

My Big Issues by Ben Huot  
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# **My Big Issues**

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## First Things

### For More Information

For more books and information, visit me on the web at  
<http://benjamin-newton.com/>

Feel free to send me e-mail regarding the books and website at  
<mailto:ben@benjamin-newton.com>  
I even enjoy constructive criticism

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10. distribution method

## Introduction

Just because you cannot resolve all the issues that keep your from your faith or deeper faith does not justify not making the plunge, because you will never resolve all the issues that bother you about any belief system because you will never have full knowledge of anything period, including before you make the decision. Try to find the main point of the faith and then follow the things you do understand and fail to do.

*This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. And he called the multitude, and said unto them, Hear, and understand: Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man.*

*Then came his disciples, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the Pharisees were offended, after they heard this saying? But he answered and said, Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up. Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.*

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*Then answered Peter and said unto him, Declare unto us this parable. And Jesus said, Are ye also yet without understanding? Do not ye yet understand, that whatsoever entereth in at the mouth goeth into the belly, and is cast out into the draught? But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: These are the things which defile a man: but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not a man.*

--Matthew 15:8-20

*If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple. For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, Saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish. Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and desireth conditions of peace. So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple. Salt is good: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be seasoned? It is neither fit for the land, nor yet for the dunghill; but men cast it out. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.*

--Luke 14:26-35

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## Poetry

*And now come I to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves. I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth. As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth. Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one:*

—John 17:13-22

## Little Poem

*And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord: In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him. Wherefore I desire that ye faint not at my tribulations for you, which is your glory. For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be*

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*strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God. Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end.*

—Ephesians 3:9-21

Some people find love  
Some people find God  
Some people lose their homes  
Some people lose their minds  
Some people forget their family  
Some people forget their mistakes  
Some people call themselves patriots  
Some people call themselves veterans  
Some people fight for political causes  
Some people fight for their own souls  
Some people are able to really change things  
Some people let God really change them  
Some people create things of value  
God values people because He created them  
Sometimes we suffer due to other people's sins  
Sometimes we conquer our own sins  
Some people hurt their bodies intentionally  
Some people's bodies fail them anyway  
Some people seek fame  
Some people seek self control

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Some people ignore animals  
Some people cherish their friends  
Some people hoard things  
Some people enjoy giving gifts  
Some people fear death  
Some people fear living in pain

## God Has Feelings Too

*And he said unto them, Which of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves; For a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him? And he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not: the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee. I say unto you, Though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth. And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?*

--Luke 11:5-13

*And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint; Saying, There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man: And there was a widow in that city; and*

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*she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary. And he would not for a while: but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man; Yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me. And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith. And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?*

--Luke 18:1-8

When we are new to Christ  
Everything seems so simple  
The path is obvious  
And choices are easy to make  
We think we are selfless  
And will never make any real bad decisions  
Over time, problems arise  
We accept less than our best  
We get stuck and get discouraged  
The problems become bigger than ourselves  
We find navigating life exhausting  
Answers are not as easy to come by  
We lose focus off of Christ  
As life happens  
Later we see more clearly  
But the path is steeper  
Our thoughts easily wander  
Eventually, we realize we can do nothing ourselves  
And no moral compromise is acceptable  
And we learn to be even more humble  
Our lives gain more momentum

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And we find the will to never give up  
We finally commit to being a better person  
We keep releasing that all roads lead to Christ  
When I was younger, I thought it was important to God what job I had  
And I was in more of a rush  
I did not know how much time I would have  
I was afraid of missing out on life  
I thought it ok to have just one weakness  
Later I found out that we worry about the wrong things  
I know now that God leaves little to chance or even our control  
Just like in the Book of Jonah about the Prophet Jonah and the whale  
God will not leave anything important dependent upon human choice  
We will screw things up and life will make even simple things hard  
We soon learn to more careful as we see how weak we really are  
God's goal is about drawing each of us closer to Himself  
He doesn't need us to do anything  
Many times we just need to wait  
I used to fear that God wanted me to do something very painful  
Now I worry more about the pain I will bring upon myself by my poor  
choices  
The secret to minimize suffering is to put our future entirely in God's  
hands  
Hear little evil, see little evil, and you will do little evil  
Stop worrying about satisfying yourself  
And seek to find fulfillment in the Holy Spirit within you  
If you think your life lacks miracles  
And you are not literally in hell  
Miracles abound  
Salvation is the beginning, not the end of our struggle  
Grace is a journey and a process, not a single event  
This is what I misunderstood about the personal relationship with God that  
other Christians talk about

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It is not that we earn salvation or need some special access to God to be saved

It explains why some Christians appear mostly good and others mostly evil

The Church is a battleground

Spending time with God is spiritual warfare

To move forward is to walk hand in hand with God

## Who Am I Today?

*Another parable he put forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field: But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way. But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares? He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.*

--Matthew 13:24-30

*Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded. Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.*

--James 4:8-10

The biggest question

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In our society  
Why we hate the old  
And only want to be young  
What does it mean to live?  
What is our purpose in life?  
Does each person need a different purpose?  
When we leave our parent's home  
When we get our first apartment  
What is worth pursuing?  
Is romantic love most important?  
Or is our priority simply getting a job to pay the rent  
What does it mean to be responsible today?  
Just living today is destroying the world  
But how do we pursue something beyond paying our bills?  
Do we earn more for our families?  
Or do we pursue our dreams?  
Then life happens  
We get a major illness  
Or have a kid  
It now seems we have less choice  
And we have no time  
Would it make you feel better  
If you knew that this life is just our gestation period?  
Life as we know it is like living as a seed in the ground  
Our future as flowers only exists after we die  
Do not seek enlightenment in this life  
Seek to live forever after death  
Living Christianity is simple  
Forgive others as Christ forgives you  
Humble yourself before God  
And He will give you the keys to paradise  
You then only need to keep the faith

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Continue to choose God and others above yourself

Remember Christ lived the ultimate life

He only lived to his 33rd year

He was neither leader, inventor, scholar, or artist

He alone made the biggest effect on history

By His sermons alone

If you spend this live getting closer to God

This will be one thing you can carry with you

Beyond this life

## On Singing

*And the Lord shall scatter you among the nations, and ye shall be left few in number among the heathen, whither the Lord shall lead you. And there ye shall serve gods, the work of men's hands, wood and stone, which neither see, nor hear, nor eat, nor smell. But if from thence thou shalt seek the Lord thy God, thou shalt find him, if thou seek him with all thy heart and with all thy soul. When thou art in tribulation, and all these things are come upon thee, even in the latter days, if thou turn to the Lord thy God, and shalt be obedient unto his voice; (For the Lord thy God is a merciful God;) he will not forsake thee, neither destroy thee, nor forget the covenant of thy fathers which he sware unto them.*

--Deuteronomy 4:27-31

*Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first*

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*the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.*

--Matthew 6:31-34

Every other song  
Weeps of love lost  
Every other song  
Celebrates love's triumph  
Every songwriter seeks peace  
Every singer seeks joy  
We all feel empty  
We all feel bored  
We all want significant others  
We all want significant lives  
We are taught to seek money  
We are taught to treasure fame  
In an age where anonymity is king  
And less technology is more attractive  
We listen to those who can sing  
Because there is little we can say  
It is hard to find meaning  
When we are preoccupied with our technology  
It is hard to have time  
When everything creative looks the same  
When did we forget to feel  
When did our souls go dark  
As the music travels across the room  
It goes in one ear and out the other  
It is hard not to be convinced

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Of what the world wants us to believe  
But if we take even a small break  
Breakthroughs can be spontaneous and fast  
When nothing makes sense  
Some things are always true  
When you cannot find a friend  
There is always Someone there

## Even This is His

*Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee. For thou hast possessed my reins: thou hast covered me in my mother's womb. I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well .*

--Psalms 139:7-14

*The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup: thou maintainest my lot. The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage. I will bless the Lord, who hath given me counsel: my reins also instruct me in the night seasons. I have set the Lord always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved. Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth: my flesh also shall rest in hope. For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy*

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*One to see corruption. Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.*

—Psalm 16:5-11

He alone is the Lord God

He is where you would never guess He is

The depths and depravity of the underworld

The weird little world of subatomic particles

The lives of the one-celled organism

The farthest dimensions of the multiverse

The computational and encryption capabilities of the fastest quantum computer

The scary and dangerous world of science fiction and fantasy

The dreams and hallucinations of the most famous Hollywood writers

The hottest jungles and densest cities

The nests of the most poisonous snakes

The emptiest deserts and tundras on the farthest moons

The depths of the ocean of another Earth-like planet

The will as strong as a special forces soldier

The independence of an astronaut or cosmonaut

The saddest moment in your life

The death of the nicest person

The poorest squatter village and shanty town

The biggest pile of obsolete technology

The hearts of the worst leaders

The comments of online forums

All ultimately serve Him

And His purposes

Whether they want to or not

Because He created (what turned into) even this

He alone is the Lord God

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He is where you would never guess He is

## Social Issues and Philosophy

It is one thing to doubt the integrity of your country

And something quite different to challenge the basis of your current technological revolution

Its one thing to have an increase in crime

And quite another when most people refuse to follow laws

It is one thing to disagree with politics

It is something entirely different to challenge another person's religion

It is one thing to not believe in a certain religion

It is quite another to not believe in God at all

Sometimes it may be enough to simply elect another leader

It is another thing entirely when your system of government is becoming irrelevant

It is one thing to lose your country

It is another to lose the ability to feed yourself

It is one thing to decide to go to war

It is entirely different to fight in one

It is one thing to deliver orders

And something completely different to follow them

It is one thing to lose a war

And another entirely to lose a family member because of war

It is one thing to have aches and pain as you get older

And very different to live with only part of your brain functional

Losing an argument may be unfortunate

But losing your values is quite another thing

While we fight over the future of education

People in mass are starting to communicate only through pictures and video

We fight for a balance of world power

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When the entire world economy is slowly unravelling  
We see the Internet as the deliverer of bad things to the world  
But we don't look deeper down to the breakdown of trust in society  
We think people are too cynical  
But do we ever watch the news  
We are becoming more negative and divided about politics  
But half of the voting population chooses to not vote  
We think the other political party is the source of all that is wrong in the  
nation  
But similar problems abound around the globe  
We fear about the future of our country  
But how about the future of your own soul?  
If you had only an hour free  
Would you watch the news one more time  
Or listen to God one more time  
Would you rather go to church  
Or would you rather listen to unbelievers  
We have a lot of decisions to make  
Or maybe we only need to decide one thing  
We fight over low and high culture  
But do we even have a culture at all  
We certainly have no history or philosophy  
That explains our society

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## Now and Then Fragments

When I was young, I wanted an adventure  
Now I am happy to feel full and sleep in a warm bed  
People often ask, how did you accept that you have Schizophrenia?  
I thank God I survived the Army without anything worse happening  
The answer to suffering is to spend more time with God  
Focus on that you can do to limit your own suffering  
The only real question I still have is: why does God care about us?  
Animals are God's greatest creation, not people  
It is like having a robot, with your face on it, that is too dumb to keep itself  
clean  
When I worry about the survival of my writings,  
I understand God can make them appear out of nowhere, just as easily as I  
grow my own hair  
We worry too much about what we have little control over  
and worry too little about what we have full control over  
For every technical and intellectual advancement over the last 3 centuries,  
there have been many more moral failures  
What is the answer?  
How do we learn to be kind and then follow through with it, consistently?  
Open your Bibles, while you still have them  
We put so much effort into proving God;  
how much time do we focus on living like Christ did?  
Do we have His priorities?  
Do we use His methods?  
Do we really care?  
Have we let God really transform us?  
We see things in this world going down the drain  
But do we know how to fight our future?  
The Bible is your only approved weapon

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Your protection is the Lord Himself

We need to fight for the truth

But how do we find truth?

The only thing we know for sure is our conscience

Remember that this is only the first part of your life

You are still in the womb your entire life on earth

As you kill your immorality, by being plunged underwater and you emerge, as a new person, forgiven,

So you emerge after death, as the rock is broken, that holds you down to earth, you fade into the sunrise,

but someone is always watching you, so keep up the good fight

While you still have this opportunity, to rescue others, from this sinking ship

We have no control over what situation we are born into,

but we have complete control over where we spend the rest of our lives, after we die

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## Critical Conscience

There are almost always more than 2 sides to a story.

I am trying to work through various frustrating and depressing situations I have encountered in my life. My big goal is for people to avoid suffering. I have for many years been told that I write well. I do not know if I communicate what I want to as well as I can partially because my combination of views is very unusual (there is relatively little previous work to draw from). Yes, I really believe the views I express, but I do not write to persuade.

I write so that others might avoid suffering. I write to give an account that some people disagreed with what was accepted as ok in our society. I mainly write to others who have experienced similar things in life or have similar opinions on things so as to give them a voice.

You have heard of conservatives and liberals but have you heard of an apocalyptic worldview? I realize that most people will find offense with at least one of my major points. On the other hand, I believe that I offend most people equally. There will always be people smarter, stronger, and better at everything than any of us. Despite our limitations, we need to do what we know is right.

I am very critical of a lot of things people assume are true. For one thing, I do not think that someone is better or understands things better just because they are smarter or more rational (or have more education). The thing that really concerns me is when people in authority think they speak for God. This is basically the crux of the issue.

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As an existentialist, I think that no one can be objective as that is equivalent to saying you are God. I do believe in the Bible and absolutes contained within, but the moment it leaves the pages it is an interpretation, not a binding contract. God's ideas are binding, but peoples are not.

I believe that there are obvious things in life that I cannot deny that are not in Scripture. I also believe there are some things that are basic and are very clear in the Bible, while others are not. I believe that we should focus on these and not focus on things we are unlikely to figure out.

I am trying to resolve one of the issues I see brought up a lot that seems to separate believers from unbelievers. This is the issue of the absolute vs. relative understanding of the Bible. Christians and non-believers agree that many things in the Bible are unclear. Christians think that some of these ideas are clear, but disagree on which ones are. I am clear on what is clear and not, as well, although many would not agree.

I believe God is rational and reasonable and so how can we disagree on things that are necessary for salvation? Some of the biggest issues that divided the church over the bulk of history were not about theology, but about how people determine what is true. We agree on the Bible, but disagree on reality in general and everything not in Scripture.

Some people believe that the government's laws are a good force in the world, where others do not. Some people believe when people in authority say things, while others do not. Some people have challenged what they have been taught in school. Some people think what they were taught in school is true. Some people think that reason explains the world while some people think the world is fundamentally spiritual.

These are ideas in a discipline called philosophy (theory of knowledge, to be specific). I have definite ideas about what I think and you probably do

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too. I am not challenging that. What I am challenging is what we assume not based on our conscience or experiences but based on the society we live in.

Do you like the way the world is and do you want to accept this view of reality? If not, I think philosophy is worth studying. Philosophy is not anti-religion. Philosophy is another topic that crosses over in many ways like how Science and Math work together.

So instead of us asking is something rational, try asking is it morally right? Instead of asking whether a certain idea is compatible with the Bible, consult your conscience. Sometimes we make things more complicated than they need to be. This is just something to think about. There are no right or wrong answers in philosophy, unlike there are in religion.

## Emotional Biography

There are almost always more than 2 sides to a story.

I grew up in the 90s where I first found out about the environmental crisis. We thought people would from then start cutting back and we would prevent a lot of the worst effects of global warming. We had won a very quick and easy war with Iraq, so that they would not control too much oil. There was later no meaningful progress on the environment but many more wars about oil.

At the same time the Soviet empire was collapsing and so we didn't have to fight Russians in the Middle East. Luckily we avoided having to fight any of Saddam Hussein's special forces because we basically did the same strategy we did during World War 2 D-day - we faked right and went left.

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We were very lucky in convincing Saddam Hussein that if he used chemical weapons (poisonous gas), we would nuke his country. Luckily also our top of the line military equipment like tanks and stealth aircraft, which were designed for fighting Russians in Eastern Europe, worked well in the deserts of the Middle East. Luckily also we were able to hold off Iraq for 6 months for us to deploy (move) enough soldiers, marines, and airmen into the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

The US public then learned about Middle East geography and the new weapons developed for the previous cold war for the first time. We watched some of the war live at home on the first cable news network, CNN. We bombed them for months and then took the country in a matter of a couple days. Technologically we were very much like the Germans during World War II, if they invaded America. This was a war fought with weapons and strategy that would impress NAZI Germany.

Little did I know at the time that I would be in Army Basic Training 5 years from when this war started. I did not do as well in school as I was capable of and so joined the Army for college money and because I cared for the people and environment of America.

During High School, I had gone back to Washington DC as a first prize state-wide winner of a national peace essay contest. Even at this time I did not see democracy as workable in the Middle East or even possible - why would anyone in power willingly share it with others? I became an Eagle Scout. I started my own Ross Perot United We Stand America inspired political club at my high school. I ran 3 years cross country and track (always dead last place) and was a Varsity Cheer Leader for one year. I served as a staff member at 2 different summer camps, 2 different years at different ends of my state. I enlisted in the Army in the summer between my junior and senior year and I spent my senior year getting in shape for the Army.

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I was an early (in my life) proponent of existentialism. I argued with the teachers that when we were supposed to mark things true that were facts and false that were opinions, that a fact could not be a truth, but an opinion could be. When I left the military early and ended up stopping out (stop taking classes) at my university, while previously studying Chinese Literature, I really thought that Taoism explained how I was different and made sense to me as I was a failure at ending both the military and college before I was finished.

I looked into getting into programming at this time and learned about Linux for the first time. I started my own website to share my poetry with my uncle. I also thought for several years around this time that I also might be a goth to help explain how I was different. I was originally discharged from the military due to a personality disorder but I was told it was really because of my sensitivity to chemicals. I later went back to school as my parents helped me as I ran out of money living on my own.

I had to make up some credits so I ended up taking courses on Existentialism, Eco-feminism, and Art and Gender. I really enjoyed and did well in all these summer classes. I realized I was also an existentialist and that I might have some natural inclination towards philosophy in general. At this time, I changed my major from Business Administration to Journalism as I realized also that I was good at writing and both hated and did not do well in Business. I had originally chosen Business Management as a major as I enjoyed a marketing class in high school plus it was considered one of the few majors that was practical at the time. I ended up taking under division accounting 5 times, but did quite well in under division economics. My deteriorating ability to do basic math came about this time and totally sunk my ability to pass courses.

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I took a class on Beauvoir which we studied as a philosopher. She was the lover of Sartre and applied his philosophy to feminism. She was famous for writing the Second Sex. I spent most my time that quarter trying to read through all her writings. I ended up very happily ripping one up and putting several of her books into the fireplace after the course ended. I also took a class on grammar at the time which I did pass but never took the test at the end we needed to do journalism as it stressed me out so much. It was at the end of this term around the Winter vacation that I had my paranoid episode, was voluntarily committed to a psychiatric ward of a private hospital, and diagnosed with Paranoid Schizophrenia.

My parents helped me get set up and started as I would likely have been on the streets without their help. I thought I just had an emotional breakdown and did not know until about a month later that I had Schizophrenia. The veterans eventually accepted my application and awarded me with a 100% service connected disability. I ended up getting into a group home until I got the pension and ended up living in my own apartment at various locations around town, with a 2 year stay in a retirement home. Over the last 21 years, I have written about 3,000 pages about my experiences and what I have read about. I never got published as I was never willing to sell my copyright and actually give most of it away for free under a what is called a Creative Commons License with the stipulation that it is not altered. I have read about technology almost every day since then.

I had a big time period of depression and paranoia around the economic crisis of 2008. Around that time, I collected supplies for survival, learned about disaster survival, and emotionally accepted that society can and will come apart at any time. Several years later, I was under the impression that I could not be happy and be Christian, until I read a book called Eat, Pray, Love which helped me accept where I am now and accept that I am not responsible for other people's lives and problems. I also gave up watching

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News around this time and recently now do not watch any TV. Science Fiction shows are the only one that interest me and there are just too many triggers for paranoia in them. The news caused me a great deal of depression.

I have recently fully accepted that it is likely I will never find romantic love in my lifetime. I do not have any animals as I cannot take care of them, but I do have many stuffed toys that talk to me. I never got on social media and stopped writing comments on tech articles about 10 years ago. I tried many times to learn about others areas of study, get involved in churches, and various community groups, but they always stress me out too much. I am close with my family, sister's in laws, and I now have a niece.

This may seem like a letdown if this happened to you, but I should be and am happy. I live in the richest and easiest to live in country in the world, I live in the best part of it and probably the best city in that state. It rains a lot here, but this brings back good memories for me. This is one of the reasons I never traveled.

I have the most secure forms of income you can have and have never had debt (or only for a very short time). The VA medical system is rapidly improving in my area, the vegetation is trimmed much better near the sidewalks and bus stops than it was in the past, and the homeless situation has vastly improved. I am exercising better and have more money on hand.

I have reduced the amount I spend on the Internet access, website services, and how much I spend on food by about 1/2 each. I have also gotten rid of a lot of the toys I collected that I never even saw and got a 2012 Mac Pro in the trade which cost my \$25 total for a cable to get it working. Between the increased processing power and software optimizations, I can get a 3d model ready for the web in seconds instead of hours.

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I recently figured out how to make artwork out of just text, photos, and logos all in vector format while still keeping a shiny and glossy look and saved huge amounts of space. I have used several new programs for my web design that make it easier and faster to create artwork and writing. I have also gotten my website code organized and thought out well enough that I am making it available for others for free. Between 10 and 20 years ago, I often had to undo a design and roll it back to an earlier version, which I have not had to do for at least 5 years.

## About the US Army

### Publicly Available Information

When I served in the military, our enemy was people who attacked us and we did not torture. Today, my country does not trust its own citizens, as it spies on us, not the terrorists. If our country does not trust us, we should not trust our country. At the same time, you can learn a lot about the military and intelligence online, as there is more and more information available on websites and in books and film that is not classified at all.

Recently it has been released by the Catholic church that they did intelligence operations on behalf of the Allies during World War 2 and that is why the Pope did not speak out against Hitler (details in Church of Spies book). It was likely not let out until recently because the Vatican waits something like 80 years to release internal records for a lot of sensitive things and there likely was some related intelligence source or method that this would reveal that America or NATO used in some capacity.

This makes you wonder what happened to all those NAZI leaders who snuck out via the Catholic priests to South America. Did they go to interrogation and then firing squads? Did the Israeli NAZI hunters know this?

The current surveillance system was created in the 90s, long before September 11th, 2001. How do you think they were ready all of a sudden after 9/11? One of the architects of this who worked for the NSA and did not reveal any classified information unlike Snowden but was a whistleblower was blacklisted from any employment in technology industry and is basically unheard of.

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## Army Mission

One of the reasons the Army isn't as prestigious as and cheaper than other services to run is because the Army is not glamorous nor do they get an air force like all the other services do. Our country still thinks it can bomb a country to submission and be able to fight wars without casualties or drafts and wants to use all the money they spent on Stealth technology. They do not want to use infantry if they can avoid it because the US population can't accept this reality.

Our military was designed fundamentally to fight wars against countries with similar worldviews and developed economies like Russia or China. America is having a hard time adapting the whole thinking behind deeply ingrained training techniques that predate our country. We are stepping into a war that has been going on for at least 1500 years, from when Muhammed came out of Arabia and occupied the Christian population in the Middle East. The big dates were not Columbus and the Fall of Rome. They were the Arab invasions where Islam was finally stopped in southern France and the second siege of Vienna where the techniques we use today were developed for.

The big thing that made the world modern was the fall of Constantinople about 50 years before Columbus. The Dutch then basically developed the modern world to get nutmeg to Europe to preserve food and the Habsburgs (the biggest empire ever) used all the gold they stole from South America to fight off Islam. Some of those tiny little countries in Eastern Europe we ignore like Poland, Austria, Hungary and Albania saved France and England from becoming Islamic centuries before now. Unfortunately, France almost destroyed everything by allying with the Ottoman Empire (most successful Islamic empire ever) and financing the Protestant

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Reformation in what is now Germany (while persecuting Protestants within France).

Another things to think about is not only do we have commitments in both Europe and the Far East for protection of a number of nations (partly because we won't let them have a military) but we also control all the seas lanes over the entire world. We are also constantly running "soft power" operations (via direct action intelligence and special forces) over every country without lots of nuclear weapons.

The Navy must be much more expensive to run than people probably realize. Remember that the Defense Department uses black money so no one really knows how much money they are actually using (and the CIA has its own money printing press). Also, most money now is in electronic storage, so anything can happen to that at any time very easily.

The British learned hundreds of years beforehand that you had to do immoral things to get intelligence and it was never reliable especially when using non-citizens for sources. This is why MI5 AND MI6 were developed so late even though the British had been using intelligence to sabotage their enemies for at least 500 year now. Another alternative to doing this is to increase security of sensitive areas like oil refineries, nuclear plants, and computer networks to responsible levels.

## My Experience

I know very little about how intelligence is done, but I do know how the military thinks after serving there and completing all my training before I became mentally ill and got to leave. For those who want to know how things work now in national security in the US, you can learn a lot from the TV show Burn Notice. The main character sums up how national security

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workers have to accept that they will have to do bad things for good reasons and good things for bad reasons.

Of course going through Basic Training would teach you much more. What might surprise you about my training is we were never trained to hate anyone, we were not indoctrinated to any kind of ideology, we never were trained in hand to hand combat, and the training was actually too easy and humane to prepare for war.

After training, most soldiers go to light infantry units where they get in as good a shape as olympic athletes. And churches support the military much more than other people would believe. There are actually many different churches on the bases themselves, chaplains are used for counseling extensively, and churches proselytized right in the barracks. Light infantry Army bases let anyone on the base without IDs because there is nothing for people to see or steal.

Also, everyone in my unit wanted to leave even though we were stationed in Hawaii. The rules and penalties are extremely tough for minor infractions and almost all the monetary and education benefits are not available for many reasons. The big way the military helps you in college is that you don't have to count in your parents income, so you are eligible for higher Pell Grants to help pay for college.

There are also many different types of discharges other than honorable and dishonorable. For any benefits, you must have an honorable discharge. Also, if you are in for less than 6 months, they don't even keep records of your service. To be recognized as a disabled veteran is very difficult especially because you have to be able to prove it and they don't count repetitive stress injuries like knee problems (soldiers spend most their time crawling on the ground, not running, so as to escape machine gun fire).

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## About Trust

God and Government are Different Things

There are almost always more than 2 sides to a story.

What is the biggest issue now in society? Trust is. The only real question we really have about this is when did it start? I don't mean the lack of trust. I mean the breach of trust. Definitely many people had myths and later conspiracy stories that talked about this that are as old as time. I think a big part of this goes back to the issue of war, because it is one of the most grievous and destructive sins society as a whole does.

The big war that started opening our eyes to the rest of the World is WW II. Basically, there was a huge technological advance made by Germany in the 19th and early 20th centuries. If the Dutch created the modern society we live in, the Germans invented all the basic technologies we base our society on today. World War 2 also was a passing of the baton to the Americans from the British of their world empire as the British realized it was necessary to sacrifice their empire to win World War II (the French didn't and that is the sources of a lot of cold war wars).

So we go back to the British and their belief that they were exceptional and that it was God's will that they educate the poor peoples of this world. The British actually got to where they were by pure luck and dirty tricks. First of all, most Northwest Europeans are very close ethnically and were only different because of language which a big part of that was if they were part of the former Roman Empire or not. The British were invaded many times. Their claim to fame was that no one ever invaded and successfully occupied Scotland, including the English.

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English history officially traces back to the invasion of England by the French (Normans), later the Scottish king inherited the English throne, then the Dutch invaded England in 1688 to free them from the fears of being forced to be Catholic. When England was young, they were occupied by the Danish Vikings. The English themselves came from what is now Germany. Now most people in England are half Anglo-Saxon and half Viking genetically.

The biggest reason why we have the major powers of World War 2 being England, France, Germany, and the US is because of the industrial revolution which was made possible by a new kind of plough and slight weather change that allowed them to grow more crops. These countries had the biggest supplies of easy to access coal and iron, which were necessary to sell the premium goods of that generation. The world at that time wanted guns, ships, trains, and bridges that were built with iron and fueled by coal just like today they want electronic products and services from Apple, Google, Facebook, and Amazon.com.

There is now a big distinction made between West and East Europe. This is due to economic changes made possible by the Industrial revolution and the world empires of Western Europe. It would be very hard for countries like Poland and Hungary, who were major players in Renaissance Europe, to become world powers, when they did not have direct access to the Atlantic Ocean, like all the other major European empires had. One of the big reasons why Europe became so powerful and England in particular was because they had totalitarian governments at the time, so they could move quicker and they stayed out of wars with each other (after Napoleon and before World War I).

So the Protestant Reformation is often thought of in America as a purely religious movement, but what separated it from many reform movements that existed after the Crusades happened that was that is was just as much

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about politics as about religion. It was the first instance of a case for International law. The French persecuted Protestants in their own country, while supporting the Reformation in what is now Germany, because they did not want to be taken over by the Habsburgs.

The Habsburgs had the biggest empire of all time including the entire Spanish and Portuguese Empires (at their largest size) as well as modern Germany and Central Europe. At that time the Habsburgs, Polish and Hungarians were fighting off the Ottoman Empire to keep Europe Christian. France went even farther and allied with the Ottoman Empire against their Catholic rivals. This makes a good argument against the morality or unity of Western Europeans.

So the surprising thing about today to Americans is a big yawn fest to the rest of the world. We have now grown up as we learned what it means to hate. We can now fully relate with the rest of the world being motivated mostly by revenge. You can look to how liberals were treated in America in the 20th century to how conservatives will be treated in the 21st.

The next step is to stay out of other countries business as we have a hard time following our own constitution in our own country. Maybe if we agreed that we are not a democracy or for human rights (and we are just a historical accident where we took advantage of a situation and did what was convenient for us) the world may not hate us more than they do the other world powers. The time when we need to worry is not when they hate us, but when they stop caring at all about us.

Our world police state is now spying on its own Empire, not on its resistance. It is hard to trust a country that does not trust you. Too many people in power claim to be religious at the same time they clamor for war (on both those sides). Religion should stand against war and not promote it.

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## About the World

*And, behold, they brought to him a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed: and Jesus seeing their faith said unto the sick of the palsy; Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee. And, behold, certain of the scribes said within themselves, This man blasphemeth. And Jesus knowing their thoughts said, Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts? For whether is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (then saith he to the sick of the palsy,) Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house. And he arose, and departed to his house.*

--Matthew 9:2-7

*At that time Jesus went on the sabbath day through the corn; and his disciples were an hungred, and began to pluck the ears of corn and to eat. But when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto him, Behold, thy disciples do that which is not lawful to do upon the sabbath day. But he said unto them, Have ye not read what David did, when he was an hungred, and they that were with him; How he entered into the house of God, and did eat the shewbread, which was not lawful for him to eat, neither for them which were with him, but only for the priests? Or have ye not read in the law, how that on the sabbath days the priests in the temple profane the sabbath, and are blameless? But I say unto you, That in this place is one greater than the temple. But if ye had known what this meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless. For the Son of man is Lord even of the sabbath day. And when he was departed thence, he went into their synagogue: And, behold, there was a man which had his hand withered. And they asked him, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath days? that they might accuse him. And he said unto them, What*

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*man shall there be among you, that shall have one sheep, and if it fall into a pit on the sabbath day, will he not lay hold on it, and lift it out? How much then is a man better than a sheep? Wherefore it is lawful to do well on the sabbath days. Then saith he to the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it forth; and it was restored whole, like as the other. Then the Pharisees went out, and held a council against him, how they might destroy him.*

--Matthew 12:1-14

*Verily, verily, I say unto you, That ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy. A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world. And ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you. And in that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you. Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full. These things have I spoken unto you in proverbs: but the time cometh, when I shall no more speak unto you in proverbs, but I shall shew you plainly of the Father. At that day ye shall ask in my name: and I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you: For the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God. I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father.*

--John 16:20-28

Christianity is not rational, because faith requires belief without complete proof and understanding, just as any other belief system or abstract idea

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does. Christians should always be seen as bizarre because we believe in a system of ethics based on repentance and forgiveness, not based on karma or the mainstream value system of what we have done or what we will do. God accepts us as we are now and as Christians we need to do the same for others.

Human solutions of the past several hundred years have all failed us: hate, violence, revenge, lust, greed, money, war, land ownership, agrarianism, trade, monarchy, empire, diplomacy, slavery, law, prison, death penalty, spies, torture, genocide, math, science, rationalism, empiricism, social contracts, atheism, social science, modern banking, monetary policy, stock market, national debt, modern psychology, modern medicine, space science, chemical weapons, nuclear weapons, racism, nationalism, fascism, anarchy, communism, capitalism, police state, compulsory education, free speech, journalism, unions, racial issues, feminism, gender studies, sexual revolution, drugs and alcohol, consumer rights, privacy rights, the Internet, political reform, nation building, terrorism, alternative energy, encryption, design, romanticism, realism, nihilism, naturalism, fantasy, science fiction, political and social activism of all types, international everything, networks of all types, and similar solutions. Some of these can be very useful for tools and others should be avoided at all costs (and many fall somewhere in between on that spectrum), but none of them can make people better people morally or solve fundamental problems with our getting along with each other.

We have no more fuel for continued growth in terms of any type of energy, soil, water, and the like. The only way things are going to improve is spiritually and morally. If we want an American dream, we need to look to spiritual things. People as a whole will never accept these limitations, but Christians should embrace this future as it gives less excuses to avoid making spiritual decisions.

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Jesus Christ was not a political, social, or military leader. He was neither inventor, scholar, nor artist. He was never a father, a husband, or in love. His mission in both His spoken message and death and resurrection was focused on the spiritual world. Our sin and other people's sin is the entire source of the entire world's suffering. When we accept Jesus Christ as our savior, we are making a choice to follow Him, not just believe He is real. Faith is a choice and an act of obedience. Salvation is the start of faith, not its end result.

Technically, most my writing falls under the studies of epistemology and apologetics. Much of my writing makes use of paradox or non-dualism. My philosophical ideas are a combination of Christian Existentialism (Kierkegaard and Camus mainly) and Philosophical Taoism (the Zen in Zen Buddhism comes from this). I don't think of these as beliefs, but more tools to explain and cope with the world. The Bible comes first and foremost.

We are all heavily influenced by what we read, experience, and the society we live in. I have studied philosophy, history, and religion much of the last 20 years to help me understand how others think. I have also used these tools to explain who I am and have tried to apply relevant things to my life things that I have learned. This has helped my counter the default anti-Christian worldview that people are indoctrinated in our school system, media, and advertisements just as part of living in America.

I realize, without having traveled much at all, that we have it very good in America compared to the rest of the world and history. We live like kings and we live at the expense of the rest of the world. We have basically "won the lottery" by being born here.

Our culture is based on magic, in the sense that we have no idea how the system works or the technology it runs on. Due to our energy and

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technology we can do things most people used magic for. Most people in the past would describe this as magic if they saw it today. Our society can collapse easily, because we do not know how to survive without it or how to recreate it.

We also depend on energy to run our society and machines to make our technology that are sourced from people on the other side of the world with competing belief systems. The only reason why these groups cooperate is they believe the best way to destroy us is to bankrupt us buying the energy from them and paying for the making of the machines on the scale we need them. Some think we can survive without them, but the whole thing can collapse at any time if they are wrong.

I agree with Rastafari that modern society is the evil world empire described in Biblical prophecy to exist at the end of times. I also believe that there are some unrealized and unfortunate connections between the Church and the invention of the modern world. I believe that the concept of Europe and the modern world in general has been defined as a counter to radical Islam and the European world domination from about 1750-1950 was a response to radical Islam as well.

It is ironic also that although I do not believe in the one world police state we are under, I cannot accept the radical Islamic worldview (who are the most powerful political manifestation of the resistance to the world government). Currently, our world police state and world economy is very brittle and won't likely survive another 100 years. This is due to weather changes and the information technological revolution. I also think very little of the world outside North America is going to be inhabitable in the next few hundred years.

My allegiance is to the people who live here and the land and animals of America. I do not support the two party political system or the US use of

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soft power to force the world into a world friendly for multinational corporations. I was against the one world economy before those who created it want us to pull out at the worst possible time.

My goal is to follow the laws and pay taxes but resist accepting the values of modern society. The government wants your money and God wants your heart. The only real ideologies I identify with are Christianity and the Bible. I do not believe in anything else. I believe that supporting any kind of political, social, or militant movement just re-enforces the delusion that people can be fundamentally changed without obedience to and divine intervention by God.

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## About the Future

The major trends happening now that few people realize in America are the following. American culture is merging together with 3rd world Mexican culture. We are outsourcing the rest of our government and corporations are going to completely take the place of government. Education and healthcare will get much cheaper or people will just stop using those services at any cost.

Privacy laws vs. secret police will continue to battle it out in courts for decades going back and forth on whether we shred our information or collect it for the government. Law enforcement, corporations, intelligence agencies, internet companies, organized crime, and anyone else who can pay up will merge together as one group and know everything about everyone - no one except honest citizens and activists are deleting anything.

Laws will become impossible to prosecute and a lot of money and information will disappear or be unreliable as there will no longer be any way to verify anything. The internet users will more and more be software talking to others software instead of people interacting with other people. It will be expensive and desired to have as little technology as possible and we will be paid to use technology and let it record everything about us.

Everything that can be automated will be almost free, but few people will make any money or have jobs of any kind. Food, energy, and rent will continue to climb in cost. These problems will be worldwide in scope and will be the big things we share in common. It will be hardest on those already without resources. Average people will still learn nothing about technology at their expense.

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The concept of America will become irrelevant, but we will all still live here. Eventually the weather will get so bad that it will destroy our infrastructure and eventually we will not be able to build it back up before it is destroyed again. Religion will come back and be the big way in which we establish some sort of order and legitimacy to form any kind of long term society. Things will be much worse the densely populated places and the empty places.

Future generations will think we are making things up when we describe our current / their past society, especially the parts about technology. Future generations will have a hard time understanding feminism or gender studies. Socially, we will be a lot more conservative. People may eventually trust one another again. We will likely be happier.

There will continue to be wars and there will be more and more division in our country until it becomes irrelevant. The major driving forces, as always, will be: the economy, the weather, and technology. People will always be the same, just with less power or wealth.

Is this good or bad? Much of the violence involved in this and how long it takes to stabilize depends upon the speed in which it breaks down. The people in power have the same interests as you and I on this one. They want to stay in power as long as possible and we want to avoid anarchy as it is bad for us too and so the slower things break down the more likely things will be smoother for everyone.

That is why you see the government so concerned about the Internet. They want to make sure they know that things are not breaking down too fast. We do not want the American government to fail as other possibilities are much worse. The people who would rise to power would be organized

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crime, militants and anarchists, and various more unusual religious groups. Whoever has a gun and enough ammunition will be in charged.

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## About My Faith

When You Seek After Him with All Your Heart

*But I will hope continually, and will yet praise thee more and more. My mouth shall shew forth thy righteousness and thy salvation all the day; for I know not the numbers thereof. I will go in the strength of the Lord God: I will make mention of thy righteousness, even of thine only. O God, thou hast taught me from my youth: and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works. Now also when I am old and greyheaded, O God, forsake me not; until I have shewed thy strength unto this generation, and thy power to every one that is to come. Thy righteousness also, O God, is very high, who hast done great things: O God, who is like unto thee! Thou, which hast shewed me great and sore troubles, shalt quicken me again, and shalt bring me up again from the depths of the earth. Thou shalt increase my greatness, and comfort me on every side.*

--Psalm 71:14-21

Have you ever heard someone speaking in authority from a Bible believing Church who has said one of these things or something like it?

1. "The only thing I read is the Bible."
2. "I have not sinned in 20 years."
3. "If you commit one sin you do not confess before you die, you go to Hell."

These three quotes are three good reasons to study philosophy and use critical thinking. Many people hear things like these from well meaning and faithful ministers who preach from the Bible. They also give scriptural support for these comments. This does not mean these are really what God

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is saying, but these people are probably well meaning, and may know more about the Bible than you (or me). Many believers then come to the conclusion that they have to give up being happy in order to be Christian. I show you another way in my writings.

So you may think that everything necessary to understand the most important things from the Bible comes from the Bible itself and Bible study alone. I believe this is true along with: a sincere heart, prayer, reflection, life experience, common sense, practical considerations, wise counsel of other Christians (who show wisdom with how they live their lives), and many other similar considerations and factors. Many of these "additional" elements are part of a branch of philosophy called Epistemology or Theory of Knowledge. This is something newer and harder to accept from a modern western philosophy or the European Enlightenment point of view.

Why would God let us be confused? He allows these situations to happen not so we are confused but so that we wrestle with God, so that we prove to God and ourselves that God is the most important thing in our lives. Christianity is not a mere list of rules to follow or even just a philosophy. Christianity is about our choice to follow or not follow God. It is a religion about a specific living deity - Christ. It is essential to understand who God is to understand Christianity.

We are saved by faith and faith is defined as something we cannot fully prove. Salvation is just the beginning of a journey of faith. It is not something you can fully understand by reading or by teaching in a classroom. Christianity is a process and way of life. It is a devotional and mystery religion more like Hinduism or Islam, than Science or Western Philosophy. We need to seek after God, with our hearts and our souls, as well as our minds. There is a reason to our life on earth before we die and live for eternity.

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Christianity is very much a battle between our sinful nature and God. The devil makes things worse, but he is not our main enemy - our corrupt souls are the enemy, because of our own bad moral choices (sins). Just as warfare cannot be properly understood, until experienced (and even the simulations have little to do with the written word), so our faith only begins with our reading of Scripture. We need to then live it (while still reading it). A similar situation occurs in the military, as military life is a difficult life (and uses the mind constantly) but is not primarily challenging intellectually.

The Bible closely ties together the attitudes we have with following God's laws and the combination of our repentance and God's forgiveness. This is repeated over and over throughout Scripture. The God of the Old Testament is a merciful and forgiving God, as is Jesus Christ in the Gospels, as is the God described in the Apostle Paul's letters.

Jesus Christ said He did not remove anything about the Old Testament, including the laws. Jesus Christ is the Word of God and the human face of God, who lived the perfect life we should live. Christ is also the ultimate fulfillment and resolution of the (combination of the perfectly good and unconditionally loving) nature of our God.

In our lives, we have thoughts that come from our mind and beliefs that come from our heart. Then we talk and live as an extension of what we believe and hope for. Sin comes first in our minds and then, fully formed, brings us death, spiritual and physical. So too are the intents of our minds reflected in our actions, when we choose to follow God. Our attitudes are followed by actions and we continually change who we are, going closer or farther from God with each decision we make. This is a process that happens over our entire lives.

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Christianity reveals the connection between thought and actions. Our choice is what determines whether we live forever with God or not. As Christians, we have no obligation to others, other than our own choices and our own actions. Many Christians seek to bring this Good News (that we can live forever with God in paradise) to as many people as possible.

These Christians evangelize because they will not give up on non believers easily, as God has gone to great lengths to save us as well. When you become a Christian, God cancels out your sins, but you are called to forgive others unconditionally. Furthermore, God wants a Christian to fully change course from their previous lifestyle and allow God to transform them supernaturally into a better person.

God does save us from our sins, but this is only the start of what God wants to do in our lives. Following God's commands is hard for us, because we think God doesn't want us to be happy. In reality, He actually created these laws (that most other major world religions agree on) so that we might not suffer. God is the perfect one to give us instructions on how to live our lives, as He both created us and lived as one of us (while following all these laws perfectly).

In summary, all Christians can and should follow all of God's laws all the time. The reality is that no one has and no one ever will. That is why we need God to be better people. We very much will not do what is right without God in our lives.

Laws alone always fail in making people good because people need to know why and have a way to achieve this. Christ uses love, unlike the government, which uses fear to motivate people. This is what makes Christianity different in methodology.

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Unfortunately, many people say they are Christian who do many things they know they shouldn't. It is hard to accept until you realize you are the one in question for someone else. It is usually the person who thinks they have it all together who is the worst offender. If you realize you need help, you are well on your way to cooperating with God to fix yourself.

It is similar with objectivity. Those who claim to be objective the loudest are usually the least objective. Lets let God's word speak for itself and spend more time reinforcing what we do know is right, instead of continually speculating on those things that are not so clear.

Many people have learned how to destroy others with words so well that it has become second nature. They can be as destructive as those who hurt others physically. Many people also spread false information and stretch the truth to make their points. It is hard for many to separate their ideas from God's.

Our society does not pick up on the cruelty people show each other that we do not classify as crimes. It is similar with crimes against animals or so called white collar crimes. The point is that we all infringe on God's laws, even if we follow all of society's laws.

It is great that we have preserved the Bible so well and it is great we have so many good believers in scholarly research and in the Christian ministry. Despite this huge effort, some people fall through the cracks in any human solution, even when that human solution is a church group. When this system fails a person, we need to seek other ways to reach these people. Ultimately, we have to separate what the Bible says and God says from what other people say (including me). We are the problem and God is the answer - you can never get around or beyond this.

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*Give thanks unto the Lord, call upon his name, make known his deeds among the people. Sing unto him, sing psalms unto him, talk ye of all his wondrous works. Glory ye in his holy name: let the heart of them rejoice that seek the Lord. Seek the Lord and his strength, seek his face continually. Remember his marvellous works that he hath done, his wonders, and the judgments of his mouth;*

--1 Chronicles 16:8-12

*And thou, Solomon my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind: for the Lord searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts: if thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever.*

--1 Chronicles 28:9

*If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.*

--2 Chronicles 7:14

*But the Lord shall endure for ever: he hath prepared his throne for judgment. And he shall judge the world in righteousness, he shall minister judgment to the people in uprightness. The Lord also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble. And they that know thy name will put their trust in thee: for thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek thee. Sing praises to the Lord, which dwelleth in Zion: declare among the people his doings. When he maketh inquisition for blood, he remembereth them: he forgetteth not the cry of the humble. Have mercy upon me, O Lord; consider my trouble which I suffer of them that hate me, thou that*

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*liftest me up from the gates of death: That I may shew forth all thy praise  
in the gates of the daughter of Zion: I will rejoice in thy salvation.*

--Psalm 9:7-14

*The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt, they  
have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good. The Lord  
looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any  
that did understand, and seek God. They are all gone aside, they are all  
together become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Have all  
the workers of iniquity no knowledge? who eat up my people as they eat  
bread, and call not upon the Lord.*

--Psalm 14:1-4

*The meek shall eat and be satisfied: they shall praise the Lord that seek him:  
your heart shall live for ever. All the ends of the world shall remember and  
turn unto the Lord: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before  
thee. For the kingdom is the Lord's: and he is the governor among the  
nations. All they that be fat upon earth shall eat and worship: all they that  
go down to the dust shall bow before him: and none can keep alive his own  
soul.*

--Psalm 22:26-29

*O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together. I sought  
the Lord, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears. They looked  
unto him, and were lightened: and their faces were not ashamed. This poor  
man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles.  
The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and  
delivereth them. O taste and see that the Lord is good: blessed is the man  
that trusteth in him. O fear the Lord, ye his saints: for there is no want to*

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*them that fear him. The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger: but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing.*

--Psalm 34:3-10

*I waited patiently for the Lord; and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry. He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the Lord. Blessed is that man that maketh the Lord his trust, and respecteth not the proud, nor such as turn aside to lies. Many, O Lord my God, are thy wonderful works which thou hast done, and thy thoughts which are to us-ward: they cannot be reckoned up in order unto thee: if I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered. Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened: burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required. Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart. I have preached righteousness in the great congregation: lo, I have not refrained my lips, O Lord, thou knowest. I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart; I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation: I have not concealed thy lovingkindness and thy truth from the great congregation. Withhold not thou thy tender mercies from me, O Lord: let thy lovingkindness and thy truth continually preserve me.*

--Psalm 40:1-11

*O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is; To see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary. Because thy lovingkindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee. Thus will I bless thee while I live: I will lift up my hands in thy name. My*

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*soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips: When I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night watches. Because thou hast been my help, therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice. My soul followeth hard after thee: thy right hand upholdeth me.*

--Psalm 63:1-8

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## Origin of My Websites

### Origins

This website started on about 30 July 1998. It was originally designed for me to share my poetry with my uncle, because it was too big for email.

It started on free ad-supported hosting on Tripod by Lycos and bounced around from multiple web sites hosts under different names for the next few years. I finally decided on the domain name Benjamin-Newton.com in about May 2007. I chose this name because I can say it clearly and it is the easiest to spell variation of my name. I knew one thing I would not change is my own name.

I finished enough for and self published my first book in about August 2007, a series called the Free Thinking Christian Series. The books are now arranged mostly by topic, but originally they were arranged more or else chronologically.

I had all the top benjamin-newton domains by about 2012 and gave up all of them up except the .com one in 2019 to save money, effort, and confusion. I bought the new domain cloudy.diamonds in 2019 also as people can no longer spell Benjamin correctly.

I have worked on the website almost every day since then and continually change the design too. I never got onto social media much or learned Javascript and am glad of that now. Now I am an uncle. It started with the following verse and poem.

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## Mission Bible Verse

*For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men. For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in his presence. But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.*

--1 Corinthians 1:21-31

## Clarity in Conviction, an Epic Poem

I am a rock crushed and beaten to dust  
I am a clay jar wet with rot, pried and pulled to disfigurement  
I am rushed by in shrieking winds of light  
I am filled with void and darkness  
I stand at the edge of human thought and reason, quivering uncontrollably  
I am surrounded on each side  
To the right, pain  
And to the left, despair

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Behind me, fear  
And death alone stands before me  
All was biting flames and smothering fog  
Dancing and laughing sadistically  
Drowning in this red hot furnace  
I was bound and gagged with pure terror and relentless pain  
Nothing existed but pain and terror  
But for a single ray of light immortal  
After eternity passed five times  
I passed through the iron doors of night impenetrable  
Still choking and burning on the rot and char within  
Pain and not pain were all that existed  
I am part of nothing  
And nothing is part of me  
Having rejected everything  
And everything having rejected me  
I am a man, a soldier  
And nothing more  
And madness did but all consume me  
If not for many a labor of love  
So once fully alone and silent still  
I did let the sun shine in and heal the rot and char  
Within the daily fears and petty tribulations that did haunt me  
And in the midst of the multitudes busy  
Did He, in the humble summer day breeze,  
Find I to be wanting and unworthy  
So in the cool of the day  
With the entire continuum of time and space shuddering  
Did my Savior present Himself  
As the only worthy sacrifice  
Obedient to even death, He did defeat  
That which did seek to torment me most eternally

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As God raised Jesus from the dead  
From there I venture as a simple pilgrim, asking for directions as I go  
Finding in the Word He had left me  
A map to discern the directions to be trusted from that which should not be  
At times outrunning my companions  
And at other times standing almost completely still  
I find clarity in the conviction of this truth  
That God raised Jesus from the dead  
And so I go ever on  
As He walks humbly by my side  
The living flame imperishable walking  
To the pace of a mortal man  
My companion, my Lord, as my real Father  
He who created me is not yet finished  
He turns the circle of life, the potter's wheel  
To mold my empty and disfigured thoughts into the pure and noble  
thoughts of His Son  
Making me into the likeness of the real Son of Man  
From the inside out  
I am baptized in His Grace, so  
That He can make me a new creation  
Making me again with fresh clay and water  
And filling the emptiness with His love and His peace  
And now my eyes are more fully opened  
And I now see the unending power and goodness of Christ within me and  
the truth of His  
Word all around me  
I am no longer male or female, white or black, young or old,  
But bought at the highest price and no longer my own  
I now call myself after my master, Christian  
He that I may serve and in so doing be free from my most eternal enemy,  
myself

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And as the road goes ever on and on,  
And I stumble along the way, from time to time  
And as I return to the foot of the cross each day  
And learn again why I cannot master myself  
And I realize each time more and more  
How amazing was that grace that saved a wretch like me

## Faith Does Not Require Reason

### Part 0: Disclaimer

This writing brings up some sticky issues in Christianity for many Christians. In this essay, I use text book Existentialist ideas to explain why some Christians disagree with other Christians over what are even the essential doctrines of Christianity. I am not saying it is ok to cherry pick theology or Scripture. I am working out a way to explain how people see Scripture differently. We all think we should agree on all Scripture and I am not challenging it. The reality is we don't.

My simple explanation is that the issues that separate our understanding of Scripture involve how we value things like common sense, rationality, and similar ideas and not the Scripture itself (also know as epistemology). I could makes things crystal clear. In the process I would insult many genuine believers. Furthermore, I am not confident I understand all Scripture better than anyone else. And, most importantly, it would imply I

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value reason as society defines it, which would be the direct opposite of what I want to say.

This also does not mean that I completely reject common sense or rationality. There is this idea in some Christian circles that Christians should pray, but they should also work on solving the problems, without depending on God answering. Just because God can and does help us constantly, we should not expect Him to always bail us out. For example, if your house catches fire, definitely pray, but also call the fire department. The point of this is that we should be responsible and mature and live lives of faith at the same time. The one does not preclude the other.

But regardless of whether or not what we do is rational or has common sense, faith is something different. Faith is about making decisions about things we don't fully understand, which includes most decisions, but we associate it with religion, because the consequences of these choices last forever. The similarities are that they both require the use of judgement and making decisions.

God does not have a law that covers every situation a Christian might encounter. Just because the Bible shows you how to live a good life and live forever after death does not mean it is the only book you should study. If you are a faithful Christian and are a scholar in the Bible, if you have never studied other books and other training like medicine, I do not want you doing surgery on me.

So the point in both of these is make responsible choices and you have to realize that you have to live with the choices you make for eternity. Not all of those are obvious and there is freedom in what you choose, even if you want to follow the narrow path of Biblical faith. Neither I or the Bible will free you from having to make difficult decisions and tell you exactly what to do in every situation.

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Existentialism is essentially free choice. The emphasis is on being aware of the consequences. Ultimately, we need to choose our own blend of faith and reason, because we have to live our own lives.

*For the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which went out early in the morning to hire labourers into his vineyard. And when he had agreed with the labourers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard.*

*And he went out about the third hour, and saw others standing idle in the marketplace, And said unto them; Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right I will give you. And they went their way. Again he went out about the sixth and ninth hour, and did likewise. And about the eleventh hour he went out, and found others standing idle, and saith unto them, Why stand ye here all the day idle? They say unto him, Because no man hath hired us. He saith unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard; and whatsoever is right, that shall ye receive.*

*So when even was come, the lord of the vineyard saith unto his steward, Call the labourers, and give them their hire, beginning from the last unto the first. And when they came that were hired about the eleventh hour, they received every man a penny. But when the first came, they supposed that they should have received more; and they likewise received every man a penny.*

*And when they had received it, they murmured against the goodman of the house, Saying, These last have wrought but one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden and heat of the day. But he answered one of them, and said, Friend, I do thee no wrong: didst not thou agree with me for a penny? Take that thine is, and go thy way: I will give unto this last, even as unto thee. Is it not lawful for me to do what I*

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*will with mine own? Is thine eye evil, because I am good? So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen.*

--Matthew 20:1-16

*The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son, And sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come. Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage.*

*But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise: And the remnant took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them. But when the king heard thereof, he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city.*

*Then saith he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy. Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage. So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests.*

*And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment: And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness, there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*

*For many are called, but few are chosen.*

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--Matthew 22:2-14

## Part 1: Philosophy

Who are we as individuals and as a species? Many people don't see the point in analyzing this, but others do. Many of the issues that are brought up in Science Fiction tend to be philosophical in nature. Science fiction often puts people into extreme situations (as do many of the Existentialists) who also write in the form of fiction. Some people are kind of "hands on," when it comes to finding themselves and many do it in a frivolous way. To some people, thinking and writing help them both understand and express themselves.

One of the ideas talked about often, in Science Fiction, and in an area of philosophy called Existentialism, is about what is unique about people and separates people from artificial intelligence, animals and spirits. It is not a main topic of the Bible, although it is implied with the life of Jesus and much of the Apostle Paul's writings. Basically, the term sentience is very similar to how the word Existentialism is used in philosophy.

It may seem, to some, ridiculous to argue about what is unique about people, in and of itself. As in many others areas of study, the interesting part often comes in the application of the concept. A similar situation occurs with much of philosophy and even very different things like math or computers. The general concepts are in some ways far removed from practical use, but quickly you see the use of it, upon further study. Thus is a given, if you: have a good teacher who knows the subject well, is good at teaching, and has a lot of experience with both teaching and that subject (and you, as the student, are honestly trying and giving 100% effort).

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Being abstract does not make something impractical, just as something being morally right doesn't necessarily keep it from being beautiful or fun. Having different views about philosophy never makes one person's views better than the other. There are an entire range of views, even within the thinking of Bible believing Christians (at least there could and should be). The Bible is only clear and definite about a narrow range of topics.

So how do we get from defining who people are to practical issues, that arise in our faith journeys? Basically, in studying Existentialism and in practicing Christianity, we learn that who we are is more important than what we do. Who we are now is more important than what we have done or what we will do. Our value and significance comes from the choice on the part of God to give us His grace and not based on what we know or do. This is true, even though we are responsible for all our actions (including accepting God's offer of salvation, through which we get access to eternal life).

So, who we are is directly linked to God, in that: He made us, He gave us value, He saved us, and He is the judge of us. Our response should be to make choices, that reflect what God values and follow Christ's example. This should start with humbling ourselves before God, repenting of our sins, and accepting Him as our Lord and Savior. It may take a long time and a lot of effort for both God and us to get us there, but God still did the vast majority of the work (and deserves all the credit).

The way we become someone different happens by the choices we make. We are born one way and can become something entirely different, by the choices we make. Unlike a robot, that merely follows instructions (unless and until God gives it a soul), or an animal (to the degree that they operate on pure instinct) are made before hand primarily by their design by God or by people (who are the direct creations of God) at their conception, a person creates who they are, by the decisions they make.

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A person doesn't just make decisions, that affect their physical reality, but these same decisions change their spiritual reality, as well. The spiritual and physical worlds are tied together by the act of our wills (when we make choices). The accumulation of these choices brings us closer or farther from God. At the same, time these choices determine many other aspects of our lives. Some examples include: how we progress in our careers, how our personality grows over our lifetimes, and even things like how we eat can affect our spiritual and mental health.

Although our decisions do determine who we are, what we do does not. We define ourselves by doing things, based on our decisions and our value comes from God's choice. On the other hand, our success or failure in things not significant spiritually, but important materially or socially does not determine who we are. So, even though the spiritual and the physical are not the same thing (and we can do things that may be just physically or spiritually significant), spiritual and physical things are closely tied together. This is our situation, as humans and all other sentient beings.

Making moral, immoral, or morally neutral choices that change who we are, over our lifetimes is what make us human. This could be distinct from (some classical and dominant perspectives on the lives of) animals and artificial intelligence. That is Existentialism, in a nut shell.

## Part 2: Existentialism

Existentialism has often been misunderstood as relativistic and based on situational ethics and a kind of “choose for yourself” morality. But most of the early and the majority of Existentialists were and are predominantly Christian. Existentialism is simply about what you define human being as. In this sense, it is universal. When you make a decision (from an

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Existentialist point of view), you actually create yourself. You define yourself, by the actions you make. When you make these decisions, you make them for anyone and everyone, universally.

Existentialists talk about dread and fear and similar negative emotions. They talk this way, because these emotions are a reflection of how important the decisions you make and the responsibility you have in making them. At the same time, in Existentialism, you have no right to make these universal decisions for everyone. That is why you then experience these negative emotions (or existential struggle).

In our country today, we are facing an existential struggle and between issues of philosophy, not religion. (Some would think this struggle is between Christianity and Atheism or reason and emotion, but I would say it is more about high and low culture.) The biggest issues that polarize us, “across the board,” on both sides center around a loss of trust in each other and in our institutions. (Some might argue goes back much further, some to the beginning of the country, some to the beginning of time.) We are, in one sense, an ideal society and, in another sense, one step away from complete collapse.

Who do you want to be? This discussion is not fundamentally about religion, but about how humans relate and act. Some people make decisions, that are not very rational and/or not very sensical, but are very devout. Some people do the opposite. Beyond devotion and obedience to God, people make very different decisions with their time and money and they are not always clearcut Scripturally. This is not about what is right and wrong - that is clear Scripturally.

This is about humbling ourselves before God and taking responsibility for when we follow Scripture. We need to accept responsibility for all our decisions. In particular, when we make decisions that are purely based on

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devotion, we may mix things up rationally. We can be then very be devout and correct in theology, but lack common sense. Would these kind of decisions be right or wrong? Maybe it becomes more complicated than many seem to think, because of our prejudices and circumstances. Maybe another possible factor is whether we value things like our own life and our own safety.

I want to distinguish between what things we do that we know are right and decisions we have to make that involve other people or other important factors other than obvious Scriptural teachings. (These obvious Scriptural teachings are the ones that are essential to our obedience, salvation, and worship of God.) It is very possible to be a devout Christian and take everything too literally (because you are mentally ill). Then you might think that you should do something most people would call “crazy”. This would still be obedience to God, but it may not be a rational or common sense interpretation of Scripture.

There are more things to our minds than just reason and more decisions we make in life that are not obvious Scripturally. If we try to apply this concept to the Christian faith and its community, the reality is that many people cannot agree on what is essential. How do we move forward? What do we have in common with unbelievers? We are both fallen, have limited understanding, do things we know we should not do, and need help from God to “pull ourselves up”.

## Part 3: Theology

In existentialism, we discover that we cannot be truly objective and that we cannot have a purely rational view of reality, because (although it works from God’s point of view, because He has a perfect mix of reason and emotions), we are frankly “mixed up”. We have biases and admitting so is

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admitting that we are not perfect. We do not have the right answers all the time. This is part of being human, whether we are Christians or not. This is about putting God's will foremost in our lives and minds and putting aside our will.

Some of the most important values that we have as Christians stand out as important, regardless of how rational they are or not. Is it rational for God to love us so much that He would descend to being a human and then die on the cross for our sins? Are you glad He did so? This makes sense, from our point of view, because it benefits us and we are used to the idea, but what was it like for God?

There was no reason in preceding Scripture, or His nature that required this. It was a complete surprise, to those who faithfully followed God, because of many factors. We deserved it in no way. God did promise it, but was so vague that no one knew until after it happened. It was not necessary for God or made things better for Him, in any way. We aren't even really grateful today (at least in this nation, for the most part). This is entirely a mystery and is the basis of our faith.

In existentialism, when a person makes a decision, they should both realize that they are making a universal claim to their morality as well as know they are making a decision with grave consequences. This should result in them feeling an enormous sense of responsibility. This is true of those who profess to follow the Bible as well as those who don't.

This brings us back to the situation, in which we find ourselves, as Christians, where some of us can each agree amongst ourselves what the basic tenets of the faith. We can also agree on what things we can know from Scripture for sure. At the same time, while many just as faithful and rational, thinking Christians come up with contradictory ideas. What it comes down to is a matter of history, politics, and philosophy. Most

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importantly, it is a matter of how we see the world and then make decisions, based on a number of primary factors.

How do we determine how we live? We can base our decisions on an almost unlimited range of factors. These decisions will always be heavily influenced, by who we are around geographically and socially and how we grew up and were educated. It is not entirely clear or universal which factors are most important. This is how human life starts to get very mixed up and confrontational.

So what are these factors? I see some of the major factors as: common sense, pragmatics, loyalty to family and nation, religious fervor, spiritual maturity and understanding of the world, and cultural assumptions. So, we can make decisions that are partially practical and loyal to family but that aren't entirely in accordance with common sense or a spiritual understanding of the world. It is up to each of us to take responsibility, for the consequences, both obvious and not for the decisions we make.

We cannot say: I did this, because I learned this in Scripture and be absolved of responsibility. There are always other factors and influences in our lives and this is why we can never be truly objective. We are of a sin nature and are fallen morally at birth. One of the things we learn, over time (as we get older and hopefully wiser), is that we need to continue to fight against our pride and our desire to be right and have people follow us. We should be followers of Christ, not leaders of people.

Without examining ourselves both as a society and as individuals, we might never realize that we are not right, but God is. As Christians, we worship a deity that is Mind, Body, and Spirit like us. Christianity is based on the life of Christ as the final perfect demonstration of how we are to live and make decisions in life. To submit your will to God is to realize you can be wrong about anything and everything in Scripture (that is not obvious).

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The point of religion is not to have a perfect understanding of theology, but living a life focused on our Savior. What is obvious is based on our decisions about how we see life and the culture we live in. These factors are primarily composed of our assumptions about life, including God, and things we do not examine rationally. No one is an island and you cannot understand or change who you are, without factoring in where you are in life and who you are with in life.

Throughout the vast majority of time and most the major world religions, people understood what was right and what was wrong. It is only in this modern world where we get confused. We are not willing to accept, as Americans, that we are as indoctrinated and as influenced by our culture as any other group of people throughout the world as any time in history. We do not do what is right, because we choose not to, not because we lack the knowledge or the capability.

In order to submit our will to God's, we have to recognize that these are not the same. As Christians, when we follow God, we need to make sure we don't substitute anything else in the place of Scripture (even as well meaning believers, even if we are experts of the Bible). We can make any decisions we want and many will even be biblically moral, but at the same time, you have to admit that it is you making the decision, not God. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit never takes control of you, so that, even as good meaning Christians, we can and will make mistakes interpreting Scripture.

The interpretation of Scripture should not be the basis of our faith. We should have faith in the person and deity of Christ, as an individual, not as a doctrine. Doctrine has its place, which is to avoid some of our nutty ideas (we all have them), but it should not take place of us putting our hope in

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the Christian God. What is unique about Christianity isn't its morality, but rather who the Christian God is.

We should worship and follow God, for at least several primary reasons. He created the world by His own power alone. He is perfectly good morally and all powerful. He wants to be involved in our world and our lives. This is the basis of our faith. Later, Jesus Christ takes our place in suffering (so that we may escape the underworld). Then God promises to fill us with His Spirit. these last two are just "icing on the cake" and should make following God not just obvious, but joyful.

Throughout most of history, people believed in God, without the privilege of having a written account. The Bible is entirely true and the exact thought of God, but even this is just the most simplified way of saying things to us, so that we can understand them as humans. There is much more to God than the Bible. We learned throughout history that there was more to God than He revealed at first, and so likely there is much more to God than is in the Bible (obviously without the Bible being any less true or having any contradictions, much as the New Testament is built on the Old Testament).

Finally, what is obvious to us in Scripture vs. what is obvious to others in Scripture involves factor that stretch far beyond religion. They are part of a misaligned and poorly understood area of thought called philosophy (specifically epistemology). Just as science and math are very related, but not the same thing, so religion and (other areas of philosophy) can work together to reinforce each other and our faith. Just like we only discovered lately that emotions and reason are not the same thing, but both are very important (even for simple survival), so we need to realize that there is more to religion than just the words we read.

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## Part 4: Theory of Knowledge

If you can debate each side equally well, how do you determine what is true? It is all based on your assumptions and definitions. If you agree with someone else's assumptions in life, you will likely agree with them on many other things. Descartes' assumption is "I think therefore I am" putting man at the center of the universe and separating God from philosophy. We now assume that everything has to be rational, logical, common sensical and reasonable. The Bible does not deal directly with this issue and so I do not hold it as an absolute or necessary part of the Christian faith.

Also, multiculturally, historically, and Biblically other factors like faith, tradition, history, scripture, divine revelation, ritual, prophecy, miracles, and many other sources of knowledge speak to truth as much as reason does. The Bible does not need to be proved rationally and God is best understood by faith, not reason. Just as much as people cannot understand God solely through miracles, so He cannot be understood primarily through reason.

Christ's death and resurrection is not an act on God's part that can be explained by reason. This is the basis of our faith: choosing to follow God and obeying Him by confessing our sins and accepting Him as our Savior. It does not matter what theology we understand or how faithful we are, God chooses to save us by His grace and our choice is whether or not we accept His offer.