a young Satanist who wanted out of Satanism. I met with her and a pastor’s wife. This young girl said she had a very beautiful spirit guide whom she had assumed was the spirit of some beautiful young woman who had died and was now with her to be her guide through life.

After talking for some time, I began to pray for her. In her mind she saw her spirit guide turn into a ghastly demon. It was not the spirit of a dead person at all, but a demon who had disguised itself as a lovely young woman. As I prayed a deep voice from within the girl spoke through her and told me, “Leave her alone! You can’t have her. She’s mine!”—Then the girl began to literally pull out her hair, and we had to momentarily restrain her. I commanded the demon in the name of Jesus to “be quiet and go back down”—and it did. Later the demon was cast out as the girl renounced her spirit guide and her involvement in Satanism.

According to Christian belief, there is only one God. To worship anyone or anything else is a form of idolatry and an insult to the true God. It is wrong because the gods which are worshiped are actually demons. Demons are real. They are evil, and they are definitely *not* an illusion. They have supernatural powers which allow people to walk on hot coals, poke wooden stakes through the cheeks without pain, etc.

A Christian friend of mine from the island of Sri Lanka, just off the coast of India, and a friend of his went to a Hindu religious holiday celebration in India where over 700 Hindus had gathered.

It was customary for many of the Hindus to walk on burning coals with bare feet, etc. Before going there my friend and his buddy prayed that “in the name of Jesus” the powers of Satan and his demons would be bound. As the celebrations began and various Hindus tried walking on the burning coals, they began to scream in agony as their feet got burned. Finally, two Hindu priests came to my friend and his companion, and said, “You must leave for we cannot begin our celebration with you here.”—Even the demons know the name of Jesus. The spirit and power of Jesus was so real in these two Christians that the Hindu leaders were able to identify my friend and his companion out of a crowd of several hundred, even though they dressed the same as everyone else.

Demons control people by three main ways: through fear, through lies, and through bondage to sin. They desire your destruction. They want to keep you from believing in God.

Have you ever wondered why Hindu temples are filled with such frightening looking gods; snakes and other ghastly looking creatures? It is because the demons are holding the worshippers captive through fear. Are these gods a reflection of the One true God who is holy, righteous, and loving? No. Those who worship these gods are actually being held captive by the demon(s). Only Jesus is strong enough to break the demonic bonds of fear and deception.

LIAR, LUNATIC, OR LORD

There is one major question you must answer, “Is Jesus Christ God?”—If you answer, “Yes,” then you will need to renounce Hinduism, or your involvement in the New Age Movement, and humbly yield yourself to Jesus Christ. If you answer, “No,” then somehow you must explain away Jesus. Eternal issues are at stake. If Jesus is right, you will spend eternity in either Heaven [a place of eternal glory and joy] or Hell [a place of torment and punishment]. For your own sake, you need to investigate the claims of Jesus. Don’t ignore the one religious world leader in all of history who actually claimed to be God incarnate: Jesus.

For sake of clarity, when I speak of Jesus being God, I am not talking about Jesus being just another *avatar*, or manifestation of the World Spirit [Brahma]. No, Jesus claimed to be the physical manifestation of the one and only true God: God become man [see Philippians 2:6,7, John 14:6-10].

In the New Testament portion of the Bible, Jesus is called almost every major name used to describe God in the Old Testament: “God,” “Yahweh,” “Lord,” “Creator,” “Savior,” “King of kings,” “the Alpha and the Omega,” “Holy One,” etc. [e.g., John 1:1,14; 8:58; 14:6-10; Colossians 1:16-18; Hebrews 1:1,2, 6; Titus 2:13; etc.].

Even though Jesus taught that God is the only one worthy of worship [Matthew 4:10], He received worship [Matthew 28:9,17]. It even says the angels of God are to worship Him [Hebrews 1:6]. If Jesus were not God, He had no right being called God, or allowing others to treat Him as God. It would be the ultimate in blasphemy and arrogance.

This is even more staggering when we realize that those who were claiming he was/is God were Jews. Jews, as you know, are monotheistic (believing in one God). When Jesus’ disciples called Him *God*, they were not talking about Jesus being a *god*, in a polytheistic (many gods) sense. They worshiped Jesus as the incarnation of God Almighty [e.g., Matthew 28:9, John 20:28, Hebrews 1:6, Revelation 5:8-14, Philippians 2:10,11], Creator of the universe [Colossians 1:16-18, Hebrews 1:1].

To believe that Jesus was *just* a good teacher (assuming He really claimed to be God) would be out of the question. He would either be much more than a *good teacher* (i.e., God), or much less (i.e., a liar or lunatic).

C.S. Lewis—author, professor, and Christian intellectual, wrote, “*A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic—on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God, or else a*

madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill Him as a demon, or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to."

Worship Him or reject Him, but please don't treat Him with indifference. To take a middle-of-the-road position concerning Christ is to totally fail to grasp the claims He made. Just as no one is ever half-pregnant (either they're pregnant or they're not), in like manner, Jesus is either God or He isn't.

You could take Buddha out of Buddhism and it would remain basically unchanged. You could take Muhammad out of Islam and it would continue to exist. But, if you took Jesus Christ out of Christianity, it would collapse because Christianity is not merely a religion or a philosophy of life; but an encounter with a Person, Jesus Christ.

Jesus stands alone in the claims He made [except for people in psychiatric hospitals who say they are God]. Jesus produced anger, hatred, or worship from the people of His day. The enemies of Jesus clearly understood His claim to divinity. They tried to kill Him for blasphemy because He claimed *equality* and *oneness* with God [e.g., John 5:18; 8:58-59; 10:33, Mark 14:61-64, etc.]. All of the main writers of the New Testament, such as Paul and the apostle John, clearly taught the deity of Jesus [e.g., Colossians 2:9; Philippians 2:6,7; Romans 9:5; John 1:1,14; Hebrews 1:1, etc.].

Jesus taught that He is the *only* way to God [e.g., John 8:24, 14:6; see also, Acts 4:12]. Christianity is not a matter of likes or dislikes, but an issue of whether Jesus was telling the truth. Because Christ claims to be God, and if He is who He claims to be, then His teachings are to be regarded more highly than any other religion in the world. It does not mean we are to be disrespectful of other religions, or that 100% of what they teach is wrong, but Christians have an obligation to tell the world about Jesus and His claims [Matthew 28:19-20].

This is why Christianity is such an exclusive religion, and why Christians sometimes seem so narrow-minded. If Christ's claims are true, Christians have no other choice but to proclaim Him as God incarnate, the One who loved us so much that He shed His blood for mankind's sins and evil acts [Acts 10:28, Romans 5:8].—This is one of the main reasons why I am writing you. In love, I proclaim to you, Jesus is Truth.

You may struggle with the thought, "But what you say seems so narrow. It seems unfair. What about all the sincere people in other religions?"—All I can say is that ultimately God will do what is right. Rather than questioning the severity and harshness of God in making the way to Himself so seemingly narrow, maybe the perspective needed is to look at the severity of sin and the harshness of the human condition which would make it necessary for a holy God to go to such extreme lengths to win mankind back to Himself. According to scripture, God entered this world for the express purpose of dying for the sins of the world [Isaiah 53; John 3:16; Acts 2:23, Romans 5:8]. People can be sincerely wrong [Romans 10:2]. I could sincerely teach that 2 + 2 = 5, but I would still be wrong. Truth, not sincerity, is the issue.—And how do we know truth? Because God, in the person of Jesus Christ, wrote Himself into our world as one of us, and told us the truth.

WHERE'S THE PROOF?

Let me summarize some of the major evidences, as I see them, that Jesus was telling the truth; that He is truly God become man. Again, you be the judge.

1. The first is Jesus' character. From the beginning of time, no other person has so powerfully affected life upon this earth as Jesus of Nazareth. His teachings are profound. [If you have never read the New Testament account for yourself, a good place to begin would be with the *Gospel of John* or the *Gospel of Luke*]. It is hard to read the account of Jesus' life and teachings and maintain that He was either a liar or a lunatic [the only other two alternatives]. Either we believe

His seemingly unbelievable claims [to be God] or we disbelieve His believable character.

2. The second is the historical evidence for His rising from the dead. This is crucial. Disprove the resurrection and you disprove Christianity. However, to do so, you would have to explain what happened to Jesus's mutilated body. For example, why didn't the enemies of Jesus just produce the body if He never arose? How did the tomb, which was guarded by Roman soldiers, get empty? Does it make sense that Jesus' disciples would steal the body of Jesus, when every Roman soldier knew that if a prisoner [in this case a corpse] escaped while under his watch it would be his life for the prisoners? Why wasn't there a fight, and why weren't there killed disciples around the tomb? If the soldiers were asleep [which was also a crime], how could the disciples have rolled away a stone weighing over one ton without waking the soldiers?

Another theory says that Jesus, having been crucified by the Romans, swooned in a state of near death, suddenly revived, rolled away a stone weighing 1-2 tons, scared away the Roman soldiers, and told His disciples, "Hey guys. Look, it's me. I've conquered death!" [No way. It takes more faith to believe some of the theories which try to explain away the resurrection, than to believe that Jesus did arise from the dead as He foretold.] And what about the disciples, and over 500 other people who claimed to have seen Him physically alive following His crucifixion? What about Thomas who was told to put his finger into the nail prints in Jesus's hands? What made the disciples, who were cowards before His death, suddenly change and begin preaching a message under the threat of death which eventually turned the whole Roman world upside down?— For further reading I highly recommend Josh McDowell's book *The Resurrection Factor*.

3. The third major piece of evidence is the documented accounts of Jesus's miracles from both Christian and non-Christian sources. If Jesus is God, then for Him to heal someone, or calm a stormy sea, would be no big deal, but merely a small repeat of what He did when He created the world. The New Testament clearly teaches that Christ, as God, is creator [John 1:3,10; Colossians 1:15-18; Hebrews 1:1-2]. One reason Christianity spread so rapidly was because of the miracles Jesus and His followers performed. If you were born blind, and you could suddenly see because Jesus touched you, you would probably believe too. [Read the Gospel of John, chapter 9.]

4. Fourth is the trustworthiness of the eyewitnesses themselves. If you can't trust them, you might as well throw out the first three pieces of evidence. Of the original twelve disciples, not counting Judas who betrayed Christ [as foretold in Psalm 41:9], tradition tells us that all but John were killed for their belief and bold profession that Jesus had conquered death, that they had seen Him alive after the crucifixion, and that He was the one hope for mankind.

Would these men have willingly died for something they knew to be a lie?—Would you die for a lie, especially if it involved saying that some man had risen from the dead, when you really knew his body was decomposing somewhere? I think not.

Further, they passed on to the world its highest moral and ethical teachings. Would these teachings have knowingly been founded on a lie? No. The only logical explanation is that they saw Jesus alive three days after His crucifixion, death and burial. This is the central theme of Christianity. [See I Corinthians 15:3-8.]

In the gospel accounts, the disciples didn't falsely cast themselves in a favorable light, as one would expect if they were making up the story. They recorded their own bickerings, Peter's denial, their cowardice, etc. Yet, these Jewish followers of Jesus [the one religion in all the world least likely to entertain such beliefs about God becoming man], spoke of the glory and sinlessness of Jesus, and called Him "Lord" and "God" [e.g., John 1:1,14; 20:28; Acts 20:28; Romans 9:5; etc.]. And, as mentioned earlier, they even went so far as to worship Him [Matthew 28:9,17], an act reserved only for God in Jewish teaching as you know [Deuteronomy 6:13-15; Matthew 4:10].

These followers of Christ had lived with him day in and day out for three years, and yet they were willing to die for their belief that He was sinless and "God."—Could anyone live with you for even one week and think that of you?

5. Fifth is the reliability of the Bible as a historical document. There are over 24,600 partial or complete manuscripts of the New Testament in either Greek or Latin. The second best documented manuscript of antiquity is *The Iliad and The Odyssey* by Homer. It has around 600 manuscripts. Most ancient documents have fewer than 10 original copies still in existence, yet they are still considered “A-1” historical documents by historians. For example, there are only 7 existing copies of the works of Plato, and 5 of Aristotle’s works.

Even if all of the New Testament manuscripts were destroyed, we could still reconstruct all of the New Testament, with the exception of about eleven verses, from the writings of the early church fathers before the year 325 A.D. Even non-Christian historians have to admit that by all scientific, archaeological, and historical standards applied to any ancient manuscript, the New Testament we have today is over 99.9 percent reliable. Not one word in a 1,000 is in question, and no major doctrine is in doubt.

Concerning the Hebrew Bible, most Jewish and Christian scholars had been using the Masoretic Hebrew text dated around 1,000 A.D. In 1947, a young shepherd boy discovered, what we now call, *The Dead Sea Scrolls*, in the caves of Qumran near the Dead Sea. They are easily dated around, or before, the time of Christ [100 B.C.-70 A.D.]. They were virtually identical to the Masoretic Text.

Add to this the reverence and painstaking methods that Jewish scribes used to copy, check, and double check their handwritten copies of the Hebrew Bible, including using a mathematical numbering system to see that things “added up.” With this said, you see why the entire Bible is the most well-preserved piece of literature from ancient times. Anyone can dispute its message, not so its historicity.

The Christian Bible as a whole is a miraculous piece of literature. Its 66 books [39 Old and 27 in the New] were written over a period of approximately 1,600 years, by 40 authors, on three different continents [Asia, Europe and Africa]. It was written in three different languages [Hebrew, Chaldean and Greek], with many literary styles (poetry, historical narrative, parables, proverbs, allegory), under all types of conditions [on the battlefield, in times of peace, in prosperity, in poverty, in captivity, at sea, in palaces, in the desert), by all sorts of people [fishermen, shepherds, kings, a physician, a rabbi, a tax collector, scribes, priests], and on about every topic imaginable [God, salvation, sex, money, marriage, family, war, politics, religion, relationships, leadership, business, etc.]. Yet, considering all this, the Bible reads, not as a fragmented mess, but as a unified whole.

The next question, of course, is whether modern translations of the Bible are accurate translations of the originals.

There are many different Bible translations on the market, which often confuses those not familiar with the Bible. Some mistakenly assume that because there are many different Bible translations, they must be saying contradictory things. Except for one or two Bible translations by cult groups where they have altered a few key verses to fit their theology, this is not true. For example, most Bible translations are translated from one of two basic New Testament Greek texts [considered to be most reliable by Biblical scholars] and one basic Old Testament Hebrew text.

Thus, while translations vary in style, they are all saying the same basic thing. To say, “You’re smart,” “Thou art smart,” or “You are erudite [smart],” are all accurate ways of saying the same thing. The content is the same, but the wording varies. The same principle is true of Bible translations.

It is my personal belief that the original writings were “inspired,” perfect in every way [II Timothy 3:16-17]. Modern translations are not inspired, but they are accurate translations of those which were inspired.

6. Sixth is the testimony of believers. Whatever one says, there are many people, like myself, of every age, nationality, social class, or century, who say they have experienced the living Christ. The accounts of restored lives, answers to prayer, healed bodies, and other evidences are hard, if not impossible, to explain unless Christ is alive. The New Testament bears witness to a

living, resurrected Lord who is alive and well, and able to change lives.

7. The last major piece of evidence is prophecy. There are at least 48 specific prophecies in the Bible foretelling Messiah's [Christ's] coming, including where He was to be born [Bethlehem; Micah 5:2], and that He would suffer and die having his hands and feet pierced [Psalm 22:16; cf., Isaiah 53; Zechariah 12:10].

Did you know that Daniel the prophet prophesied the exact week in history that Christ would be killed [Daniel 9:24-27]? Put in layman's terms, this passage says that from the command to "restore and rebuild Jerusalem," which we can easily date in 445 B.C. by King Artaxerxes, until Messiah would "atone" for sin and be "cut off" [die], would be a total of $62 + 7$ weeks = 69 "weeks" [= 7 years], or in other words $69 \times 7 = 483$ years.

Using a Jewish calendar, which operated on 360 days per year, starting at the time Artaxerxes issued his decree, going forward 483 years, it comes out exactly to the week Jesus was crucified [April 6th, 32 A.D.]. If you want to understand this prophecy in detail, get a copy of the small book *Daniel's Prophecy Of The Seventy Weeks* by McClain.

The Bible also predicted that Jesus would conquer death by being resurrected [Psalm 16:10; cf., Acts 2:22-27]. How could the Bible predict such astounding things hundreds of years in advance if the Bible weren't true and Christ weren't who He claimed to be? The odds are astronomical that any one man could fulfill these exact prophecies made by many prophets over a span of several hundred years.—It was God's way to be sure we wouldn't mistake His coming.

Would you care to make a prediction that 600 years from now a great religious world leader will be born in a certain small town with a population of probably less than 1,000 people? And, could you predict 600 years in advance the exact year and week this person would die? The Bible did.

Some scholars used to say that the Bible writers had taken events from the past, and written about them in such a way as to make it sound like they were yet to happen. However, with the discovery of the *Dead Sea Scrolls*, we can now prove that the prophecies were written before the actual events, especially the prophecies about Jesus. In Jerusalem, at a museum called the Shrine of the Book, there is a complete copy of the book of Isaiah, with the passage in chapter 53 about the Messiah [Christ] being the suffering servant and dying for the sins of the world. There are also eight copies of the book of Daniel among the *Dead Sea Scroll* parchments.

In a booklet this size I cannot go into detail, but I recommend Josh McDowell's book, *Evidence That Demands A Verdict Volume I*, for more on this subject.

The Bible also predicts future events still to come. According to the Bible, God will not let sin and evil go on forever. There is a day coming when Jesus is going to return and set up His kingdom, headquartered in Jerusalem. What many fail to realize is that the Jewish Messiah [Jesus] had to first come as the atoning sacrifice for sin [Isaiah 53] before He could return a second time as King and Judge.

Concerning Jesus' second coming, He said that no one would know the exact day or hour of His return, but He did say that we would know it was getting close when we began to see certain signs [Matthew 24:33].

Let me highlight a few signs which the Bible prophesies will happen as the end of the age draws to a close. It makes me believe that Christ's return is near, *very near*. And once again, ask yourself, "If the New Testament weren't inspired by God, how could it give predictions 2,000 years ago that read as though they were off the front page of today's newspaper?" If you went to a theater to see a play you had already seen before, and you happened to arrive late, you could tell, just by looking at the props on stage, what was coming next. The same is true about the Lord's return. The Bible is very clear concerning the props which must be in place before Christ returns.

a. Virtually all prophecy centers around the nation of Israel, because God has not forgotten His promises to the Jewish people. [There are also some wonderful prophecies for non-Jews.] The Bible predicted that Israel would become a nation again [Daniel 9:27; Ezekiel 37:1-14]. After

almost 2,500 years Israel did in 1948. Let me share a quote from Dr. Paul Meier concerning Israel becoming a nation:

“In the Torah, Moses wrote [Leviticus 26:18 and elsewhere] that in the future, whenever Israel sins greatly as a nation God will allow calamity to come their way. He will however, give them time to repent. If they, as a nation, do not repent after their warning period, then the remainder of their punishment will be multiplied by seven.

Over 600 years before the birth of Jesus, God used Ezekiel, a contemporary of Daniel, to show Israel her sin. In Ezekiel 4:3-6, God told the prophet to lie on his side for 430 days to signify the 430 years Israel would spend in exile for her sins. Another contemporary of Daniel’s and Ezekiel’s, the prophet Jeremiah, predicted that the first 70 years of that 430 years would be a Babylonian exile [Jeremiah 25:11]. That was Israel’s warning period.

Sure enough, as predicted, Nebuchadnezzar came along and transported the Jews from Jerusalem to Babylon in 606 B.C. Then 70 years later; Cyrus the Great of Persian [possibly Queen Esther’s son] conquered Babylon in 536 B.C. and said he would pay for the millions of Jews to go back to Jerusalem. But the Jews refused. Only 50,000 devout Jews went back. The rest didn’t want to interrupt their businesses in Babylon [now Iraq].

This obviously made God angry, so take 430 years of exile, subtract 70 years of warning, and multiply the remaining 360 years times 7, as Moses instructed in the Torah. You will get 2,520 prophetic years of 360 days each = 907,200 days from the day Cyrus made his decree to return to Jerusalem which comes out [are you ready for a shock?] to May 14, 1948, the day Israel became a nation.”

Has God forgotten His people? No. He was merely carrying out the prescribed judgement on them, brought about when they chose to disobey. [Do you ever get the idea that God takes our choices seriously? I do.]

According to Matthew 24:34, Jesus said *this generation* would not pass away until all these things were fulfilled. Obviously, He wasn’t speaking of His own generation 2,000 years ago. So, what generation did He mean? Was it the generation alive when Israel was to become a nation? Most consider a generation 70-80 years. According to that view Christ will likely return before the year 2028, possibly much sooner. The second view is that it will be the generation when all of the major signs He predicted begin to occur. Either way, as I view things, it could be getting close, very close.

b. Another event the Bible predicts, is that there will be a coming together of 10 nations recreating the old Roman Empire [Daniel 7:21-25; Revelation 17:12]. Some feel the forming of the European Community in 1992 may be a partial fulfillment of this.

c. The Bible has a great deal to say about a 7 year period on the earth known as the Great Tribulation [Daniel 9:26-27; Matthew 24; Revelation 4-19; Jeremiah 30:7; etc.]. It is the 70th “week” Daniel talked about in the passage we examined earlier. It is a time when *all hell will break loose* on earth. Revelation 8:7-11 describes some of what will happen during this time. It says that a third of the earth will be destroyed by fire and a third of the world’s waters will turn to *wormwood* [poisonous or bitter]. It is interesting, but the Russian word *wormwood* is translated *Chernobyl* [as in the nuclear power plant that experienced a meltdown and spread radioactivity over much of Eastern Europe and Russia].

Most consider this judgment either an asteroid hitting one of earth’s oceans, or possibly nuclear war. For example, after the United States dropped the first atomic bomb on Hiroshima in World War II, thousands and thousands of people died, not only from the bomb blast itself, but also from drinking water contaminated by radioactive fallout.

d. Another major prop is that an army out of the East will come toward Israel some day with an army of 200 million men. The Bible says the Euphrates River will dry up before them. Red China today can easily muster an army that size, and isn’t it interesting that the Euphrates River now has a dam across it with huge spillways which could hold back the water [Revelation 9:13-21]. And remember, this prophecy was written when the entire earth’s population was not much

larger than 200 million and huge dams did not exist.

e. The Bible predicts that there will come a man, called the Anti-Christ, who will proclaim himself to be God, and he will rule the world during much of the seven years of Tribulation. In Revelation 13, it says he will make everyone take a *sign* on the hand or forehead [the number “666”] called the *Mark Of The Beast*. People who do not have it will not be able to buy or sell. With computer technology, computer chips, visible and invisible inks, and laser scanners [like you see at grocery stores] this is easily possible today.

With the instability of the world economy, it is very likely that there could be an economic collapse in the not too distant future.

f. During the Tribulation, there will be plagues and diseases which will wipe out a fourth of the world’s population [Revelation 6:7-8]. With AIDS, the ebola virus, germ warfare, and other diseases, this is a real possibility.

g. In Matthew 24:6-8, Christ spoke of an increase in *wars, famines and earthquakes*. We have already had two world wars. At the time of this writing, according to the U.S. Geological Survey in Boulder, Colorado, there has been a rapid increase in earthquakes with a magnitude of over 6.0 on the Richter Scale. To give you an idea of how rapidly things are changing look at the following statistics:

1890- 1900	1 major quake	1950-1960	9 major quakes
1900-1910	3 major quakes	1960-1970	13 major quakes
1910-1920	2 major quakes	1970-1980	51 major quakes
1920-1930	2 major quakes	1980-1990	86 major quakes
1930-1940	5 major quakes	1990-1995	over 100 quakes.
1940-1950	4 major quakes		

Besides wars and earthquakes, there have also been an increasing number of famines worldwide.

h. The Bible predicts that the Jewish temple in Jerusalem will be rebuilt [implied in Daniel 9:27 and Matthew 24:15]. I understand that Israel already has it designed. In Jerusalem, Orthodox Jewish priests are being trained on how to perform temple sacrifices, as prescribed in the Law of Moses.

i. In Matthew 24:22, Christ said that unless He returned to earth, there would be “no life” left on this planet. Christ spoke this when the Roman two-edged sword was about the most powerful weapon on earth. Now, think of the nuclear, germ, and chemical weaponry that could be unleashed, and ask yourself, “How much longer can our world survive?”

One multiple-warhead nuclear bomb today has more power than all the explosives and bombs used by all the nations in World War II combined. Supposedly, if you dropped a fork from your kitchen counter, at exactly the same time a major nuclear bomb exploded a few miles away, you would be vaporized before the fork hit the floor.

j. Revelations 11:7-9 says two prophets of God will be killed during the reign of anti-Christ, and people all around the world will view their bodies. People used to make fun of such a notion—until satellite TV.

k. Revelation 16:21 talks about hail balls weighing up to 100 pounds. Impossible you say? That’s what scientists thought until the first atomic bomb was exploded forcing moist air high into the atmosphere creating hail balls large enough to dent the decks of Navy test ships near the explosion site.

l. The Bible predicts major breakdowns in the family and in moral values prior to Christ’s return [II Timothy 3:1-5]. This is happening. Look at the rise in abortions [over 30 million in the U.S. in the last 25 years], crime, unwed mothers, abuse, violence, suicides, rapes, drugs, gangs, etc.

There are many more prophecies I could list, but I want you to see that what the Bible talks about is as real today as when it was written. In fact, the book of Revelation in the Bible is much easier to believe and understand now than when it was written almost 2,000 years ago.

I believe our days here on this earth may be rapidly drawing to a close. In I Thessalonians 4:16-17 says, “*For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.*”

Read Zechariah 14, and the physical coming of *Yahweh* [Hebrew name of God] to Jerusalem, and compare that with Revelation 19 and the physical return of Jesus, and suddenly it all starts to make sense. Passages which Jewish teachers for centuries have allegorized and spiritualized may actually come true literally when Jesus, the long-awaited Messiah, returns to Israel.

STEPS TO KNOWING GOD

Most who call themselves Christians, I think, will agree with what I am about to say. This section is extremely important. I don't ask that you automatically believe the facts I present. If you are serious about God, then do your homework. Take the time to look up the Bible verses I cite. Ask God to confirm in your heart whether what I say is true. Seek God as if your soul depended on it; it just might.

I intentionally list references from the Old Testament [Hebrew Bible], because I want you to see that the same New Testament truths were clearly taught or prophesied in the Old Testament. The Bible is a unified whole, with Jesus being the unifying theme which ties it all together.

The following four spiritual laws are clearly taught in the New Testament.

Spiritual Law #1: God is a God of love. He loves you, and has a wonderful plan for your life [I John 4:16; John 3:16; 10:10, Ephesians 2:10]. What God wants for your life is awesome beyond belief [Ephesians 3:14-21].

Spiritual Law #2: So, what went wrong? Why aren't more people experiencing what God intended? It is because our sin separates us from a holy God [Isaiah 59:2; Romans 6:23]. Sin is active or passive rebellion against God. It is not listening to God, but “*doing our own thing.*” Because God is “*holy,*” totally without sin or wrongdoing, we cannot just bop into God's presence [Isaiah 6:1-5, I John 1:5]. Just as you wouldn't be allowed to walk on someone's expensive white carpet if you had oily, muddy shoes, neither will God tolerate sin in Heaven. If we went to Heaven without a basic change in who we are, we would corrupt and pollute Heaven, just as we have the earth.

We all fall short of God's standard of perfection. If we lined up in front of the Grand Canyon, and tried to jump across it, some might jump further than others; but the point is, we would all fall short. [Ecclesiastes 7:20; Romans 3:23]. Because Adam and Eve chose to sin, the Bible teaches that this sin nature got passed on to all mankind; the same way a leopard inherits its spots from its parents [Genesis 3; Psalm 51:5; Romans 5:12-21].

According to the Bible, sin is more than murder, stealing, or adultery. From God's perspective sin is such things as boasting in our own achievements. Sex outside of marriage is sin. Lying, gossip, slander, cheating, cowardice, yielding to fear, not trusting God, coveting what others possess, not acting in faith, being disrespectful, putting worldly success or money before God, unforgiveness, lack of prayer, not keeping our promises, looking lustfully at someone, swearing, not acting in love, and a bunch of other things, are sin [Exodus 20; James 4:16; Galatians 5:19-21; Revelation 21:8; Romans 1:18-32; 14:23; Matthew 5,6; etc.].

According to the Bible, we all stand guilty before God, no matter whether we have sinned a little or a lot [James 2:10].—It is like the man who said, “*But, Judge, look at all the people I didn't kill.*”—The point? None of us deserves to go to Heaven. We have all sinned against an eternal God and committed eternal sins.—Stating it bluntly, unless God forgives us, by God's standard we're deserving of Hell. As a just and righteous judge, God cannot just sweep our sins under the carpet.

Spiritual Law #3: Christ is the only way to God. He died to pay the penalty for our sin. By his

death, Jesus bridged the gap between a holy God and sinful man. Either we go to God by way of Jesus, or we do not get to God [II Thessalonians 1:8-9; John 3:16; Romans 5:8, Acts 20:28; I Timothy 2:5].

The story is told of a young woman who received a phone call from the emergency room of a hospital stating that her dad was deathly ill, that he may have only hours to live. Because she lived a couple hundred miles away, she got in her car and began frantically driving to see her father. As she was going through a small southern town, she looked in her rear view mirror, and there was a police car chasing her. Because she was going so fast, the officer didn't merely give her a ticket, he arrested her. The next day she appeared before the local county judge who told her that for going 50 miles per hour above the speed limit, her fine would be \$300 or three days in jail.

She pleaded with the judge. "*Your honor, you don't understand. I don't have \$300 with me, and I can't spend three days in jail. I must go to see my father who is dying.*" The judge said, "*I'm sorry, young lady, but the law says you must pay \$300 or spend three days in jail.*"

She began to weep, and the old judge was moved with compassion. To the surprise of everyone in the court, he stood up, stepped down from the bench, walked over, took off his robe, put on his sports coat, walked around in front of the bench, pulled out his checkbook, wrote a check for \$300, and laid it on the bench. Then he walked back around, took off his sports coat, put back on his robe, and resumed his seat. He said, "*Young lady, the law says you must pay \$300 or spend three days in jail, but I see someone has paid the fine for you. Case dismissed!*"

In essence, that is what God did for us. The Bible says that the penalty for sin is death [Romans 6:23]. When we stood condemned, without hope, God took off his robe of deity, put on a robe of humanity, became a man in the person of Jesus Christ, and died for us. God did for us what we could never do for ourselves [Romans 5:6]. According to scripture, Jesus is both God and man. He has two natures: one human, the other divine [Philippians 2:6,7 and Romans 1:3,4]. If we accept his offer of forgiveness, when we stand before God as Judge, we will be standing before the One who loved us and paid the fine for us: "Case dismissed!"

Spiritual Law #4: Knowing the first three laws is not enough. It takes a response on our part. While we cannot earn salvation, it is nonetheless a *gift* which must be received [Isaiah 64:6; Ephesians 2:8-9]. John 1:12 says, "*Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.*"—How do we *receive* the gift of salvation?

First, we are asked to *believe* several wonderful truths: (1) that Jesus loves us, (2) that he died for our sins [past, present and future], and (3) that he arose from the dead [John 3:16; Romans 5:8; 10:9; I Corinthians 15:3-5].

Since it is our sins which have been keeping us from God, we must be willing to turn from our sin [Mark 1:14,15]. The Bible calls this *repentance*, which simply means to *turn around*.—For example, if you are on the wrong bus heading away from God, you need to change buses, and get on board with Christ. Or, putting it another way, if you have been driving your own bus, it means being willing to get out of the driver's seat, and inviting Jesus to take over as your bus driver. He can turn your life around, and get you going in the right direction.

The tale is told of a man who tightrope walked across Niagara Falls with a 200 pound sack of sand on his back. Upon successfully completing his feat he turned to a spectator and asked, "*Do you believe I could do that again?*" The person said "*Sure!*" The tightrope walker tossed down the sand and said, "*Then climb on my back.*"—Real believing is more than giving mental assent to the claims of Christ. God asks you to "climb on board," and commit yourself to him. It is more than believing something to be true in your head. It is a commitment of the heart.

If you confess your sins to God, and ask him to forgive you, the Bible promises you will be forgiven. No matter how big, or how awful, your sins are, God is more than willing to forgive you [Isaiah 1:18; I John 1:9]. And, more incredible still, is the fact that these sins will *never* be held against you [Romans 4:7,8; 8:1].

Because we are weak and rather powerless when it comes to sin, God places his Holy Spirit in

each person who receives Christ in order to help them keep from sinning. In other words, if you allow him, the Holy Spirit will power your bus [Acts 1:8; Ephesians 1:7-14, Galatians 2:20; I Corinthians 10:13; Philippians 4:13]. With God's Spirit living in and through you, you can also begin to experience God's peace and joy [John 14:27; Galatians 2:20, 5:22; Romans 7:14-8:11].

And last, but not least, if you receive Christ into your life, you become a child of God, part of God's family.—Let me share a simple illustration. Would you go to a stranger's funeral and ask the family of the deceased for a share of the inheritance? You could tell them, "I'm a *good person*, and I do nice things for others."—Would that impress them? No. They'd say, "I'm sorry, but the inheritance is for family members only. We don't even know you."

Well, the same is true with God. You must be born into God's family if you expect to *inherit* what is God's. His inheritance is for his children, for those who *know* him. That is why Jesus said unless a person is *born again*, he or she will never see the Kingdom of Heaven [John 3:3-18]. The moment you *believe* in Christ, you are legally adopted into God's family. You inherit eternal life, and glory beyond your wildest imagination awaits you [I Corinthians 2:9; 3:21-23; Ephesians 1:3; Romans 8:31,32; John 14:1,2; Revelation 21:1-4].

When you die, how can you be sure you will go to Heaven to be with God? The Bible says, "*And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may KNOW you have eternal life.*" [I John 5:11-13, emphasis mine]—How can you *know* you have eternal life? Does it depend on how you feel, or upon circumstances? No. It depends on God's promise. God promises that if you *believe* in Christ, and commit your life to him, you can *know* you have eternal life.

Scripture also says that if you ask *anything* according to God's will, God will hear and answer you [I John 5:14].—So, is it God's will that you *believe* in Jesus and *receive* him? Yes [II Peter 3:9]. Therefore, if you sincerely pray to God, and invite Jesus into your heart, you can do so with confidence *knowing* that God will hear and answer your prayer. This is where *faith* comes in: believing that what God tells you is true.

Speaking for myself, I entered into a relationship with Jesus when I was 14 years old. At a youth meeting I prayed and invited Jesus Christ to come into my life and forgive me of my sins.—And he did. It was that simple. To my amazement, it worked. God's peace flooded through me. Old feelings of guilt were gone. As I read the Bible, it finally began to make sense. God became very real to me. I also began seeing God answer specific prayers, which surprised and delighted me no end. While being a Christian has been downright hard at times, I wouldn't trade the joy of knowing Christ for anything in the world.

A TIME OF DECISION

Christianity isn't merely a religion; it is a love-relationship with the living God. God is the lover of your soul, and he has proposed marriage to you. The question before you is whether you will say, "I do."

If you have felt the Spirit of God speaking to you, and you have become convinced in your heart and mind that what I have written is true, then you must decide what you will do with Jesus.

No matter how much evidence I give, the final step is still one of faith, even though there is solid evidence upon which to base that faith. For example, I can't *prove* that George Washington lived, but I can show overwhelming evidence that he did. By *faith*, I believe George Washington lived, and by *faith*, I believe Christianity is true, based on evidence, and the fact that it works. Jesus Christ has changed my life. By his grace, I am not the person I used to be.

A simple way for you to test the truthfulness of what I've said is for you to actively, honestly, seek God on His terms [as best you understand], with a willingness to follow the truth, whatever that is. Not to honestly seek God with all of your heart, is to gamble with your soul. Choosing not to decide is a decision. To do nothing is the same as saying "No."

To start with, you may want to pray something like this: “*Dear Lord God, if you’re there, and what this booklet says is true about Jesus, then I want to know. Please show me the truth.*”—Praying this prayer will not make you a Christian, but it is an honest first step in turning to God.

Secondly, read.—Read the Bible. Don’t just rely on what you have heard. Study it for yourself. Look up the Bible verses I’ve shown you. *Think* with your mind; *listen* with your heart. Allow God to speak to you.—Read some of the books I have made reference to in this booklet. There are well thought-out answers to virtually any question you can ask.

Some day you will stand before God, either forgiven or unforgiven. Hell is one of those horrible doctrines most Christians, myself included, don’t like to discuss. However, Jesus talked about Hell more than all the other Bible writers put together. Not to choose God, and accept his offer of forgiveness, is to choose a life of eternal separation from Him [Daniel 12:2; Revelation 20:11-15; II Thessalonians 1:8-9; Matthew 13:40-43]. God is serious when it comes to sin. God hates and judges sin. If you refuse his forgiveness, and you hang on to your sin, you will die with your sin, like a person refusing to get off the Titanic. If there were any other way, Jesus would not have had to die. There is no other payment for sin acceptable to God other than the death of Jesus on the cross. Scripture says, “*Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved*” [Acts 4:12].

This may be a hard decision for you. Much is at stake. If you receive Jesus as Lord, it will cost you. It has cost me. You may be misunderstood. Friends and family members may reject you.—Welcome to the club. Jesus was also misunderstood and rejected. He was willing to die for you. Are you willing to live for him?

No one has a deciding vote in this decision but you. God votes for you. Satan, who is also very real, votes against you. I pray that you will cast your deciding vote before it is too late. According to scripture, there are no second chances in another life [Hebrews 9:27].

What will you do with Jesus? He stands at the door of your heart knocking. Will you open the door and let him in? [Revelation 3:20]

If you become convinced that what I have said is true, and if you are ready to open the door of your heart to him, then find a quiet place and invite him in. Don’t procrastinate. What greater joy could you have than to know your sins are forgiven, that you have been given eternal life, and that you are prepared to meet your Lord. His return could be very soon [Zechariah 14:1-9; I John 3:1-3].

When you are ready, may I suggest the following prayer, or one like it: “*Dear Jesus, I thank you for loving me. I am sorry for the ways that I have sinned against you. I believe you died on the cross for my sin. As best as I know how, right now, I invite you to come into my life. Please forgive me, and cleanse me from all my sin. Make me the person you want me to be. I need you. I willingly yield my life to you. Thank you for hearing my prayer. Amen.*”

These words are not magical. The important thing is that you mean them. [See I John 5:11-15]. Once you have prayed and asked Jesus into your life, I believe you need to renounce all sins which many have given any demons access into your life; things such as worshipping Hindu gods, having a spirit guide, etc.

I strongly urge you to have one or more strong, mature Christians with you when you do this next exercise. Have them pray for you, that God will protect you, and that God will expel any demons from your life.

Here are the steps I would encourage you to take:

1.) Read Psalm 18 out loud (Demons hate this one for it speaks of God’s awesome power and His victory.)

2.) Ask God to place a hedge of angels around you to protect you, your family, your possessions, your pets, etc.

3.) Claim the fact that you are now a child of God, and that because of your union with Christ, you have authority over the demons (Ephesians 1:3-23; Colossians 1:9-14; 1:9-15).

4.) Read Ephesians 6:10-18 and consciously pray and claim the fact that God has equipped you with all you need to do spiritual warfare with Satan. By faith put on the “armor of God.” Christ has already won the victory for you.

5.) The Bible says that God has not given us a “spirit of fear but a spirit of power . . .” (I Timothy 1:7). If you feel fear, don’t give in to it. It is very possible that you are feeling the demon(s)’ fear.

6.) As you begin to confront any demons, you may say something like this, “*Any demon[s] present, I command you in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, that as you leave my life, you are not to retaliate against me or my family in any way, shape, or form. You are not to harm anyone or anything as you leave. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, when you leave, your leaving is to be one way and one way only—away from me, never ever to return. When you leave you are to go to where the Lord Jesus Christ sends you.*”

When you are ready, pray the following prayer of renunciation.

“Satan, I address you and you host of demons and call you to attention in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. I bind you to silence. As a child of God, I have authority over you, and I outrank you.

“I renounce ever signing my name over to you or having my name signed over to you by someone else through any non-Christian religious ceremonies. I announce that my name is now written in the Lamb’s Book of Life (Revelation 3:5; 20:15). I announce that I am now part of Christ’s church, His bride (Ephesians 5:25-32).

“I renounce any and all covenants I knowingly or unknowingly have made with you. I announce that I am now a partaker of the New Covenant bought by the blood of Christ and sealed by the Holy Spirit (I Corinthians 11:23-26; Ephesians 1:13-14). I announce that I am trusting only in the cross and shed blood of my Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 3:22-26; Galatians 2:20; 6:14).

“Satan, I renounce any and all guardians, surrogate parents, Hindu gods, idols, or spirit guides assigned to me. I announce that God is my Heavenly Father and the Holy Spirit is my guardian by whom I am sealed unto the day of my redemption (Ephesians 1:3-14). I break, in the name of Jesus, any and all demonic ties with crystals, charms, and other objects of pagan worship. I reject and renounce all curses and assignments that were made for me or by me for your service. I accept only God’s assignments for me and announce that Christ became a curse for me when He hung on the cross for me (Galatians 3:10-13). I renounce any and all sins that have given you and your demons legal right to remain in my life.

“As a child of the Most High God, I take authority over you. I bind to you and your demons any and all transferences that may have occurred to other family members or friends because of my association with you. When you leave me, I forbid you to retaliate against me, my family, my pets or my possessions.

Satan, I command you and all your demons to leave me, never ever to return, and to go to where the Lord Jesus Christ sends you, effective now. You must leave my life!”-(from unpublished class notes:Dr. Neil Anderson, Talbot Seminary, and modified slightly by this author.)

As a final step, in your own words, invite God’s Holy Spirit to fill all spiritual voids vacated by these demons. Ask Him to “clean house,” so to speak, and cleanse you of all remaining demonic influences. This means, among other things, that you must get rid of all idols, crystals, books, and other objects used in Hinduism or the New Age Movement.

Once you have invited Jesus Christ to be a part of your life, I encourage you to find a loving evangelical church where the Bible is both honored and taught. Visit several churches before you decide. Pray about it and listen to your heart. It is sort of like trying on a new pair of shoes. You don’t necessarily want to buy the first pair you try.

Continue to pray, read scripture and allow God to speak to you. If you’re a United States student in high school, check out such interdenominational groups as Campus Life, Young Life,

Fellowship of Christian Athletes, K-Life, etc. If you are in college there are interdenominational college ministries such as Campus Crusade For Christ, The Navigators, Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship, etc. Groups such as these are a great way to begin to grow and to find support throughout the week. Even if you are not a student, call these groups to find out some good churches in your area.

The story is told of a native witch doctor who had done much evil in his life, causing much needless suffering through his superstitious beliefs. As a result of the love and work of some Christians, this man yielded his heart to the Lord. He called a tribal meeting to share with his village the transformation that had occurred in his life.

He said that before he came to know Christ as savior it was as though there was an evil dog in him that made him do cruel, hateful things. When he repented of his wrongs, and asked Christ into his life, he said it was as though a powerful good dog came to live in him.

As he spoke, a small lad sitting at his feet grew more and more absorbed with what he was saying. When the lad couldn't take the suspense any longer he blurted out, "Did the bad dog leave?" The former witch doctor paused and said, "No, son, he still hangs around." The boy asked "How do the two dogs get along?" The old man replied, "They fight all the time!" The little boy, with great concern in his voice said, "Well, which one wins?" The old man, with a smile and a twinkle in his eyes said, "The one I feed the most!"—How true!

There are spiritual battles that will go on in your life. Just as God and angels are real, Satan and his demons are also real. The New Testament has much to say about them. Beside the other books mentioned thus far, there are three books I highly recommend to help you gain and maintain spiritual victory in your life. The first two are written by Dr. Neil Anderson; *Victory Over the Darkness* and *The Bondage Breaker*. The third book is *Search For Significance* by Robert McGee. I would also recommend such Christian writers as Charles Swindoll, Josh McDowell, and Max Lucado as profound, yet readable authors.

To grow as a new Christian, I suggest you contact any of the following Christian organizations. Check your local phone book, inquire at a Christian bookstore, or access them over the internet.

Billy Graham Evangelistic Assoc.: <http://www.graham-assn.org>

Campus Crusade For Christ: <http://www.ccci.org>

Fellowship Of Christian Athletes: <http://www.gospelcom.net/fca/>

Freedom In Christ Ministries: <http://www.ficm.org>

Great Commission Ministries: <http://www.greatcommission.org>

Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship: <http://www.ivpress.com>

Josh McDowell Ministries: <http://www.ccci.org/josh/>

The Navigators: <http://www.gospelcom.net/navs/>

Youth For Christ: <http://www.gospelcom.net/yfc/>

* You can also contact <http://www.gospelcom.net/> for addresses of other Christian organizations and resources.

Keep feeding the good side. May His grace and peace be yours.

APPENDICES:Resurrection vs. Reincarnation

Christianity does not teach reincarnation, but rather resurrection. The Bible says that is appointed unto men *once* to die and after that the judgment. [Hebrews 9:27]. There is a day coming when each of us will stand before God in judgment once for all. We will either stand

forgiven or not forgiven. Reincarnation, on the other hand, is the belief that we will cycle through this life many times through a series of births, deaths, and rebirths.

Reincarnation is based on the belief that each soul has *karma*. Karma results from either the good deeds or bad deeds we do in this life. Karma attaches itself to our souls. Supposedly, after death, if one's good karma outweighs the bad, one is reborn into our world with a higher position and a better life. If the bad outweighs the good, we are demoted in our next life. We may even come back as an animal, such as a cow.

Practically, what does this mean? It means that if reincarnation is true, you will most likely have to suffer and die many, many times. Just think; you get to relive junior high school over and over and over and over . . . [No thanks.]

According to the Hindu teaching of reincarnation, I would pose the following questions:

1.) How do you know it is true? Who is to say? If life is *maya* [illusion], could reincarnation be an illusion? Is it possible that Satan is deceiving you into believing reincarnation is real?—Remember, demons have been around for centuries. It would be very easy for them to plant false memories of another life into your head or of another time in history. Demons could easily pose as some dead person from the past who offers to be your spirit guide. I believe that reincarnation, and the evidence supporting reincarnation, is nothing more than deception carefully orchestrated by demons.

2.) If, as Hinduism teaches, we are each being punished to varying degrees for our bad karma from a former life, how can we be expected to learn from that which we can't remember? Ask almost anyone if they remember a former life and they will say no. Do you?

3.) How are people such as Hitler to be judged, people whom society calls evil? Such people may be very sincere in their beliefs. If sincerity is rewarded, how will they be judged? If they were evil, does being sincere make it good? Does it matter what you believe as long as you are sincere? Is there ever such a thing as being sincerely wrong? 4.)

When an innocent baby dies, or is aborted in its mother's womb, did that baby deserve such treatment because of bad karma? It would seem to me that the child had not lived long enough to have karma worth judging.

5.) If both good and evil (Kali and Siva) exist within Brahma, how are you to trust your interactions with Brahma? What if you accidentally get plugged into the evil side of Brahma? Would Brahma even care? How is Brahma qualified to judge evil, if Brahma is partially evil? Wouldn't Brahma be at war with himself? Also, how can Brahma know good from evil and yet be impersonal? By what standard is Brahma qualified to judge karma? Doesn't judgment take thought and discernment? If karma exists and there is some sort of judgment when you die, who (or what) is judging you? Who determines what is good karma and what is bad karma? If all karma is an illusion (*maya*), how can it be judged?

6.) Hinduism teaches that people's suffering in this life is a result of their bad karma from a former life. Correct? Isn't this why Hinduism keeps people in the caste system and lets many of them starve to death or remain in poverty?—To see the differences in philosophies between those who believe in resurrection versus reincarnation, walk the streets of Calcutta and observe the poverty. It is usually Christian missionaries who are there helping such people, not Hindus.

Jesus taught His followers to care for the poor, the sick, the wounded, and those gone astray. Jesus taught that we are to love God and love our "neighbor as ourself."—Why do Christians have hospitals to care for the sick? Why do we try to provide housing and food for the poor? Because that is what love demands.

7.) Does reincarnation foster holy living?—What's to keep you from living a life of drunkenness and sexual immorality? Wouldn't you know that if you mess up in this life you'll just get reincarnated and have another chance? In other words you just keep taking the test over and over again until you pass. [Hopefully, if you mess up real bad, you'll not come back as a cow.—And speaking of cows, I'm curious; how does a cow attain good or bad karma?]

What I am about to share doesn't disprove the theory behind reincarnation, but it does

demonstrate how belief in reincarnation can have disastrous results. In Minnesota (U.S.A.), several years ago, a young Satanist took an axe and murdered his entire family. When asked why, he said they were *nerds* (socially embarrassing to him), that he was doing them a favor by killing them; for the next time they are reincarnated, he said, they will come back as better people.—This is the theory of reincarnation carried to the extreme. But do you see how his belief affected his behavior, which had consequences.

Bottom line, why do I believe in resurrection and not reincarnation? Because of Jesus.—He came from Heaven to earth, lived, died, was physically resurrected to life, and ascended back to Heaven again. He knows the truth, for He is God. Jesus and His followers taught resurrection [e.g., John 11; I Corinthians 15; I Thessalonians 4:13-18], not reincarnation. You best take life seriously because, according to Jesus, there are no second chances after death.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

This booklet is one of several booklets in a series defending the Christian faith, written by myself. You can read or download any of the booklets off the internet at: <http://www.4seekers.com>.

Due to the potential risk to my family by religious groups violently opposed to Christianity, such as some Muslim extremists and Satanists, I have chosen to write all booklets in this series under the pen name, Timothy Cross. I am willing to die for my faith, should it come to that; I just don't want to speed up the process.

Why did I choose the name Timothy Cross? Because it was *Timothy* who was told by the apostle Paul to guard the gospel [II Timothy 1:13,14]. And, what is the central message of the gospel? It is the *cross* of Jesus Christ [ICorinthians 1:18-2:2]. Further, by writing under a pen name, it takes the focus off me and puts it where it should be, upon the truthfulness and trustworthiness of Jesus Christ and him alone. As Titus 2:13 says, Jesus is our glorious “*God and Savior.*”

So you know a little about me, I am an evangelical Christian. I work primarily as a chaplain with a hospice [terminally ill patients], and in a psychiatric hospital. On more than one occasion, I have worked closely with Josh McDowell [Campus Crusade For Christ]. I became a Christian through Youth For Christ [Campus Life] in high school, and was very involved with Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship as a student in college. I have always attended churches which are evangelical and interdenominational in flavor [e.g. Evangelical Free Church, Evangelical Covenant Church, Great Commission Ministries, etc.].

I hope this booklet helps you discover and walk in the awesome truth that, not only does God exist, but you are awesomely loved by God.

With deepest respect,

Timothy Cross

“... *in love he claims all.*”—C.S. Lewis