Bipolar Religiosity: Bipolar Disorder And My Religious Experience

By Jeffrey L. Reid
This book is dedicated to my loving and amazing and wonderful mother, Beth Dickson, who has always been there for me no matter what was going on in my life at the time...thanks, Mom! Love you!
# Table of Contents

## Contents

Forward .................................................................................................................. 7

BIPOLAR DISORDER ....................................................................................... 9

MY RELIGIOUS JOURNEY ........................................................................ 15

BIPOLAR MANIA AND RELIGIOUS BELIEF ........................................ 32

Introduction to “Thoughts” ........................................................................ 34

THOUGHTS ................................................................................................... 35

Introduction to “We are Living in the Last Days” ................................ 40

WE ARE LIVING IN THE LAST DAYS ..................................................... 42

Introduction to “Holiness and the Power of God” .......................... 47

HOLINESS AND THE POWER OF GOD ............................................. 48

Introduction to “The Joy of the Lord” .................................................. 51

THE JOY OF THE LORD ......................................................................... 52

Introduction to “Thoughts from Jeff and Thoughts from Jeff Part 2” .................................................................................................................. 54

THOUGHTS FROM JEFF ....................................................................... 55

THOUGHTS FROM JEFF-PART 2 ............................................................ 61

Introduction to “Full Realization Atheism” ........................................ 66

FULL REALIZATION ATHEISM ................................................................ 67

Introduction to “NASA Photographs Jesus in Space!” .................. 79

NASA PHOTOGRAPHS JESUS IN SPACE! ......................................... 80
Thoughts on “Fuck You, Jesus!” ................................................................. 204
FUCK YOU, JESUS! .................................................................................. 205
Introduction to “What Atheism Has Done for Me” ....................... 206
WHAT ATHEISM HAS DONE FOR ME.................................................. 207
CONCLUSION.......................................................................................... 214
Jeff is the most incredible man I know — and he is my bipolar son. What makes him incredible to me is not that he has bipolar disorder, or that he is my son, but that he has struggled since early adolescence with a disease very few, if any, professionals understand, let alone the “guy on the street” and he has remained compassionate, loving, caring, interesting and interested, eager to learn and to do. This book is a testament to those qualities.

Both before and after he was diagnosed, Jeff would do almost anything to escape the horrors of his disease and to “feel normal” which led to many addictions. Drugs and alcohol took him to a different, albeit a very dangerous, world where he could feel good for a while without worrying about why. The crashes were as bad as the highs were good but alcohol and drugs can be removed from the body and suicides were prevented. Religion was, and is, the worst of the addictions. There is no rehab center for religion. There are no mind blinding drugs short of stupors. Within bipolar disorder, “moderation” is not easily understood.

Intelligent people struggle with their beliefs in life, death, and if there is a hereafter. And Jeff, like most people who have bipolar disorder, has a very high IQ. The rest of us come to an acceptance of a formal religion, no religion, or some form of “I don’t have a clue” and that’s OK. But the bipolar mind cannot let go and the high that comes from occult/charismatic/over the top religion where you give control to someone who promises to take care of you is strong and more dangerous. The struggle
between the two becomes all inclusive in their lives. The high of the religion is replaced with the high of the hate with blessed periods of normalcy between.

This book will not end the fight but it is Jeff’s, and my, hope it will help not only the bipolar patient but their family and friends, understand the addiction and that understanding will bring some recognition and, with that, some peace.

Beth Reid Dickson
This book is about bipolar disorder and more specifically about my religious journey as a person who has that illness. Bipolar disorder is an illness marked by bouts of mania and depression with some periods of blessed normalcy and stability in between.

Bipolar Disorder can be defined as follows (http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/bipolar-disorder/what-is-bipolar-disorder.shtml):

*Bipolar disorder, also known as manic-depressive illness, is a brain disorder that causes unusual shifts in mood, energy, activity levels, and the ability to carry out day-to-day tasks. Symptoms of bipolar disorder are severe. They are different from the normal ups and downs that everyone goes through from time to time. Bipolar disorder symptoms can result in damaged relationships, poor job or school performance, and even suicide. But bipolar disorder can be treated, and people with this illness can lead full and productive lives.*

The symptoms of bipolar disorder are varied but they follow a distinct pattern which can be diagnosed by a qualified mental health professional (http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/bipolar-disorder/what-are-the-symptoms-of-bipolar-disorder.shtml):

People with bipolar disorder experience unusually intense emotional states that occur in distinct periods called "mood episodes." An overly joyful or overexcited state is called a manic episode, and an extremely sad or hopeless state is called a depressive episode. Sometimes, a mood episode includes
symptoms of both mania and depression. This is called a mixed state. People with bipolar disorder also may be explosive and irritable during a mood episode.

Extreme changes in energy, activity, sleep, and behavior go along with these changes in mood. It is possible for someone with bipolar disorder to experience a long-lasting period of unstable moods rather than discrete episodes of depression or mania.

A person may be having an episode of bipolar disorder if he or she has a number of manic or depressive symptoms for most of the day, nearly every day, for at least one or two weeks. Sometimes symptoms are so severe that the person cannot function normally at work, school, or home.

Symptoms of bipolar disorder are described below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symptoms of mania or a manic episode include:</th>
<th>Symptoms of depression or a depressive episode include:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mood Changes</strong></td>
<td><strong>Mood Changes</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• A long period of feeling &quot;high,&quot; or an overly happy or outgoing mood</td>
<td>• A long period of feeling worried or empty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Extremely irritable mood, agitation, feeling &quot;jumpy&quot; or &quot;wired.&quot;</td>
<td>• Loss of interest in activities once enjoyed, including sex.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Behavioral Changes</strong></td>
<td><strong>Behavioral Changes</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Talking very fast, jumping from one idea to another,</td>
<td>• Feeling tired or</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
having racing thoughts
• Being easily distracted
• Increasing goal-directed activities, such as taking on new projects
• Being restless
• Sleeping little
• Having an unrealistic belief in one's abilities
• Behaving impulsively and taking part in a lot of pleasurable, high-risk behaviors, such as spending sprees, impulsive sex, and impulsive business investments.

"slowed down"
• Having problems concentrating, remembering, and making decisions
• Being restless or irritable
• Changing eating, sleeping, or other habits
• Thinking of death or suicide, or attempting suicide.

Bipolar disorder has made my life a living hell compared to what those who are not mentally ill get to enjoy. I have never been able to hold a job for any length of time. I have never been able to complete school and get a college degree, though I have certainly tried. My job and school records reflect a lifetime spent struggling with mental illness. I have struggled with serious substance abuse issues for decades. My younger years were spent self-medicating with alcohol and drugs or self-medicating with extreme religious belief. I was always swinging
between one of the two extremes and that pattern continues even today though in a milder form. My life has been a constant battle with a severe mental illness that takes the lives of many who suffer from it. I am determined not to be one of the sad statistics, but it is not uncommon for people who suffer from bipolar disorder to take their own lives. I posted this to my Facebook account recently, and it shows how tired I get sometimes of fighting this illness:

People who enjoy good mental health and take it for granted truly have no idea how lucky they are. I have spent my entire adult life battling bipolar disorder and I am dealing with it right now, today. I would give ANYTHING to have JUST ONE "normal" day where I wasn't depressed or manic or angry or raging or too happy or too sad or any number of other symptoms I have to deal with on a daily basis. Just yesterday I was in a severe state of agitated mania and was so irritable and aggressive I wasn't safe on the roads. If you don't have bipolar disorder, you have no idea what that is like. You have no idea what it is like to be so depressed that you would rather be dead than feel so bad. You have no idea what it is like to struggle for decades with substance abuse issues that never go away... because drinking or doing drugs at least temporarily makes the misery this illness causes go away. I have spent my whole life trying to "get it together" and I never have been able to because even when I am doing well... bipolar disorder raises its ugly head. I have never been able to hold a job for any length of time. I have never been able to complete school and get a college degree. I have never, ever known what it is like to wake up and not have this goddamned illness to deal with in some form or another 24/7. Sometimes I get TIRED! I get TIRED of fighting HARD for what most everybody else just takes for granted. What I wouldn't give for ONE day away from this living hell... I am not suicidal. I am
just TIRED and not feeling right at all. I am ill right now and I am seeing my doctor tomorrow afternoon. But it is small wonder that this illness takes the lives of many who suffer from it...

One of the features of bipolar mania is religiosity, and mine has manifested as either intense Christian faith or an intense interest in Eastern religion. There is not much middle ground. I am either intensely religious or not religious at all. If you have bipolar disorder and have struggled with religious belief, you are not alone!
PART 1

MY

RELIGIOUS

JOURNEY
My religious journey in life has been an interesting one, to say the least. I was raised United Methodist but chose to stop attending church at the age of ten because those beliefs didn’t make sense to me. I went back to the same church for the Confirmation process when I was in my early teens, and then didn’t think about religion much after that until I was about sixteen years old. At that time, I got into frequent religious discussions with our fundamentalist Christian neighbors, but I did not convert to the Christian faith until March of 1985. My conversion then was due to the influence of a good college friend and exposure to the Christian evangelistic production known as “The Jesus Film”. If you are interested, that film is actually freely available to watch online here:

http://www.jesusfilm.org/

I still remember well the huge emotional impact that film had on my young self. I wanted what this Jesus had to offer! I spent the next fifteen years as a sometimes doubting but still very devout fundamentalist Christian. Those doubts came to a head in early 2000 and after doing a lot of reading on the skeptical side of the fence; I lost my faith and began my journey toward rationalism and atheism. I will document that journey later in this book but right now I would like to turn the focus to the initial fifteen years of my Christian experience.

I was saved (I asked Jesus to be my Lord and Savior) on March 7, 1985 at the First Baptist Church in Brazoria, TX. This occurred after much discussion with my good friend Mike and after
seeing the Jesus Film. I remember how exciting those days were. My initial reaction to Mike’s well-meaning “witnessing” to me was to tell him to get away from me with that Jesus shit! But after many discussions my heart began to soften to his message and eventually I ended up in Mike’s car (we were all together in one Honda Accord) to read some scripture from the Bible. I remember well that something seemed to come alive in me when we read Hebrews 4:12, which states:

“For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.”

I remember thinking then that maybe there was something to this Jesus stuff. It was not long afterward that I accepted Jesus as my Lord and Savior and my Christian experience began.

I had a great time getting involved at the First Baptist Church in Brazoria, TX. My life was changing radically and rapidly from that of a teenage party animal to that of a serious and devoted fundamentalist Christian. Everything changed, from my beliefs to my speech and musical tastes. I stopped listening to 80’s Rock and began listening to the Christian music that my friend Mike introduced me to. I learned to love Amy Grant, Michael W. Smith, Sandi Patti and especially Keith Green. It was a radical departure from my usual tastes in music. Elvis Presley and Buddy Holly and the awesome 80’s Rock had been replaced with religious alternatives. There would come a time when I would toss that “evil secular” music out in the garbage, which greatly angered my mother. One of my most vivid memories from those early days of Christian faith at First Baptist Brazoria was using their prayer chapel. I would spend hours there
praying and praising and worshiping God. I took my 80’s Boom Box with me and blasted Christian music of all kinds while I sought the face of God. I remember that at least once I spent all night in that prayer chapel seeking God. Those were exciting times and I made many new Christian friends. One of them was David, the music minister at the church. He was a great guy and fun to be around. We got along well and at one point in time he agreed to come over to our house to pray because strange and scary things had been going on in my bedroom at night. I believe now that I was having hallucinations and delusional thinking as a result of my then recent drug use and undiagnosed bipolar disorder, but at the time I was convinced that it was a result of demonic activity. I was seeing apparitions on the walls and hearing strange noises such as knocks on the walls as I was falling asleep, which is classic poltergeist activity. One of the apparitions I saw was a 19th Century British Navy Captain. I don’t know how I knew that’s what he was, but I did. His mouth would move but I could not hear what he was saying. I had a Star Trek calendar on my wall at the time and I remember that the photo displayed that month animated itself and the planet started spinning and the starship actually orbited the planet. David and I prayed in my bedroom and I remember that the strange occurrences stopped at that point, but I now doubt that it was the result of the power of prayer. I think my mental health was simply improving as a result of stopping the drug and alcohol abuse. But in any case it was nice to have a normal bedroom again! Not long after that David and his family moved out of state and I was sure sorry to see him go.

My new Christian life was sure a lot of fun. I attended church at every opportunity and I remember well driving between Lake Jackson and Brazoria at very high rates of speed and being excited to have another opportunity to get together with my
Christian friends to worship God. I was driving a little Datsun 210 at the time and I pushed it as fast as it would go, which was about 85 mph. Needless to say, that was just slightly above the posted speed limit.

I did not attend First Baptist Brazoria for very long. My friend Mike was involved in the Charismatic Movement and he was attending the Shady Oaks Assembly of God in Lake Jackson. I began attending there and it wasn’t long before my musical talent was discovered. I was practicing a solo at the church and my new friends Bobby and Anna Jo heard me and they were amazed at how well I could sing! I spent the next several years singing solos and participating in the praise and worship choir at one of the churches I attended.

Mike was anxious for me to know God in a deeper way and he began urging me to seek the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. Charismatic believers base this experience primarily on Acts 2:1-4 which states:

“When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. And divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance”.

They believe that the experience of speaking in tongues is part of a “second blessing” that brings with it a deeper relationship with God. I prayed for this experience several times and had some ecstatic religious experiences but I was never fully convinced that I had received the real deal. My friend Bobby prayed with me one time and after I uttered something
unintelligible while under a lot of pressure to perform he assured me that I “had it”! I remained secretly unsure but I still prayed and sang in tongues frequently from that point on. I just tried to keep it private for fear of being overheard and suffering the embarrassment of being told that my “tongues” were not the real thing.

In August of 1985 I went off to school at East Texas Baptist University in Marshall, TX. I was very lonely there at first. It was my first time away from home for any length of time. I ended up having a fun time there but my bipolar illness raised its ugly head and I ended up being suspended academically and for bad behavior and came home summer of 1986. I had major substance abuse issues at the time and I was caught drinking and smoking pot – not exactly activities that are encouraged at a Christian school! But during my time there I made some good new friends and had the opportunity to go see some great Christian concerts. The highlight of those trips to Louisiana to see the Christian stars of the time was seeing Mylon LeFevre & Broken Heart and getting to shake Mylon’s hand backstage! I said something like “That was fun!” and he replied with something like, “Yeah, it was!” Wow!! This was my first time to see them in concert. In 1987 I got to see them again with my friend Mike in Houston, TX. I also saw Michael W. Smith in concert in Houston in 1985.

I spent part of the summer of 1986 in the hospital in Lake Jackson getting inpatient treatment for alcohol abuse. While I was there I was also made aware that I was very immature for my age. I was also diagnosed with bipolar disorder by a doctor we did not like (he was a doctor for the money, not because he cared) but the condition was blamed on alcohol abuse at the time. The substance abuse issues continued after my release
and even today it can be a problem when I am ill and symptomatic.

My friends Bobby and Anna Jo changed churches and I soon followed them. I began attending the Church on the Rock in Brazoria and loved it! They were affiliated with Larry Lea’s Church on the Rock in Dallas, TX. That church was a lot of fun! I made many new friends, including the pastor and his family. It was not long before I was singing solos there and participating in the praise and worship choir. The choir was so much fun. We would march from the back of the church to the front and up on the stage singing and then lead the church in praise and worship. I remember them having the names of God up on the front wall of the church:

*Jehovah Tsidkenu, our righteousness*

*Jehovah M’Keddessh, our sanctification*

*Jehovah Jireh, our provider*

*Jehovah Rophe, our healer*

*Jehovah Nissi, our banner*

*Jehovah Rohi, our shepherd*

*Jehovah Shalom, our peace*

*Jehovah Shammah, our ever-present Lord and God*

At the time I thought that was just great.
That church had a phenomenal worship life. I remember that at times it felt like Heaven itself was moving through that building. They also had fun slogans for the year such as “Storm the Gate in ‘88” and “Draw the Line in ‘89”. I frequently attended the early morning 6:00am prayer meetings, which meant getting up very early in the morning and driving in from Lake Jackson. It was worth it though as we called in new believers by faith from every direction to the church. There were signs even then of trouble with my faith though, as if my friend Mike attended with me he would often have to pray me through to belief again so I could enjoy the prayer meeting. Even then I was plagued with doubts and unbelief.

I moved from Lake Jackson to Houston in 1988 but I didn’t let that stop me from attending Church on the Rock in Brazoria. It was worth the drive and gas was a lot cheaper back then than it is now. Even so, I was often broke back in those days and I remember having to ask friends for gas money to attend church. I attended Houston Community College and had the opportunity to perform solo music at an event that they held. I was nervous but it ended up being a lot of fun.

Sometime in 1990, I believe, I began attending the Brazosport Christian Center in Lake Jackson. I had moved back down there and was working for my mother at her travel agency. That was a fun church too but not in the same way that Church on the Rock had been. I sang solos there too and made some good friends. Among them were Ralph and Pam and Bobbie. It was while I was at that church that I started a newsletter called “The Sword” and lived through a fire at our apartment complex. I was in church worshiping God very soon after the fire, which really impressed one of my friends.
The next several years are a blur of being in and out of church, but mostly out. I was, in fact, in and out of church for my whole Christian experience, which spanned the years from 1985-2000. I realize now that the reason for that is the fact that I have bipolar disorder. I know now that bouts of religiosity are strongly tied to the manic phase of bipolar illness. I would be in church worshiping God for months and out of church for months drinking and using drugs. When I would go back to church the religious highs were intense and I would wonder how I could have ever doubted God or His Word. I still go through these swings in belief now. When I am not in a bipolar manic phase I generally am not religious. But when a swing up into mania begins, God and Jesus suddenly seem very real. Reading the Bible is almost like magic and it is so obviously from GOD. I should know by now what is happening to me and that these feelings, as intense and convincing as they are, are just a phase of my bipolar illness. But I never seem to learn, and that too is a product of the illness. Sometimes these bouts of religiosity manifest as an intense interest in Eastern religion instead of Christian faith. But in any event, the feelings and beliefs are not actually a reflection of how I really feel when I am not ill. They are a product of mental illness and nothing more. It seems that for me religion is so strongly tied to my bipolar illness that the two cannot be separated. My mother used to try to tell me when I was a devout Christian that it was because I was ill, but at the time I refused to believe her. I told her that that would mean that every Christian believer was mentally ill. But that obviously isn’t the case. She was trying to tell me what I realize is true now – that religion and bipolar illness are inseparable for me.

My most recent bout of bipolar religiosity manifested as a rather sudden and dramatic return to Christian faith. I was
watching a TV show about demons and demonology with my father when I started thinking about all of the strange and scary things that happened to me when I was younger. I had the realization that I knew there was a God and it wasn’t long before I was praying for forgiveness and recommitting my life to Christ. I failed to realize that I was having a manic episode and went with the convincing feelings. I even had an online friend tell me that I was having a manic episode, but I denied it because I didn’t want that to be true. Without thinking about why I was believing again or about what I was doing, I went back to church and made a big announcement on Facebook that I was a believer again and I put up a website. I went absolutely all out! At the time I didn’t realize how ill I was, but it is in my manic phases that I actually feel the most “normal”. I don’t think I am ill, but I am. The following is what I wrote as the introductory post to my Christian website:

*I was saved at a small Southern Baptist church in Brazoria, TX on March 7, 1985. I had been witnessed to by a good friend in college and then seen the Jesus Film. After hearing what my friend Mike had to tell me about Jesus and after seeing the film, I knew I wanted and needed what this Jesus had to offer. I remember those joyous times 28 years ago like they were yesterday — attending church every time I possibly could, praying, worshiping, devouring the Bible, spending time alone with God in the church prayer chapel, making great Christian friends, etc. Those were exciting times and I was enjoying a “drugs to Jesus” conversion experience that was awesome beyond description. We did not know that I was mentally ill at the time (I have bipolar disorder), but I went from being a hardcore party animal to being a hardcore follower of the Lord Jesus Christ in a very short period of time. But my Christian experience was not untroubled. I never really got rooted and*
grounded in my faith. I had doubts that I was unable to find good Christian answers for and I developed a history of being in church living a good Christian life for months and then being out of church and away from God and back to my old substance abuse habits for months at a time. I know now that that had everything to do with my bipolar condition and my lack of solid grounding in the faith. Everything was great when my emotions were running high, but when the feelings died down I would usually be gone from the church, leaving my friends to wonder what had become of me once again and what had happened to my faith.

In early 2000, my doubts had built up to the point that I could no longer ignore them, and I got on the Net and looked for information questioning the Bible and the Christian faith. I was astonished by what I found at sites such as the Secular Web and it wasn’t long before I was a very angry and bitter confirmed Atheist. I spent the next 13 years away from God and I did several angry atheistic websites that I am not very proud of now. I was famous for a while for my brand of irreligious humor, but behind all the laughs was a tremendous reservoir of pain that I had no idea how to escape from. I was trapped in a prison of hatred, anger, bitterness, and BLISTERING RAGE that was with me, seething under the surface, for YEARS. No amount of lashing out at my former faith did anything to relieve the pain. It actually just made things worse.

I spent 13 years away from God, except for a few brief re-commitments that didn’t last long due the same lack of grounding in the faith and having doubts overwhelm me. About a week ago my father and I were watching a TV show about demons and demonology that was about the only thing on at the time that interested us at all. God did something amazing
while I was watching the show. Something suddenly changed inside of me and I started thinking about all the weird and scary things that happened to me back in my younger years and I realized that I know that there is a God and a real spiritual world. I never expected to ever return to Christian faith again. Having God reach out to me the way he did that night was a total and completely unexpected surprise. I will praise Him forever for it! I asked God to forgive me for everything that I had said and done against Him and I know that he did it. He is a good God whose boundless love and mercy endures forever! I almost threw away the most incredible gift anyone can ever receive — the gift of eternal life and the joy of spending an eternity with an incredible, amazing, holy, majestic, loving God who is great and mighty beyond the ability of human language to describe. Here is the psalmists description of God in Psalm 145:

I will extol you, my God and King, and bless your name forever and ever.

2 Every day I will bless you and praise your name forever and ever.

3 Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised, and his greatness is unsearchable.

4 One generation shall commend your works to another, and shall declare your mighty acts.

5 On the glorious splendor of your majesty, and on your wondrous works, I will meditate.

6 They shall speak of the might of your awesome deeds, and I will declare your greatness.

7 They shall pour forth the fame of your abundant goodness and shall sing aloud of your righteousness.
The Lord is gracious and merciful,
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.
The Lord is good to all,
and his mercy is over all that he has made.

All your works shall give thanks to you, O Lord,
and all your saints shall bless you!
They shall speak of the glory of your kingdom
and tell of your power,
to make known to the children of man your mighty deeds,
and the glorious splendor of your kingdom.
Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom,
and your dominion endures throughout all generations.

[The Lord is faithful in all his words
and kind in all his works.]  
The Lord upholds all who are falling
and raises up all who are bowed down.
The eyes of all look to you,
and you give them their food in due season.
You open your hand;
you satisfy the desire of every living thing.
The Lord is righteous in all his ways
and kind in all his works.
The Lord is near to all who call on him,
to all who call on him in truth.
He fulfills the desire of those who fear him;
he also hears their cry and saves them.
The Lord preserves all who love him,
but all the wicked he will destroy.

My mouth will speak the praise of the Lord,
and let all flesh bless his holy name forever and ever.
I attended church for the first time in years last Sunday at ChangePoint Church in Anchorage, Alaska. I enjoyed the service very much and met some great folks. I was invited by my new friend Karl to attend a class on Monday night called Growing Deeper. There I had the pleasure of meeting Randy and Anita, the people who are teaching the class. I spent some time talking with Randy after the class and was pleased to discover that he understands bipolar disorder and the impact it has had on my faith and my ability to consistently follow God. Randy apologized for crying when I shared what God had recently done for me, but that didn’t bother me at all. He couldn’t know that I am a “crier” too. I shed tears easily and openly. This macho stuff about “men don’t cry” is just so much cultural nonsense. Crying is one of the most authentic ways to show emotion that there is, in my opinion. I have cried tears of joy writing this post with no shame at all. I cried tears of joy while I listened to this great worship song sung by Amy Grant:

http://youtu.be/HCKEkueBPtc

I remembered and realized that this is what I was created for — to love and worship my Lord and my Savior and my King and my GOD forever and ever! There is no greater JOY!!

I didn’t think I would ever again believe in God and I certainly never expected to return to the Christian faith. I’m still working on getting a solid grounding in my faith, but I know that God will take care of it. I have found a great church and I know what I am learning in the Growing Deeper class will help a great deal. If only I had had such a class available to me back in 1985! But God worked an incredible miracle in my life in the space of a few moments and I’ll praise Him forever for it. He is an amazing God whose boundless love and mercy truly endure forever!
To most people reading my site it may seem that I had a genuine re-conversion to Christian faith. It may seem that I experienced a genuine and amazing miracle from God. But the reality is that it was nothing but a very typical bipolar blip on the map of my life. It was a manifestation of what was a major manic episode for me and really nothing more. While I was in the midst of it all, it felt real. I thought it was real. I desperately wanted it all to be real. But in the end it was just a bipolar bout of religiosity and a rather bad one at that. Once the manic phase died down, so did the intense religiosity and the beliefs. I gradually lost my faith as the mania subsided because the faith I thought I had regained was not the real thing. It was simply a product of mental illness. Nobody who is not mentally ill can possibly understand the pain and frustration that this all causes, but I know that those who love and care about me try to understand and they sympathize. Knowing that I am loved by those who watch me go through these phases of illness and in and out of religious belief does help.

This is what I have been living with since I was nineteen years old – bout after bout of bipolar religiosity and every episode feels absolutely real while it is happening to me. Sometimes the bouts of religiosity are mercifully brief, perhaps only a few weeks. But others, as this last one did, last for months. I am always thankful that I didn’t make too many friends at church so that not too many people will wonder what happened to me when I stop showing up.

Not every bout of bipolar religiosity has involved Christian faith. Back in the late 1990’s I was briefly involved in a fundamentalist Hindu cult when I lived in Austin, TX and here in Anchorage, AK within the last year I have attended a Hindu temple a couple of times. I ultimately decided that Hinduism wasn’t for me, but I
have retained an interest in the beliefs and practices of that religion.

I also fell in love with the teachings of Eknath Easwaran. He teaches spiritual truths from many religious paths and advocates an 8-Point program of meditation that I liked and found very beneficial.

For quite a while I had a meditation room in a small closet that I really enjoyed. I took it down several months ago because it was not being used, but a part of me wishes that it was still there.

Eastern religious teachings meant a lot to me for a long time. I still enjoy returning to them from time to time because it’s just all so interesting to contemplate. For example, take this verse from the Mandukya Upanishad:

*THE SYLLABLE OM, which is the imperishable Brahman, is the universe. Whatsoever has existed, whatsoever exists, whatsoever shall exist hereafter, is OM. And whatsoever transcends past, present, and future, that also is OM.*

I could meditate on that for hours! It is such a deep religious truth, whether it is actually true of the real world or not.
PART 2

BIPOLAR MANIA

AND

RELIGIOUS BELIEF
Some of the material presented in this section may be offensive to Christian readers. Please understand that this material is included not with the intent to offend but with the intent to inform and to demonstrate the effects of bipolar disorder and bipolar mania on my religious thinking.
BIPOLAR MANIA AND RELIGIOUS BELIEF

Religious belief and bipolar disorder are inseparable forces for me. It seems that one cannot exist apart from the other. Bipolar mania can be defined as “a prolonged period of mood that is unusual for the person”, and the condition has several recognizable symptoms.

When I am manic my most recognizable symptoms are elevated mood, irritability, unusual hostility, impulsiveness, financial extravagance/recklessness, and an increased focus on religion and religious activities. Last summer (summer of 2012) during a major manic episode I ran up $15,000 in credit card debt in a very short period of time. I love the stuff that I got and still have some of it, but I would rather be without all of that debt!

The increased focus on religion is recognizable because I progress rapidly from lack of belief (which is my normal state and default position) to extreme religious belief, and I join a church and become very religiously active. I become paranoid that I have committed terrible or unpardonable sin, and I often fear the devil or am paranoid about the possibility of demonic activity. I even frequently doubt my salvation and consider the possibility that I am a false convert – a wolf in sheep’s clothing. I live in fear of ending up in Hell. These fears tend to increase the intensity of my religiosity. When I am feeling good and close to God I want to be someone important in the church I am attending. I have a strong desire to be praised for being a great singer or a great evangelist or one who does great good works.
When I am manic and I am worshiping God I feel the presence of God deeply and it feels very real, but I have become convinced that my sense of the presence of God is a religious delusion—a hallucination produced and driven by the bipolar mania that I am caught up in. I often have strong desires to spend hours seeking God and this often manifests as a desire to stay up all night praying and worshiping God. I’m getting too old to be able to do that even when manic, but the desire is still there.

I believe that the unusually strong hostility I have displayed toward Christians and Christianity in the past has been a product of bipolar mania and/or depression as well. I am no longer feeling angry about my religious past but that was not always the case. I spent several years as a very angry and very outspoken ex-Christian Atheist.

I have done a great deal of religious and anti-religious writing over the last fifteen years. I would like to share some of it now to demonstrate how much my beliefs have jumped all over the map along with the phases of my bipolar illness. My beliefs tend to change frequently and even when I am professing fervent belief chances are good that it won’t last long.
Introduction to “Thoughts”

I wrote these thoughts out on October 13, 2011. In them, I express my dissatisfaction with life and my dissatisfaction and disillusionment with both Christianity and Atheism. I was trying to decide what I wanted out of life and what course to of action to take to get the most out of my life. I knew that I was afraid to commit to another spiritual belief system after getting burned so badly by fundamentalist Christianity. I was desperate for there to be some spiritual meaning to life, but I was not sure what that was. I was just sure at the time that God existed. This writing represents a look into some of my deepest thought processes about God and religious belief.
THOUGHTS

Why is it that I do nothing that is really meaningful with my life? Why have I been happy with that? Because it's easy to drift through the days doing nothing of any real value? My lack of accomplishment was understandable for a very long time. I have spent my entire adult life struggling mightily with mental illness and settling for far less than I know I am capable of. If I could just get my mental and physical health in order and keep it that way it would help tremendously, but even then my life will not change for the better unless I take action and make it happen.

Why do I eat so much unhealthy garbage that I know sabotages my health? Force of habit? Because sugar is addictive? Emotional reasons – to cover up bad feelings I don't want to deal with? All of the above?

What makes me happy? What makes me feel good? What makes me feel like I am making a difference? What makes me feel like I am really LIVING instead of just existing?

What could I be doing that would make me WANT to get up in the morning? What could I be doing with my life that would be exciting, meaningful and fulfilling?

One of my problems is that I don't put full effort into anything I do, with the exception of school and things I enjoy like computers and exercise. I know I have no hope of ever being as athletic as some of my online friends are, but I enjoy pushing myself to do more when I exercise. I have plenty of things around here that I could be doing, but I never get around to
them. The reason is because they don't seem like really productive pursuits, and I know that. There is nothing wrong with doing a lot of spiritual reading, learning Sanskrit, learning to use Blender or other complicated software, or working on antique radios or learning to play my keyboard. But having something to get up for in the morning and go do seems a lot more worthwhile and productive. Then all those other things could be the part-time hobbies they should be. And, if I had somewhere to be and something meaningful to do on a regular basis, my health would likely improve mentally and physically and my immune system would likely be a lot stronger too.

I really enjoy the positive spirituality I have discovered and I see the potential for it to make a huge positive difference in my life, but I haven't committed to it like I wish I would, and I do know why. I fear making a commitment to another religious or spiritual belief system because I got burned so badly by the fundamentalist Christian cult. I think it is extremely unlikely that embracing Eastern spirituality, which is so much more positive, loving, and life-affirming than Christianity is, would lead to another bad experience, but the fear of being hurt again or of being fooled into investing my time and emotional energy into a demonstrably false belief system again is still very much there. There is also the battle between my head and my heart after so many years of angry, atheistic thought. In my heart, do I believe in God? YES, without any question, and I know that God really is LOVE. But my head, which has been filled with so much anger and atheistic thought for so many years, battles with my heart constantly. But even great Eastern spiritual leaders such as Sri Ramakrishna had those struggles. At times he would be consumed with doubt about his entire religious belief system and agonize over whether it was all just a fantasy or not. He would beg the Divine Mother to show Herself to him and
remove his doubts. She always did, but his experience shows me that even great spiritual men struggle with doubt. It is a healthy part of the human condition, and nobody is exempt from it.

My heart is usually in the right place. I am a good, loving, compassionate, giving, caring human being. But what comes out much more often than I wish is the ANGER that I have lived with all of my adult life. It's how I have responded to circumstances or people I don't like for many years. It used to be just normal for me to yell and scream and rage at people who made me angry or who offended me in any way. Even now if my mind is not otherwise occupied it tends to go to anger and angry fantasies where somebody pisses me off and I “put them in their place” and tell them off. I may not do it outwardly anymore, but mentally I still ream people's asses whether the events leading to me doing that are real or imagined. So, as much as I want to enjoy inner calm and peace, I'm usually tense or even bottling up hostile feelings because of my negative and undisciplined mental life. Both Hinduism and Buddhism have a tremendous amount to say about the mind and how learning to control and discipline it is critical to mental and emotional health and spiritual growth. Of course, I fully agree with them, but knowing it and doing it are very often two entirely different things!

Who am I? Who am I supposed to be? Who do I want to be? What do I want my life to mean?

Christianity once answered those questions to my satisfaction. I had dreams within that belief system that were never fulfilled. I wanted to be a traveling evangelist or a famous worship leader or be the man who led thousands or even millions of people to
faith in Christ. Of course, none of that ever even came close to happening. I did do solos in church frequently and I performed publicly a few times, but that was all that came of my desires to be one of the big names in the Christian faith.

Fundamentalist Atheism also answered those questions to my satisfaction for several years, but much less happily. I spent many years as an angry atheist who very publicly bashed Christianity on the Net. I argued strongly against the Christian faith and any sort of literal belief in the Bible, and for a while I had a very popular website. I took it down back in 2004 when my conscience started bothering me to the point that I knew I could no longer continue and still feel good about myself. I also knew that atheism wasn’t making me happy and that deep down inside I still believed in God, just not as Christians define Him. I found myself unable to continue promoting what I now see as the most depressing belief system currently available. Either we are here for a reason and life has a specific meaning and purpose beyond just existing and making a living, or it doesn’t. Atheists believe that science has all the answers or will eventually and while they insist vehemently that they are not religious, most of them do cling to the religion of Scientism with great faith.

For a while, I believed that the best religion was none. Agnosticism or a weak form of Deism at best seemed the most honest way to go. But that was far from satisfying as I kept feeling the need for something more. There simply must be more to our existence than what meets the eye. The Apostle Paul and the Catholic Church created a religion that Jesus himself would not recognize if he could be alive to see what has become of it today. He is recorded as having said, “The Kingdom of God is within.” Every other major religion or spiritual
tradition contains exactly the same truth, though it may be expressed in different words or approached in different ways.

When I'm gone, how do I want to be remembered – as a man who struggled with mental illness all his life and allowed it to define his limits, or as a man who overcame serious mental illness and made a habit of exceeding perceived limitations (whether imposed by me or by others)? What course of actions should I take to move me beyond drifting through endless days of not accomplishing much of value to building a life where doing things that have value and that make a difference in the lives of others is the norm? Right now I'm stuck in the isolated life I have lived for many years with the desire to move beyond that existence, but no real idea how to do so. If I leave the house fired up with good intentions to go make a difference, then where do I go? What do I do? At this moment, I DON'T KNOW!!
Introduction to “We are Living in the Last Days”

I wrote the following article, “We are Living in the Last Days”, in 1999. At the time I was living in Amarillo, TX and was holding a job that didn’t require me to actually work very much. I had a lot of free time on my hands so I started a Christian ministry and put an ad in the newspaper for help running it. I ended up hiring an older couple named Dennis and Evelyn. We rented some office space in downtown Amarillo and began a phone ministry to raise funds. We did well and several local businesses donated money to support our efforts to help others. Dennis and Evelyn initially seemed like nice folks, but they ultimately railroaded me into doing things their way and they ended up stealing the ministry from me. I was not attending a church at the time but I do recall getting into a few discussions with some Jehovah’s Witnesses. That was interesting but ultimately nonproductive.

Back in those days I was absolutely obsessed with the idea that we were living in the End Times and that Jesus was coming back soon. I maintained this belief thanks in large part to popular Christian apologists of the time despite the fact that the return of Jesus had been predicted with great excitement and fanfare for Rosh Hashanah in both 1988 and 1989 by a preacher and author named Edgar Whisenant, and obviously neither prediction turned out to be correct. His popular book, 88 Reasons Why the Rapture Will Be in 1988, turned out to be much ado about nothing. I remember going to bed on the night of Rosh Hashanah in 1988 with great excitement. I fully
expected to be ushered into the presence of Jesus Christ at some point in time during the night. When I woke up the next morning and realized that nothing unusual had occurred I was very disappointed and then had to endure some good-natured ribbing from my non-Christian family.

In the article, I parrot arguments from popular Christian apologists of the time such as Grant Jeffrey and try to make a case for why we must be living in the Last Days. Please enjoy this look back at my religious past for what it is – a fascinating look into the mind of a young and fervent fundamentalist Christian. I was very sure of myself and also very judgmental of others who held different opinions and beliefs. It is hard for me to believe now that I ever thought this way, but clearly I did.
WE ARE LIVING IN THE LAST DAYS

It is evident from both a prophetic and moral standpoint that we are living in the last days before the return of Jesus Christ in power and great glory. "Then Jesus went out and departed from the temple, and His disciples came to Him to show Him the buildings of the temple. And Jesus said to them, 'Do you not see all these things? Assuredly, I say to you, not one stone shall be left here upon another, that shall not be thrown down.'" (Matthew 24:1-2) This prophecy of Jesus was fulfilled to the letter in 70 A.D. when the Romans destroyed the temple. "Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, 'Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?"' And Jesus answered and said to them: "Take heed that no one deceives you. For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many. And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of sorrows." (Matthew 24: 3-8).

Please take the time to read Matthew 24 in its entirety. Matthew 24 is a fascinating chapter where Jesus laid out the signs of the end times and how we could know that the end is near. In 1948, in direct fulfillment of prophecy, Israel became a nation once again. Jesus said that the generation that saw that happen would not pass away before He came again. In 1967,
Israel regained control of the Old City of Jerusalem. Now, a Biblical generation, depending on how you look at it, is from 40-100 years. Forty years from 1948 is 1988, which is when many Christians publicly declared that Jesus would return. Obviously, it didn't happen. That is the danger of date setting. No one knows the day or hour of Christ's return, but we can know the general time, or season of His return. There are many proofs, some of which I will be sharing, that prove that we are living in the last days. If we take the 1967 date, forty years puts the date at 2007. Taking the 40-100 year range from either 1948 or 1967, we come up with the following dates: 40 years: 1988, 2007; 70 years: 2018, 2037; or 100 years: 2048, 2067. My personal feeling on the matter is 2007, forty years after Israel regained control of the city of Jerusalem. Up until that time, the Gentiles controlled the city. While 1948 is prophetically extremely significant, I feel that 1967 started the countdown to the return of Jesus Christ. That is my opinion only, not to be construed as date setting. My deepest conviction is that Jesus will return within the next 2-5 years. Again, I don't and can't know for sure.

Signs of the times: Unbelievable moral decay, many attacks on the Bible as the inerrant, infallible Word of God; abortion, murder, general lawlessness, drunkenness, drug addiction, suicide, rise of occultism and Satanism - channelers (mediums), New Age movement, ; doctrines of demons in the church - the health and wealth false gospel, little gods theology, Sophia goddess worship, the ridiculous idea that Jesus was wealthy - all representing a falling away from the true Christian faith, influx of demonic Eastern religious thought into the West and even into the church sugar-coated in Christian terminology, false pseudo-Christian cults like the Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons and Christian Scientists.
Shall I go on?

Now, let's elaborate on the above list. In the last 100 years, as godless men have undermined the authority of the Bible, this nation, and the world have witness unbelievable, swift moral decay, particularly within the last 40 years. Murder is rampant, particularly murder in the form of abortions. Our wonderful President, Bill Clinton, has signed a bill keeping an extremely heinous form of abortion legal - partial birth abortion, where the baby is carried almost to full term, partially delivered, and then the 'doctor', ignoring his Hippocratic oath to do no harm, murders the child by sucking the brains out of the baby. Most abortions are done because the "mother" doesn't want the child, whatever her selfish reasons might be. Most pro-abortion (murder) advocates ask, "What if the mother's health is in danger?" Abortions to protect the mother's health or life are done in vanishingly small numbers. What about the mental health of a woman after an abortion? Most women know deep down inside that abortion is murder. Most women feel very guilty after having an abortion. They know that they have committed murder, not just the removal of some unwanted tissue. Babies are human beings from the moment of conception. "For you have formed my inward parts; You have covered me in my mother's womb. I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made." (Psalm 139:13-14) How will we avoid the judgment of God if the sin of abortion continues?

Murder from drug deals gone bad to international terrorism is on the rise. Terrorism has come to America -- the World Trade Center bombing and the Murrah Federal Building bombing in Oklahoma. The Oklahoma City bombing was foretold by God 3500 years ago in code (See the section on the Bible Codes).
Alcoholism and drug addiction are rampant. They are a huge combined problem, not only in human lives destroyed, but lost productivity at work and the destruction of families. Why do people use mind-altering substances? Other than social reasons, they are used for the temporary escape they provide. But there is always the morning after. I am not saying that people who can drink responsibly shouldn't be able to drink, but it is wiser not too. Alcohol is a deadly poison, both physically and spiritually. God has a lot to say about alcohol in the Bible. Here is one sample: "Proverbs 20:1 Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise." Here is God's solution: "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths." (Proverbs 3:5-6) "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." (Phil. 4:6-7)

Suicide is on the rise. It knows no economic or social bounds. Suicide has many causes, from mental illness to substance abuse and occult involvement. Satan's plan and desire is to destroy God's crowning creation: Man. He will use any means available to destroy one or many human lives. Suicide attempts occur because that person has lost hope. They see no way to get out of their problem other than death. What these people need to know is: (1) death is not the end, nor is it an escape. (2) There is always hope in God. Jesus Christ came to destroy the works of the devil. (3) Don't minimize the person's problem, but try to show them the hope that is in Jesus. Pray for them, be kind to them. God is not willing that any should perish, but that
all should come to repentance. Let God deal with the person. In the meantime, keep the person as safe as is possible.

Involvement in the Occult is rising, not only among young people, but across all age groups. Demonic Eastern religions have gained a huge foothold in the West. God has created a desire for Him, a "hole in our soul", that only He can fill. Lost, sinful man will try anything before coming to God for his needs, it seems. That includes the occult -- horoscopes, demonic games like Doom or D&D, meditation, yoga, and the list goes on. None of it satisfies and it is all demonic. "But yoga feels good. How can it be bad?" It is because it cannot be separated from the demonic religion that it stems from. The New Age movement with its "I am God or a part of God" philosophy is straight out of Hell. Anything goes, from witchcraft to séances to palm reading. There is really nothing "new" about the New Age. It is all ancient in origin. It is all bad, all demonic and sometimes openly satanic. The false doctrine of reincarnation is taught, along with divination, sorcery, witchcraft, medium ship (channeling), etc. They are saying that "the Christ" is in the world. Christians know this “Christ” of theirs as the Antichrist. We truly are living in the last days. One last proof that we are living in the last days is the incredible increase in knowledge we have witnessed in the last 100 years or so. God prophesied through Daniel that in the last days knowledge would increase greatly. “But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased.” (Daniel 12:4)

The only hope that this world has is Jesus Christ. He died for your sins. He is real, He is God, and He loves you! He offers you eternal life! Ask him into your heart and life now. You'll never be the same!
Introduction to “Holiness and the Power of God”

This article was also written while I was living in Amarillo, TX in 1999. It contains my thoughts at the time on the holiness of God and how to bring revival to America. It is another look into my young and fervent fundamentalist Christian mind. It also demonstrates that at that time I was very judgmental towards others who held different opinions and beliefs. It is hard for me to believe now that I ever thought this way, but it is a frightening look at religious fundamentalism in action. I am happy to report that I now have nothing against people who hold religious beliefs different from my own, and I fully support gay rights and marriage equality. I have, thankfully, grown up and matured quite a bit over the last fifteen years.
HOLINESS AND THE POWER OF GOD

How to Bring Revival to this Land

One of the most awesome attributes of God is His holiness. God’s holiness is presented, upheld, and confirmed from Genesis to Revelation. I believe God is bringing Judgment upon the Earth and this nation soon. The peoples of the Earth have filled up their respective cups of sin. God pleads with us to repent, but we turn our backs on Him pretending that all is well. Still, he waits, holding back his holy anger and judgment, because He is also a loving God, and he is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance and find eternal life in Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:9). He is waiting on His church to wake up and become the holy people that He desires.

I am frequently shocked by what I hear in the news—homosexuals being welcomed in the church with their sinful “lifestyle” not only accepted, but completely sanctioned. Man has decided to sit in judgment of the Word of God, and declare that homosexuality is not condemned by God. Thinking themselves to be wise, they have become foolish! They conveniently forget and disregard Romans Chapter 1 and many other passages of Scripture from the Old and New Testaments that make it quite clear that homosexuality is a heinous sin.

Should we hate homosexuals? No! Should we hate the sin of homosexuality? Yes, because that is what God has declared in His Word! God loves the homosexual and Lesbian, but He hates
their sin. I also heard a young woman on television tell a reporter that the Wiccan religion is not evil! She said it wasn’t Devil worship. Her mother supports her daughter’s decision to be a witch! They are deceived by Satan himself! God’s punishment for the sin of witchcraft is death (Exodus 22:18). The daily murder of children through abortion continues unabated. America and the world are steeped in the sin of Adultery; it is rampant even in the church! God didn’t suggest that we not commit adultery, He commanded that we not commit adultery! God abhors adultery! (1 Cor 6:16) God created sex for procreation in the sanctity of marriage. (Genesis 2:24, Matthew 19:5-6) Adultery causes untold human suffering, from broken marriages and homes to murder.

I know of a woman who was single for several years, and several men propositioned her. Most of them were deacons in their respective churches. Married men! Pastors and church workers are being accused of child molestation and other crimes. Can there be any doubt that we are indeed living in the last days? Jesus said that the generation that saw Israel become a nation again would not pass away before he came back again. Israel became a nation on May 15, 1948. He also said the world’s sin and wickedness would be like in the days of Noah. This is the situation we find the world in today! The return of the Lord Jesus Christ is at hand! Glory to God! The church is in a terrible state worldwide. We lack holiness. We lack righteousness. God has called us to live holy lives! The word holy means set apart – separated. We are in the world, but not of the world! We are seated in heavenly places in Christ! (Ephesians 2:6)! Heaven is our real home! Jesus said to store up treasures in Heaven, not on Earth (Matthew 6:20). Set your minds on things above (Colossians 3:1-17). If you have sin in your life, repent! (2 Chronicles 7:14) If you are a backslider, come home to God,
he will forgive! God is issuing a call for holiness in the lives of His people! God said to be holy for He is holy! Worship God in the beauty of His Holiness! Set your face and your path toward God. Don’t look to the left or to the right! Keep your eyes upon Jesus, the author and finisher of your faith! Let the Word of God be your guide (Psalm 119:105)! There is sin in the camp! Let us all repent before God, live holy lives, live the Word of God, walk upright before God, and see people won to Christ! Jesus said that those who love him would obey his commands! (John 14:15) How many of us turn the other cheek, go the extra mile, give not only our tunics but also our cloaks to those who want to sue us? How many of us love and pray for our enemies? How many of us use foul language? How many of us earnestly seek God’s face in the morning? (See Matthew 6)

Before revival can come, we as a church must REPENT! This is the Word of the LORD to the church: “If my people who are called by my name, will 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 NIV) A mighty move of God can come to this nation! Let REVIVAL start with YOU!
Introduction to “The Joy of the Lord”

This article was written in 1999 while I was living in Amarillo, TX and running a Christian ministry. It expresses my thoughts at the time on living a victorious life in Christ and living in the joy of the Lord. It represents yet another look into my young and fervent fundamentalist Christian mind.
THE JOY OF THE LORD

One of the hallmarks of the Christian life should be the indescribable joy of knowing our Lord, Jesus Christ! We are called by God to live holy and upright lives, pleasing to Him. “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.” (Romans 12:1-2) If our lives are committed to God and we are walking in His will and seeking His face daily, then the joy of the Lord is part of our inheritance from God as believers in Jesus Christ! “For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.” (Romans 14:17) We, as Christians, ought to be the happiest, most joyful people on the face of the Earth!

Our sins have been forgiven (Isaiah 1:18, John 3:16), we have been seated in heavenly places with Christ Jesus (Ephesians 2:6), we are blessed with all spiritual blessings in Christ (Ephesians 1:3), our real home is in Heaven (Col. 3:1-4, Hebrews 11:14-16), our lives are hidden with Christ in God (Col. 3:3), we are the righteousness of God in Christ (2 Cor. 5:21), we have been justified before God through faith in Jesus Christ (Romans 5:1), absolutely nothing can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 8:38-39), we are kings and priests of the Most High God (Rev. 1:6, 5:10), Jesus is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption (1 Cor. 1:30), We are redeemed through the blood of Jesus
Christ (Ephesians 1:7), and we share in Christ’s victory over death, hell and grave! (1 Cor. 15) Glory to God! If all of those truths don’t get you excited and fill you with joy, I don’t know what will! The joy of the Lord is our strength! (Nehemiah 8:10)

Joy is not always an emotion, but the knowledge that no matter what we go through here on Earth, our destination is Heaven and an eternity with Jesus Christ! (James 1:2) Believing in Jesus, knowing that He is real and alive forevermore should fill us with joy! (1 Peter 1:8) Rejoice in the Lord! (Phil. 3:1)
Introduction to “Thoughts from Jeff and Thoughts from Jeff Part 2”

This was written in May of 2004 as I was contemplating a return to Christian faith. I discuss my reasons for believing again, such as the apparent design in Nature, fulfilled biblical prophecy, and the nature of mankind. I remember this time in my life well. I was working as a route driver in Houston, TX and was in the process of giving up my then popular “Religion is Bullshit” website over fears that it was negative and that I might be misleading people. This is one instance among many of my bipolar illness leading me to belief again that was intense but ultimately short-lived.
The following thoughts are taken from a letter that I wrote to a friend in the days leading up to my reconversion to Christianity.

Let's see, on the religion thing. I've been giving it a lot of thought lately on the "maybe I might go back to it" side. I know a LOT about the Bible and Christianity (much more than most average Christians), but I've changed over the last several months, and so have my views on religion. I'm just not angry any longer. Oh, I'm still angered by and appalled at the ignorance and blatant dishonesty of so many Christian apologists and at the lack of Christlikeness of so many "Christians", but as strange as it may seem and as surprising as it is even to me, I am beginning to feel that Christianity makes more sense than I have given it credit for in a long time. There are a lot of issues for me to sort out. I am certain I could never be a Fundie again. I know too much, but I wonder how many Fundies know that their own movement is only about a century old? Christians of the past, at least to my knowledge, didn't make absurd claims about the Bible like that "inerrancy" nonsense. I've given this a great deal of thought, and to do it I have had to put aside my feelings about the rude letters I continue to get from "Christians" who visit my site, since I know that most average church-going folks are generally very nice, caring, decent people, and not like the "Christians" that I encounter on the Net. I can only speak for myself, but for me, Atheism was strongly tied to ANGER. As my anger has disappeared, so has my Atheism and even my Agnosticism. I KNOW that there is a God. I think I have always known, and I have always been a very religious and spiritual person, although
I have denied that part of myself for a long time in favor of being the "educated skeptic" at war with the Christian faith. I'm trying to make a very long story reasonably short here, but the bottom line is that I have been experiencing "cognitive dissonance" about Christianity for a long time. Here are some of those thoughts that are leading me to belief again:

1. The universe - "creation" itself. Nature, to me, just screams DESIGN. GOD. So does my mirror every time I look into it! I think about the human brain and the heart and the liver and all of our organs, and I ask myself "Can I really honestly believe that these are the product of millions of years of blind, godless evolution?"

And, while I don't dispute evolution itself (although I know the theory has problems and isn't perfect), I can't see that as a reasonable belief. Science says that the universe came about with a "Big Bang", which is what the Bible describes - creation "ex nihilo". When I have asked atheists why they believe that a creation does not point to a Creator, the best they can do is to play semantic games and claim that creation should not be called "creation" (since that inconveniently points to a god).

2. The nature of mankind. Most people like to think that mankind's nature is basically good, and I've believed that myself for a long time, but the more I take a hard look at the world and the condition it is in and the evil that takes place in it in countless forms, the less I can subscribe to the "man is basically good" viewpoint. It seems plain to me that mankind's nature is basically selfish and evil, which is again exactly what the Bible claims it is. I think the biblical writers got this one right.

3. Prophecy. I've run into several undeniably fulfilled prophecies - important ones - and that is making me take a very hard
"second look" at the Bible. I hardly think it's "inerrant", but I am thinking it could contain God's message to mankind. Men wrote it, but God inspired the overall spiritual message, which is consistent throughout the text. In addition, "End Times" events are happening EXACTLY as prophesied. That's bothered me for a long time. If the Bible isn't true, then why are world events happening exactly as it foretells? Israel exists as a nation again (in direct fulfillment of prophecy) and the Jews are returning to their homeland. Jerusalem has the world's attention. Israel has gone from being a "wasteland" to being a fertile land (again in direct fulfillment of prophecy). The EU fits the bill for the "revived Roman Empire". A one-world government is being very actively pursued. Plans are in place and priests are being trained for the Third Temple. China can now produce a 200 million man army, we know now that "elements melting with fervent heat" is an excellent description of a nuclear event. And on and on and on and on...

These things are really causing me to THINK about my conclusions about Christianity, as much as I despise the corruption of the church and some of its most visible preachers/teachers. But then again, that is EXACTLY the way the church is supposed to be in the Last Days! Sure, corruption has always existed, but not to the extent that it does now. False teachers are EVERYWHERE, and Christians are (gasp) turning away from sound doctrine and flocking to teachers who tell them what they want to hear! It's true that every generation of believers has wanted to believe that it's "the final one". But, they didn't have Israel existing as a nation with Jews back in their homeland, and that's the key.

Anyway, I'm sure you can see where my thinking is going. My heart is just not in my website any longer. I still enjoy
entertaining others with my humor, but I'm not nearly as sure as I once was that my views are RIGHT and that Religion is Bullshit and Christianity is just a myth and WRONG. If the core of Christianity is true despite the corruption of the church (as I really think it might be), then I have misled a LOT of people. If so, well, so be it. I can't change it, but I'll do what I can to correct it even though I know I will get lots of hatred and ridicule thrown at me if I dare to announce that I believe again (and I am still wavering on the "belief", even though obviously I'm favoring it at the moment).

I've been thinking a lot about the meaning of life, and what the most satisfying worldview is for me. I've tried Atheism, and found it empty and very depressing. According to Atheism, there is no God and no higher purpose to life. We are accidental and a product of millions of years of godless, naturalistic evolution, and when we die, that's IT. I'm just not a naturalist, because I can't honestly embrace such a hopeless and depressing worldview. Reincarnation? Maybe, but I see what that belief has done in the countries where reincarnation and karma are widely accepted as fact. If we do reincarnate though, when does the cycle end, and why would I want to believe that I live again and again and again and again only to be finally absorbed back into an impersonal God and in doing so lose my individuality? I've thought a lot about the basic Christian message - a God of LOVE expresses His love for us by becoming one of us and sacrifices Himself for us. There is an AWESOME Heaven awaiting believers, and yeah, a terrible Hell awaiting those who reject Jesus. But, I no longer believe that Hell is an impossibility if God is LOVE. I can explain that later (at least as much as my thoughts have developed on the subject). I will say that I don't think Hell is flames and torture, or even the more
benign "separation from God" view that is popular now.

Worship is another thing. Skeptics commonly characterize it as "stroking God's ego" and telling him how wonderful he is all the time, as if he needed to be constantly reminded. They just don't understand, and I've always known that they were dead WRONG on the subject, but every time I try to explain what worship really is, I get the "no, it's stroking god's ego. Period." response. I can't possibly be right in their eyes, although I have experienced worship both private and corporate many times over the years. Worship is a BEAUTIFUL thing. Worship is NOT really or solely for the benefit of God. God knows who he is and he doesn't need to be reminded of his identity by men. :-) Worship ultimately benefits the one doing the worshipping. Worship is intimate fellowship with and submission to GOD. He is ABSOLUTE TOTAL LOVE!! I can remember times back in my Christian days when I thought I was going to literally explode with JOY if I didn't back away from God's Presence! Our bodies are just not designed to be able to handle being in the unveiled Presence of GOD! Worship solidifies faith (try doubting the existence of God while you are in his Presence. It's hard to do!) Skeptics like to claim that feeling God's presence is all emotion. Well, no it's not, nor is God an "Imaginary Friend". God is a very real Divine Being whose presence can most definitely be felt by humans! Being in the Presence of God is emotional. How could it not be? But, God is a Divine Intelligence, a Being who we can relate to and who can relate to us, not just an emotional high.

Okay, enough, I suppose, but it's felt really good to write out my thoughts, even though I realize that you are not likely to agree with me that Christianity has any basis in reality. I read the Sermon on the Mount last night. It's always been a favorite part
of the Bible for me, and as anti-Christian as I have been, I just can't find anything to hate in the teachings of Jesus (and yeah, I know the gospels are anonymous and were written decades after the events they portray, but even so, the purported teachings of Jesus are not worthy of hate, in my opinion). I've often thought that if Christians would behave as they are supposed to do, that they would be hated and persecuted a lot less than they are. And why do people hate Christianity so much? Because of the behavior of many "Christians", but also because they hate hearing the truth about themselves because it hurts. I've always taken notice of the fact that Atheists hate being told that they hate God. They claim that they don't hate God, but then they proceed to spew hatred at both God and the Christian religion. If it's just an ancient myth with no basis in reality, then why hate it so deeply? I see Atheists claim not to hate God or Christianity, but then they turn right around and heap hatred and insults on both God and the Christian religion, and in doing so the truth that they do indeed hate God (and they can't honestly hide their hatred) becomes clear. In short, the argument that Atheists don't hate God just doesn't hold any water with me any longer. I did the same thing and claimed not to hate God, but then proceeded to make my hatred very plain.
THOUGHTS FROM JEFF-PART 2

I had a discussion with a new Christian friend from this business I'm doing, and I fired some questions at her. We might discuss the "prosperity doctrine" issue soon, which I think is unbiblical, although I used to believe in it wholeheartedly. Some Christian apologists I have some respect for because they generally know what they are talking about when it comes to doctrine and theology. One of them is Hank Hanegraaf. He is known as the "Bible Answer Man" on his radio show. I've never heard it since it isn't broadcast in this area, but I have read a few of his books, and I was very impressed and I learned quite a lot. He debunked several doctrines popular in the Charismatic movement here and demonstrated clearly how and why these teachers/teachings were wrong. The only book of his that I didn't like was "Resurrection". His arguments for the Resurrection of Jesus were weak in my opinion and he came across as the typical Christian apologist making bold claims and statements without having much in the way of evidence or facts to back those claims and statements up with. I do agree with him that resurrection is a more satisfying worldview than reincarnation though, regardless of whether either view actually is correct.

This new friend of mine, Jeri, made the statement during our conversation that she "doesn't argue the Bible, she just believes it", and I thought to myself, "how typical!", but I asked her why she felt that way, and she gave me her testimony and said that sure she occasionally has doubts about the reality of God, but she says she would rather be a Christian and believe in God than be an atheist and have no hope for anything after this life. I
I pass a small cemetery on my route almost every day (except Monday), and I invariably think about the fact that dead people are in there. It reminds me of the old joke about how great the place must be since people are just dying to get in there! lol... But, it also makes me think about the fact that those people were once living just like we are with lives and jobs and families, etc. and now they are dead, and the reality that I will die at some point in time too isn't lost on me. I can't imagine being dead. The reality that my lifeless body will be in a box in the ground someday rotting to dust is a very uncomfortable reality for me to face. I would imagine that is true of everyone. It's hard for people to face their own mortality.

The question I have to ask myself is, "Do I believe that conscious existence ends with the death of the physical body?" My answer to that, although I could certainly be wrong, is at this moment a resounding NO! While there is no "smoking gun" and proof of an afterlife, there is a great deal of circumstantial evidence that I find credible, not just NDEs and OBEs and stuff like that, but my own life experiences.

I KNOW that an unseen spiritual world does exist. I have had encounters with it since a very early age. I've had a lot of unusual things happen to me. Some of the "paranormal" activity I have experienced happened in my mother's office building. She owned a travel agency and the building it was located in for about 20 years. That building was haunted. Neither my sister or I was comfortable being there alone at night. It just didn't feel right from the moment we entered the building even during the day! The odd occurrences that stick out for me are the fact that when nobody else was in the building, I could hear "work" going
on in the front office - papers being shuffled, an occasional voice, etc. The phone would ring repeatedly, but when I answered, nobody was there. This was an ongoing very annoying and very creepy problem. I was a Christian at the time, so one night I tried an experiment. I prayed about the situation and did the necessary spiritual warfare that I knew how to do, and to my AMAZEMENT, the phone stopped ringing. PERIOD. Coincidence? Answered prayer?

My room at the house we lived in when I was a teenager was haunted as well. I was dabbling in the occult at the time and flirting with Satanism, so that hardly is surprising in retrospect. I used to hear knocks on the walls when I was in that "not asleep but not awake" stage of drifting off, and I also could see an apparition of a 19th Century British Naval captain on my wall. His lips would move, but there was no sound when he spoke. I don't know how I knew his rank or recognized the uniform, but I did. I also used to frequently feel something walking on my bed when I was trying to go to sleep. That really freaked me out! This was going on not terribly long before I got saved in 1985. I became good friends with the music minister of the local Baptist church pretty quickly. I told him what was going on in my room, and he came over and we prayed, and the activity stopped! Coincidence? Answered prayer?

There's just so many things that I have dismissed and chosen not to think about because I was SO ANGRY and SO BITTER for so long. I blamed the Christian Church for a long time for the intensity of my bipolar problems, but that blame I think was misplaced. Nobody ever offended me in church. I had a lot of great friends and acquaintances. Everybody cared for me and was interested in me, or at least was civil to me if we really didn't know each other. False teachings DID do a lot of damage
I have been a skeptic for the last four years or so. I spent a lot of that time VERY ANGRY and BITTER. I have NOT been a happy person. I thought I would find happiness free from religion, but I was wrong. I have NOT been happy trying to embrace an atheistic worldview that I find absolutely empty and hopeless despite my many posts on my site to the contrary. I tried to convince myself that my naturalistic beliefs could work for me and that I could live without a spiritual life and without God, but I was wrong. The heart cannot rejoice in what the mind cannot accept. I can't accept Atheism, and even if I could, there would be nothing worth rejoicing over. One of my skeptical friends, the Mighty AtheiStar as he calls himself, talks about the "Good News" of Atheism. My thought is, "Are you actually serious?" I don't consider the notion that this life is IT and that death means nonexistence to be "Good News"! That sounds like very depressing BAD NEWS to me!

I have been taking a really hard look at myself and at other "professional" skeptics who make their skepticism very public as I have. They do have facts and skeptical research that can be very hard to counter from the Christian viewpoint on their side, BUT many of them are very hateful towards the Christian God and religion just as I have been, and they belittle Christian believers just as I have done. I'm not sure that I am proud of my site or of my behavior. I'm actually sure that I'm NOT proud of my site. My immediate family knows about it, but few other people that I personally know do. It's not something that I share. I don't swell with pride when I contemplate telling people that I run a site called "religionisbullshit.com", and maybe that should tell me something!
I still have a lot of doubts, but something Jeri said also is sticking with me. She said that questions were fine and normal and that I should seek answers, but that I could also get "stuck in a rut" and never have peace. I haven't had PEACE in so long! I haven't felt JOY in so long! I understand the "why" factors of my journey from Christianity to skepticism, but the end result has not been what I expected. I turned my back on a Loving God because I was very ill at the time and because I found so much information that seemed to prove Christianity to be nothing but a myth. I'm all for critical thinking and reason and rational thought, but I must have faith in God as well. For me, I think that faith is Christian.

Although I have studied other religions and tried a few other religious beliefs (particularly that fundy Hindu cult), I keep coming back to Christianity. I think that must be because deep down I still strongly believe it to be true despite all of the skeptical knowledge I have gained over the last few years.
Introduction to “Full Realization Atheism”

I wrote this article in 2005 for publication on my anti-religious website and the ex-Christian.net forums. It contains my thoughts on religion and on why atheism is the correct point of view given the evidence that we have available to us.
I wrote this article concerning my views on Atheism back in 2002, and it was posted to my original "Religion is Bullshit" site for a long time. In addition to reposting the original article, I would like to add the following thoughts, which I will try to keep short since the original article is lengthy enough for one post in and of itself. :-) My thinking is still basically the same, but my conviction that Atheism is the correct position has only grown stronger over time, given the complete lack of evidence for the actual existence of any of mankind's many gods and the very strong evidence available from medical science that quite conclusively indicates that the mind is completely dependent on the brain and that mental life ceases when brain function does. Brother Keith Augustine has written an excellent article on the case against immortality, which is available here:

http://www.infidels....mmortality.html

This post has also been magically inspired by Brother Rick Wingrove's article entitled Full Realization Atheism.

I've done a lot of thinking about religion and spirituality over the last few years, and I have come to some realizations over the last year or so about what I believe and why. To me, religion is obvious mythology based in ignorance and large amounts of wishful thinking. Religion offers a variety of pleasant fantasies and asserts the existence of a god and an afterlife in some form, but with little good evidence to back the claims made up as actually having some basis in demonstrable reality. Religion
does offer hope and it asserts a higher purpose for our existence, but I have come to the conclusion that the hope religion offers for the survival of consciousness after bodily death is a false hope. False hope is no hope at all in reality. There is a part of me that wants religion to be true, a part of me that wants to believe that life continues after death, but I recognize religion for the shield against the unpleasant reality of the finality of death that it is. I accept demonstrable reality as it is - no god exists and nothing at all - good or bad - can or does happen to us after we die.

On the matter of spirituality (apart from organized religion), I believe it can and does serve a positive purpose in the lives of many people. I enjoy meditating and doing yoga on a fairly regular basis. That's my spirituality, and I enjoy it very much, but I recognize that all of the pleasurable feelings those activities bring originate in my brain, not from some outside force or being. In fact, that's true of everything I or anyone else ever feels. All conscious awareness, all feeling, all emotion, everything that we are, know, and feel is dependent on the brain. So is our very experience of "god", a fact that is demonstrated and summed up rather well I think at this link:

[http://www.innerworl...egs.com/god.htm](http://www.innerworl...egs.com/god.htm)

The fact that the mind is completely dependent on the brain and the fact that all awareness and experience is generated by or is dependent on the brain pretty much seals the Atheist position as correct for me.

With those additional thoughts added, here is the original article that I wrote back in 2002:
The purpose of this article is to reveal the truth about Theism and to highlight the failures and falsity of Theism as a worldview, and to set the record straight and to counter the lies promoted by Christian Fundamentalists about Atheism. Theism is a false worldview and has brought much harm and very little good to Mankind. That is the verdict of history.

Theists, mainly Christian Fundamentalists, spread several misconceptions and lies about atheism and atheists on a regular basis. Theists would have us believe that atheism is evil and leads to immorality and the social ills that plague our society. History soundly disproves these assertions, and in fact, proves that Theism and Religion are the cause of most of the suffering and social ills that have plagued Mankind throughout history.

Atheism is a view of life, our world, and our universe that is built upon the foundations of reason, logic, and rational thought. Atheism is absurdly called a religion by some of the more radical Christian Fundamentalists but, of course, it does not in any way resemble one. Atheism has no god or gods and no tenets of faith, and therefore cannot properly be called a religion. Atheism is the lack of belief in any gods. Period. That's it in a nutshell. Atheism is about non-belief rather than belief. But, at its core, atheism and atheists deal with the facts and the evidence for divine beings as it is. Atheists generally do not engage in the wishful thinking, faulty logic, and intellectual dishonesty so prevalent among theists. There is no convincing evidence for the existence of any God or gods. If there was, there would not be so many atheists and agnostics in the world. Theists have come up with many arguments for the existence of god, but the fact remains that they have not come up with even
ONE argument for the existence of god that is valid or that even gives strong evidence for the existence of god. If they had, theists would not have to continually revise failed arguments and come up with new ones.

Theism fails as a viable theory for the origins of the universe and our world. Theism is built on a very old belief - that of Anthropocentrism. The men of the ancient world, including the writers of the Bible, were ignorant of science and they held a cosmology and a worldview that we now know to be absurd and patently false.

We now know that the universe is a staggeringly enormous place. Earth is but one planet in one solar system among many in one galaxy among many. Earth is not at the center of the universe or the galaxy or even our solar system. The simple fact of the matter is that Earth is rather insignificant in the grand scheme of things in the universe. Our knowledge of the cosmos provides proof beyond doubt that neither the Earth nor Mankind is anything central or special in the universe. The mythology of the Bible simply does not match up with Reality. The worldview of the Bible is ignorant and naive, and it is time to let Religion and religious myths die their natural deaths. Education and knowledge are the natural enemies of Religion.

The Theistic worldview may well sound nice and religions based on theism may be comfortable to believe. That does not, however, make them true. It is very important to deal with truth, facts, and Reality in all areas of life no matter what our emotional reactions may be or how much we may not like certain realities, and that includes religious belief and/or the belief in a god. Sure, it sounds nice to believe that there is a
Loving God up there in the sky or in some spiritual realm who created us and that there is an eternity in Heaven waiting for those who serve this God, and that those who disagree with us and whom we do not like are destined for an eternal punishment. That belief may be comfortable, but does it have any basis in Reality? The answer, based on the evidence and facts that we have available to us, is a resounding NO.

The failure of theism to explain the universe and our origins still leaves us with deism, polytheism, and pantheism as major theories in the "god" paradigm.

**Deism - the form of theological rationalism that believes in God on the basis of reason without reference to revelation.**

*WordNet ® 1.6, © 1997 Princeton University*

**Polytheism - The worship of or belief in more than one god.**

*The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition Copyright © 2000 by Houghton Mifflin Company. Published by Houghton Mifflin Company. All rights reserved.*

**Pantheism - A doctrine identifying the Deity with the universe and its phenomena.**

*The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition Copyright © 2000 by Houghton Mifflin Company. Published by Houghton Mifflin Company. All rights reserved.*

I reject the above three options for basically the same reasons that I reject theism - they are not based in demonstrable truth, facts, and Reality. Deism is the most rational of the above three,
but I reject it also due to the lack of evidence for the existence of god, and the lack of evidence for intelligent design in the universe. We live in a universe and a world that is explainable by naturalistic forces and causes - no deity required. All of the failed arguments, logical fallacies, and wishful thinking of the theists does not change this fact.

Having rejected theism and competing theories and doctrines, one is left with no god and no belief in or doctrine of an afterlife. How then can Atheism be positive since it denies any supernatural reality or life after the death of the body? In the remainder of this article, I will attempt to show that, contrary to the assertions of theists and religionists, atheism is fundamentally and innately a positive position, while theism and religion are fundamentally negative and innately harmful.

Theists and believers in religion would have us believe that religion and belief in god has been a positive force and had a positive effect upon Mankind and his history. This claim is patently and demonstrably false.

History clearly shows us otherwise. Religion and belief in a deity has a long history of visiting tremendous suffering upon Mankind and causing bloody conflicts due to the differing ideas on what god has revealed or what god's will is.

Theists and believers in religion would have believe that religion and belief in a deity offers hope. Again, history clearly shows otherwise. Religion has not offered real hope to Mankind. Religion has done little positive for Mankind and has caused a great deal of harm down through the centuries. All of Mankind's religions can easily be shown to be false. The only hope that
religions offer is false hope. False hope is, in reality, no hope at all!

Theists and believers in religion would have us believe that religion and belief in a deity has furthered social progress. History again clearly shows us otherwise. Religion in general and Christianity in particular has, in fact, done much to stifle social progress. The Bible condones slavery, human sacrifice, child abuse, and it denigrates women. It contains atrocities and sexual content that, if present in any other book, Christians would be strongly opposed to. The Bible's take on morality and moral standards is not one that encourages social progress. Hammurabi's Code predates the Bible, and is regarded by many as superior to the morality presented in the Bible.

Theists and believers in religion would have us believe that religion has been the friend of science and scientific progress. Again, history clearly shows us otherwise. Religion has, in fact, been the historic enemy of science and scientific progress. The period in history when Religion and the Christian Church ruled supreme is commonly known as The Dark Ages. Science and scientific knowledge has only progressed as Mankind has thrown off the shackles of religious ignorance and dogma. Christian Fundamentalists today would like very much to take us back to the Dark Ages via the pseudoscience of Creationism. Creationism is faith. It is not science, and it is not even remotely scientific or based in Reality. The notion that it should be taught alongside science and scientific facts is absurd. Unfortunately, due the troubled state of science education in our schools and in our country in general, religious ignorance has found some acceptance, which is an appalling and very frightening reality. Religion and religious ignorance do NOT belong in our schools,
and it is my fervent hope that our system of education will not be the victim of religious ignorance, and certainly not ignorance and idiocy of the magnitude represented by Creationists and Creationism. I, for one, do NOT wish to see a return to the Dark Ages in America.

Theists and believers in religion would have us believe that morality comes from religion and/or that god dictates morality and/or moral standards. History once again disproves this assertion. The Bible god makes Hitler look wonderful by comparison. Let's examine the Christian historical record on morality at this link: Victims of the Christian Faith. I dare any Christian to talk to me about morality and utter ignorant bullshit about how wonderful Christianity has been for Mankind after reviewing the facts of history.

We have seen that the claims of theism are false and the claim that Religion is good for Mankind is also false. Belief in a deity and Religion have both had a profoundly negative effect upon Mankind. So, why do I believe that Atheism is positive?

Atheists are not hindered by a religious belief system or religious dogma, and are therefore able to think about any issue that they wish to, and come to their own conclusions. Atheists do not have to deny truth, facts, or Reality in order to satisfy the demands of a religion or religious dogma or some god that they believe in. Atheists are free thinkers. Freedom of thought is one of Man's most precious freedoms. Religion and religious dogma rob us of that freedom.

Atheism elevates and affirms the value of life. Life is precious. We are here purely by chance. Think about it. If your parents
had not been expressing their love for each other at a certain
time on a certain date, you would not be here to be reading this
article! Life is a wonderful thing, and our time in this universe is
finite. Our existence will come to an end. All of us must face
death at some point in time. My mortality, the fact that my
existence would one day end, used to bother me. I spent a lot of
time thinking about it and talking about it with friends and
family. My thinking on it now can be summed up in a quote
from Samuel Clemens (Mark Twain):

*Mr. Clemens was once asked whether he feared death. He said
that he did not, in view of the fact that he had been dead for
billions and billions of years before he was born, and had not
suffered the slightest inconvenience from it.*

I have come to feel the same way. Life is a wonderful thing, and
we should make the best of our lives and strive to leave this
world a better place for our having been here. Immortality
actually bothers me now more than the thought of my own
mortality. I think that immortality would eventually become
rather boring and pointless, and that it would eventually
become a hell unto itself. Spend some time really thinking about
it. If we didn't die, what the hell would we do after we had done
it all? What would there be left to feel after we had felt every
emotional state that humans are capable of many, many times
over. Even joy would not be joyful after several hundred years, I
would think. Immortality has its pitfalls and shortcomings, and I
think it would ultimately be a good definition of Hell. Life is
temporary, and our lives are finite. I personally do not wish to
live or exist forever. If there is nothing at all after this life, I will
not exist to be concerned about not existing. This fact is
summed up beautifully by Mark Twain in the above quote. Mark
Twain has been dead now for 92 years. I doubt that he has suffered any inconvenience from it at all. The kind of immortality that I wish for is not continued conscious, personal existence after the death of my body. I consider reincarnation a possibility, but I think that that is another concept that is riddled with wishful thinking and seeing what we might wish to see when evaluating the evidence. Reincarnation might be true, but then again it might not be. I don't know and really don't care. The immortality that I hope for is to make a real, positive difference in the lives of those who I touch and influence, and to live on in a positive way in the memories of my family and friends who survive me. That is the best kind of immortality. Personal conscious existence forever is not a thought that I find appealing. But that should not be taken to mean that I am negative about life. I do suffer from Bipolar Disorder, and I have to deal with the trials and tribulations that come with having that illness. Overall though, I find life very much worth living. Atheism, far from being a negative or depressing worldview, is actually one that I have found to be very freeing and life affirming. Atheism is life without mental, emotional or spiritual shackles. Atheism allows us to live life to the fullest without the guilt, shame, and fear that characterize religions and religious dogma. When death comes to those who I know and love, I honor their life and the time that I had with them. They live on in my memory. That is currently the case with three of my grandparents. They are gone now, and I have grieved their deaths and the loss of them. Should I live long enough, I will one day have to say goodbye to my parents. It is not something that I look forward to or something that I want to have to face. But it is a fact that it will happen, and when it does, I will grieve but I will honor their lives and their memory. They will live on in my memory and I hope to bring honor to them in life and in death.
through living a good and positive and meaningful life. Atheism removes the fear of death, which is based in religion and superstition. I do not fear death. I am not anxious to die, and I want to live a long and full life, but death will one day come to me, and I do not fear it. Everything that lives will eventually die. There are no exceptions. Religion and religious dogma make death a fearful thing. The reality is that death is as natural as life is. It is not something that we need to fear. We may fear the pain and discomfort that can be and often are associated with the death of the body, but death itself should not be something that we need to fear. Religion causes that fear. Atheism removes it. Atheism is freedom - freedom of the mind and freedom of the human spirit. Atheism is freedom from fear, guilt, and shame. Atheism is, without a doubt, a positive and life affirming worldview.

Religious believers, especially religious fanatics, would have us believe that atheism is negative, empty, and hopeless. I once believed that of atheism. I saw it as empty and hopeless, just as the Christian Church had taught me that it was. I saw atheism as an excuse to disobey the God that I firmly believed in, at least in my acceptance of Christian dogma, and I thought that atheists were immoral, unhappy, and even evil people. I had been taught that view by the Christian Church and the writings of Christian apologists. I am here to tell you that atheism is not about not having hope and it is not about defiance of a god. Atheism is about appreciating and honoring our lives and our minds and our freedom of thought, and our time in this universe, and of course appreciating and honoring the lives of those that we love and those who we are able to share this thing called life with. Atheism is about freedom - the freedom to live the life that we have in the here and now to its fullest
potential. Atheism is the freedom to make the best of our lives without the baggage of worry about an alleged afterlife for which there is no proof and our fate after death, if any. Religion is a mental prison of guilt, shame, brainwashing, and fear. Atheism and free thought are the metaphorical keys to the prison door, and they point the way out of Religion's Prison to ABUNDANT LIFE. Glory!

I affirm Atheism - the realization that there is no god and no afterlife and that assertions of such amount to nothing more than mythology and wishful thinking, as mankind's greatest hope - freedom from the fear, guilt, ignorance, dogma, mind control, etc. that are so much a part of religion. I don't have an Invisible Friend, nor do I have need of one. I could wish that god was real like I could wish for a million dollars to magically fall out of the sky, but wishing doesn't make it so. It is vitally important, in my opinion, to deal with reality as it demonstrably is rather than as we wish that it could be. I challenge every religious believer reading this article to take the time and have the courage to submit your cherished beliefs to critical, rational scrutiny. You may lose cherished beliefs, but you may also discover freedom to think, reason, live, and fully be who you are that you never suspected existed. Atheism - Full Realization Atheism - allows us to live life - the life that we have in the here and now - to its fullest free of the false hope offered by religion, and free of mind-crippling fear-based myths.
Introduction to “NASA Photographs Jesus in Space!”

This is another one of my favorite anti-religious humor pieces. I wrote it in 2007 for publication on my anti-religious website and on the Ex-Christian.net forums.
NASA PHOTOGRAPHS JESUS IN SPACE!

HOUSTON, TX - NASA has announced one of its most startling finds to date. In a press conference held today at NASA headquarters, it was revealed that the Hubble telescope had recently captured a faint but recognizable image of Jesus Christ flying through space.
Worldwide reaction to the photo has been mixed.

Catholics around the world are building shrines to the image.

Hindus are celebrating the image as an apparition of Krishna in the form of Jesus.

Muslims are rioting, complaining that the image insults the Prophet Mohammed.

Some fundamentalist Christians are praising God, claiming that the image proves the validity of their beliefs. Others are strongly condemning the image as a work of Satan preceding the soon coming of the Anti-Christ. Tim LaHaye said that he plans to write the event into his "Left Behind" series of books.

Reactions among world religious leaders have also been mixed.

Pope Benedict XVI praised God and the Virgin Mary for the heavenly sign, saying that it was meant to help bring faith in the Church back to the world.

Paul Crouch, President of the Trinity Broadcasting Network, believes it is a warning to sinners on planets everywhere to repent. He said his network has plans to "beam the Gospel out into space! Glory to God!"

David Silverman, President of American Atheists, condemned the photo as an obvious hoax financed by the Religious Right.

A NASA spokesperson, speaking on condition of anonymity, said
that NASA planned to sell copies of the glorious photo - which it confirms as genuine - on eBay.
Introduction to “A Note of Thanks to God”

This was written in 2011 and it expresses my heartfelt thanks to God for getting through to me again. I was so happy and so overjoyed! I was so happy to be free from the anger I had been wrapped up in for a long time. Even though I am no longer a believer, my heart is still moved when I read this and I remember how happy I was at this time in my life.
Thank you GOD for never giving up on me and for seeing me through some really dark and miserable times in my life. Thank you for believing in me even when I said that I didn’t believe in You. I knew better deep down inside. I’ve always known You were there, but ANGER deep beyond description that lasted for years made me claim otherwise. Thank you for seeing me through those often difficult, confusing, and painful years of fundamentalist religious fanaticism and the years of angry and depressed atheism that followed. Though there were some good and even joyful times during those years, neither extreme was where I needed to be, and You knew that. Thank you for gently and lovingly breaking through all of that anger and rage that I was so wrapped up in for so long. Nobody but You could have accomplished such a feat. Thank you for being who You are, the Lord of Love who is enshrined in my heart (and in the hearts of everyone) always and forever. Thank you for bringing me home to You!!

Though I am no longer a fundamentalist Christian, the music I continue to love from back in those days often still has great meaning to me and still speaks to me deeply. These songs do a pretty good job of expressing how I feel now about God and how grateful I am to Him for His Love and compassion and for everything He has done for me and for everything He has brought me through. This scripture comes immediately to mind as well.
4 Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
    I will fear no evil;
    For You are with me;
    Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.
    (Psalm 23:4, New King James Version)

Like waking up from the longest dream, how real it seemed
Until your love broke through
I’ve been lost in a fantasy, that blinded me
Until your love broke through

(Video: Your Love Broke Through by Keith Green)

Is all this real or a dream
I feel so good I could scream
You put this love in my heart

This song could so easily have been written about my own life!

(Video: You Put This Love in My Heart by Keith Green)

I have loved this wonderful song from Twila Paris ever since it came out back in the 1980’s. It never gets old!

He is the Lord
Forever His truth shall reign
Heaven and Earth
Rejoice in His holy name
He is exalted the King is exalted on high

(Video: He is Exalted by Twila Paris)
Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!
(Philippians 4:4, New King James Version)

So sings my soul
And lifts my voice
He makes me glad
I will rejoice

I will rejoice! Many great memories of having this and many other songs from this awesome Mylon LeFevre and Broken Heart concert cranked up LOUD at home and in the car and jamming out and enjoying it with great friends. Those were some good times!

(Video: Mylon LeFevre & Broken Heart – I Will Rejoice)

And finally, “Runner” from Twila Paris. I have always loved this song, but it is especially meaningful now.

Oh runner, when the race is won
You will run into his arms

(Video: Runner by Twila Paris)

My heart is overflowing with the joy and peace that comes from knowing God and from knowing that, at least spiritually, I am where I need to be. When the race is won, I will run into His arms!
Introduction to “Who is God?”

This was written in 2011 and it represents my thoughts on who God is at that time. There have been times in my life when I was deeply in love with Eastern religious thought and this was one of them. I was an enthusiastic follower of the teachings of Eknath Easwaran at the time, and I still love his work.
Who is God? Everybody has an opinion on the subject, and of course so do I. My opinion has changed over the years. My spiritual journey has taken me through several years of embracing both fundamentalist Christianity and then fundamentalist Atheism, once I became aware of the many problems that exist with taking the Bible as a literally true, inerrant and infallible text. Now I find myself very happily hanging out somewhere in the middle of the religious spectrum as a budding religious mystic.

I believe in God, but I no longer see Him as being tied to any one religion or holy book. God has inspired all of the great religious traditions such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism and Christianity, and the same basic spiritual truths are present in all of the great holy books. As Eknath Easwaran explains in his commentary on the Gita entitled the End of Sorrow:

The Upanishads tell us that the Lord weaves the whole universe out of himself and sits in the midst of it, working hardest of all. It is difficult even to imagine the Lord’s labor. In a period of decline and dissent over twenty-five hundred years ago, he came as the Compassionate Buddha to toil for our enlightenment. He shed his Buddha body and no sooner got home when a call came from the shores of Galilee: “Trouble brewing – come quickly.” With hardly any rest, he went off again to look for suitable parents. He finally decided on Mary and Joseph, but there was no place in which to be born except a stable. With this humble birth the Lord came to us as Jesus and worked for us until his body was crucified. Then he went home
only to hear another call of tribulation, this time from Arabia. He came again as an ordinary man who became united with Allah and gave us the Koran. Once again he returned home, but while he was recovering from the desert heat the call came for him to be born as Shankara in Kerala, then again in the nineteenth century as Sri Ramakrishna.

As indicated above, God has had many incarnations, appearing many times as needed to help us remember who we really are and to help us along the spiritual path. He has many names — Jehovah, Yahweh, Jesus, Allah, Krishna, Vishnu, and many more coming from several religious traditions.

Regardless of what name you choose to call Him by God is the Lord of Love, working ceaselessly in our behalf and always with us, enshrined in the hearts of all.

*The name of the LORD is a strong tower; the righteous run to it and are safe.* — (Proverbs 18:10)

*I am the goal of life, the Lord and support of all, the inner witness, the abode of all. I am the only refuge, the one true friend; I am the beginning, the staying, and the end of creation; I am the womb and the eternal seed.* (BG 9:18)

I think it is important to note also that I reject the concept of hell and of any sort of eternal punishment as those doctrines of fundamentalist religion are diametrically opposed to God’s loving and merciful character. The Lord is enshrined in the hearts of every one of us, the most objectionable of characters among us included. God never has and never will give up on any of us, no matter what we may have done. As the Bible affirms, God is not willing that any of us should perish, but that all of us should come to repentance. (2 Peter 3:9). Every single one of
us, though it may take many lifetimes, will eventually realize our true nature – pure divine love – and make our way back to God.

God is the Lord of Love, revealed by various names in all of the great religious traditions and holy books.

Namaste.
Introduction to “Morning Prayer”

I wrote this prayer in September of 2011 for use in my morning meditation. I think it is one of the most beautiful things I have ever written, and it came straight from the heart.
MORNING PRAYER

Lord, grant me the opportunity to share your peace,

Help me to keep my mind focused on you,

The sacred syllable OM (ॐ) reverberating in my heart,

Help me to remember who I really am and who we all really are,

Pure consciousness and pure love forever united with and in you,

Help me recognize the unity of life in every circumstance,

Grant me the vision to see the divinity in us all,

Grant me the opportunity to brighten someone’s day,

Grant me the opportunity to learn and practice patience,

Help me to slow down and remember to offer the small kindnesses that mean so much to others so that they may be inspired to pass the love on to those their lives touch,

Grant me the opportunity to share in the joys and sorrows of others as if they were my own,

Grant me the opportunity to bring heaven to earth and to spread the joys of love and compassion in this and every other moment of this wondrous experience called life.

Namaste.
Introduction to “Jerry Falwell Magically Undeadens Himself”

This is one of my favorite anti-religious humor pieces. I wrote it in May of 2011, and it discusses the supposed resurrection (magical undeadening) of the Rev. Jerry Falwell and his subsequent inclusion as the fourth member of the Divine Trinity.
LYNCHBURG, VA – Through an unimaginably powerful feat of magic matched in recorded history only by the Lard Jesus Kryasst, the Rev. Jerry Falwell, the formerly deceased pastor of Thomas Road Baptist Church in Lynchburg, Virginia, has Magically Undeadened Himself – and in doing so has both demonstrated and proved His Divine nature.

Worshipers at the Thomas Road Baptist Church were stunned into a reverent silence last Sunday when they were treated to a glorious but quite unexpected visit from their beloved pastor. According to witnesses of the magical event, the Rev. Falwell appeared unannounced during services, materializing into full visibility slowly. He was seen to float gracefully from the back of the church to the pulpit, seemingly unencumbered by his glorified but still morbidly obese body.

As the joyful members of His former and now once again magically current congregation attempted to compose themselves as they recovered from the heavenly shock of once again being blessed with the presence of their (formerly deceased) pastor, the Rev. Falwell delivered a message of unprecedented scope to His flock. Falwell announced that He
had been planning His glorious Magical Undeadening long before He Croaked in the Spook on May 15, 2007, determined mightily within Himself to accomplish His goal of entrance back into the world of the living when the Lard Jesus magically signaled that the time was right.

The Rev. Falwell encouraged His flock to continue pleasing the Lard, praising their tireless efforts to persuade Americans – by legislative force if necessary – to turn their backs on freedom and democracy in favor of a glorious Christian theocracy. He also spoke approvingly of His congregation's efforts to replace the modern sciences of cosmolgy, biology, and biochemistry with Bible-based mythology and ignorance in the science classrooms of the nation's public schools. Falwell also expressed pleasure at the progress that has been made in rewriting American history, citing recent victories in the less educated areas of the country such as Texas.

Immediately after lavishing His congregants with praise for what they were doing right in their efforts to please the Lard, the Rev. Falwell took them to task in a sudden fit of rage reminiscent of that commonly seen in those suffering from bipolar disorder, lambasting them for their much too lenient stance on homosexuality. Holding up the exemplary Christian behavior of the members of the Westboro Baptist Church in Topeka, Kansas as a model worthy of imitation, He urged His congregation to redouble their efforts to stamp out this vile abomination, stressing the importance of hating homosexuals strongly, but with a spirit of love.

After briefly excusing Himself to tend to the needs of His glorified but still morbidly obese body (a high-fat snack and a
quick piss in the Spook), the Rev. Falwell delivered His most stunning and dramatic announcement. He informed His congregation that after discussing the matter with the other two versions of Himself, the Lard Jesus had realized that in light of Falwell's glorious accomplishment, there was a need for a changeless change in His Divine nature – a fourth version of Himself. It was decided, after much time spent deliberating with Himself, that Jerry would be formally installed as the fourth member of the Divine Trinity. This changeless change was somehow magically accomplished without altering the triune nature of the Divine union.

The Divine Trinity as it was before the Rev. Falwell's membership:

The Divine Trinity as it is now and forevermore, unless another changeless change becomes necessary:
The Rev. Falwell revealed that His function within the Divine Trinity will be to assist the Spook of Kryasst version of Himself with His mission, the most important part of which is to magically draw those who hear the Glorious Bullshit about the Jesus version of Himself to that version of Himself, convincing them within their farts that the Glorious Bullshit they heard is indeed True. Jerry feels, though, that the most enjoyable and rewarding part of His role as the fourth member of the Trinity will be to function as a magical conduit for Divine bullshit when believers are sharing the Glorious Bullshit about the Jesus version of the Divine Trinity with an unslaved individual and find themselves immediately needing to recall a forgotten passage of bullshit from the Book of Myths or they are in need of some especially convincing bullshit that will help draw the unslaved person to slaving belief in Kryasst.

For more information on the formerly deceased Rev. Jerry Falwell and His new-found Divine role please prayerfully consult the Lard Jesus or, alternatively, contact the Thomas Road Baptist Church by phone at (434) 239-9281 or visit their website at http://home.trbc.org/.
Introduction to “Practicing the Presence of God”

I wrote this on December 27, 2010 for publication on my “Spirituality Daily” website. I had just finished reading the book of the same name by Brother Lawrence, and I was excited about the possibility of close and intimate friendship and relationship with God.
Maintaining a regular spiritual practice brings out the best in me, and I’ve realized that it’s important for it to be an ongoing reality in my life and not just a short meditation in the morning before the day really gets going. I would really like to get into the habit of practicing the Presence of God at all times. As Brother Lawrence puts it in his classic book:

*Brother Lawrence related that we should establish ourselves in a sense of God’s presence by continually conversing with Him. It was a shameful thing to quit His conversation to think of trifles and fooleries. We should feed and nourish our soul with high notions of God which would yield us great joy in being devoted to Him.*

And as the Apostle Paul reminds us:

> Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. *(1 Thessalonians 5:16-18, New King James Version)*

One excellent way I have discovered to stay God-centered is to recite a mantram silently to myself. It can be something simple like “Jesus, Jesus, Jesus” or “Rama, Rama, Rama”, which is what I normally choose to use, or the longer form is excellent as well:

*Hare Krishna Hare Krishna*

*Krishna Krishna Hare Hare*
Hare Rama Hare Rama

Rama Rama Hare Hare

I find it uplifting to recite the mantram throughout the day as I have a few minutes here and there to do it and as I think to do it. The mantram brings a fresh and refreshing sense of the presence of God.

Mantrams are powerful. They build you up spiritually while quieting the incessant chatter of the mind. For much more on mantrams and how and when to use them, please see Eknath Easwaran’s excellent Mantram Handbook.

God is the creator and sustainer of the universe, the Lord of Love who is enshrined in our hearts. From the Shvetashvatara Upanishad:

Know God and all fetters will fall away.
No longer identifying yourself
With the body, go beyond birth and death.
All your desires will be fulfilled in him
Who is One without a second.

Know him to be enshrined within your heart
Always. Truly there is nothing more
To know in life. Meditate and realize
The world is filled with the presence of God.

God is omnipresent. He is the exalted Lord. He is everywhere, within us all, enshrined in our hearts always. We need only to realize this awesome truth, and once we do we are free to experience the abiding, steadfast love and peace of God in our lives.
Introduction to “I Am Not... But I Am”

I wrote this in 2011 for publication on my “Spirituality Daily” website. I was in love with Eastern religious thought at the time and the belief that we are not our physical bodies nor are we defined by our states of mind.
I AM NOT... BUT I AM

I am not anger.

I am not rage.

I am not irritation.

I am not disappointment.

I am not frustration.

I am not hatred.

I am not disgust.

I am not sadness.

I am not despondency.

I am not anxiety.

I am not depression.

I am not happiness.

I am not elation.

I am not joy.

I am not these or any other emotions, which are only temporary states of mind. I am, in fact, not my mind. I also am not my body.

I am an eternal spirit — a part of God. I am a spark of the divine emanated from God, Who is ONE without a second. Or, as

“We are gods within God, finite spirits within the Infinite Spirit. But what is spirit? Yoga tells us that spirit is consciousness. We are eternal consciousness, each of us individual and distinct. Yet we are more. Each of us takes our being from God as the wave takes its existence from the ocean.”

Knowing that I am not my body, my mind or my emotions allows me the freedom to choose not to identify myself with them. I experience what happens to my current body whether it be good or bad and I am charged with the responsibility of caring for it to the best of my ability, but ultimately it is just a temporary mortal vehicle which houses my immortal spirit/consciousness. As Krishna says in the *Bhagavad Gita*:

As to the embodied childhood,
Youth and old age arise in turn,
So he gets another body—
The wise are not confused by this. (2:13)

I experience the thoughts and emotions that occupy my mind at any given time, but those who have discovered the wisdom and power of yoga (which is far more than just the asana poses) are blessed with the realization that they need not be ruled by them. As the ancient Indian sage Patanjali reveals in the *Yoga Sutras*:

“Yoga is perfect evenness of mind.” (1:2)

This truth is echoed in the *Bhagavad Gita* as well:

Then being steadfast in yoga,
Without attachment do actions
Heedless of success and failure—
Evenness of mind is yoga. (2:48)

I believe that in meditation we should strive to identify more
with who and what we really are (and who we know others to
be in reality) rather than allowing what we know we are not to
define us and the way we live life and respond to others.

As Krishna says in the Bhagavad Gita:

He, disciplined by yoga, sees
The Self present in all beings,
And all beings within the Self.
He sees the same Self at all times. (29)

The one who sees Me ev’rywhere,
And who sees all things within Me;
I am never lost unto him,
Nor is he ever lost to Me. (30)

He, established in unity,
Worships Me dwelling in all things,
Whatever be his mode of life,
That yogi e’er abides in Me. (6:29-31)

And as Eknath Easwaran expresses it so beautifully in his
translation of the Bhagavad Gita:

“When a person responds to the joys and sorrows of others as if
they were his own, he has attained the highest state of spiritual
union. (6:32) (The Bhagavad Gita (Classics of Indian Spirituality))”

104
Namaste.
Introduction to “Eating with an Attitude of Thankfulness”

I wrote this on January 6, 2011 for publication on my “Spirituality Daily” website. I had been reading about the concept of conscious eating and decided to give it a try. I was amazed with the results!
I’ve been reading and thinking a lot recently about eating mindfully and with an attitude of gratefulness. Today, instead of eating mindlessly in front of the TV as I usually do, I sat down at the table and did my best to focus my mind totally on my meal. I ate more slowly than I normally do, savoring the flavor bursting forth from each bite of food that I would have missed had my mind been focused instead on whatever I was watching on the tube.

It is amazing what we miss in life because our minds are not one-pointed, focused completely on the task at hand. I can’t count the number of times I have eaten a meal or a favorite snack such as a Clif Bar and then realized afterward that I hadn’t been paying attention and had not really tasted and fully enjoyed what I had just eaten.

In his wonderful book on Passage Meditation, Eknath Easwaran writes about what he terms automatic eating:

*Automatic eating occurs too in front of the television set, or at a movie theater, nightclub, or sports event. The action catches us and the hand just keeps moving up and down, to and from the mouth, like an automated signboard of a cowboy endlessly waving “howdy” from a casino in Las Vegas. But we can learn to be more aware of what we are watching, and do one thing at a time. It will multiply our enjoyment immensely.*
In addition to focusing my mind on the food I was eating, I approached my meal with an attitude of thankfulness for every aspect of it. I focused on being thankful to God for making the food possible, thankful to the farmers who grew it and to the workers who harvested and packaged it, thankful to the shippers who shipped the food way the heck up north here to Alaska ( 🙂 ), thankful to the grocers who made it available and cared for it, and thankful for the funds that made it possible for me to have the food to enjoy.

The lunch I finished a while ago, I think, was one of the best meals I have ever eaten — not because of the meal itself, but because of the successful and educational experiment in mindful eating.

I encourage you to try it sometime soon. I think you’ll like it!
Introduction to “Living the Prayer of St. Francis”

This article - which was written on February 28, 2011 - expresses my thoughts on actually living the Prayer of St. Francis of Assisi. What would life be like if I really put this prayer into practice in my daily life? This article demonstrates what my spiritual thinking was at a time when I was feeling well and feeling free from the anti-religious anger that would sometimes consume me.
LIVING THE PRAYER OF ST. FRANCIS

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace,
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;
where there is injury, pardon;
where there is doubt, faith;
where there is despair, hope;
where there is darkness, light;
where there is sadness, joy;

O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console;
to be understood as to understand;
to be loved as to love.

For it is in giving that we receive;
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned;
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

For the past couple of months or so, I have been meditating on the Prayer of St. Francis as suggested by Eknath Easwaran as a part of his Eight Point Program. To say that meditating on the prayer is life-transforming would be putting it mildly. And, of course, I have had a desire to make this wonderful, beautiful prayer an integral part of my life. As I was meditating this morning I asked myself, “What if I actually did it?” “What if, instead of just giving mental assent to this prayer as a wonderful ideal, I actually put it into practice in my daily life?” “What if we all actually did so?”
I have, of course, been inspired to live a more compassionate life and to consciously show more love toward others since I began meditating. But how much more life-transforming would it be to really put this prayer into practice in my daily life?

*Lord, make me an instrument of your peace,*

*Where there is hatred, let me sow love;*

On a daily basis, at least on an intellectual level, I deeply appreciate the fact that God — who is the Lord of Love — is enshrined not just in my own heart but in the hearts of all. But I would love for that knowledge to move deeper into my heart and to become more real to me in my daily life. I would love for the knowledge that God is all and is in all to be so deeply ingrained in my being that it informs every thought that I have and every action that I take. I would love to be an instrument of God’s peace in the world.

And where there is hatred, I would love to sow love. There are so many places in our world where hatred abounds and love is desperately needed — for example, in our political and religious discourse. There is so much hatred and vitriol present on both sides of the fence and on each topic. I am ashamed to say that I have been a part of participating in and spreading that hatred and vitriol. But I am only human and have just been blindly going with the flow of what is sadly normal now in our political and religious discussions and debates, allowing my emotions to run free and for the moment ignoring the fact that my opponent on the other side of the fence or on the other end of the religious or political spectrum is a living, thinking, feeling human being who in all likelihood loves God and country just as much as I do.
O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console; to be understood as to understand; to be loved as to love.

What if all of us made a conscious effort to put aside the emotions that can inflict so much damage and chose instead to listen to and hear the other group’s point of view with an attitude of love and did our best to understand instead of criticize? To those who would say in response, “Well, that would be nice, but it’s not the real world” I would ask, “Why can’t it be? Why shouldn’t it be? What, besides a cynical, jaded attitude toward the idea and a lack of willingness to make a positive change is keeping you, me, or anyone else from it?” Every one of us has the freedom to choose how we will respond at any moment to any given situation. We can respond to those whom we disagree with either with anger and vitriol or with an attitude of understanding and love. The choice is ours to make. It really is just that simple! As Eknath Easwaran relates in his powerful book entitled Passage Meditation: Bringing the Deep Wisdom of the Heart into Daily Life (Essential Easwaran Library):

It may seem old-fashioned, but I would recommend standing guard over the gate of the mouth to ensure that only the right kind of words come out. It is another form of sense training. Vulgar speech, sarcasm, gossip, even pointless chatter, should all be denied exit visas. The Sufis capture this idea in a splendid metaphor. They advise us to speak only after our words have managed to issue through three gates. At the first gate we ask ourselves, “Are these words true?” If so, let them pass on; if not, back they go. At the second gate we ask, “Are they kind?” If we still feel we must speak out, we need to choose words that will be supportive and loving, not words that embarrass or wound.
another person. At the final gate, we ask, “Are they necessary?” They may be true, even kind, but it doesn’t follow that they have to be uttered; they must serve some meaningful purpose. Do they clarify the situation or help someone? Or do they strike a discordant or irrelevant note?

All of us understand what blows can do to someone, but we do not realize that words can create a more painful injury, one that can last for many years. Nor do we understand the terribly destructive impact words can have on the consciousness of the person who uses them.

What a change there would be in our political and religious discourse — and in our discussions on many other topics as well of course — if all of us took the advice of the Sufis to heart concerning our words!

where there is injury, pardon;

When we are injured, our natural conditioned response is to react with anger. When someone does something bad to us or says something bad about us, our natural response is a desire to retaliate. But the much better way to respond — the way that promotes peace and that helps bring love into the world — is to choose to pardon those who have offended us. As the famous Twin Verses of the Dhammapada say:

Our life is shaped by our mind; we become what we think. Suffering follows an evil thought as the wheels of a cart follow the oxen that draw it. Our life is shaped by our mind; we become what we think. Joy follows a pure thought like a shadow that never leaves.
“He was angry with me, he attacked me, he defeated me, he robbed me” – those who dwell on such thoughts will never be free from hatred. “He was angry with me, he attacked me, he defeated me, he robbed me” – those who do not dwell on such thoughts will surely become free from hatred.

For hatred can never put an end to hatred; love alone can. This is an unalterable law.

Like most people have, I have encountered some bad people in life who have hurt and used me. One person named Rebecca stands out in particular. It’s a long and very embarrassing story and some of the details I prefer to keep private, but suffice it to say that this woman – whom I met over the Internet — lied to me about who and what she was and she used me for the Web skills I possessed that she had need of and when my usefulness was over, she got rid of me in a very cruel way. It made things all the worse that she knew that I had developed romantic feelings for her and she used that knowledge to full advantage. Needless to say, it made the hurt of being used as I was much deeper.

I have bipolar disorder that is very well controlled now, but back in those days I was very ill and very angry. Although violence does not normally come naturally to me at all, I was so enraged by the way Rebecca had treated me that I thought I could probably kill her if the opportunity ever arose. Haven’t we all experienced angry thoughts that we would never actually act upon? It’s just an unfortunate part of the human condition. But now, if I was to encounter Rebecca again, I would give her a big hug and let her know that I forgive her. How she would choose to respond to that would be entirely up to her. The important thing for me is to do the forgiving. Continuing to hate Rebecca
and continuing to feel anger toward her serves no purpose except to make me miserable. Responding with love and forgiveness brings healing not just to me, but to the whole situation.

where there is doubt, faith;

Who hasn’t doubted their abilities, their worth, or their faith in God at some point in time? The highest and most wonderful service we can render to anyone who is experiencing those painful times of doubting is to lift them up, give them encouragement, love them, and remind them that even in our times of questioning and doubting God is always present and that He will never leave them or forsake them.

When we are responding with love and compassion, there is no room for judgment or criticism.

where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light;
Before my bipolar illness was diagnosed and successfully brought under control, I spent years experiencing a great deal of despair and depression, and I went through some really dark and miserable times. I feel a tremendous amount of gratefulness toward my loving and supportive family, my knowledgeable and compassionate physicians, and everyone else who helped me regain my health. There are many people in this world who are suffering for any number of reasons. We live in a troubled world, and problems such as hunger, poverty, disease, crime, alcoholism, drug addiction, violence, racism, physical and mental abuse and many other serious issues afflict far too many of us, causing tremendous suffering. There are no easy fixes to these problems, but again the highest service we can render those who are suffering is to love them, to assure them that there is hope and when we have the power to do so, to offer them a way out of their suffering. Love brings healing, and when we are busy loving others and serving them, it is impossible to criticize them and judge them at the same time.

where there is sadness, joy;

There are many reasons for sadness in this life, too. Who of us hasn’t experienced the pain of the loss of a loved one or the loss of a job, for example? When we encounter someone who is experiencing sadness in their life, the highest and greatest service we can render to them is to comfort and console them and do what we can to bring joy back into their life.

O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console;
   to be understood as to understand;
   to be loved as to love.
For it is in giving that we receive;  
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned;  
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

The whole thrust of this wonderful prayer is to inspire us to live life in such a way that it brings transformation not just to our own lives, but also to the lives of others. When we put our own needs aside and choose to live a life of service toward others we unleash the incredible power of love, and the joy of seeing the lives of others positively transformed because of our efforts in their behalf is ours to enjoy. What better way and more joyful way of life can there possibly be than to dedicate ourselves to the task of transforming hatred into love, injury into pardon, doubt into faith, despair into hope, darkness into light, and sadness into joy? As St. Francis so truthfully has said, when we give to others we receive, when we pardon others we too are pardoned, and when we die to ourselves we are born to eternal life — a life of peace, love, and joy that will never fade away. As Jesus said:

25 For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. (Matthew 16:25, New King James Version)

This is the prayer that guides my life and if you haven’t already done so, I hope you will consider making it yours too. St. Francis gave us the formula for a happy, joyful, fulfilled, and deeply meaningful life centuries ago. It’s up to us now to put it into practice in our lives and then watch as the love and compassion we share with others ripples out from us and our entire world is transformed.

Namaste.
Introduction to “Fundamentalist Christianity is a Cult!”

I wrote this article in July of 2011 for publication on my anti-Christian “Religion is Bullshit” website. In it, I express my thoughts on why fundamentalist Christianity meets the criteria for being a cult and why I believe it to be a dangerous belief system that should be avoided. This is an important part of my religious (or perhaps my anti-religious) thinking.
FUNDAMENTALIST
CHRISTIANITY IS A CULT!

“What is a Cult?”

Alan Gomes writes: “A cult of Christianity is a group of people, which claiming to be Christian, embraces a particular doctrine system taught by an individual leader, group of leaders, or
organization, which (system) denies (either explicitly or implicitly) one or more of the central doctrines of the Christian Faith as taught in the sixty-six books of the Bible.” Alan Gomes, Unmasking The Cults (Zondervan, 1995)

“A cult is a group or movement exhibiting a great or excessive devotion or dedication to some person, idea, or thing and employing unethically manipulative techniques of persuasion and control (e.g., isolation from former friends and family, debilitation, use of special methods to heighten suggestibility and subservience, powerful group pressures, information management, suspension of individuality or critical judgment, promotion of total dependency on the group and fear of leaving it, etc.) designed to advance the goals of the group’s leaders to the actual or possible detriment of members, their families, or the community.” (West & Langone, 1986)

This article will make the case – from the cult identification materials offered by Fundamentalist Christians themselves – that Fundamentalist Christianity itself is a cult. My comments will be in bold. cult identification information available here was used as the basis for this article.

“A cult is a group or movement exhibiting a great or excessive devotion or dedication to some person, idea, or thing...”

Fundamentalist Christianity stresses excessive devotion to Jesus above all else, marking them as a cult.

“employing unethically manipulative techniques of persuasion and control ...”

The Christian Church uses several known brainwashing techniques to gain and then keep converts. Here is an example: Ever been to a church service where the same song is sung over and over again? I have, and it is a common practice. What the vast majority of church members do not know is that this is a brainwashing technique. The repetition of the song breaks down mental barriers and puts people in an extremely suggestible state. The music plays a part as well. Deep bass tones played rhythmically and repeatedly will cause people to enter an altered state of consciousness – they go in and out of trance while the song is playing. Watch a Charismatic praise & worship service or pay attention next time you are in a church service. You will notice some folks staring blankly into space. They are in a hypnotic trance. Some preachers also use a speaking technique called “voice roll”, which also has a hypnotic effect. While in a relaxed altered state, most people’s defenses (and critical thinking skills) are down and what they are taught at that time they will not necessarily think through for themselves. So, while the defenses are down, the brainwashing and indoctrination takes place.

“use of special methods to heighten suggestibility and subservience…”

See above. Also see the excellent and informative article available at this link: The Battle for Your Mind.

“powerful group pressures…”

Fundamentalist Christians are strongly pressured to avoid “sinful” activities and to conform to the standards of the group.

“information management…”
Information critical of the Bible or the Christian religion rarely reaches Fundamentalist Christians because it has been denounced as being “from Satan”, therefore they avoid it, if they even know that it exists.

“suspension of individuality or critical judgment...”

These are big issues within the Fundamentalist Christian faith. Among Christians, critical thinking about the Bible or the Christian religion is strongly discouraged. Doubt is, after all, “of the devil”. Proper development of the personality and individualization in children and adolescents may be severely impaired due to the replacement of the real personality with a false religious one due to brainwashing and indoctrination.

“fear of leaving it...”

Religious fear is a huge factor for those who are questioning their faith or who have decided to leave it. Fear of Satan and fear of Hell are tools that the Church has used very successfully to keep people in the fold. Those who leave are often plagued for years with religious fears. These fears may appear to be baseless to those outside of the Fundamentalist Christian cult, but to those suffering from them, these religious fears are very real indeed. For those suffering from fear of Satan or fear of Hell, the information available at this link should help overcome those fears: http://dangerouschristianity.com/to-end-fear-of-hell/.

Characteristics of a Cult

“Popular”
Fundamentalist Christianity is certainly popular. Millions of people in this nation alone claim to have had a “born again” experience and claim to be Christians. Dick Sutphen, the popular New Age author and hypnotist, has pinpointed what I think is a very valid reason for the continued growth of the Fundamentalist Christian cult. From his article, “The Battle for Your Mind“:

Any study of brainwashing has to begin with a study of Christian revivalism in eighteenth century America. Apparently, Jonathan Edwards accidentally discovered the techniques during a religious crusade in 1735 in Northampton, Massachusetts. By inducing guilt and acute apprehension and by increasing the tension, the sinners attending his revival meetings would break down and completely submit. Technically, what Edwards was doing was creating conditions that wipe the brain slate clean so that the mind accepts new programming. He would tell those attending, “You’re a sinner! You’re destined for hell!”

As a result, one person committed suicide and another attempted suicide. The neighbors of the suicidal converts related that they, too, were affected so deeply that, although they had found “eternal salvation,” they were obsessed with a diabolical temptation to end their own lives.

Once a preacher, cult leader, manipulator or authority figure creates the brain phrase to wipe the brain-slate clean, his subjects are open to new programming. New input, in the form of suggestions, can be substituted for their previous ideas. Because Edwards didn’t turn his message positive until the end of the revival, many accepted the negative suggestions and acted, or desired to act, upon them.
Charles J. Finney was another Christian revivalist who used the same techniques four years later in mass religious conversions in New York. The techniques are still being used today by Christian revivalists, Cults, human-potential training, some business rallies and the U.S. armed services.

Let me point out here that I don’t think most revivalist preachers realize or know they are using brainwashing techniques. Edwards simply stumbled upon a technique that worked, and others copied it and have continued to copy it for over two hundred years. And the more sophisticated our knowledge and technology become, the more effective the conversion. I feel strongly that this is one of the major reasons for the increasing rise in Christian fundamentalism, especially the televised variety, while most of the orthodox religions are declining.

“Manipulative”

Fundamentalist Christians are regularly manipulated through fear, guilt, and shame tactics. Fear tactics include inducing fear of God, fear of Satan, and fear of Hell. Guilt and shame tactics are used on those who have committed some alleged “sin” and all Christians (and possible converts) are made to feel guilty and ashamed for having allegedly offended God.

“Controlling and authoritative: This message is from God; I am a prophet... You must follow these rules...”

This one is definitely a characteristic of Fundamentalist Christianity. Their message is supposedly from God, Jesus is the prophet of God/the Messiah, and there are rules that must be followed to be saved or to be in fellowship with other Christians and the church as a whole.
“Fear-inducing”

Fundamentalist Christianity is definitely fear-inducing – fear of God, fear of Jesus, fear of Satan, fear of Hell, fear of demons, fear of sinning...and so on. Fear, fear, fear, fear, and more fear is the name of the game! It is used unfortunately quite successfully to keep the flock in line.

“Legalistic”

Some Fundamentalist Christian denominations, such as the Church of Christ, are more legalistic than others.

“Condemning”

Fundamentalist Christianity is very much a condemning religion. Entire groups of people are regularly condemned, as is everything that is seen as “sin”.

“Conformity”

Christians are definitely expected to conform to the culture of their church and to behave “as Christians” – i.e. avoid “sinful” activities.

“Exclusivity”

This is absolutely true of Fundamentalist Christianity. Fundamentalist Christians believe that theirs is the only right way to live – the only way to Heaven and the only way to God.

“Financial involvement”

Fundamentalist Christians definitely are expected to contribute financially in the form of tithes (supposedly
mandatory for the blessings of God), building funds, love offerings, etc. It is not uncommon for Christians to be manipulated through fear, guilt, and shame into giving much more than the base 10% tithe.

“isolation from outside”

This can be an issue in some churches, but I don’t believe it to be common except in the sense that Christians are often denied the knowledge of the existence of materials critical of their faith.

“Lack of privacy”

This can be an issue with new converts. They often are not allowed time or privacy to think their decision to become a Christian through rationally after the emotional high of conversion has worn off.

“Love-bombing”

This is definitely an issue in Fundamentalist Christian churches. Visitors are often love-bombed in the hopes that they will keep coming back and eventually be converted, and new converts are often love-bombed in an effort to keep them coming to church and to discourage them from thinking critically about their conversion experience.

“Critical thinking discouraged; can’t question.”

This is definitely true of Fundamentalist Christianity. Fundamentalist Christians are strongly discouraged from thinking critically about their faith, the Bible, or the Christian religion. Doubt, they are told, is “of the devil”, while the need to “just have faith” is stressed.
“Indoctrination”

Fundamentalist Christians are definitely indoctrinated, and brainwashed as well.

“Corporate identification with goals of group”

This is true of Fundamentalist Christianity, whether dealing with a building fund for example, or a corporate desire to get to heaven.

“Demands Total Commitment and unquestioning submission”

This is true in the sense that total commitment and submission to God/Jesus is strongly stressed.

“Value rejection: encouraged to denounce values and beliefs of former life.”

This is definitely true of Fundamentalist Christianity. New converts are frequently encouraged to denounce old spiritual beliefs and values, and to get rid of anything they may own that is “not of God”.

“Threats about leaving and consequences”

This is absolutely true of Fundamentalist Christianity. Those leaving the Fundamentalist Christian cult are frequently threatened with the anger of God and the supposed “reality” of Hell.

Symptoms of cult Followers

- Fear
• Loyalty
• Brainwashing
• Emotional vulnerability
• Neurosis
• Guilt
• Identity confusion
• Paranoia
• Loss of free will
• Intellectual sterility
• Diminished capacity of judgment
• Psychosis
• Suicidal tendencies

All of these characteristics typify someone who has been involved with and then left the Fundamentalist Christian cult. I know they describe my struggles with leaving the cult and they hold true for others as well.
Introduction to “Letter to Senators”

I wrote this on September 14, 2011 and intended to send it out to every member of the United States Congress. But due to a lack of funds to mail each member of Congress individually and the length of time it would take to email them individually, I never got it sent. My heart was in the right place though, and I wanted to encourage our Congress members to work together peacefully for the good of our country.
LETTER TO SENATORS

I would like to share this article that I wrote for my blog at http://www.spiritualitydaily.com a few months ago. I am writing because the anger and vitriol that has become so much a part of our political process and that is dividing our nation deeply concerns me. I believe that it is imperative that we all work together to create positive change not just in our nation’s political process but in every facet of our lives.

Centuries ago St. Francis of Assisi, a Catholic friar, gave us the formula for a peaceful and happy life. If it were to be embraced by the citizens of our nation and of our world as a total way of life, imagine the transformation that would take place! This way of life – this way of being – is compatible with all religions and is, in fact, strongly endorsed by the mystics of every major religious tradition in the world. Jesus urged us love our enemies and to pray for those who persecute us.

38 “You have heard that it was said, ‘Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.’ 39 But I tell you, Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. 40 And if someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. 41 If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. 42 Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.

43 “You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor’ and hate your enemy.’ 44 But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, 45 that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the
good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. 46 If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? 47 And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? 48 Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect. (Matthew 5:38-48)

Mahatma Gandhi changed the face of the world and gained independence for India through his call for nonviolent resistance to British rule. Through his life and through his strict adherence to the Hindu religious principle of *ahimsa* (total nonviolence) Gandhi proved one of the central truths of Buddhism found in the Dhammapada:

*Hatred can never put an end to hatred; love alone can. This is an unalterable law.*

The Bhagavad Gita in its entirety is an urgent call not only to selfless action for the benefit of all, but to the realization of the unity of life.

I’ve said all this to express my belief that the difficult political and financial issues that face us today can be solved. But let it be done in a spirit of love, understanding and cooperation rather than through a continuation of the anger, hatred, and vitriol that has been not only ineffective, but that has been and still is hurting us all.

Sincerely and with thanks for your time and consideration,

Jeffrey L. Reid (jeffreylreid@gmail.com), Anchorage, Alaska
Introduction to “Insane Beliefs Checklist”

This is another one of my favorite anti-religious efforts. It highlights the absurdity of the Christian religion in a very humorous way.
INSANE BELIEFS CHECKLIST

He is before all things, and in him all things hold together (Col. 1:17).

You believe that before anything at all existed, there was an Invisible Man. You believe that this invisible Man is magically holding the universe together.

In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And God said... (Gen. 1:1,3)

You believe that an Invisible Man magically created the universe by speaking a powerful magical spell from Nowhere.

Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? (Gen. 3)

You believe that Mankind "fell from grace" because a lying talking snake convinced the world's first blonde to eat some magic fruit from a magic tree.

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. (John 3:16)

You believe that because the Magic Fruit Incident occurred, the Invisible Man had to sacrifice Himself to Himself to save us from Himself. You believe that if we telepathically accept the Invisible Man's sacrifice, we can enjoy a second magical eternal life in the sky after our life here on earth is over.

And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. (Rev. 19:11)

You believe that the same Invisible Man who magically created the universe from Nowhere will ride His Sky Horse down from the Sky Kingdom to make war and kick the lying talking snake's a$$ for good. You believe that this victory will magically repair the damage magically caused by the Magic Fruit Incident.
Introduction to “The Age of Anger”

I wrote this article in March of 2011 and in it I express my thoughts, from a religious perspective, on why we live in a society so filled with anger.
THE AGE OF ANGER

We live in an age of anger. We live in a world where anger is expressed in many forms. Terrorism coming from Islamic fundamentalists who have hijacked that religion for their own evil means is a constant threat. Armed conflicts are an ever-present reality in various parts of the world. All too often we hear about tragedies such as school shootings or shootings such as that which occurred today in Arizona leaving six people dead, including a nine-year old girl. We live in a litigious nation due to the anger that exists in our modern society. Road rage causes injuries and sometimes claims lives. The Internet and our television and radio programming are filled with angry and insulting rhetoric be it over religious, political, or other differences. Violence is ubiquitous in our television, movie, and gaming entertainment. Anger and the violence it inspires is running rampant in our world, it is progressively getting worse, and it shows no signs of abating any time soon.

Why is anger so rampant in our world today? Why is it such a powerful force that fills our hearts and minds and pits every one of us against our fellow man at one time or another? The fact is that we are living in what the Hindu scriptures refer to as the Kali Yuga. Attributes of this Yuga, which most interpreters of the Hindu scriptures believe began in 3102 BCE, include (as listed in the previously linked Wikipedia article):

A discourse by Markandeya in the Mahabharata identifies some of the attributes of Kali Yuga:
In Relation to Rulers

- Rulers will become unreasonable: they will levy taxes unfairly.
- Rulers will no longer see it as their duty to promote spirituality, or to protect their subjects: they will become a danger to the world.
- People will start migrating, seeking countries where wheat and barley form the staple food source.

In human relationships

- Avarice and wrath will be common. Humans will openly display animosity towards each other.
- Ignorance of dharma will occur.
- People will have thoughts of murder for no justification and they will see nothing wrong with that mind-set.
- Lust will be viewed as socially acceptable, and sexual intercourse will be seen as the central requirement of life.
- Sin will increase exponentially, whilst virtue will fade and cease to flourish.
- People will take vows only to break them soon after.
- People will become addicted to intoxicating drinks and drugs.
- Men will find their jobs stressful and will go to retreats to escape their work.
• Gurus will no longer be respected and their students will attempt to injure them. Their teachings will be insulted and followers of Kama will wrest control of the mind from all human beings. Brahmins will not be learned and honoured, Kshatriyas will not be brave, Vaishyas will not be just in dealings and Shudras will not be honest and humble to their duties and to the other castes.

Certainly sounds very much like the world we live in, doesn’t it?

Some Christians believe that we are living in what the Bible describes as the Last Days or the End Times. Consider these passages of scripture:

18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, 19 because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. 20 For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, 21 because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. 22 Professing to be wise, they became fools, 23 and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man—and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things.

24 Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, 25 who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and
served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

26 For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. 27 Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due.

28 And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting; 29 being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; they are whisperers, 30 backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, 31 undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful; 32 who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them.

(Romans 1:18-32, New King James Version)

2 For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, 3 unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, 4 traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, (2 Timothy 3:2-4, New King James Version)

Again, scripture describes our world and the behavior of mankind with pinpoint accuracy.
Whether you accept the authority of the Hindu or Christian scriptures or not, the fact is that they have us and our world pegged.

The anger and violence that so consumes our world has many people justifiably concerned about the survival of humanity. But God has not left us without help during this age of anger.

As Eknath Easwaran explains in his commentary on the Bhagavad Gita entitled the End of Sorrow:

_The Upanishads tell us that the Lord weaves the whole universe out of himself and sits in the midst of it, working hardest of all. It is difficult even to imagine the Lord’s labor. In a period of decline and dissent over twenty-five hundred years ago, he came as the Compassionate Buddha to toil for our enlightenment. He shed his Buddha body and no sooner got home when a call came from the shores of Galilee: “Trouble brewing – come quickly.” With hardly any rest, he went off again to look for suitable parents. He finally decided on Mary and Joseph, but there was no place in which to be born except a stable. With this humble birth the Lord came to us as Jesus and worked for us until his body was crucified. Then he went home only to hear another call of tribulation, this time from Arabia. He came again as an ordinary man who became united with Allah and gave us the Koran. Once again he returned home, but while he was recovering from the desert heat the call came for him to be born as Shankara in Kerala, then again in the nineteenth century as Sri Ramakrishna._

_God, by whatever name you address Him, is the Lord of Love. He has returned to this earth again and again to toil for our enlightenment, to remind us of our true identity, and to_
encourage us in our spiritual striving, which will eventually reunite every single one of us with God.

The antidote for anger is love. Most of us likely are not in a position to effect massive change in the world but we can act within our sphere of influence, and like a pebble dropped into a pond, our actions may ripple out from our relatively tiny sphere of influence to eventually encompass the whole world. One committed and determined man can influence the destiny of a nation, as Mahatma Gandhi demonstrated a few decades ago in India. Together we can influence the destiny of not just one nation, but the entire world. We can choose to approach others and the situations we encounter in life with an attitude of love, compassion and understanding instead of responding with anger. As Jesus said:

44 But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, (Matthew 5:44, New King James Version)

Not an easy task for sure, but well worth the effort.

I have discovered a wonderful, spiritual way of life I would wholeheartedly recommend to anyone interested — Eknath Easwaran’s Eight Point Program. When fully embraced, this way of life can help bring peace and joy into our own lives and into the lives of everyone we encounter.

Conquer the angry man by love.

Conquer the ill-natured man by goodness.

Conquer the miser with generosity.
Conquer the liar with truth.

- The Dhammapada

Namaste.
Introduction to “The Supreme Goal of Life”

I wrote this in 2011 and it reflects my belief at the time that seeking and knowing God is the supreme goal of life. I discuss my religious background and my disappointment with atheism and ultimately conclude that God is the basic fact of the universe and that knowing and loving and serving Him is the supreme goal of life.
I have had quite a journey through religious belief during the last 25 years or so. I was raised United Methodist, but I had little interest in religion when I was young. When I was a teenager, I made friends with our neighbors across the street. They were fundamentalist Christians and over the next couple of years or so we had quite a few interesting religious discussions, but nothing really “stuck”. I left the subject alone for a while, but at the age of 19 I converted to Christianity through the influence of one of my college friends. At the time, I was a pretty screwed up young man. I was dealing with then undiagnosed bipolar disorder and the substance abuse issues that frequently go hand in hand with the illness. My friend Mike made quite an impression on me with his kindness toward me and his strong desire to help me overcome my problems. He eventually got me out to his car to read some scripture and as I did I felt something stirring and coming alive inside of me so I thought, “maybe there is something to this Jesus stuff. Maybe it’s for real!”. Not long after that, I experienced a dramatic religious conversion and was transformed from a troubled teenager to a devout Christian believer — you know, the well-meaning but annoying kind of Christian who hands out tracts and is always preaching. My intentions were good. I sincerely wanted others to experience the joy and the new life that I had found. I just went about it in the wrong way. I was very happy with my faith for a long time, but due to my bipolar illness I spent years alternating between periods of devout religious belief and periods of deep depression accompanied by substance abuse.
I always had questions about my faith that I could never seem to get good answers for, and eventually those nagging doubts and questions led me to start exploring the skeptical side of the fence. After much reading and research, I reached the conclusion that the fundamentalist Christian faith that I had invested so much time and energy into could not possibly be true, and I ended up walking away from my faith and anything at all to do with God or religious belief. What followed was approximately eight years of atheism, which at the time seemed “logical” and “rational”, but it never really sat will with me deep down inside. I maintained a popular website and argued extensively and, I thought, persuasively against the Christian faith and against the existence of God. I became known and appreciated for my irreverent humor and at the time I really enjoyed doing it not only because my efforts made me laugh but because others who shared my views were entertained as well, and of course my ego enjoyed all of the positive feedback I received.

I have realized now that Atheism doesn’t work for me. It’s not what I believe to be true deep down inside, and I can now acknowledge what I was feeling for so long though I tried to deny it, even to myself — the reality that atheism is an empty, hopeless, and depressing way to see the world. If atheism is true — if there is no God — then there is no meaning and no purpose to our existence. If atheism is true, then our existence is purely an unplanned accidental result of the process of biological evolution and when we die we cease to exist. I know plenty of atheists who are satisfied with that view, the supposed “harsh reality” that this life and the physical world is all there is. Our lives have no meaning or purpose beyond what we give to them and when death comes knocking that’s it. Lights Out forever. I know plenty of atheists who congratulate
themselves for accepting “reality as it is” free from any religious or spiritual beliefs. I was once a part of that crowd. I was determined to live my life without any reference to God or any sort of religious or spiritual belief. But not any longer. Perhaps I could be accused of having never been a “REAL” Atheist. But the reality is that people change their mind on the issue of God over time just as they do on many other important and not so important issues in life.

I believe in God and I consider His existence to be the basic fact of the universe. I have come to realize that God is not limited to one religion or one holy book or one way of being believed in and approached. I strongly concur with the Hindus in their belief that “Truth is One, Paths are Many.” I also agree with them that there is an underlying and unchanging unity of life that exists beyond this constantly changing physical, phenomenal world and that every single one of us is divine and capable of tremendous spiritual growth and of accomplishing tremendous good in the world. We are all capable of realizing God right here, right now, in this life.

I believe that God not only exists, but that He is the supreme goal of life. The true purpose of life is to know and to serve and to draw ever closer to God and also to live a life of service to others. As Krishna affirms in the Bhagavad Gita:

“I am the goal of life, the Lord and support of all, the inner witness, the abode of all. I am the only refuge, the one true friend; I am the beginning, the staying, and the end of creation; I am the womb and the eternal seed.” (BG 9:18)

And as St. Teresa of Avila affirms in Let Nothing Disturb You:

“He who has God finds he lacks nothing; God alone suffices.”

145
The road to happiness and to a fulfilled life isn’t paved by selfish living that satisfies the ego. The road to happiness and fulfillment is paved with selfless work done to benefit others. Such a life takes our eyes off of ourselves and our needs and puts them squarely where they should be — on others and their needs. As Mahatma Gandhi once said,

“I must reduce myself to zero. So long as a man does not of his own free will put himself last among his fellow-creatures, there is no salvation for him.”

And as Jesus said,

For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. (Matthew 16:25, New King James Version)

When we lose our own lives — when we put aside our own selfish desires — and instead choose to live lives of service toward others, we discover that we have found happiness, peace, and the true meaning and purpose of life. This is how, as Christians would understand it, we die to self and take up our cross and follow Christ.

The same basic truths are found in all of the major religious traditions. The supreme goal of life is to know, love, and serve God regardless of what name we use to address Him. A natural byproduct of knowing God is a desire to live a life of service to others. And in the act of adding happiness and joy to the lives of others, we add it to our own lives as well.
Introduction to “Thoughts I Need to Express”

I wrote these thoughts out on August 17, 2011. I was feeling a great deal of anger towards Christianity at the time for the damage I felt that those beliefs had done to me. I felt the need to get those thoughts out on paper, and I read them to my counselor when I saw her soon after writing them. I was also trying hard to live the Eastern spirituality I was happy with at the time, but I realized that the anger I was feeling toward my Christian past was holding me back from making spiritual progress. This is an angry anti-Christian rant, but it’s an important part of my religious past. It demonstrates clearly the anger and bitterness that I was wrapped up in for a very long time.
THOUGHTS I NEED TO EXPRESS

I’ve been doing a lot of thinking about positive changes I need to make to my life, which of course includes my thought patterns and the way I choose to respond to life events.

I have been harboring a tremendous amount of (completely justified) anger, bitterness, and hatred toward Christianity for about ten years now, ever since I came to the realization that I had been intentionally lied to, brainwashed, indoctrinated and deceived for 15 years of my life by an evil cult that doesn’t deserve even the slightest bit of respect. There is a part of me that would love to wipe the evil, destructive scourge of Christianity off the face of the earth and erase 2000-years worth of bloodshed, religion-sanctioned ignorance, and severely stunted social and scientific progress, if I had the power to do so.

The fundamentalist Christian cult destroyed my life. They claimed to have “God’s Truth” for everybody for all time handed down from God in a divinely inspired, infallible and inerrant book. Instead, what they offered me was a severely flawed myth-error-atrocity -absurdity-bad “history”-ridden “holy” book, a pack of ancient myths and lies, false and severely psychologically damaging doctrines, and many false promises. They seem to have originated the “bait and switch” tactic that shady salespeople are known to use frequently. They got it straight from the Church!

Christians talk a lot about love but rarely show it. I heard about love in church – about how much God allegedly loved me and what Jesus had supposedly done for me. This “love” comes
packaged with an immense amount of psychologically damaging guilt, shame and fear designed to lock the unfortunate victim of this mental and emotional abuse into the cult belief system for life.

How do Christian cultists define “love”? “God sacrificed himself to himself to save us from himself.” The absurdity of that doctrine aside for the moment, how exactly does that equal “love”?

Christianity can be humorously (but accurately) defined as shown in this graphic:

![Christianity graphic](https://example.com/christianity-graphic)

Much of the world has been enslaved to this absurd belief system for 2000 years. Much of the rest of the world has been and still is enslaved to the equally (at least) absurd, evil, and damaging religious nonsense known as Islam.
I spent 15 years of my life believing that I was a sinful, depraved, essentially evil (without Jesus) worthless being who had no chance of being “good enough” for God (without Jesus). I spent those years fearing hell and fearing angering God and a tremendous amount of time feeling religious guilt and shame that I now realize was needless and without any basis in reality. I also spent those years fearing that my “unsaved” family and friends would be going to hell to burn and be tortured forever.

To say that Christianity is a very dangerous and damaging belief system would be stating the case very mildly! It is a clear and present danger to anyone who has the misfortune of getting sucked into it. Instead of enjoying its completely undeserved status as a socially acceptable belief system and instead of being allowed to trot out its pack of dangerous and damaging myths and lies and false promises on a weekly (at a minimum) basis, the fundamentalist Christian church should be revealed publicly as the dangerous cult that it is and condemned by the mental health community as strongly as is possible. There should be strong warnings against the doctrines and teachings of this evil cult not only on the Internet, but in every conceivable media outlet. The proper authorities would do no less in the case of a tainted food, water or disease outbreak and psychologically damaging, dangerous belief systems should get no less. In no way should they be given any special protection nor should they be allowed to freely prey on the unsuspecting public.

I live every day with the damage done to me by the fundamentalist Christian cult even though I walked away from it eleven years ago. The damage done was severe and it has been lasting.
Knowing intellectually that Christianity has no basis in reality and that the same goes for the fear, guilt, and shame that I was subjected to for so many years is of course a good and valuable thing, but it doesn’t address the psychological damage done or the strong negative emotional baggage I have been left with which I have been unable to resolve.

I know intellectually that I am and always have been a good, caring, loving, giving, and compassionate person. But the emotional baggage and toxic teachings I still carry from my days in the Christian cult tells me that I am a sinful, bad, essentially depraved and evil person who was born deserving to burn in hell forever – that my righteous and good acts are as filthy rags to God (Isaiah 64:6).

*All of us have become like one who is unclean,*

* and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags;*

*we all shrivel up like a leaf,*

* and like the wind our sins sweep us away.*

With this kind of belief drilled into me for years, how can I be expected to honestly feel good about myself? How can I possibly really love myself and see myself as worthy of love with this kind of toxic garbage still infecting my thought processes and my sense of self-worth? How can I possibly have a healthy sense of self-esteem having believed this of myself for so long? I am fully aware now intellectually that “sin” is a religious concept with no basis in reality but after so many years of fearing and hating my supposed sinfulness and asking God often to forgive sins both of commission and omission and so often feeling judged and condemned and not forgiven and disregarded or forgotten by God, how do I overcome those toxic beliefs and find healing? How do I go from the “sin
consciousness” that was drilled into me by the Christian cult to accepting and loving myself as I am – a flawed and imperfect but basically good and loving human being? Hmmm... I am indeed imperfect as everybody is, but am I really “flawed”? Such is the pervasiveness of toxic teachings, even after years away from the church.

I was taught that “God is Love” in church, but the reality is that most of the Bible portrays God as anything but “loving”. I hear Christians claim all the time that “God is good” and I wonder, “Have they ever actually read the book they claim to revere as God’s Word?” The obvious answer is “NO”. In the Old Testament, God is portrayed as repeatedly either ordering or directly committing mass murder. Genocide was perfectly acceptable if God ordered it or committed it himself. It was perfectly acceptable to beat the hell out of your slaves as long as you didn’t kill them. It was perfectly acceptable to murder homosexuals. God killed a man because he dared to pick up some sticks, which absurdly counted as “work” on the Sabbath. God sent bears to slaughter children who made fun of one of his prophets. According to Psalm 137:9, happiness is bashing the heads of infants against rocks. The New Testament doesn’t get much better. The morally reprehensible doctrine of an eternal hell is introduced as is the notion that it is perfectly acceptable to kill people if they lie to you (see Acts 5). The book of Revelation is a religious lunatic’s fantasy, but it portrays the slaughter of billions (if the events depicted were to occur in modern times) by an allegedly “loving” God and then of course after being murdered in horrible ways they get the extremely dubious honor of getting to spend an eternity in God’s BBQ pit. Praise the Lord!
I actually saw one of my Christian friends (whom I respect as a friend very much) assert on Facebook the idea that if criminals had been given the opportunity to read the Bible when they were children then perhaps they wouldn’t be in prison now. I couldn’t believe what I was reading! Most of the Bible is most definitely NOT appropriate reading material for children! Unless you want them to grow up to be criminals, that is... after all, according to the Bible mass murder, killing infants, murdering homosexuals and stoning disobedient children to death, among other equally immoral acts, are all perfectly acceptable things to do.

I’ve also recently seen the assertion made that America is in the condition it’s in because we have “forgotten God”. And that if we followed “God’s laws” we wouldn’t have the problems we are facing now. What a load of utter nonsense. I guess if we just “remembered” God and apologized for pissing him off, everything would just magically be okay. And especially if we figured out which set of God’s contradictory “laws” we should follow! *rolls eyes*

God is Love? God is good? **NOT ACCORDING TO THE BIBLE!**

I happen to like and agree with much of what the Eastern religions such as Hinduism and Buddhism teach. Buddhists generally lack a belief in a god, but Hindus of course have many though they are generally believed to be the personal aspects of Brahman, the impersonal Ultimate Reality. Christians will readily condemn the Eastern religions as being “false” and “demonic” while they think nothing of the fact that they likely understand little or nothing about what they are condemning while they simultaneously fail to consider the fact that what information they do have is likely inaccurate distortions of what Hindus and
Buddhists actually believe gleaned from the writings of willfully ignorant, heavily biased Christian apologists.

I learned very well how to hate, judge and condemn others courtesy of the fundamentalist Christian cult. I learned the joy of anticipating God’s judgment on groups of people I was taught to hate. I was taught to view the alleged coming judgment of people I was led to believe “hated God” as a good thing, as “righteous and just”. It sickens me now to think that I ever could have thought that way or held such beliefs. Nothing matches the power of religion to warp the moral compasses of those who believe in it almost beyond recognition. Evil becomes good and good becomes evil.

I would love to be able to wholeheartedly believe that a loving God truly exists and I would love to be busy finding joy in serving others in any way I possibly can. That’s where my heart is and that’s what I know will bring me true happiness.

But before I can truly live that life – the one I know I am meant to live -- and embrace those beliefs I have to find a way to resolve these long-standing negative feelings and toxic beliefs. I will never know the happiness and the peace that I know should be available to me if I can’t find a way to get out from under all of this toxic emotional baggage I have been carrying around for years.

I have information and tools available to me – such as Eknath Easwaran’s excellent 8-Point Program – but to fully take advantage of the positive beliefs and spiritual teachings I have become aware of, I have to get out from under the toxic and negative anger, bitterness, hatred and rage that Christianity brought into my life. I have carried them with me and have been weighed down by them for far too long.
I want to see the positive changes that I want so badly to become a reality in my life and embracing positive spirituality and getting free of the baggage the fundamentalist Christian cult left me burdened with is going to be a huge part of it, but there is a lot of work to be done.

The closing verses of Chapter 2 of the Bhagavad Gita summarize beautifully the person I would love to become. I am far from it right now, but that kind of change and that level of spiritual growth is my goal.

**Arjuna:**

Tell me of the man who lives in wisdom,  
Ever aware of the Self, O Krishna;  
How does he talk, how sit, how move about?

**Sri Krishna:**

He lives in wisdom  
Who sees himself in all and all in him,  
Whose love for the Lord of Love has consumed Every selfish desire and sense-craving  
Tormenting the heart. Not agitated  
By grief nor hankering after pleasure,  
He lives free from lust and fear and anger  
Fettered no more by selfish attachments,  
He is not elated by good fortune  
Nor depressed by bad. Such is the seer.

Even as a tortoise draws in its limbs  
The sage can draw in his senses at will.  
An aspirant abstains from sense-pleasures,
But he still craves for them. These cravings all
Disappear when he sees the Lord of Love.
For even of one who treads the path
The stormy senses can sweep off the mind.
But he lives in wisdom who subdues them,
And keeps his mind ever absorbed in me.

When you keep thinking about sense-objects,
Attachment comes. Attachment breeds desire,
The lust of possession which, when thwarted,
Burns to anger. Anger clouds the judgment
And robs you of the power to learn from past mistakes
Lost is the discriminative faculty,
And your life is utter waste.

But when you move amidst the world of sense
From both attachment and aversion freed,
There comes the peace in which all sorrows end,
And you live in the wisdom of the Self.

The disunited mind is far from wise;
How can it meditate? How be at peace?
When you know no peace, how can you know joy?
When you let your mind follow the Siren call
Of the senses, they carry away
Your better judgment as a cyclone drives a boat
Off the charted course to its doom.

Use your mighty arms to free the senses
From attachment and aversion alike,
And live in the full wisdom of the Self.
Such a sage awakes to light in the night
Of all creatures. Wherein they are awake
Is the night of ignorance to the sage.

As the rivers flow into the ocean
But cannot make the vast ocean o'erflow,
So flow the magic streams of the sense-world
Into the sea of peace that is the sage.

He is forever free who has broken out
Of the ego-cage of I and mine
To be united with the Lord of Love.
This is the supreme state. Attain thou this
And pass from death to immortality.

Eknath Easwaran’s 8-Point Program:

1. Meditation on a Passage
2. Repetition of a Mantram
3. Slowing down
4. One-Pointed Attention
5. Training the Senses
6. Putting others first
7. Spiritual fellowship
8. Spiritual reading
The person I hope to become, though it may take a lifetime of work, is far better than the person I was as a Christian. I would much rather learn how to love myself and every other living thing fully and without reservation than to stay angry at the Christian cult and never come close to reaching my full potential as a human being. That is my goal.
Introduction to “Thoughts on the Bible”

I wrote this on March 20, 2013 as I was slowly but surely coming down out of bipolar mania and losing the faith I thought I had regained. It shows the compromise I was willing to take with the Bible in order to keep my faith.
THOUGHTS ON THE BIBLE

This is a letter I wrote to a casual online friend not long ago. It reflects my thoughts on the Bible — which I believe is the inspired Word of God — right now after many years of atheism and skepticism.

I am just recovering from thirteen years of angry and bitter atheism. I walked away from my faith back in 2000 after doubts overwhelmed me and after I found that religious skeptics/atheists seemed to have better answers than Christians did. I just recommitted my life to Christ a few weeks ago.

I believe that God created us in His image, but within the framework of evolution. The scientific evidence for biological evolution is simply overwhelming and we as Christians need to adjust to that reality instead of denying it. One approach shows a dynamic, living faith capable of addressing the real world. The other approach shows an inflexible faith incapable of addressing modern realities, and it just makes us look really stupid. And besides, what is 4.55 billion years to an eternal God? Or even 13.7 billion years? I look at Bible stories such as the creation accounts, Noah’s Ark, and even the Exodus as “true myths”. By that I mean that though they are not literal historical accounts of real events, they speak great spiritual truths that still have great meaning for us today. They still speak to the human condition in powerful ways.

I look at the Bible itself as the Word of God for sure, but I don’t approach it as a science or history textbook, because the reality is that it isn’t. There are numerous scientific and historical
errors in the Bible, and saying that the original manuscripts were inerrant doesn’t work either because... they no longer exist! I accept the Bible as a divinely inspired work that still reflects the time in which it was written. I LOVE IT, and I LOVE GOD!

I am overjoyed at finding faith again. I was sure that I never would. But there is a part of me that feels a need now to speak out as a voice of faith AND a voice of reason. That’s one of the plans I have for my new blog. I am dead set against stuff like creationism. It is not true and as messengers of Truth, we have no business having any part of it. I have often wondered over the years how the creationists managed to miss the parts in the Bible that speak about honesty and integrity. I have guessed that they simply don’t care because teaching and promoting creationism makes them boatloads of money. I think you can see that I have very strong feelings here!

Anyway, I hope that all makes sense to you. 😊

Hope that makes sense to you too. It’s where I’m at right now as a committed follower of Jesus Christ.
Introduction to “Oneness with Jesus Christ”

I wrote this on March 9, 2013 during a brief but intense bipolar-induced reconversion to Christian faith. It shows how deep into belief I can get in a very short period of time. I am an “all or nothing” kind of guy, and that goes for religion too.
ONENESS WITH JESUS
CHRIST

I visited my favorite bookstore, Title Waves Books, in Anchorage yesterday. I found some great books while I was there, including a copy of My Utmost for His Highest: An Updated Edition in Today’s Language. I remember having a copy of it years ago and loving it.

I love today’s devotional message, which I have read several times already.

Do you also want to go away? —John 6:67

What a penetrating question! Our Lord’s words often hit home for us when He speaks in the simplest way. In spite of the fact that we know who Jesus is, He asks, “Do you also want to go away?” We must continually maintain an adventurous attitude toward Him, despite any potential personal risk.

“From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more” (John 6:66). They turned back from walking with Jesus; not into sin, but away from Him. Many people today are pouring their lives out and working for Jesus Christ, but are not really walking with Him. One thing God constantly requires of us is a oneness with Jesus Christ. After being set apart through sanctification, we should discipline our lives spiritually to maintain this intimate oneness. When God gives you a clear determination of His will for you, all your striving to maintain that relationship by some particular method is completely unnecessary. All that is required is to live a natural life of
absolute dependence on Jesus Christ. Never try to live your life with God in any other way than His way. And His way means absolute devotion to Him. Showing no concern for the uncertainties that lie ahead is the secret of walking with Jesus.

Peter saw in Jesus only someone who could minister salvation to him and to the world. But our Lord wants us to be fellow laborers with Him.

In John 6:70 Jesus lovingly reminded Peter that he was chosen to go with Him. And each of us must answer this question for ourselves and no one else: “Do you also want to go away?”

A couple of things really hit home with me.

We must continually maintain an adventurous attitude toward Him, despite any potential personal risk.

What an exciting way to live life! I can’t think of any other way that I would rather live my life. Faith shouldn’t be dead and boring. That’s religion. Having a real, living relationship with Jesus Christ, who is eternal life (John 17:3), should be an adventure every day!

One thing God constantly requires of us is a oneness with Jesus Christ. After being set apart through sanctification, we should discipline our lives spiritually to maintain this intimate oneness. When God gives you a clear determination of His will for you, all your striving to maintain that relationship by some particular method is completely unnecessary. All that is required is to live a natural life of absolute dependence on Jesus Christ. Never try to live your life with God in any other way than His way. And His way means absolute devotion to Him. Showing no concern for
the uncertainties that lie ahead is the secret of walking with Jesus.

Yes! This is the life that I want. I pray to God to show me how to live absolutely dependent on Jesus Christ. I have learned that my life is hidden with Christ in God (Colossians 3:3) and that it is not I who live but Christ who lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me (Galatians 2:20). Amen!
Introduction to “Regrets and the Peace of God”

I wrote this on March 6, 2013 while I was dealing with a bout of bipolar depression and with the consequences of some bad choices. It shows that while I was dealing with some issues in life, my faith in God remained intact for the time being.
I have had a lot on my mind today. I’ve been in a rut lately where I’ve had to push through everything I need to get done without enjoying the doing. I have had to make myself workout, go to doctors appointments, get outside for fresh air, etc. The details of daily life that I normally enjoy just haven’t been much fun. I have bipolar disorder, and I know that is depression talking. I’ve also fallen down in the substance abuse department — nothing terrible, just some Kava. A whole bunch of Kava, actually. But... I’m not supposed to touch that stuff at all. All of this is my bipolar illness raising it’s ugly head and I know that. I’m doing my best to deal with it, and I know that God knows and understands what I am going through, and I know that His grace is sufficient for me.

I’ve been thinking too about the thirteen years I spent away from God. I’ve been thinking about all of the spiritual growth I could have enjoyed over those years, the growth as a man that I could have enjoyed over those years. The good Christian friends I could have made. The things I could have done for God. The miracles that I could have seen in my own life and in the lives of others. Thirteen years ago I let my doubts about my faith get the best of me. It’s true that I wasn’t finding good Christian answers for my questions. It’s also true that I was extremely mentally ill at the time and I was not thinking all that rationally, and I was angry simply because I was ill. But, I went looking for skeptical information. I went looking on the Net for information that was critical of the Bible and the Christian faith. And, of
course, I found a whole bunch of it. There are a lot of people out there who hate God, hate the Bible and hate Christianity. They have come up with many reasons not to believe, many of which seem to make sense. I fell for it, and the consequences of my decision to walk away from the faith followed. I spent thirteen angry, miserable years without God in my life. I spent much of that time lashing out against the Bible and the Christian faith with a tremendous amount of anger and rage. I thought I had been played for a fool all those years that I had been a believer. The bald-faced truth of the matter is that Satan played me for a fool all of that time. He is a liar, a thief, and a destroyer. I know that now not just because the Bible says so, but from experience. I exchanged a life with God for a life without Him, and what a huge negative difference that made. I thought I was going to find freedom. I thought I was going to find a better life by rejecting God and only believing in what my five senses told me was real. I thought by lashing out against religion and being an outspoken Atheist I would find the peace and happiness that I hadn’t found as a believer. I thought being “rational” and “logical” was the best way to be and to live life. For a season, it was indeed fun. I gained a reputation as a very funny guy while I was doing atheistic websites. But behind all of the irreligious humor was a tremendous amount of pain. Bipolar disorder is not a fun illness to have to live with. It can be debilitating. It can be devastating. I’ve had a hard time of it today, but I know that God is stronger than my weakness. I know that His strength is made perfect in my weakness.

I can’t change the way I chose to live the last thirteen years of my life. I can’t turn back the clock. But what I can do is resolve to do and to be better. I can make better choices. I can experience spiritual growth NOW and I can experience growth and maturity as a man NOW. And I can watch those things
continue in my life on a daily basis as long as I make the right choices. All of life is a steady, never-ending string of choices. I am not perfect and I will fall. I will make mistakes. I will, I’m sure, make some really bad choices and have days like today. But I know that God is involved in my life again now and I am determined to stay on the right spiritual path. I know that God loves me and that He cares deeply about what happens to me. I am determined to grow in Christ. I am determined to gain a strong grounding in the faith so that when days like today come I will be able to stand and I will be able to emerge victorious.

I can’t say that I am enjoying a lot of peace right now. I am ill and I am dealing with the consequences of some bad choices. But I know that God is bigger than the worst choices I have made. I know who I am in Christ. I know that I serve a great and mighty God for whom absolutely nothing is impossible. I know to cast all my cares about Him because he cares for me (1 Peter 5:7). I have prayed, but I need to pray some more. I have praised God, but I need to praise and worship more. I need to press in and press on until I experience the spiritual breakthrough I need. The enemy has hit me pretty hard today, but he will not have the victory.

I know that that peace of God which surpasses all understanding will come, and that it will guard my heart and my mind in Christ Jesus my Lord. Amen!

I need to pray and seek God, but I also need to be prayed for. If you are reading this and you are a Christian, your prayers are greatly appreciated!
Introduction to “His Divine Power Has Granted Us All Things”

I wrote this on March 4, 2013 when I was just awed by the idea that God had granted us all things according to His divine power that works within us.
HIS DIVINE POWER HAS GRANTED US ALL THINGS

His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire.

– 2 Peter 1:3-4 ESV

I’m posting on this topic again because I am just so awed by it. There is so much scriptural meat in these verses!

1. We have been granted all things that pertain to life and godliness!

ALL THINGS! Not just a few things, not just the most important things, but ALL THINGS! WOW!!

2. Through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence...

Through what? The knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence! The more we know Jesus, the more we become like Him. And how awesome is it that He has called us to his own glory and excellence? Think about it. The Creator of the universe has called us to his own glory and excellence! We are called to be like our Creator and to have fellowship with Him! That is amazing beyond words!
How do we get to know Jesus? Spend time with Him and get to know Him through prayer and through His Word! He is a real, living God and He wants a real, living relationship with us.

3. By which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises...

God has granted to us some incredible promises. In the matter of salvation He chose us, gave us the faith to believe, justified us, made us His sons and daughters, and gave us the Holy Spirit. Through faith we are partakers in His divine nature! And we have been given many other promises in the Bible:

http://bible.org/article/selected-promises-god-each-book-bible

4. So that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature...

WOW! God has given us the ability to become partakers of His divine nature! Through the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives, we can become more and more like Jesus. That is God’s general will for all of us according to Romans 8:29. Absolutely amazing! More like Jesus: more loving, compassionate, caring, kind, holy, righteous, etc. The more quality time we spend with Jesus, the more we will be transformed to be like Him. WOW!!

5. Having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire...

We have escaped the corruption of the world! How amazingly awesome is that? We don’t have to go down the same troubled road that most of the rest of the world is traveling. Through the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives, we can take a different path — one that leads to peace and joy with the power of God in our lives. Incredible!
I am running out of superlatives. “Amazing”, “awesome”, and “WOW!” just don’t even begin to describe the incredible gifts that we have been given. And none of it is from our own effort or because of our own merit. God has shown us all unmerited favor and showered us with the greatest gifts in the universe!

All of the awesome promises of God are ours through faith and through the knowledge of His Son, Jesus Christ! Praise God!
Introduction to “Trusting God Fully”

I wrote this on March 3, 2013 as I was thinking about what it would take to really give my life to Christ totally and trust God fully.
TRUSTING GOD FULLY

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. – Philippians 4:6-7 ESV

5 Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding.
6 In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.
7 Be not wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord, and turn away from evil.
8 It will be healing to your flesh[b] and refreshment[c] to your bones. – Proverbs 3:5-8 ESV

...casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you. – 1 Peter 5:7 NKJV

What would happen in our lives if we really took God at His word and put our full trust and faith in Him? What would happen if we really committed to living God’s Word? I challenge you to find out! I am embarking on this amazing adventure too, learning how to really trust God and cast all of my cares upon Him because he cares for me. I look forward to enjoying the peace of God, having given all of my troubles and anxieties to Him. It is a continual moment-by-moment process, not a one time event. Amen!
Introduction to “When the Rubber Meets the Road”

I wrote this on March 1, 2013 when I was feeling very frustrated with my medical insurance company over their failure to do their job and pay for my medication. Things eventually worked out okay, but this is what I was feeling in the meantime.
I have had something very frustrating happen to me today that made me very angry. It has to do with insurance coverage of a needed medication. I’m sure you probably know how that goes and how frustrating and infuriating it can be.

I have bipolar disorder, and I have to admit that I fired at my insurance company with both bipolar barrels of anger and rage. I knew I shouldn’t react that way but I did it anyway because, in the moment, it felt good. But I also know that it was not the path I should have taken and not how I should have behaved as a follower of Jesus Christ.

I am loving being right with God again, but if my faith doesn’t help me when the rubber meets the road, as it did for me today, what good is it? As the scripture says, faith without works is dead (James 2:20).

My faith did work for me today because after I got done venting my anger and rage, I prayed and gave the entire situation to God, keeping in mind Philippians 4:6-7 which says:

_Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus._

I know this situation is in His hands now and it will get worked out. The Holy Spirit also brought scriptures to mind that are
relevant to the situation, such as the reality that man’s anger does not accomplish the righteousness of God (James 1:20).

I praise God for today because I am learning to put my trust in Him and follow Jesus Christ, even when the going is not easy. I have a long way to go. I fell and didn’t handle things the way I should have initially, but I got right back up again. I will run this race to win it and keep my eyes on the prize, which is Jesus Christ and the exceeding greatness and joy of knowing and following Him. Amen.
Introduction to “Genesis 1-3 as Dictated by the Holy Spook”

This was written in 2003 for my then popular “Religion is Bullshit” website. It contains a great deal of profanity and mocks the Book of Genesis as an accurate representation of our beginnings.
GENESIS 1-3 AS DICTATED
BY THE HOLY SPOOK

Before the Beginning, an All-Powerful Magical Being was sitting on his ass in a Land called Nowhere for a very, very long time, although there was no time yet, and time cannot exist in Nowhere. This Magical Being, being magical in nature and bored stiff from doing nothing in Nowhere for a hell of a long time although there was no time to enable him to do anything or to even notice that he was bored doing nothing in Nowhere, decided to be true to his magical nature, and work some magic. As the Magical Being opened his mouth to talk to himself and think out loud while wondering what he should do, the beans that he ate for dinner worked their own special magic, and he spontaneously and unexpectedly emitted a Great Juicy Magic Fart. This Great Juicy Magic Fart, the explosion that we euphemistically call the Big Bang, expanded into the Universe that we live in. This Great Juicy Magic Fart, totally unplanned as it was, caught the Magical Being quite by surprise. He looked at the expanding emission from his ass and said, "Holy Shit! I created the Universe! Glory!"

As the Great Juicy Magic Fart Universe expanded, some of the shit solidified and became galaxies. Some of the smaller shit solidified and became suns and some of the even smaller shit became planets. The shit that was even smaller than the other previously mentioned shit became asteroids, comets, and other assorted space shit. Of course, other shit happened too, but that covers the most important shit in this simplistic shitty creation myth that perhaps someday some Shit-filled Fundies
will ludicrously take very seriously as Divine Truth. There was enough shit in the Great Juicy Magical Fart to form an enormous universe composed of approximately 125 billion galaxies. Our galaxy is the only one of any importance to the Magical Being, and then only one planet in one solar system in that one galaxy euphemistically called the "Milky Way" after the Magical Being had a bout of diarrhea while in the vicinity is actually of any great importance. Those other 124,999,999,999 galaxies are simply a bunch of basically useless space shit that is good for glorious window dressing to be observed from our vantage point on this one relatively very small piece of solidified magical shit called Earth, but not much else. Anyway, as the Earth cooled from the heat generated by the Great Juicy Magical Fart, it just happened to be at the right distance from the larger and hotter piece of shit called the Sun for something truly magical to happen upon its cooling surface. The Magical Being, being quite pleased with the outcome of his accidental but truly Magical Fart, reached down into a pool of shit and caused some molecules of shit to come together to form this totally new shit called LIFE. This new shit called life turned out to be Magically Tenacious. Against all odds, it survived the hostile environment that the Magical Being had created it in, and it got better and better over time. Before too long, at least on the Magical Being's time scale, single-celled life forms emerged that were able to swim and survive in this shit called water. Another form of life called plants also formed and survived by soaking up invisible shit from the really hot piece of shit called the Sun with shit projections called leaves. This Magically Tenacious LIFE progressed into better and better forms of shit. Some really enormous pieces of shit called dinosaurs ruled the planet for millions of years until the Magical Being said, "Fuck this shit! It's no good!" The Magical Being lassoed one of those pieces of shit
that we call asteroids and hurled it at the piece of shit called Earth. The smaller piece of shit struck the much larger piece of shit called Earth with tremendous force, and spewed all kinds of shit into the Earth's atmosphere. The dinosaurs looked up as the smaller shit streaked through the sky headed for impact in the Yucatan Peninsula. They collectively sighed with resignation at their unavoidable fate but cried out to the Magical Being in terror and anger saying, "FUCK YOU, MAGICAL BEING!!" The Magical Being, being heinously evil, didn't really give a shit and shouted back down and sayeth unto them, "EAT SHIT AND DIE, DINOSAURS!!"

After this shit happened, the Earth gradually recovered and shit. Now that the enormous pieces of shit called dinosaurs were no more, there was room and opportunity for smaller pieces of shit called mammals to form and eventually rule the planet and shit. Most of these life forms were just dumb shit. But, several million years ago, some of this dumb shit started getting smarter and shit and became primates. These primate shit things got bigger and smarter and the Magical Being just sat back and really didn't do much until 6000 years ago. It was at that time that He said, "Shit! I had better interject myself and do something with this shit and give it some Magically Divine direction and shit." The Magical Being looked at the primate shit things and decided arbitrarily to use them for a model for this new idea that he had dreamed up recently while taking a shit. He reached down into the Earth and scooped up some shit. The Magical Being formed something that looked very much like the other primate shit things, but this shit was the best yet! The Magical Being endowed this superior primate shit life with an intelligence sort of like his own in a distant and mystical sort of way, but with no magical powers. But, he made sure that this
better primate shit life would survive by giving it compatible tools that made them feel REALLY GOOD when they came together periodically to make some more superior primate shit things just like themselves. The Magical Being was thrilled! He looked around at the shit that he had created and said, "This shit is fucking awesome!"

The Magical Being and the shit that he had created on the Earth lived together for a while in perfect harmony, but as it always does, shit happened! The Talking Snake, a previously unknown piece of shit, meandered into the Realm of the Magical Being on Earth and spoke with the shit things called Adam and Eve. Now Eve was a particularly dumb blond piece of shit who didn't know better than to listen to the Talking Snake, who always lies. The Talking Snake informed Eve that the Magical Being was holding out on her and Adam and that they should eat of the shit from the tree that the Magical Being had forbidden them to fuck with. Eve replied and said, "The Magical Being said not to fuck with that shit or we would surely die!" The Talking Snake informed Eve that the Magical Being did not have their best interests in mind, and that he wanted to keep them from experiencing their full potential and shit. Eve decided, "What the fuck? It looks good and shit." So, Eve ate some of the shit from the tree that she had been warned not to fuck with. Adam came back from doing some other shit somewhere else and found Eve eating the shit from the tree that she wasn't supposed to fuck with. Adam was like, "What the fuck is this shit?" Eve explained the situation to Adam, and since Adam could readily observe that Eve had not died and shit, he was like, "Shit! Let me have some of that forbidden shit from the tree that we are not supposed to fuck with!" Adam chomped down on the forbidden shit, and about this time the all-knowing
Magical Being boomed out, "Adam, where the fuck are you?"
Adam was momentarily taken aback at seeing the all-knowing Magical Being mystified and shit, but he collected himself and said, "Here I am over here, Magical Being, with Eve and this Talking Snake!" Well, the Magical Being was FUCKING PISSED OFF. The Magical Being turned to the Talking Snake and said, "Cursed art thou for doing this evil shit! You shall crawl on your belly and eat pulverized dried shit for all of your days and shit!"
The Magical Being turned to Adam and roared, "Why did you eat the shit from the tree that I told you not to fuck with?"
Adam thought to himself, "I'm not taking the rap for this shit alone". He turned to the Magical Being and said, "Eve made me do this shit! The Talking Snake lied to her and she, being the dumber than shit blond that she is, lied to me and I believed her and shit since she has never lied to me before."

The Magical Being, being totally unreasonable and shit, turned to Eve and said, "Because you have done this shit, you shall experience tremendous pain while giving birth to little shit beings like yourselves." But, even though I am inflicting this horrendous punishment upon you, please never doubt that I love you!" The Magical Being turned to Adam and said, "Because you have also done this shit and ate the shit from the tree that I told you not to fuck with, I am banishing you from my Magical Realm on Earth. You will sweat and work torturously hard and shit to scrape out an existence and survive. But, please believe that I love you!" The Magical Being also informed them that they had lost eternal life and shit and that they were fucked for about 4000 years until he could fuck Mary with His Holy Spook and produce a primate shit thing who is also the Magical Being embodied. But, right there the Magical Being prophesied about the embodied Magical Being baby primate
shit thing that was to come in about 4000 years, or in about four days as the Magical Being interprets the time, and what the Magical Being baby shit thing was going to do to the Talking Snake and for the disgraced primate shit life things. The Magical Being clothed Adam and Eve since they were naked and shit. The Magical Being said, "Holy Shit! They have become like one of us, even though there is only one of Me." Because they can think for themselves now, I must banish them forever from my Magical Realm on Earth. If only they hadn't eaten the shit from the tree that I told them not to fuck with! DAMN that Talking Snake!" So, the Magical Being banished Adam and Eve from his Magical Realm on Earth and placed a really special Magical Talking, Flying, and Flaming Sword in front of the entrance to the Magical Realm to keep them out and shit.

This concludes the first installment of the shit that happened after the Magical Being accidentally farted and created the universe. Suffice it to say that a bunch of shit has happened since the shit that has been portrayed in this story took place, which I will relate as time permits and shit.
Introduction to “You Might Be a Christian If...”

I wrote this on January 25, 2008 for publication on the exChristian.net website. It is a humorous look at Christianity from an atheistic point of view.
YOU MIGHT BE A CHRISTIAN
IF...

1. You believe that an ancient Book of Myths filled with contradictions, absurdities, atrocities, myths, fables, and plenty of non-historical "history" is somehow magically the inerrant, infallible "Word of God".

2. You believe that a Magical Being magically brought the universe into existence by speaking a powerful magical spell from Nowhere approximately 6000 years ago.

3. You believe, concerning the origins of mankind, that a Magical Being magically made us by fashioning a doll from a mound of scooped up dirt, which he then somehow magically brought to life via His Spook who is also somehow magically Him.

4. You believe that Three Magical Beings are somehow magically One Magical Being, and that the Three Magical Beings who are One Magical Being are somehow magically Each Other.

5. You believe that mankind "fell from grace" and deserves to be barbecued eternally because two primitive people who lived in an awesome garden located somewhere in the Middle East listened to a lying talking snake and ate some forbidden magic fruit from a magic tree.

6. You believe that this Magical Being who magically created the universe and us is "all-knowing" even though He lost track of
Adam in the awesome garden and that he is "all-powerful" even though He has trouble with iron chariots.

7. You believe that you possess some sort of magical inner spook that is the "real" you. You believe that this inner spook can be magically transformed by a Sky Spook and even lived in by an Invisible Sky Man via that same Sky Spook.

8. You believe that because the first two magically created people disobeyed the Magical Being due to the influence of a lying talking snake and some magic inner spook-killing fruit, that all men are born with their inner spooks killed and in need of a magical transformation courtesy of a Sky Spook.

9. You believe that an Invisible Man who lives in the Sky is going to kick a talking snake's ass by sacrificing Himself to Himself and then Magically Undeadening Himself. You believe that if we believe that the Invisible Man is Magically Undead, that a Sky Spook who is also somehow magically the Invisible Man will Magically Undeaden our inner spooks and magically live inside of us and at the same time will "seal" our inner spooks as His so that it is kept safe from the diabolical attacks of the Talking Snake and his evil spooks.

10. You believe that this enormous universe which consists of approximately 125 billion galaxies was created specifically for mankind, and that human history reflects a cosmic battle between an Invisible Man who lives in the Sky and an evil spook who enjoys manifesting as a talking snake. You believe that humans are divided into two groups - those who serve the Invisible Sky Man and those who serve the Talking Snake.
11. You believe that since we "fell from grace" because of some magic fruit and a lying talking snake that we need redemption, and that to accomplish this the Magical Being sacrificed Himself to Himself to save us from Himself. But, you also believe that the Magical Being's sacrifice somehow magically doesn't count unless we believe it and accept it.

12. You believe that a Magical Being somehow magically became a man, and that this Manly Magical Being murdered Himself and then Magically Undeadened Himself three days later via the Sky Spook version of Himself so He wouldn't have to toss us into an eternal flaming torture chamber because of the unfortunate incident involving the lying talking snake and the magic fruit.

13. You believe that a Sky Spook who is somehow magically the Magical Being raped a woman named Mary who somehow magically remained a virgin after being raped, and that this glorious union produced a child who was somehow magically the Magical Being embodied.

14. You believe that after the Manly Magical Being magically Magically Undeadened Himself, He somehow magically blasted off and flew up into the clouds to live in the Sky Kingdom with His Father who is also somehow magically Him.

15. You believe that at literally any moment you could find yourself magically floating up into the clouds to join an Invisible Magically Undead Sky Man in a long-awaited event known as "The Rapture". You are so convinced of the imminent nature of this absurd event that you have placed a bumper sticker on your car that reads, "WARNING: In the event of Rapture, this vehicle will be unmanned." Assuming that you are not driving a convertible with the top down most of the time, the issue of
how you would float through the roof of your car has never concerned you. You have just left it up to the magic of the Magic Sky Man.

16. You believe that the sky can somehow magically be rolled up like a scroll, and you believe that a Sky Dragon can somehow magically toss a third of the stars down upon the earth, and that the earth will somehow magically survive this assault.

17. You believe that the universe is magically being held together by an Invisible Man who lives in the Sky.

18. You believe that the Magic Sky Man is preparing to ride His Sky Horse down from the Sky Kingdom very soon. You find yourself filled with joyous anticipation at the thought of the senseless torture and slaughter of billions of non-Christian people who will then be tossed into a flaming torture chamber forever to be barbecued without mercy and without any hope of reprieve because when these horrific events occur it signals the end of the line for the Talking Snake and his evil minions (including those pesky rational, thinking people) and the beginning of a wonderful magical eternal life for you up in the Sky with your Three Invisible Friends who are somehow magically One Invisible Friend.
Introduction to “Why I am No Longer a Christian”

I wrote this article on June 6, 2008 for publication on my “Christianity is Bullshit” website and exChristian.net. I discuss the reasons why I can no longer consider myself to be a Christian, and it is an interesting look at my thinking at the time.
WHY I AM NO LONGER A CHRISTIAN

A survey that I took the other day has had me thinking about why I walked away from the Christian faith. I didn’t walk away because I rebelled against God or because I was angry with God or because I was treated badly or hurt in the church. In fact, my church life was very good. I had good friends. I had a good relationship with church leadership. I even frequently sang solos during church services and sang in the praise and worship choir. I had a great time in church and I still miss the sense of belonging and the sense of fellowship with other believers that I enjoyed during my Christian days. There are other things that I still miss from my Christian days. I still miss the excitement and joy of praise and worship. I still miss prayer, and having intimate moments alone with a holy and righteous God. I still miss believing in an all-powerful, all-loving, Almighty God. So why in the world would I walk away from a belief system that worked so well for me and that made me so happy?

I walked away because questions built up that had no satisfactory Christian answers, and I could no longer ignore them. I walked away because I could no longer honestly believe in the claims and doctrines of the Christian faith.

I once believed very strongly in God. I never thought that I could let go of my belief in God, but it happened. My path to atheism was not an easy one. I didn’t just wake up one morning and decide that I no longer believed in God. The road to atheism for me was difficult and extremely painful. I really wanted God to
exist very badly, but the more I learned, the more I came to realize that God is a myth - a powerful myth, but a myth nonetheless.

I once believed very strongly in the power of prayer. I used to spend at the very least an hour a day in prayer. I would often attend early morning church prayer meetings, and then go home and pray more. It seemed like I was always praying about something going on in my life! I also, of course, regularly prayed for other people, including my pastor and church leadership.

I absolutely loved Charismatic-style praise and worship. I could literally spend hours in worship if the opportunity arose, just basking in the presence of God and being awed by his holiness and love. I can remember times when I felt wrapped in JOY beyond description. I can still access those feelings. I remember how great it was. But I no longer believe that the God those emotions were directed toward actually exists. And I understand the incredible power of belief. Once the human mind is convinced of the truth of something, the incredible power of belief takes over and shields us from seeing the validity of any other point of view. The power of belief can shield us from reality itself!

I once believed that Jesus was not only the Son of God, but also that he was God Incarnate - God Himself come to earth. I believed firmly in the Virgin Birth and in the sinless nature and life of Jesus Christ. I believed absolutely that he died for my sins on the cross and I also firmly believed that he rose from the dead again for my sanctification and justification before God the Father. I never would have thought that the day would come when I would give up those beliefs, but it did. I now accept the fact that Jesus Christ is a myth. He never lived, never died, and
never rose again. That is the conclusion that the research I have done over the last several years has led me to.

I once believed that the Bible was the “Word of God”. I believed it with all of my heart. I just knew that it was the inspired word of the holy God that I loved to worship and be around. It was just obvious to me. But now I realize that it is nothing but a collection of ancient religious mythology, with no God behind it as the author. The Bible clearly reflects the ignorance and prejudices of the Bronze Age men who wrote it. It is a Book of its time, not a Book for the Ages.

So, why am I no longer a Christian? It boils down to one thing - education. I know a lot more about the Bible now as an atheist than I did as a Christian. I know a lot more about Christian doctrines now as an atheist than I did as a Christian. Or, at least, I have a different understanding of them now that I no longer believe them. I have a different understanding of God now that I no longer believe that he actually exists. Education has made the difference. The education I gained reading skeptical materials has made the difference. But it’s a good difference. I know how to think critically now. I know how to think for myself. I know how to give my own life meaning apart from religion. I know how to live life happily free from the chains of religious mythology. My Christian experience was not a bad one, and I have no doubt in my mind that I was a “real” Christian. But education stretches the mind, and like a rubber band that is stretched, the mind cannot return to its original condition once it has been stretched. I left the faith primarily for intellectual reasons. I can no longer honestly embrace the doctrines of the faith, and so - I am no longer a Christian.
Introduction to “I Feel Like I Got Some ‘Splainin’ To Do”

I wrote this on February 18, 2008 for publication on the exChristian.net website. It explains my bipolar illness and the effects it has had on my religious beliefs and my behavior in taking my website on and offline several times. It represents an important look back at what my bipolar illness was doing with my beliefs at that time in my life.
I wrote the following in 2003 for posting to my original religionisbullshit.com website. I am sharing it again now in an attempt to relate what happened to me when I pulled a successful site off the web and suffered a reconversion to my former beliefs. Thankfully I recovered and am now seeking to mend any broken bridges that occurred as a result of that time period.

I have not ever kept the fact that I have Bipolar Disorder a secret. I have openly acknowledged it on this site on numerous occasions. I was diagnosed with this mood disorder, also known as Manic-Depressive illness, in February of 1998, but the illness has affected me from the age of ten, with the symptoms becoming markedly worse and very troublesome in my teens, and the affliction continues to cause many problems in my life now, at age 37. Bipolar Disorder has a strong genetic component to it, but in my particular case, my story regarding it really begins during my birth. I was born in November of 1965.

At the time, the Community Hospital there in the town that I was born in was a good one and I know that the medical staff meant to care for my mother and I well, but as it worked out the nurses on duty were inexperienced, as was the doctor. He had just begun his practice. I was born breech, and had a very difficult birth. Pressure put on my skull during birth caused damage to my right temporal lobe that eventually caused a seizure when I was ten years old. There is no question that I
should have been delivered by C-Section, and I would be beyond any doubt if I was being born today, but things happened as they did and being angry about the poor decisions of the nurses and doctors in attendance at my birth 37 years ago serves no useful purpose now.

I had that seizure during the summer of 1976. My life changed permanently that night. I went to bed the night that it happened a happy, reasonably well-adjusted kid. I woke up a couple of hours later in the hospital a changed and unhappy, insecure young man. Bipolar Disorder, already present in my genetic makeup, emerged and there is no doubt that by my early teens I was a full-fledged Bipolar individual. In 1976, the medication of choice for seizure control was Phenobarbital. I was on it for six years. The seizure itself and the Phenobarbital changed my personality markedly. I was a troubled kid, and my behavior showed it. By the age of 16, I had grown out of the need for anti-seizure medication. I was taken off of the stuff, but it is the opinion of my parents that my withdrawal from Phenobarbital was progressed too quickly, and it wasn't long before I headed for the bottle. Substance abuse is very common in people who suffer from mental heath issues.

By the age of 17, I was a full-fledged teenage alcoholic. My problems with alcohol lasted until the time of my diagnosis as Bipolar in 1998. I have not drank since that time. Other than alcohol, my drug of choice was marijuana and I smoked a LOT of it in my junior and senior years in high school and off and on throughout my twenties.

Bipolar Disorder has no cure. It's symptoms can be managed, but living with the illness is still a living hell most of the time. I
would not wish this affliction on my worst enemy – not even the Talking Snake! Medications help, but they do not cure. I almost never am in a manic phase of the illness although I experience a few of the traits of mania such as difficulty sleeping and "racing thoughts" from time to time. What troubles me on a daily basis is depression. I am ALWAYS depressed - how depressed is just a matter of degree. I do have periods of time when I feel basically "normal" but even those times I am well aware of the underlying depression that is still there. I have been clinically depressed for so many years that I have no idea what "normal" feels like.

Bipolar people tend to wear their emotions on their sleeves. We feel our emotions INTENSELY, and that is certainly true of me. My emotional life is an intense one, whether what I am feeling is pleasant or not.

Now, to get to the point of this post. At the time of my recent brief but intense reconversion to Christianity, I was going through a very bad Bipolar episode. I was very depressed. My financial situation, which has always been a struggle had become critical, and that is what led up to my move to Alaska to stay with my Dad. The move itself was very stressful, as big changes in life usually are. I was severely emotionally stressed at the time, and I needed RELIEF.

I did not expect to ever return to Christian faith in any form ever again, but what happened to me does have a perfectly rational explanation, of course, in spite of my earlier insistence that it did not and therefore it had to be god. I was indeed wrapped up in a lot of HATE, ANGER, and BITTERNESS towards Christianity, and I did need to let go of it, and I have done so to a large degree compared to where I was but I would be lying if I
claimed that I was totally free of those negative emotions. I'm not, but I am much freer from them and being obsessed with them than I was before. But, there was no miracle and no mythical deity involved in what happened to me. I was aware that I was taking things too far in some of my posts and also aware that the way I was treating Christians wasn't right. I don't apologize for mocking ridiculous beliefs, but the attitude with which I did that was indeed wrong and I knew it, and that was starting to really bother me. In addition to the bad Bipolar stuff going on, I was experiencing a lot of guilt and considering a lot of things about my site and what I was doing with it. It particularly bothered me, considering the nature of some of my posts, to discover that Junior High School-aged kids were visiting my website. This website is definitely for a mature and critically thinking adult audience. I do have an important message - a critical one - in my opinion, but I don't want to be responsible for exposing children to content that is inappropriate for them to see. I have not ever used an excessive amount of profanity on my website, and I don't do so in my normal, everyday speech. It's just not a large part of my vocabulary and it doesn't need to be. But, the language on this site will be cleaner- although not necessarily profanity-free in the future, as will any pictures that I decide to post. For a long time, I failed to take into consideration the fact that I might have some younger viewers and that I need to bear that in mind.

So, I had Bipolar issues going on, guilt issues going on, questions to myself about my own personal character in some areas going on, and all of this stuff was snowballing on me and coming to a head, and like I said I had reached the point where I had to have RELIEF, or the pressure cooker that was my emotional life was going to blow, and probably not in a healthy way. At the time, I
was getting dangerously depressed and I was not coping with life very well at all. I did have a spiritual experience that I cannot deny although I know it didn’t have anything to do with the Bible God or Jesus any more than it had anything to do with Allah or Mohammed, for example. What did happen to me was a catharsis which I interpreted in religious terms at the time.

In the past, when I couldn’t handle things, I self-medicated with alcohol and drugs. I have also self-medicated with religion for years. The only times that I felt "normal" and like I "belonged" was when I was drunk, stoned, or high on god and radically religious. None of those things - alcohol, drugs, or religious belief - are necessarily bad things when handled in a responsible and healthy manner. But, when taken to extremes, all of those things can be very destructive. That’s what has happened and does happen with me. I self-medicate in a variety of ways when the emotional suffering caused by my Bipolar illness becomes too much for me to cope with. Back in my 15 years of extreme Fundamentalism, I was in and out of church. When I wasn’t attending church and obsessing with my religion and how RIGHT and TRUE my beliefs allegedly were, I was drinking heavily and using drugs. ALL of it - the alcohol, drugs, and religion - were self-medicating coping strategies that I used to try to deal with the emotional pain and issues in my life. I have come a long way in the last five years or so in learning how to deal with my Bipolar illness in healthier ways. I have particularly made progress in the last year.

I made some changes to my diet that have brought a great deal of relief from Bipolar symptoms. I no longer feel a need or desire to turn to substance abuse for relief, and that in and of itself is a wonderful reality. But, sometimes my coping skills are still very inadequate. Although I didn’t think through the reality
of the situation at the time, I did what I always do when I have a Bipolar crisis. I self-medicated. I turned to religion, and I did indeed find temporary relief. I knew the whole time deep down inside that what I was professing to believe was bullshit that I couldn't rationally or factually defend but at the time, I NEEDED to believe again until the crisis was over.

Karl Marx said that religion is the opium of the people, and he was right. I am aware that he did not say that in relation to using religion as a coping device for mental illness, but it still applies. I used the opium of religion to cope with emotional issues in my life that had become unbearable.

All of that said though, I want to stress the fact that I am well aware that people who don't suffer from mental health and addiction issues can and do use alcohol and the less dangerous recreational drugs without experiencing terrible problems in their lives due to the use of those substances.

The same is true of religion. Religious belief, although no religion is literally true, does serve a positive role in the lives of many people, as does healthy Spirituality outside of the structure of organized religion. I do not deny that there can be and are healthy forms of religious/spiritual belief. What I have tried to accomplish and what I hope I have accomplished in this post is to relate some very personal realities about me and my life and the Bipolar illness that I suffer from, and its role in my recent brief return to religious belief.

This was not an easy post for me to write since it is rather personal in some respects. I know it was rambling, but I put a lot of thought into what I wanted to say and I hope this helps folks
to understand my recent changes in belief and why that happened and worked out as it did. So, I submit this with the hope that this information will bring greater understanding of me as an individual and the struggles that I have in my life with this Bipolar illness, and also I hope it will bring a greater understanding and awareness of Bipolar Disorder and the suffering that it causes in the lives of those afflicted with it - suffering so intense and unpleasant that it caused me to turn to a belief system that I know to be untrue and that is obviously and provably untrue in my desperate need to find relief from my emotional suffering at the time.

OK, that was 2003. This is now – early 2008. What I would like to do is explain what happened with my original religionisbullshit.com site and my religionisbullshit.org site. In mid-2004, I had grown so burned out on my site and so afraid that it was a negative thing that I really honestly thought that I was ready to shut it down and be done with it – and that’s exactly what I did in spite of good advice from several good friends to the contrary. I have deeply regretted my decision to shut down my original site ever since then. I was so sure in July 2004 that I was done with my site that I turned my domain name over to a friend.

In early 2005, I went back online with a new RIBS site, but grew frustrated because I wasn’t experiencing the success I had enjoyed with my original site, and I was still having struggles with my bipolar illness. This led to an unfortunate history of taking my site on and offline several times over the course of a couple of years. I wasn’t and I am not currently having a struggle over whether I believe in Christianity or not. I was experiencing bipolar episodes that were really troublesome to me, and I was experiencing frustration at the lack of success of
my site. And both of those things combined led to the history of taking my site on and offline.

Again, I deeply regret my actions, I can’t undo what happened, but I learned from it. I am moving ahead with new fresh ideas and some good old fashioned humor! I know that only time will prove it, but my current www.christianityisbullshit.com site is online and will remain so for the foreseeable future. I love doing it and I love entertaining folks and stomping fundies, and I can’t imagine NOT doing my site. I am really dedicated to exposing the fallacies, lies and absurdity behind religion – all while putting giving the reader a chuckle first!

My health now is much better than it was a few years ago. My bipolar illness is much better controlled than it used to be, and I’m better educated about it now than I was before.

I know this has been long, but I appreciate your time in reading it. Thanks and “Glory!”
Thoughts on “Fuck You, Jesus!”

This was written on February 17, 2013 just prior to my last bipolar-induced re-conversion to Christian faith. This article expresses the anger and disappointment I was feeling over my Christian experience. I was angry for a long time and I believe that that anger was totally justified, but I have moved on from it. It makes no sense to me now to give the Christian religion any emotional power over me since I no longer believe in the existence of its God or in its claims to spiritual truth. I have also moved on from feeling any anger towards Jesus for what the church that bears his name put me through. He is long dead so feeling anger toward him makes little sense. I have moved from anger to acceptance of my religious past. I view my religious past and the changes that have taken place over the years due to my bipolar illness with great interest now and see them as a valuable learning experience. I think that view is much more mature than continuing to wallow in needless and pointless anger.
I remember how happy I was to accept Jesus as my Savior at the age of 19 after being witnessed to by a good friend and watching “The Jesus Film”. Jesus, you promised me eternal life. What I got was 15 years of false and damaging beliefs and psychological manipulation and abuse. So, fuck you!

I worshiped you privately and publicly. I made a fool of myself for you in front of many people. I annoyed family and friends for you. I told my loving mother that she was going to hell. I annoyed and no doubt amused convenience store clerks and toll booth operators for you. My reward? 15 years of psychological manipulation and abuse. Fuck you, Jesus!

I have bipolar disorder that had not then been diagnosed. I was prayed for many times. Nobody knew what was wrong with me. I hit the floor for you many times, “slain in the spirit” hoping for healing. My reward? I got a religious high, but nothing else. You failed to heal me, Jesus. So, fuck you!

You said you were coming back again and I expected it at any moment for 15 years of my life. I looked forward to being with you in heaven. You lied and gave me a false hope that I held on to for years. So, fuck you!

You gave me heartache and heartbreak. You stole 15 years of my life and the pain still remains. So, fuck you, Jesus!

I loved you and I thought you loved me. I thought I had the greatest friend in the universe forever. It was just a lie – a myth and nothing more. So, fuck you, Jesus!
Introduction to “What Atheism Has Done for Me”

I wrote this in 2005 for publication on ex-Christian.net. I discuss some of my religious history and then go into what I feel atheism has done for me at great length. It is an interesting look at my thinking back then and the truth is that I still feel much the same way now.
WHAT ATHEISM HAS DONE FOR ME

I grew up in a nominally religious home. I was raised United Methodist, but at home religion was limited to occasionally reading some bible stories, and that's about it. I quit going to church when I was about ten years old, and didn't get involved in religion again until I was 19-years old. At that time, through the influence of my good friend Mike, I became a "sold out to Jesus" fanatic fundie. That was a huge change for me, going from a party animal alcoholic and drug user to Jesus Freak. It was a huge adjustment for my family too. I was still living at home at the time, and I remember when Mike and I came home one day and we were climbing the stairs on the way to my bedroom, my younger sister laughed when she heard us going on about how wonderful Jesus was. She thought it was hysterically funny, but of course I knew that she just wasn't saved - yet. :rolleyes: I had religion, and I had it bad! I'm sure she laughed even harder when I cranked up Keith Green and Sandi Patti Christian music instead of the awesome 80's Rock that was usually blasting from my stereo. She wasn't laughing though, and neither was my mother, when I threw away hundreds of dollars worth of records and tapes (hey, this was before the days of the CD!) because "that music is satanic". Fortunately, they found out in time before the trash ran, and my mother forced me to retrieve the bags from the garbage dumpster. But anyway... I spent the next 15 years of my life as a fanatic fundie Christian. Due to my then undiagnosed bipolar illness, I had for that entire time swings from periods of devout
religious belief to times of serious substance abuse. Every time I "backslid" though, I would always eventually (usually within a matter of months) be back in church serving Jesus again and wondering how I could have ever left Him. In hindsight now, I know that when I got "saved" I just added religion as a way to cope with the symptoms of my illness. Sometimes religion worked great, and sometimes substance abuse worked great. Either way, I was just self-medicating, whether I was high on Jesus or high on drugs and alcohol.

I deconverted in early 2000 at the age of 34, and since then - with the exception of a few bipolar-induced and unfortunately very public short-lived "reconversions" - I have remained an ex-Christian, and I see no good reason to ever return to the faith again. I'm alternately extremely pissed off about the years I devoted to a demonstrably false belief system, and sometimes I wonder if I should be grateful for my Christian experience because it may have saved my life by giving me something positive to hold on to when I was so ill. But the reality is that if I had never become a Christian (and in many ways I wish I never had), then I would have found some other way to cope besides extreme religious belief.

What religion gave me was a strong belief in a loving God who cared about me and cared about what happened to me. It also gave me a sense of importance because I believed that Jesus loved me personally enough to die for me. I also had a strong belief in a Heaven wonderful beyond our ability to describe that I was going to go to after I died and spend eternity there with the God and Savior that I loved. I really needed those beliefs at the time because I had assurance that the miseries of this life that were caused by my illness were nothing compared to the eternal joy and love and happiness that I was going to
experience once this life was over. I spent years really, really looking forward to Heaven and desperately wanting Jesus to return so I could be delivered from the struggles of this life. I remember how excited I was in 1988 when Jesus was supposed to return on Rosh Hashanah of that year. I read the book "88 Reasons Why the Rapture Could Be in 1988" by Edgar Whisenant with great excitement. On the night that the Rapture was supposed to occur, I told my unsaved family goodnight for what I thought would be the last time, and went to bed fully expecting to be gloriously raptured into the presence of Jesus sometime during the night. Imagine my disappointment when I woke up the next morning! My family just smiled at my religious foolishness and gave me a bit of a hard time about it, but then life went on as usual.

What Atheism gave me back was the use of my brain and common sense. I value reason and rational thought a great deal because I lost the use of them for so long in the area of religious belief. Because I don't believe in God, my destiny is my own. What I do with my life is up to me, and I don't have to spend it trying to please God or constantly apologize for sins either real or imagined. I don't have to constantly apologize for being human. I can just be me - a good and good-natured but fallible and imperfect human being - instead of what I think and hope that God wants me to be. It's very difficult to know if you are really pleasing a God who never gives you any sort of feedback! What Atheism also gave me was relief from the fear of Hell. Hell is an obvious myth, and a sick and demented and evil myth at that. But I spent years worrying that my unsaved family and friends were going to go there and at times when I doubted my salvation, I was very afraid that I would end up going there too.
What Atheism robbed me of was my strong belief in a loving God. No longer can I lay my problems and struggles down at the foot of the cross or in God's hands for Him to carry instead of me. No longer can I pray and believe that I am being lovingly heard by God in times of spiritual, emotional, or physical need. No longer can I engage in the praise and worship that I used to enjoy so much. No longer can I stand in awe of the holiness and purity of God as I pray. That belief is gone, and it is no longer possible for me to honestly believe that the loving God that I once believed in so strongly actually exists. God is pure mythology, and though the emotions I felt were wonderful, they were a product of the incredible power of belief, and that belief no longer exists.

Atheism robbed me of a belief in a Savior who was my best friend. I knew that Jesus loved me more than I could possibly comprehend, and that He would never let me down. He was with me always! I was sure that I let Him down a lot, but I believed in His love and forgiveness, and I knew that He would always take me back when I repented after I fell into indulging in sinful thoughts or behaviors. When I became an atheist, I lost my best friend.

Atheism robbed me of a belief in a Heaven wonderful beyond description that was waiting for me after I died. As an atheist now, I know that instead of going to a wonderful Heaven when I die, I'm simply going to cease to exist at the moment of my death. There is no good evidence that any part of us survives death, and I no longer expect or believe in any sort of afterlife. But, it was a tremendous hurt and disappointment to discover that my belief in Heaven - a place that I wanted to believe was real so badly - was based on nothing but ancient mythology.
Atheism robbed me of the belief that the bible was the "Word of God". I spent many years viewing it as a Divine Book - an inerrant, infallible, Divinely inspired guide for living straight from the throne of God. Now I recognize the fact that the bible is anything but the "word" of a god. It is, in reality, a collection of ancient religious mythology that clearly reflects the time in which it was written. The mostly anonymous authors of the bible clearly knew nothing of modern science, and God didn't reveal any modern scientific knowledge to them. The bible, in reality, is far from being inerrant or infallible. It is riddled with contradictions, absurdities, obvious myths, and a great deal of non-historical "history".

Atheism robbed me of my sense of divine specialness. I believed for years that God created mankind generally, and that he created me specifically with a loving and great plan for my life in mind if I would just obey Him and give myself completely to Jesus. Now I know that I am nothing but an accident. If a particular sperm from my father and a particular egg from my mother had not met and formed me one night in early 1965, I wouldn't exist. Perhaps I am still special in the sense that I am unique - the only me there ever has been or ever will be - but there is no divine plan behind my existence.

Atheism robbed me of my hope that maybe there was some greater purpose behind my bipolar illness. I hoped for years that God would heal me and use my life to glorify Him. Now I know that I simply drew the short end of the genetic stick (or whatever), and that no supernatural or divine reason for my illness exists. I had the misfortune of being born with genes that would cause mental illness starting in my teenage years, but the only reason for it is just simply genetics. There's nobody to blame and no particular reason that it happened to me. It just
did, and I have to live with it and the consequences of it every single day.

Atheism robbed me of the belief that there is a higher purpose behind our existence. I know now that we exist because we evolved over a period of millions of years, not because God created us for companionship with Him. I know now that we have to find our own purpose for being. We have to create our own reasons for living because there is no greater divine purpose behind our lives. I still honestly wish that there was some sort of divine plan behind our existence, but there isn't, so I accept that reality even if I do so still somewhat grudgingly.

Atheism robbed me of my belief that I would be reunited with family and friends after death in Heaven. All of my grandparents are now dead. Granddaddy Reid died first in 1993 at the age of 85. Granddaddy Shelley died in 1994 at the age of 76 after years of struggling with heart problems caused by the rheumatic fever he had as a child. Grandmother Shelley died in 2002 at the age of 84 from a ruptured aortic aneurysm caused by high blood pressure. Grandmother Reid was the last to go in 2003 at the age of 87, but her mind was gone long before then, I believe from Alzheimer's Disease. I loved them all deeply and I still miss them terribly. I no longer expect to be reunited with them in Heaven. I remember when Granddaddy Shelley was in the hospital near death, he said to my Baptist minister uncle, "Danny, I hope I make it!" My grandfather wasn't a religious man, but he believed in God and he wanted to go to heaven. He made it one of his goals to read as much of the bible as he could before he died. My uncle didn't share the gospel with him at that time, and I remember feeling terribly guilty for a long time because I didn't either. I worried for a long time that my grandfather might have died unsaved and gone to hell. I'm
relieved of that fear now, but I know now that I will never, ever see my grandparents again. They are dead and irretrievably gone. My parents are in their mid-60's now, and they too will die, and I will never, ever see them or know their love and support again. I lost my good friend Donny to suicide in 1985. I know now that I will never, ever see him again. When people die, they really die. They cease to exist and are gone forever. This is a sad, brutal reality that atheists accept without trying to shelter themselves from it with religious mythology. The reality and finality of death makes me sad, but at the same time it makes me value my family and friends more because I know that life is short, unpredictable, and temporary. It's very important to me to spend as much time as I possibly can with those I love and care about and to tell them frequently that I do.

I spent 15 years of my life believing strongly in a demonstrably false religion. Religion gave me a lot that was good, but it also filled my mind with many false promises and false beliefs. Walking away from religion and my belief in God and consequently embracing Atheism is the hardest but the best thing I have ever done for myself. Although I still sometimes miss the religious feelings I enjoyed and the beliefs that I had, I don't regret my decision to reject religious belief in favor of demonstrable reality at all. I am a stronger, better person because I am an atheist. I face reality as it is - even the most unpleasant parts of it - and I am good and moral because that's a part of who I am as a person, not because I am trying to please God or because I am living in fear of him. I have discovered how wonderful it is to face life on its own terms, free of religious myths and lies! Glory!
CONCLUSION

As should be clear, my beliefs have been all over the map and they are predictable only in that they will be either Christian or Eastern in nature, but intense regardless. I have given a lot of thought to what I believe and why, when I am healthy. Losing faith is not an easy thing. It is, in fact, a very painful process. Having it happen to me over and over again over the years has been nothing short of excruciating. I still have a strong religious impulse that may never go away. It is as much a part of who I am as my bipolar illness is. It is, in fact, very likely a part of the manic phase of my bipolar illness. But, finally realizing that leaving religious belief alone is the best and healthiest option for me has given me some measure of peace. This quote by the ancient Roman emperor Marcus Aurelius (who was quite the philosopher-king) sums my current thinking up nicely.

“Live a good life. If there are gods and they are just, then they will not care how devout you have been, but will welcome you based on the virtues you have lived by. If there are gods, but unjust, then you should not want to worship them. If there are no gods, then you will be gone, but will have lived a noble life that will live on in the memories of your loved ones.”

My greatest hope and desire is to live a good life that will be remembered well by those who love and care about me. I think that is the greatest goal anyone can have in this life – to live well and be remembered well when we are gone. Can I get an “amen?” Glory!