

A MESSAGE OF LOVE & HOPE FOR THOSE IN *UNITY*

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Dedication

I dedicate this book to some of my dearest and closest friends who are in Unity.
I love and respect you. Accept this with all the love I feel in my heart for you.

I. Introduction

When I was in my twenties, I was heavy into theology, and would often measure people by how they stacked up theologically. Once I recall throwing out a test question to a fellow pastor to see how he *measured up*. I don't remember what I asked him, but I was stunned by his reply.

He said, "*I'd rather get to know you first, and come together on that which unites us in Christ, rather than that which might divide us. Once I know you, then I'll be glad to share my beliefs with you.*" Even now, the sensitivity of his answer, and the love he showed me, almost brings tears to my eyes. I came to love him, and even though he is more theologically liberal than I, we remain friends to this day. I can honestly say the same thing about my friends in Unity. While I disagree with some of your theology, or lack of theology, I still respect and love you very much. I am sorry that I do not have the privilege of getting to know you before sharing my confession [faith and beliefs] with you. I believe there is much that unites us, and my goal is to stimulate your thinking, not build a wall between us. I am aware that in the end we may have to lovingly agree to disagree.

To me, while there are many important ingredients in a person's walk with God, two of the most important ingredients are love and truth. On the love side, I give those I know in Unity an "A+". For whatever reason, when it comes to the truth side, there are some beliefs you hold which deeply concern me. I wouldn't bring them up if I didn't think they were of importance.

I have no idea how this booklet got into your hands. Regardless of whether it was from a positive or negative source [from your perspective], in a spirit of open-mindedness, I ask that you weigh what I share. I'm not writing to condemn, but to hopefully cause you to reflect.

When I am around my friends in Unity I sometimes feel a sadness. Most lack an intimacy with God so characteristic of most [not all] of my more evangelical friends. I rarely hear those in Unity telling of answers to prayer or expressing what new things God is doing in their lives. Their sharing is almost always on the cognitive level when it comes to spiritual matters, or it is centered on human and social concerns [which in themselves are often very good].

There also seems to be a formality and an uneasiness about spiritual matters.—Do you pick that up?—Those in Unity, who are normally so relational when it comes to people, often speak of God very impersonally. I have known some in Unity who even question whether God is personal, or whether God is more like the *Force* in Star Wars.

So, why am I writing? Is it to *change* you? Not really. I'll leave that to God. I have enough changing to do on myself without worrying about changing you. However, I do have some suggestions on how you can know God more personally, at the heart level. I will be challenging a few of Unity's beliefs, because I believe it is some false or mistaken beliefs which may be keeping you from knowing God as intimately as possible. For example, some [not all] in Unity have a core belief that God is impersonal. I believe that this false assumption is keeping their hearts locked to knowing an incredibly personal God who is the Author of all passion and feeling.

Some I've known in Unity have become so oriented experientially that they have abandoned reason. I hope you haven't done this. I believe that God has give us a mind as well as a heart. Remember, Jesus is referred to as the *logos* ["Word"] in John 1:1. Logos is the root of the word logic.—I believe God is the Author of rationality and logic, as well as the creator of passion and feeling. It isn't an either/or proposition. With this said, I invite you to join me on a journey of both heart and mind.

II. Why Are You In Unity

A friend of mine, who graduated with a PhD from Stanford, told me about an advanced biology course he once took. During most of the semester the professor had lectured on the theory of evolution. However, out of fairness, the professor decided to devote one day to presenting arguments against evolution. He then proceeded to show that evolution was a mathematical impossibility, that there were virtually no fossil links between the various species, that evolution runs counter to the law of entropy and the second law of thermodynamics, that natural mutations are almost always harmful, etc. In one lecture the professor demolished virtually all that he had been teaching for the entire semester. Finally one of the students asked, “*So, professor, why do you believe in evolution?*”—The professor walked to the window, stared outside for the longest time, then turned to the student and said, “*Because I want to.*”

May I ask you a similar question; “Are you in Unity because of truth, or is it because you just *want to?*”

I can think of four main reasons why people join Unity [I’m sure there are probably many other reasons].

a. It is the politically correct thing to do, to treat all religions with “tolerance” and consider them all on equal footing. After all, who wants to be judgmental of others’ beliefs? So, why not join a denomination where beliefs do not matter as much, where the emphasis is on a spirit of *unity*?

b. Some may be sick and tired of all the in-fighting of other churches. Possibly you have been wounded very deeply by the institutional church, and what you long for is love and unity, so you joined a church which stresses *unity*. It is interesting, but a close friend of mine who was in Unity (she has since died) confided in me that even her Unity church had factions. What that tells me is that people are still people. There are no perfect churches on planet earth. [If I ever found the *perfect church* and started going there it would no longer be perfect.]

For those of you who want peace and harmony at all cost, may I lovingly challenge your thinking by saying that peace at all cost can be very dangerous, For real truth and love to exist, sometimes falsehood and evil must be confronted. Some things are worth fighting for and even dying for. There would be no Christianity or Bible today had the early Christians given in to the pressures of the Roman Empire with its pagan religions. Much of the Christian heritage you enjoy today was purchased with the blood of martyrs.

c. Some join Unity for its permissiveness. As one friend in Unity told me, “*You can believe whatever you want to.*” Again, a cautionary word is in order. Does truth matter? Does it matter if I believe that $2 + 2 = 4$ or 7 ? At what point does tolerance become a license for sloppy thinking and an excuse for destructive behavior? For example, I think it is dangerous to treat the 10 Commandments as the 10 Suggestions. Most people, when confronted with a lifestyle that goes contrary to the Bible, either change their *behavior* to conform to their *beliefs*, or else they change their *beliefs* to conform to their *behavior*. Speaking frankly, I’ve known a few people who joined Unity to find a church that was tolerant of their alternative lifestyles and behaviors which the Bible considers immoral.

4. Some are in Unity because of their sincere convictions that the teachings of Unity are *right and true*.

I don’t know why you are in Unity. Is it self-seeking, or is it because of deep conviction that this is where God wants you? If, in your heart of hearts, you discovered that Unity was mistaken in some very core, foundational truths, and you believed God was calling you down a different road, that of enlightened truth, would you be willing to go?

III. Laying The Foundation For Understanding

A few years ago a little light turned on in my head when a chaplain, mentor/friend used the word “*self-evident.*” All of a sudden some things I’d been wrestling with in my thinking became very clear. It was as though the truth had been staring me in the face all along, but, because the answers were so common sense, so self-evident, I’d missed seeing them. As my friend remarked, “*It is self-evident that the self-evident is not always self-evident.*”

Just as common sense is not so common these days, neither are some of the self-evident truths of this world. For example, it is self-evident that air surrounds us, but when was the last time you thought to yourself, “*Yep, sure enough; I’m surrounded by air and without it I’d be in big trouble!*”?

Denial and avoidance are two ways most of us deal with the thorny issues of life. We deny the obvious. We avoid talking to the doctor because we’re afraid of the truth. Yet, wouldn’t you agree that we could spare ourselves a lot of pain in the long run if we would simply face the truth?

Like an ant living at the base of Mt. Everest, it is easy to get so focused on our little ant hill that we miss the bigger picture. If I may, I’d like to encourage you to lift your eyes off your current circumstances, whatever they may be, and focus on some of life’s bigger self-evident truths which, like air, are easy to overlook. Will you think with me as I share some self-evident spiritual truths I see?

As a hospice chaplain [working with the terminally ill], and as a professional landscape photographer, I see life

differently than most. I see both beauty and heartache, almost on a daily basis. And, from time to time, I see incredible faith, hope, and courage. As a photographer, I'm aware that if I can find the right matte and frame to put around a photograph, it will make the photograph look twice as pretty. The right framing enhances the beauty of the picture inside. In like manner, I believe that God has put a frame around each of our lives, and that is death. At first we hate the frame, but once we accept it, the picture inside, life itself, becomes much more precious and beautiful. Life is full of so many wonderful things if we but have eyes to see; things that are so self-evident that, just maybe, we've missed seeing them. Allow me to share, what to me are, self-evident truths.

I will include various scripture references. Unity uses the Bible as an inspirational source document. For your own personal growth I think you will find it both helpful and enlightening to look up the scripture references I give, if you wish.

Self-Evident Truth #1: God exists.

To me, one of the most obvious truths is that God exists.

One night a woman brought her husband to the psychiatric hospital where I used to work. The man was as drunk as drunk could be. I asked him if he went to A.A. [Alcoholics Anonymous]. He said, "No, I don't believe in all that God stuff." His wife said, "You should!" He responded, "I don't believe there is a God."—At that point I couldn't resist, so I said, "I think there is an easy way to prove to you there is a God." He took the bait, so I said, "See that picture behind you? Would you believe me if I said there was an explosion at a paint factory and it blew paint everywhere and just by chance made that painting?" He said, "No." I asked, "Why not?" He said, "It couldn't happen."—I responded, "So, whenever you see design, there is usually a designer, or when you see art, there is usually an artist, right?" He said, "Yeah." Then I said, "When you look at Cindy Crawford, the supermodel, or an Arabian stallion, a rose, a New England Fall, or a butterfly, do they look like something the universe puked out by accident, or does it look like there's design?" He said, "Design."—I said, "Then there must be a Designer, and that is God." He said, "###*##, you got me!"

Self-Evident Truth #2: God is awesome beyond belief.

It doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure out that if God exists, then God is awesome beyond belief. By merely looking up at the night sky and gazing at the stars, that isn't hard to see.

For example, the largest star we can see with the naked eye is a star located in the southern sky, during the winter months, in the constellation Orion. The name of the star is Betelgeuse [pronounced beetle juice]. It is the upper left reddish star just above Orion's belt of three stars. Betelgeuse is so big that approximately 160 million of our suns would fit inside it. It has a diameter of approximately 250 million miles. If our earth were the size of a golf ball, by comparison, Betelgeuse would be a ball 2 miles high. If there were a tunnel through the center of that star, driving at 55 miles per hour, it would take us 1,600 years just to drive through the tunnel. [It would only take 193 years to drive from here to our sun.] If Betelgeuse was sitting where our sun is, the orbits of Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, and Jupiter would all be inside it.

Driving at 55 miles per hour, it would take us 52,000,000 years to drive from here to the closest star to earth [four and one-third light years], if you don't count our sun as a star.

Our solar system is part of a larger galaxy [a cluster of many stars] called the Milky Way, which is made up of an estimated 250 billion stars. Our sun is one of those stars, and a small one at that [a yellow dwarf star]. To put our earth in perspective with the Milky Way, imagine a one inch square with 200 microscopic dots inside it, representing 200 stars, one of which is our sun.—We have already established that it might take 52 million years to drive from one star (or dot), to another at fifty-five mph.—To grasp the size of our Milky Way, it would take 160 acres [roughly a half mile square] of those one inch squares to equal the size of the Milky Way. If the Milky Way galaxy were reduced to the size of North America [Canada, the U.S.A. and Mexico] our solar system, by comparison, would be about the size of a coffee cup. And our Milky Way is estimated to be only one-trillionth of the known universe.

National Geographic [May 1974, p. 592] had this to say: "Imagine that the thickness of this page represents the distance from earth to the sun [93,000,000 miles, or about eight light-minutes]. Then the distance to the nearest star [4 1/3 light years] is a 71-foot-high sheaf of paper. And the diameter of our own galaxy [100,000 light-years] is a 310-mile stack, while the edge of the known universe is not reached until the pile of paper is 31 million miles high—a third of the way to the sun!" If the universe is incredible, then the God who created it is even more incredible.

Self-Evident Truth #3: We live in a little speck of time suspended between two eternities.

Imagine a piece of chalk the size of a telephone pole [50-60 feet tall], and a chalkboard hundreds of miles long. Pretend you take that huge piece of chalk and draw a thin line that goes and goes until the chalk runs out. Think of this as a time line representing eternity, except that with eternity the chalk never runs out. Now, put a tiny dot at the front end of that line, and let it represent your whole life here on earth compared to eternity.

First, does it matter whether God exists?—Of course. If there is no God, you might as well erase the line, for when you die the party is over—forever! In which case, you should drink all the enjoyment you can out of this tiny dot of time, for that is all you will ever get.

On the other hand, if God is real, and there is an afterlife, then nothing on earth could be more important. You are literally at the beginning of forever; be it good, bad, or otherwise. Things such as war, a terminal illness, making money, marriage, having kids, national freedom, getting an education—even sex—would not begin to compare in importance to that which will affect you eternally.

Latest statistics say that 100% of every generation will die. We are each living one breath and one heartbeat away from eternity. Pascal, the French mathematician who invented calculus and created the first crude calculator, said it was amazing to him that people worry and fritter over temporal things which are of no eternal consequence, while at the same time living without forethought or seeming concern for that which will affect them throughout all eternity.

Self-Evident Truth #4: God is infinitely personal.

Let me ask you a question: “*Can something come from nothing?*” The answer is, “*No.*” This is an undisputed scientific law. Following this line of reasoning, does it make sense to believe that a God without intelligence could create people with intelligence? No.—Therefore, God must be intelligent, incredibly so, to create the universe around us. By sheer observation, we can also surmise that God must be powerful beyond belief.

Could a God without personality create people with personality? While that might be arguable, it stands to reason that God in all likelihood is infinitely personal, since God created love and joy which are components of personality.

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

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

First, if God is all wise and all good, as I think God is, He would know all things, including how things would be if they weren’t good. For example, I have never murdered anyone, but that doesn’t mean I don’t know what murder is. That God should allow evil, as He obviously does, does not mean that He is evil. His allowing the possibility of evil is, I believe, the highest good. [By the way, I use the personal pronouns He/Him for God, not that God is only male, for God is creator of both male and female qualities, as as such, contains both qualities. I use these pronouns for they are the generally accepted pronouns for God.]

Let me explain. God created us as choice-makers, with free wills so that we would not be robots. At stake was whether we would be able to freely love, versus whether we would be robotic androids [machines that look like people]. To illustrate this, what if I told you, “*I’ll take you out for lunch, and you can have whatever you want. You can have pizza, pizza, or pizza. What do you want?*”—That is no choice. God, in like manner, could have said, “*You have a choice. You can love Me . . . or you can love Me . . . or you can love Me.*”—Again, that is no choice. For real love and goodness to exist, without us merely being robots, there had to be an alternative, a real choice: evil.

As strange as it sounds, love demands a choice. The possibility of evil and suffering existing is necessary if we are to have real free will. As much as we sometimes hate it, that is the price tag for having freedom of choice.—Because God has given us free will, we can love Him, or hate Him. We can love people, or we can abuse them. We have the potential to do great good or great evil.

In Hinduism, God is called by the name *Brahma*. Brahma is the impersonal, cosmic World Soul. The goal of all Hindus is through a series of reincarnations to be absorbed into Brahma, sort of like a drop of water being absorbed back into the ocean. When this happens one loses one’s identity and personhood.

Why do I bring this up? Because I have known people in Unity who believe that God is impersonal, sort of like the “Force” in *Star Wars*. As popular as the notion is that God is some sort of impersonal *Force*, who set things in motion, and then stepped out of the picture, such a view does not hold up to reason nor to Biblical writings. God is much more than a *Force*. He is infinitely personal and all-powerful. Logically speaking, I think God has to be.

An impersonal God is not very appealing to me. I don’t want to give up my personhood and identity to be reunited with some impersonal *force* where I won’t even know I exist.”—Who wants to live in a state of unconscious nothingness as Hinduism teaches? I sure don’t.

Self-Evident Truth #5: We are eternal spiritual beings. Only that which is spiritual is of eternal lasting value.

I once read a book by Bruce Larson where he commented that the Bible is not primarily a book of theology, although it contains a lot of theology. He said the Bible is not primarily a book of history or prophecy, although it obviously contains a lot of history and philosophy. As I read, to be honest, I began to wonder, “*What’s left?*” He then pointed out that the Bible is primarily a book of relationships: one’s relationship with God, with one’s neighbor, and with oneself, and that if we miss the relational, we have missed what life and the Bible are all about.

One thousand years from now what difference will it make whether you lived in a shack or a million dollar mansion? Will it really matter whether you drove a Porche or an old used Chevy, or wore the latest designer clothes, or were the CEO of a company?—A person once asked, “*How much money do you think Bill Gates will leave when he dies?*” His friend responded, “*All of it.*”

One of the harshest self-evident realities of life, is that we will lose everything physical at death.—We can only take with us that which is eternal in nature, the spiritual; namely relationships [with God and people]. Jim Elliot, a missionary who was martyred for his faith, may have said it best, “*He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.*”

Self-Evident Truth #6: Our hearts long for Heaven.

In one of the most powerful books I’ve ever read, “*The Journey of Desire,*” John Eldredge points out that it is impossible to hope for that which we do not desire. Do you desire the things of God? Do you really long for Heaven, or does it sound like a place of total boredom? You may rightly ask, “How can I desire a place I’ve never seen or been?”—Let me try to answer this questions, if I may. I truly believe that if you learn to desire Heaven, then you will hope for Heaven, and it will change the course of your life; not to mention affecting how you view life on planet earth.

To start with, visualize the most beautiful thing you’ve ever seen in your life. For me it was the summer of 1978. I’d just driven across western Kansas and eastern Colorado in rain. As I approached Denver, the storm passed, and there before me were the snow-capped Colorado Rockies. It was near sunset and the sky had that luminous quality. The sky seemed to be filled with every shade of purple, lavender, pink, peach, and orange you can imagine, capped with a bright red sun just above the mountain peaks. And to top it off, behind me, where the storm had just passed, was a brilliant rainbow and some geese flying south. It was so incredible that I pulled off the highway and stared. It almost brought tears. But, do you know what? Within twenty minutes it was gone and I felt so sad.—“*Oh, if it could have just lasted longer! If only I could have, somehow, entered into the beauty and stayed.*”

Have you ever been to a music concert that is your type of music, whatever that might be, and for a brief while it seems as though you are suspended in time? But then what happens? The curtain drops, the lights come on, and it is over. If you’re like me, a wave of sadness often hits.—Again I feel, “*Oh, if it could have just lasted longer!*”

Or, do you recall your first feelings of romantic love and how wonderfully exciting they were? Do you still have them?—No. And while you may still deeply love whomever you’re with [if you are with someone], I’m guessing those wonderful feelings of romantic love have diminished as you see them more realistically. They may snore, not pick up after themselves, and have some quirky habits which can drive you up a wall.

Or, have you ever seen someone’s face and been drawn like a magnet to it? You could seemingly stare into the beauty of that face, into the beauty of those eyes of love and acceptance, forever. And then what happens? The person gets up and leaves, and a knife pierces your soul.

Well, what would it be if you could live some place where the beauty never fades, where the music never ends, where the feelings of passionate love and adventure never diminish, and where for all eternity you could stare into the face of perfect love; the face of God?—You see, you have just described Heaven.

Ever since you were born, God has planted the longings for Heaven in your heart. The achings, the longings, the

deep desires, the passions, the thirst for adventure and acceptance, your pining for the good ole days; they all point in one direction, and it isn't toward earth, nor to the past, but it is toward God and Heaven.

Like the warm aromas coming from your mother or grandmother's kitchen when you were a child, we only get tantalizing foretastes of Heaven now. The beauty and the glory of nature, as C.S. Lewis says, "*is only the first sketch.*"

I Corinthians 2:9 says, "*Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither has entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for those who love Him.*"

To me, these are self-evident truths. Listen to your heart, and I think your heart will tell you that these longings are true. You see, you've longed for God and Heaven all your life; whether you realized it or not. Rather than turning to your addictions and to the idols in your life which break your heart, why not turn to God, the source of life?

These truths I hold to be self-evident.

IV. A Look At The Core Beliefs Of Unity

After preaching a funeral at a Unity church a few months ago, I went into the Unity bookstore located in the church. I asked the person attending the store, "*If you were to recommend one book which would best define what Unity is all about, what would you recommend?*" Without hesitation she gave me "*Unity: A Quest For Truth*" by Eric Butterworth; Unity Books 1995. I have read it. I enjoyed his humor and obvious sincerity. Mr. Butterworth, stated that *truth* is the ultimate issue. I agree. However, as I read his book, he said several things which, to me, are not true. Without wanting to go on the attack, will you allow me to comment on some of the statements he made. I assume they reflect the general beliefs of Unity. If I accidentally misrepresent him or Unity in any way, please forgive me. I believe that some of these core teachings are what keep many in Unity from having a personal, intimate relationship with the infinitely personal, loving God.

1. Is truth relative, open to subjective interpretation?

"As long as they differ in mind, in education, in experience, they will approach Truth from different viewpoints and interpret their experiences of Truth in different terms. It would mean a tragic loss to religion, to Truth, to life itself, if it should ever be possible to force all people to feel and think and act alike in matters of religion." [*Unity: A Quest For Truth,*" by Butterworth, p. 25, emphasis mine.]

In philosophical terminology, Mr. Butterworth implies that truth is relative; that each religion is true in its own way, or that it makes no difference what one believes as long as one is sincere and tolerant of others. I disagree. I think common sense will tell us that relativism cannot be right.

Mr. Butterworth basically says that it would be wrong to have all religions think alike. His statement would be true if *sincerity* was the standard for measuring religions. However, it becomes a different matter when *truth* is the standard by which we judge different religions. One of the most oft' repeated warnings in the New Testament, from both the lips of Jesus, and the writings of Paul, John, and Peter is to be on guard against "false teachings" and "false teachers." Some people are sincere, but sincerely wrong; dangerously wrong.

To illustrate what I mean, imagine a world where virtually everyone believed in a Little Green Man in outer space who lived just two miles beyond the range of our greatest telescope, and, while we've never seen him, we believe he is there. Let's say that the majority of people in the world believe he lives on peanut butter and jelly sandwiches. Some, however, believe that he is too sophisticated for mere peanut butter sandwiches. They believe he lives on steak sandwiches, while others insist he loves pasta. Some even challenge the fact that he is green. They say he is purple.

Who's to say for sure what he is like?—Does he live on peanut butter, steak, or pasta [or even tacos]? Is he green or purple or is he yellow with red polkadots? Does he exit at all? Who is to say?—The dilemma of the Little Green man is not unlike the many beliefs people hold in God. Who's right? Who's wrong? Who's nearer to the truth?

There is only *one* person who could say what the Little Green Man is like and that is the Little Green Man. Unless he were to communicate with us, your guess would be as good as mine. The same is true about God.

There are a lot of religions and people saying what God is or is not like, and whether or not He even exists. The only one who can say for sure whether God exists, and what He is like, is God. As simple as this is, it is an important point to grasp. Only God can give the final word on Himself. Now, let's suppose someone claimed to be the incarnation of the Little Green Man. Anyone claiming to be the Little Green Man would be one of three things: a liar,

a lunatic, or else, just possibly, the Little Green Man had actually come to earth. If he could prove who he claimed to be, that would settle all debate.

In like manner, what if Jesus really claimed to be the incarnation of *Yahweh/Jehovah* [the Hebrew name for God]? Now this would be something you could easily investigate.—Any person claiming to be God would either be psychotic, with delusions of grandeur [crazy], a deceiver out to pull off one of the greatest scams of all time, or, this person might actually be God. Possibly God had chosen to write Himself into His own story and become a man.

To believe that Jesus was just a good teacher, assuming he really claimed to be God, would be out of the question. He would either be much more than a good teacher [i.e., God], or much less [i.e., a liar or lunatic]. Think of the hundreds of thousands who have died martyrs' deaths because of his claims. If he is not God, these people died for a lie, for an idol. And yet, as I will show, this is exactly what Jesus claimed: that he was God incarnate.

C.S. Lewis—author, professor, and Christian intellectual wrote, "*Aman who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic—on a level with the man who says he is a poached egg or else he would be the Devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God, or else a madman or something worse. You can shut him up for a fool, you can spit at him and kill him as a demon, or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about his being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.*" [Mere Christianity, MacMillan Pub., N.Y.; 1978, P.56.]

As Rebecca Pippert in her excellent book, *Out of the Saltshaker and into the World*, wrote: ". . . He [Jesus] said 'I and the Father are one' (John 10:30). He informed people that knowing him was the same as knowing God (John 8:19), seeing him was the same as seeing God (John 12:45), believing in him was the same as believing in God (John 12:44) and receiving him was the same as receiving God (Mark 9:37) . . . Let us suppose that I made the kind of claims that Jesus did and people began to say, 'Isn't Becky terrific?! I mean, the way she forgives sins . . . And her moral ethics are so brilliant and impeccable . . . And what a superb teacher! . . . not to mention her perfect sinless life. There is one little problem. She does seem to be a little confused about her deity. But other than that, she really has it all together!'—No one is a little confused about his own deity and sane." [Inter-Varsity Press, 1979, Downers Grove, IL; p.42]

There can be no middle ground. Just as no one is ever half-pregnant [one is either pregnant or not pregnant], in like manner, Jesus is either God or he isn't.—Lunatic, liar or Lord. It is not intellectually wise to ignore the life and teachings of the only major religious leader in all of history who actually claimed to be God: Jesus. He is too important a figure to pass over lightly. He did live, and he stands alone in the claims he made and the life he lived.

Where Mr. Butterworth's statements prove false is that he puts all religions and belief systems in the same basket, with the same amount of credibility. That might be true but for one important fact: God has spoken the truth to us. As with the Little Green Man, God has appeared on the scene and we have beheld his glory [John 1:14-18]. God became man [Hebrews 1:1-4, Philippians 2:6-11; John 1:1, 14].

It should be no surprise then that when God-in-Christ appeared on the scene he produced anger, hatred, or worship from the people of his day. To take a middle-of-the-road position concerning him is to totally fail to grasp the claims he made. The enemies of Jesus clearly understood his claim to divinity. They tried to kill him for blasphemy, because he claimed equality and oneness with God [e.g., John 5:18; 8:58-59; 10:33, Mark 14:61-64, etc.]. All of the main writers of the New Testament, such as Paul and the apostle John, clearly taught the deity of Jesus [e.g., Colossians 2:9; Philippians 2:6, 7; Romans 9:5; John 1:1, 14; Hebrews 1:1, 8].

This is even more staggering when we realize that those saying these things were monotheistic Jews, people who believe in only "*one God*" [Deuteronomy 6:4]. They were not talking about Jesus being one of many gods, in some polytheistic, Hindu sort of way. No, they worshiped Jesus as the incarnation of the God Almighty [e.g., Matthew 28:9; John 20:28; Hebrews 1:6; Revelation 5:8-14; Philippians 2:6-11].

Reason with me. For sake of argument, if Jesus is God, then he could state the truth about God [i.e., himself]. He could explain how to have a right relationship with God, because he is God. Correct?—Jesus could declare what is right and what is wrong. Why? Because if he is God, he wrote the rule book. Like it or not, if he was/is God then he could make such statements. If he wasn't/isn't God, then he was either crazy or a deceiver. Christianity would be false, and you should search elsewhere for God.

Paraphrasing Peter Kreeft, "*Either we disbelieve his believable character, or we believe his unbelievable claims [to be God].*" The miracles and resurrection, not to mention the weight of prophecy, prove that Jesus' unbelievable claims to be God are in fact true both historically and scripturally.

You could take Buddha out of Buddhism and it would remain basically unchanged. You could take Muhammad out of Islam and it would continue to exist. But, if you took Jesus Christ out of Christianity, it would collapse because

Christianity is not merely a religion or a philosophy of life; but an encounter with a Person, Jesus Christ.

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

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

Not only is relativism bad theology, but it is also bad philosophy. Truth is truth, no matter what anyone says. Just as there are natural laws of science which we consider to be true [e.g., the law of gravity], there are also spiritual laws and absolutes which are just as true. Good is good. Evil is evil. God is good. God opposes evil.

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

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

If one insists on saying truth is relative, I would simply ask, “*Then why should I trust or believe anything you say because in your next breath you might change your mind?*—Would you trust a doctor who told you, “*There are no absolutes. It doesn't matter what medicine you take as long as you are sincere.*” Would you keep going to that doctor? No, you wouldn't. Why? Because your heart and your mind know truth exists. To live any other way is to be insane, out of touch with reality.

So, coming back to what Mr. Butterworth implied, truth is *not* relative, any more than the law of gravity. I believe there is only one truth about God. While I may not comprehend the law of gravity, any more than I comprehend the total truth about God, it does not change the fact that such truth exists and that I should seek to understand that truth with all my heart and mind.

2. Is Jesus only the “son” of God or is He God the Son?

“Jesus did not come to take the place of God, but rather to show people how they might find God for themselves and with selves, as Jesus Himself had found God within.” [“*Unity: A Quest For Truth,*” Butterworth, p. 35.]

A friend and co-worker of mine who is in Unity told me that he believed Jesus was the “*son of God,*” but not God. Is this the true teaching of the New Testament? Actually, no.

The Bible teaches that Jesus was/is God incarnate. In the New Testament, hundreds of times, Jesus is called by virtually every major name and attribute used to describe God in the Old Testament:

“*God*” [John 1:1,14; Hebrews 1:8],

“*Yahweh/Jehovah*” [John 8:58; cf. Exodus 3:14],

“*Lord*” [Acts 10:36],

“*Creator*” [Hebrews 1:1,2; John 1:10; Colossians 1:16-18],

“*Savior*” [Titus 2:13],

“*King of kings*” [Revelation 19:16],

“*the Alpha and the Omega*” [Revelation 22:12-16],

“*Holy One*” [Acts 3:14,15],

“*Rock*” [I Corinthians 10:4],

“*Forgiver Of Sins*” [Mark 2:1-12],

“*Lord of the Sabbath*” [John 5:18; Mark 2:28], etc.

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

gance. Jesus, a Jew, would have known that.

The word *Son* was used of Jesus in at least four ways: *Son of Mary*, *Son of David*, *Son of Man*, and *Son of God*. Those four terms describe the natural relationship of Jesus to the Father and to humanity. Except for the first one, the Son of Mary, the other three uses of the word, Son, are used figuratively in the New Testament, and are not to be understood in a literal sense. Let me explain the four usages:

Son Of Mary: According to His human nature, Jesus had one parent, Mary. In this sense, Jesus of Nazareth was literally and physically a “son.” The man Jesus had no literal earthly, biological father. He was virgin born. The only real “Father” the man Jesus had was God. The seed implanted in Mary was from God’s Holy Spirit (not an angel or some alien from outer space).

Son of David: In this instance, Son of David is figurative because Jesus was not a literal first generation descendant of David (see Matthew 22:42-45). The term does show that Jesus is a descendant and heir of David. It is clearly the figurative use of the word son.

Son of Man: The term son of man is distinctly Jewish and was first used in the Old Testament. The word “man” is plural, referring to mankind, not to any one man. The word *son*, as used in the phrase *son of man*, is clearly figurative. The term, “*Son of Man*” links Jesus to all mankind. It shows the humanity of Jesus.

At His trial before the Sanhedrin and the high priest Caiaphas asked Jesus, “‘*Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?*’” “*I AM,*” said Jesus. “*And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven.*” (Mark 14:61-62). In saying this, Jesus made a powerful assertion about His coming return with great glory to judge and rule over the earth. In that encounter with Caiaphas it is significant that Jesus accepted simultaneously the titles “*Son of Man*” and “*Son of the Blessed One (God)*.”

Son of God: The term “*Son of God*” implies the full deity of Christ [that Jesus is God incarnate], just as the term “*Son of Man*” implied His full humanity.

Son of Man = Fully Man Son of God = Fully God

If the term Son of Man means that Christ is fully man, then the term Son of God means that Christ is God. The New Testament teaches that Jesus, before becoming a man, existed in the “*form*” of God (Philippians 2:6), and that He took a second “*form*” (nature) when He became a man (Philippians 2:6-7). Thus, Jesus has two natures: as God [Son of God] and man [Son of Man].—See also Romans 1:3, 4.

One scriptural description of Jesus is that he is the “*only begotten Son*” of God [John 3:16].

C. S. Lewis clearly illustrates the meaning of “*begotten*” when he writes:

“One of the creeds says that Christ is the Son of God “begotten, not created”; and it adds “begotten by his Father before all worlds.” Will you please get it quite clear that this has nothing to do with the fact that when Christ was born on earth as a man; that man was the son of a virgin? We are not now thinking about the virgin Birth. We are thinking about something that happened before Nature was created at all, before time began, “Before all worlds” Christ is begotten, not created. What does it mean?

“We don’t use the words begetting or begotten much in modern English, but everyone still knows what they mean. To beget is to become the father of; to create is to make. And the difference is this. When you beget, you beget something of the same kind as yourself. A man begets human babies, a beaver begets little beavers and a bird begets eggs which turn into little birds. But when you make, you make something of a different kind from yourself. A bird makes a nest, a beaver builds a dam, a man makes a wireless set—or he may make something more like himself than a wireless set: say, a statue. If he is a clever enough carver he may make a statue which is very like a man indeed. But, of course, it is not a real man; it only looks like one. It cannot breathe or think. It is not alive.

*“Now that is the first thing to get clear. What God begets is God; just as what man begets is man. What God creates is not God; just as what man makes is not man.” (emphasis mine; from the book *Mere Christianity*)*

3. Is the Bible trustworthy and inspired?

“The Bible was not handed down from the heavens in completed form, it was created.” [“Unity: A Quest For Truth,” Butterworth, p. 39.]

“One of the greatest limitations to understanding the Bible is the insistence on its infallibility.” [“Unity: A Quest For Truth,” Butterworth, p. 38.]

The main problem with saying the Bible is *not* inspired or infallible is that the Bible, hundreds and hundreds of times, claims to *be* the inspired, infallible *word of God*. Read the Gospels and you will see that time and again Jesus affirmed the Old Testament as the Word of God; that God had sovereignly spoken through human agents. “*Thus saith*

the Lord . . .” is one of the most oft’ repeated phrases in the Bible. Logically speaking, either God inspired the Bible or He didn’t. The apostles affirmed the Bible as God’s Word. [E.g., II Timothy 3:15,16, I Peter 1:23, II Peter 1:19-21]. If the Bible is wrong about itself and the source of its inspiration, then it cannot and should not be trusted at all. Further, there are hundreds of fulfilled prophecies which prove its authenticity.

Some say, “*But the Bible has been copied and recopied so many times that even if it were inspired in the beginning it has now become unreliable.*”—Actually, this is not true. There are over 24,600 partial or complete manuscripts of the New Testament in either Greek or Latin. The second best documented manuscript of antiquity is *The Iliad and The Odyssey* by Homer. It has around 600 manuscripts. Most ancient documents have fewer than 10 original copies still in existence, yet they are still considered “A-1” historical documents by historians. For example, there are only 7 existing copies of the works of Plato, and 5 of Aristotle’s works.

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

Concerning the Hebrew Bible, most Jewish and Christian scholars had been using the Masoretic Hebrew text dated around 1,000 A.D. In 1947, a young shepherd boy discovered what we now call The Dead Sea Scrolls in the caves of Qumran [Israel] near the Dead Sea. Major portions of the entire Old Testament were found. They are easily dated around, or before, the time of Christ [100 B.C.-70 A.D.]. The Dead Sea Scroll copy of the book of Isaiah, for example, was so identical to the Masoretic Text that only eight minor discrepancies were found.

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

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

The next question, of course, is whether modern translations of the Bible are accurate translations of the originals. There are many different Bible translations on the market, which often confuses those not familiar with the Bible. Some mistakenly assume that because there are many different Bible translations, they must be saying contradictory things. Except for one or two Bible translations by cult groups where they have altered a few key verses to fit their theology, this is not true. For example, most Bible translations are translated from one of two basic New Testament Greek texts [considered to be most reliable by Biblical scholars] and one basic Old Testament Hebrew text. Thus, while translations vary in style, they are all saying the same basic thing. To say, “Howdy,” “Hello,” or “Hi,” are all accurate ways of saying the same thing. The content is the same, but the wording varies. The same principle is true of Bible translations.

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

4. How Important Is Theology?

“Unity is an ecumenical movement. It is not a program for uniting religious organizations into one...but a teaching movement seeking to lead all people—regardless of organizational barriers or theological differences—to a new sense of spiritual unity with God and with one another.”—[“Unity: A Quest For Truth,” Butterworth, p. 5.]

*“Unity is a study of the teachings of Jesus Christ **free from the influence of traditional Christian theology** and with an open mind.”—[“Unity: A Quest For Truth,” Butterworth, p. 56, emphasis mine.]*

Virtually everyone I’ve known in Unity have been nice, sincere people; including one boss, one co-worker, for-

mer customers when I managed a bookstore, plus a couple of hospice patients. However, most of them have/had vague opinions of what lies beyond the grave. Was it going to be Heaven, Hell, or reincarnation? Would they have a resurrected body, or were they going to be going on an endless cycle of being reincarnated and having to go through life again and again, suffering and dying over and over again? When I question my friends in Unity about their theological beliefs, most of their beliefs in these areas are either weak or non-existent.

In reading Mr. Butterworth's book, he gave lip service to the Bible, but only as one of many sacred writings, which may or may not have been inspired. In response to his downplaying of theology, may I quote C.S. Lewis? C.S. Lewis likens good theology to our need for maps.

"...there are two things you have to remember about it [maps of the Atlantic]. In the first place, it is based on what hundreds and thousands of people have found out by sailing the real Atlantic . . . In the second place, if you want to go anywhere, the map is absolutely necessary . . . theology is like a map . . . Doctrines are not God: they are only a kind of map. But that map is based on the experience of hundreds of people who really were in touch with God . . . In fact, that is just why a vague religion—all about feeling God in nature, and so on—is so attractive. It is all thrills and no work . . . you will not get eternal life by simply feeling the presence of God in flowers or music. Neither will you get anywhere by looking at maps without going to sea. Nor will you be very safe if you go to sea without a map. Consequently, if you do not listen to Theology, that will not mean that you have no ideas about God. It will mean that you have a lot of wrong ones..."[From *Mere Christianity*]

Mr. Butterworth also says, *"Unity considers itself wholly Christian, with Jesus Christ as its true authority."* [*"Unity: A Quest For Truth,"* p. 24.]—I would agree with this. However, he goes on to quote Charles Filmore, who helped found Unity: *"Christ Truth, it seems to me, is of vastly greater importance than any amount of theorizing about the existence of heaven or hell, or life after death . . ."* [*"Unity: A Quest For Truth,"* Butterworth, p. 24.] If we live in a tiny speck of time between two eternities, to only concern ourselves with this life, which is but a split-second, and ignore what Christ himself taught about Heaven and Hell, life after death, etc. is, in my way of thinking, not only incredibly short-sighted, but eternally dangerous. I don't care about a psychological Christ consciousness on this earth if I miss spending eternity with God. Temporal versus eternal. Finite versus infinite. Mortal versus immortal. Which do you think more important?—From where I sit, Mr. Butterworth and Mr. Filmore have it totally backwards.

5. Is the God of the Old Testament consistent with the Jesus of the New Testament?

"Much of our confusion in the study of the Bible comes from the fact that the God of the Israelites was a stern, autocratic, and sometimes cruel God, a God of vengeance who destroyed whole cities with all their inhabitants. The God of Jesus was a tender and loving God of forgiveness." [*"Unity: A Quest For Truth,"* Butterworth, p. 31.]

"The doctrine of hellfire is inconsistent with Jesus' life and teaching." [*"Unity: A Quest For Truth,"* Butterworth, page 68.]

Is this true?—I think we would do well to see what Jesus taught about the God of the Old Testament. First of all, Christ totally identifies with the God of the Old Testament, calling God his *"Father."* He taught that all of the Old Testament scriptures had him in mind [Luke 24:27; John 5:39, 40.]. Virtually every controversial passage in the Bible, from Sodom and Gomorrah, to Adam and Eve, to Noah, to Moses, Jesus affirmed as true [Matthew 11:23; John 19:4; Luke 17:27; Luke 24:27; etc.]. It may surprise you to know that Jesus taught that there was absolutely no difference between the God of the Old Testament and His God. It was merely a different dispensation in terms of how the Holy God of the Old Testament was choosing to reveal Himself.

I question how much Mr. Butterworth has studied the Bible. To say Jesus did not teach about hell is uninformed. In fact, it may surprise you to know that **Jesus taught more about hell than all the other Bible writers combined.** Our notion about the doctrine of hell comes primarily from the lips of Jesus. If you are interested in seeing what Jesus had to say on this subject, look up the following verses: Matthew 3:12; 5:22, 29,30; 7:19; 8:12; 10:28; 13:30, 42, 56; 18: 6-9; 22:30; 23:14,15, 33; 25:4, 30, 41, 46; 26:24; Mark 8:36; 9:43-48; 12:40; 16:16; Luke 3:17, 12:5; 13:28; 16:24, 20:47; John 3:18, 36; 5:29; 12:48; 8:21; 16:11; 17:12.—Add to these the many other verses from Paul, Peter, James, the writer of Hebrews, and John [as found in the Epistles of John and Revelation], plus a few Old Testament references such as Daniel 12:12, etc., and the scriptural evidence for hell existing is overwhelming. What I want you to realize is the doctrine of hell is a New Testament doctrine primarily taught by Jesus himself.

I'll address some of our emotional objections to hell later in this booklet.

7. Reincarnation or Resurrection?

“The afterlife concept of heaven is a carry over of the early primitive belief of the ‘happy hunting ground.’” — [“Unity: A Quest For Truth,” Butterworth, P. 65.]

“Unity suggests an answer: the theory of reincarnation . . . the concept of reincarnation might be called ‘the gospel of the second chance.’” [“Unity: A Quest For Truth,” Butterworth, p.73,74.]

It is interesting, but Jesus said, *“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father’s house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going to prepare a place for you.”* [John 14:1,2]

In the four gospels, there are 137 references to Heaven. The Book of Revelation uses the term “heaven” 48 times. If heaven isn’t real, then the vast majority of the New Testament is wrong.

Christianity does not teach reincarnation, but rather resurrection. Paul, and all other New Testament writers, speak of a “day” when our bodies will be transformed. In Philippians 3:20,21 Paul wrote, *“But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.”*—I don’t know how anyone could say it any more plainly than that. We will have a transformed, resurrected body in heaven. We will not be reincarnated to have another go at being here on earth.

The Bible says that *“it is appointed unto men once to die and after that the judgment.”* [Hebrews 9:27]. According to the teachings of Jesus, there is a day coming when each of us will stand before God in judgment once for all. We will either stand forgiven or not forgiven. Reincarnation, on the other hand, is the belief that we will cycle through this life many times through a series of births, deaths, and rebirths.

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

To me, Unity seems to be a blend of oriental Hinduism, the New Age Movement, and Christianity. However, according to the Bible people retain their identity after death. Moses still remains Moses, Abraham remains Abraham, etc. Scripture never speaks about Abraham who was once Abdul Jonesheimer in a former life or Betty Sue Smith now. In the Bible, those who have died always retain their one identity. [Read Luke 16:19-31 about one case where Jesus refers to Abraham as still being Abraham in paradise.]

Practically, what does belief in reincarnation mean? It means that if reincarnation is true, you will most likely have to suffer and die many, many times. Just think, you may get to relive junior high school over and over and over and over . . . [No thanks!] Looking at our world, if reincarnation is the gospel of the second chance, I know a lot of people who’d better pray that they get more than two chances.

For those who believe in reincarnation, I pose the following questions:

1.) How do you know it is true? Who is to say? If life is *maya* [illusion], as Hinduism teaches, couldn’t the teaching of reincarnation also be an illusion? Could it be that Satan deceives people into believing reincarnation is real?—Remember, demons have been around for centuries. It would be very easy for them to plant false memories of another life into one’s head about another time in history. Demons could easily pose as some dead person from the past who offers to be your spirit guide. Couldn’t reincarnation, and the evidence supporting reincarnation, be nothing more than deception carefully orchestrated by demons? [By the way, unless Jesus was delusional, demons exist, for he spoke to them on numerous occasions.]

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

Imagine for a minute, if reincarnation were true, that Adolph Hitler was reincarnated as a horribly deformed baby named John Doe because of all the evil Hitler had committed in his prior life. However, John Doe would have no clue as to why life should be treating him so unfairly. Would this be fair to John Doe? Who should rightfully atone for his own evil: Hitler or John Doe? It would seem to me that the only one who should atone for Adolph Hitler’s sin is Adolph Hitler. Reincarnation would not be the gospel of second chances, but rather something terribly unfair.

3.) Hinduism teaches that people’s suffering in this life is a result of their bad karma from a former life. Correct? Isn’t this why Hinduism keeps people in the caste system and lets many of them starve to death or remain in poverty?—To see the differences in philosophies between those who believe in resurrection versus reincarnation, walk the

streets of Calcutta and observe the poverty and the inhumane treatment of Calcutta's poor. It is usually Christian missionaries who are there helping such people, not Hindus.

Jesus taught His followers to care for the poor, the sick, the wounded, and those gone astray. Jesus taught that we are to love God and love our "neighbor as ourself."—Why do Christians have hospitals to care for the sick? Why do we try to provide housing and food for the poor? Because that is what love demands. Why doesn't Hinduism act accordingly? Because people are getting what they deserve based on a previous life.

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

What I am about to share doesn't disprove the theory behind reincarnation, but it does demonstrate how belief in reincarnation can have disastrous results. In Minnesota (U.S.A.), several years ago, a young Satanist took an axe and murdered his entire family. When asked why, he said they were *nerds* (socially embarrassing to him), that he was doing them a favor by killing them; for the next time they are reincarnated, he said, they will come back as better people.—This is the theory of reincarnation carried to the extreme. But do you see how his belief affected his behavior, which had consequences?

5. Some argue that Jesus taught reincarnation when he said concerning John the Baptist, "*And if you are willing to accept it, he is the Elijah who was to come.*" [Matthew 11:14] There are several reasons this cannot be right.

a. John the Baptist was directly asked if he was Elijah by the Jews in John 1:21. He said, "*I am not.*"

b. On the Mount of Transfiguration, do you recall how Moses and Elijah appeared physically with Jesus? [See: Matthew 17.] This was *after* John the Baptist had been killed [Matthew 14]. Yet, Elijah was still Elijah. He was not John the Baptist.

c. For reincarnation to work a person must die first, right? Did Elijah die? According to II Kings 2, Elijah never died physically, but a chariot of fire came and transported him directly to heaven.

d. The words of Jesus are explained in that John the Baptist came, not literally as Elijah, but rather in the spirit and power of Elijah. You may recall that Elijah's apprentice, Elisha, asked for a similar thing as he requested to have a double portion of Elijah's power. See: II Kings 2.

Dr. Butterworth stated, "*We are told that all people are created equal, that all are God's children*" ["*Unity: A Quest For Truth*," Butterworth, p. 73]. First of all, it is the *Declaration Of Independence* which states that *all people are created equal and endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights*, not the Bible. What the Bible does teach, however, is the notion that God will judge all people fairly. The scriptures teach that to whom much is given, much will be expected. Some are born with many talents and opportunities, some not. Paul clearly addresses this issue in the first three chapters of Romans. We live in a world where the consequences of man's sin and choices are being played out all the time. Life is not fair because we live in an evil world. Thankfully, there is an all-wise, holy God big enough to sort everything out in the end.

Bottom line, why do I believe in resurrection and not reincarnation? Because of Jesus.—He came from Heaven to earth, lived, died, was physically resurrected to life, and ascended back to Heaven again. He knows the truth, for He is God. Jesus and His followers taught resurrection [e.g., John 11; I Corinthians 15; I Thessalonians 4:13-18, Hebrews 9:27], not reincarnation. According to Jesus, there are no second chances after death.

9. Who is at the center?

"*Jesus did not place the emphasis on Himself, but always on you, your unfoldment, your believing, and your achievement. Jesus never claimed anything in the name of Jesus or the personal "me."*" ["*Unity: A Quest For Truth*," Butterworth, p. 36.]

"*Jesus focuses his attention on you.*" ["*Unity: A Quest For Truth*," Butterworth, p. 37.]

"*God is you.*" ["*Unity: A Quest For Truth*," Butterworth, p. 34.]

I respectfully disagree. Jesus did put himself in the center. Do you recall how he called men to lay down their lives for him, to take up their crosses and follow him. He received worship [e.g., Matthew 28:9, 17]. There is a grave danger in putting man at the center, versus God at the center. The whole concept of "Lordship" is that the Lord is center. Christianity is Christo-centric, not man-centered. Galatians 2:20 says, "*I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me.*" Are we to believe in human potential? Yes, but it always with the aware-

ness of our need for Christ. Jesus in John 15:5 said, *“I am the vine, you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.”*

10. Isn't sickness illusion? Is it always a form of God's judgment?

“You experience sickness because in your consciousness you have limited the expression of that perfect life.”
[*“Unity: A Quest For Truth,”* Butterworth, p. 60.]

“The Lord is my health. I can't be sick.”—[*“Unity: A Quest For Truth,”* Butterworth, p.82.]

“Unity teaches that sickness is never the will of God, that God is Spirit, the very essence of life, and that this essence could not be working against itself.” —[*“Unity: A Quest For Truth,”* Butterworth, p.59.]

“Death is not in the plan of God.” [“Unity: A Quest For Truth,” Butterworth, p.74.]

As a hospice chaplain I have known hundreds of patients who are now dead. Last year alone I preached 31 funerals. I have some major difficulties reading statements such as these made by Mr. Butterworth. For me to tell patients dying of cancer that if they would only think correctly they wouldn't be sick is cruel. I'd much rather be honest and help them face the fact that they are dying, and then to tell them of a suffering Savior who is able to meet them in their pain, and who will be there for them as they walk through the valley of the shadow of death.

Latest statistics are that 100% of every generation dies. Period. There is no debate. Those who espouse mind over matter, from my perspective, are playing mind games and do a great injustice and lay unnecessary burdens and guilt trips on people. In the final analysis everyone dies, even Mr. Filmore and Mr. Butterworth.

There is a story about a little boy who went to a Christian Science church one Sunday. Much like Mr. Butterworth, they deny sickness as negative thinking. As the boy entered the church, the pastor asked him where his father was. The boy replied that he was feeling sick. The minister told the boy to tell his dad, *“You only think you're sick.”* The next Sunday again the boy went to church along, and again the minister asked him, *“Where's your dad?”* to which the little boy replied, *“He only think he's dead.”*

Again, common sense should dispel such magical thinking. For example, do people at Unity die? Do you ever have funerals in your church? If you're 35 years or older, look in mirror. Are you aging? Do people at your church die, or have you found the fountain of eternal youth? As I look at the picture of Mr. Butterworth on the back cover of his book, I can tell he is no spring chicken. I can tell that the very thing he is espousing does not work for him. He is getting old and some day he will get sick and die, if he is not dead already. That is a fact. If I am not mistaken, I believe the Filmores are already dead.

In a nutshell scripture teaches that death, pain, and suffering came as God's judgment on Adam's sin [Genesis 1, 2]. While death is an enemy which God will one day do away with [I Corinthians 15:35-57], God sometimes causes death and suffering. It can be an extreme form of God's judgment on sin, even among Christians [e.g., Acts 5:1-11, I Corinthians 11:27-32]. Even Paul experienced a “thorn in the flesh,” allowed by God to keep him humble [II Corinthians 12]. Whether cancers and other terminal illnesses, such as AIDS, are forms of judgment is irrelevant. Everyone on the face of this planet stands under judgment for his/her sins until they are forgiven. Once we are forgiven we are no longer under condemnation. Romans 8:1 says, *“Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”* (That can be you.) Romans 4:7-8 says, *“Blessed are they whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will never count against him.”*—Now that is good news.

So, is all sickness a form of God's judgment? No. We all recognize the fact that we bring on many of our own illnesses by smoking, not exercising, worrying, etc.—Is God to blame for this?—No. If we are honest we would have to say, as President Truman used to say, *“The buck stops here.”* It always amazes me how people can defend their right to smoke or be promiscuous, and then blame God when they get lung cancer or catch a sexually transmitted disease.

God obviously allows sickness and suffering. That is obvious. [I strongly disagree with those who say God is too impotent to stop it, or is too uncaring to stop it.] For me, the question is, *“Why does God allow suffering?”*

First, we know, based on God's character, that God is holy, loving and good. God can do no wrong. So, if you and I had the mind of God, if you and I could see as God sees, and know as God knows, we would do absolutely no differently than God is already doing. Therefore, whatever the reasons for allowing suffering and evil, however harsh, they come from a heart of love and goodness. If God is all-knowing, all-powerful, all-good, and all-loving, then whatever God does will be right. Whatever He says goes. Our judgments of God matter little. If He created us, who are we to sit in judgment of Him? We would be using brains He created to criticize the One who made us. That would

be like a character in a book criticizing the author for the way the book was written, or a clay pot criticizing the potter for making it the way it is.

I have a very good friend who is a neurosurgeon. Recently he took the whole top of a lady's skull off following a car accident. Her brain needed room to swell after being badly bruised. Did he cause her physical pain and also the embarrassment by having her head shaved? Yes, he did.—But he also saved her life.

In like manner, we must not hastily criticize God for what He allows or does not allow. According to the creation account in Genesis: sin, sickness and pain were not part of God's original plan. They came as the result of man's sin and rebellion. They were the just consequences for man's rebellion against God, and a constant reminder of man's need for a Savior. They are a combination of God's just punishment, a reminder to us of the seriousness of sin, as well as the logical consequence of our behavior. Read the Old Testament and you will see God's just punishment. Though severe, the punishments were usually meant to bring the nation of Israel back to God. The book of Hosea is a classic. More than any other Old Testament book it catalogs the sins of Israel, and yet it most clearly shows God's love for His people. God hated executing judgment on Israel. It broke His heart [Hosea 11:8,9].

Is pain still useful? Yes.

C.S. Lewis said that pain is like a megaphone [amplifier] that God uses to awaken a deafened world.—And it works. Pain does get our attention; like the story of the Missouri farmer who hit his mule between the eyes with a two-by-four just to get its attention. Lewis, in response to a comment that a loving God could never inflict pain, jokingly responded, "*Have they never been to a dentist?*"

I am told that there are some sheep who keep wandering from the flock and are in risk of being killed by wolves. In extreme instances the shepherd may intentionally break the leg of the sheep and then carry that sheep on his shoulder until the leg is mended. After that, the sheep will never leave the shepherd. In like manner, who are we to say that there aren't sound reasons for why God allows the things he does, for after all "*The Lord is my shepherd . . .*" [Psalm 23:1].

Compared to eternity, our lives on earth are but a split second. Our bodies are temporal. Our spirits, however, are eternal. What is hardest on the body is sometimes best for the spirit. Time and again as a chaplain I have seen people come to faith in God because of their illness/pain. It is like the shot across the bow of a ship that alerts them to danger unless they change course. In Romans 8:18-28 Paul said one reason God allows pain is to produce a *hope* for Heaven. Read this passage and you will see that Paul uses many feeling words to convey how unpleasant life can be sometimes. But then he contrasts all the pain of this life with "*hope*" "*glory*" and "*freedom*."

God doesn't want us to get confused with where our real home is. Our home is in Heaven. Pain brings that lesson home loud and clear. Without the pain and hard times, some of us would never come to faith in God. Isaiah 55:6 says, "*Seek the Lord while he may be found; call on him while he is near.*"—God is often nearest to us in our pain.

Can we pray and be healed? I wish I could tell you that in every case this would happen, but I can't. The only one qualified to make that decision is God. The main thing we need to remember is that we are truly loved by God and if we have received Christ's forgiveness, then from an eternal perspective everything is going to be all right.—Obviously, it is within God's power to heal us physically. And, in some cases He may.

Sometimes God will take us out of the storm. Other times He takes the storm away from us. But more often than not God walks *through* the storm with us. Concerning death itself, a prayer I pray for myself is: "*Lord, when the time in my life comes that I can bring you greater glory through my death than through my life, then I want you to take me, but not before.*"

If physical well-being were a sign of spiritual maturity, then anyone with physical ailments or handicaps would be second-class Christians. That is simply not what scripture teaches. Some of God's greatest saints have had handicaps. Fanny Crosby, whose hymns have touched millions, was blind. She was the one who wrote that classic hymn of the faith, *What A Friend We Have In Jesus*. She was once asked by Dwight Moody, the great American evangelist, "*If you could have one wish on this earth what would it be?*"—Everyone expected her to say, "*I'd like to receive my sight.*" *Instead she said, "I'd like to remain blind the rest of my life so that the first face I see will be the face of my Lord."*

The apostle Paul most likely had severe eye problems (II Corinthians 12:1-10; Galatians 6:11). Not all illness is linked to sin or unforgiveness (e.g., II Corinthians 12:7-10; John 9:2-3; I Timothy 5:23; II Timothy 4:20). While physical illness *may* be a sign of spiritual problems (eg., I Corinthians 11:30), that is not always the case. Sometimes illness has nothing to do with our sin (John 9:1-3).

While I do not know whether God will heal any of us at any given time, I want to re-emphasize the fact that God will always do what is right. Think with me. Do you believe God loves you unconditionally?—The answer is, "Yes." God loves us with a perfect love. [The Greek word is *agape* love.] Secondly, is God all powerful? "Yes." [If you

doubt that look at the universe He created.]—Now, put these two concepts together: God loves us unconditionally, and He is all powerful. What this means is that all of the love, and all of the power behind the whole universe, is focused on loving us to the degree that we are able to receive it.—Don't pass over this lightly. Think about it. This thought can revolutionize the way you think about God.

If you have given God control of your life, then your life and your body are no longer your own, but His [Romans 12:1,2; I Corinthians 6:20]. You are in good hands. Paul wrote in Philippians 1:21-22, “so . . . now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.”—For the believer, death is not a thing to dread, but is rather our ticket home, into the arms of the One who loves us and died for us (Acts 7:55-59).

We need not grieve as those who have no hope. (See I Thessalonians 4:13-18.)

11. Is salvation universal?

“There is no final salvation. There is no intermediary between God and you but your own mind.” [“Unity: A Quest For Truth,” Butterworth, p. 52.]

“Undoubtedly, all of us have at some time been exposed to a theology that presented the blood and thunder of God and the hereafter...a final ‘judgment’ when the books are balanced...Sensible people have always rejected this ridiculous picture . . .” [“Unity: A Quest For Truth,” Butterworth, p.67.68.]

Do you know why it is *not* a ridiculous picture? Because it is a picture painted by Jesus.

Are there consequences for the choices we make? Will there be judgment some day? Based on the teachings of Jesus there will be. There may be *hell* to pay for those who choose evil, such as Hitler did. And, there will be final salvation for those whose sins have been forgiven.

You may struggle with the thought, *“But what you say seems so narrow. It seems unfair. What about all the sincere people in other religions? Are they going to hell because they don't believe in Jesus?!”*—All I can say is that ultimately God will do what is right. Going by what God has revealed in his Word, I cannot tell you how it will be for those who have not heard about Christ. I can tell you that for those who know about God's salvation through Christ, if they reject Him, they will not inherit Heaven. I know that seem harsh, but this is clearly what the Bible teaches. [See John 1:12; 14:6; I John 5:11-13; etc.]

Rather than questioning the severity and apparent harshness of God, maybe we should start questioning the severity of sin. Think of all the evil in this world and how much God has seen and put up with. Can you imagine the holy hatred God must have toward evil, knowing what could have been, what should have been, but wasn't because of man's warped choices? Ask yourself, *“What would make it necessary for a holy God to go to such extreme lengths to win mankind back to himself, that he would enter this world and willingly die for the sins of the world?”* According to scripture, God loved us so much that he entered this world for the express purpose of dying for the sins of the world [Isaiah 53; John 3:16; Acts 2:23, Romans 5:8, etc.]. Now that is love.

Further, the doctrine of hell and just retribution answers the ultimate question of justice. How could a holy God just sweep sin under the carpet and pretend it never happened, especially if those committing the sin refuse his pardon and forgiveness?

To live in a world where there would be no consequences, no reward for good behavior, or no consequences for bad behavior, would be more like hell than Heaven. Imagine a world where it made no difference whether you loved or did not love, where the rapist would get an identical reward as a Mother Teresa. Wouldn't you cry out for justice? A friend of mine in Unity once told me she could not believe a God of love punishing anyone, but in the next breath she told me that child molesters should be punished. What her heart longed for was justice. I think we can all relate.

[For more on these topics read: *“The Case For Faith”* by Lee Strobel, and *“Making Sense Out Of Suffering”* by Dr. Peter Kreeft.]

According to many passages in the Bible, some day we will all stand before God, either forgiven or unforgiven. Jesus himself said, *“The Father loves the Son and has placed everything in his hands. Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him.”* [John 3:35,36. See also John 3:16-18.] As mentioned, Jesus talked about Hell more than all the other Bible writers put together. Not to choose God, and accept his offer of forgiveness, is to choose a life of eternal separation from Him [Daniel 12:2; Revelation 20:11-15; II Thessalonians 1:8-9; Matthew 13:40-43]. God is serious when it comes to sin. God hates and judges sin. If we refuse his forgiveness, and we hang on to our sin, we will die with our sin, like people refusing to get off the Titanic. If there were any other way, Jesus would not have had to die. There is no other payment for sin acceptable to God other than the death of Jesus on the cross. The apostle Peter told a crowd of Jews, *“Salvation is*

found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved" [Acts 4:12]. Christ himself said, "I am the way, and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." [John 14:6].

Hell doesn't sound like a joke to me. [I wish to God it were a joke.]—Hell is the most unsettling doctrine I am asked to embrace as a Christian. Jesus spoke often of judgment, even going so far as to say that on the day of judgment, men will render account for every careless word they've uttered [Matthew 12:36]. John 3:16, the most quoted verse in the Bible, states that those who believe will "not perish" [implying that those who do not believe will *perish*]. Verse 18, just two verses later, says, "Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already . . ." Those who do not believe will perish.

Mr. Butterworth also said, "*The story [in the Bible] includes final 'judgment day' when the books are balanced, and if the balance is found to be in our favor, we go up, and if against, we go down.*" ["Unity: A Quest For Truth," Butterworth, p. 67]. I'm sorry, but while this may be the teaching of the Qur'an [Koran], it is not the message of the Bible. If we commit just one sin we're still guilty. It is sort of like the man who said, "*But judge, look at all the people I didn't kill!*" No amount of good works could atone, or pay for, the evil we *have* done. Rather, what we need is a Savior. Our good works will never get us to heaven.

Ephesians 2:8,9 says, "*For it is by grace [something undeserved] you have been saved [from hell], through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.*" [brackets mine]

Romans 3:23 says, ". . . for all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God."

Romans 6:23 says, "*For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*"

And lastly, Romans 5:8 says, "*But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*" [Romans 5:8].

Mr. Butterworth said, "*There is no final salvation. There is no intermediary between God and you but your own mind.*" ["Unity: A Quest For Truth," Butterworth, p. 52]. I'm sorry, but this is not true. We cannot think our way into God's presence. Rather we come through Jesus who is our mediator. The apostle Paul wrote, "*For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.*" [I Timothy 2:5]. If what Jesus says is true, then unlike what Mr. Butterworth says, there is a final salvation, and it is found through the person of Jesus Christ and his shed blood.

Speaking very frankly, either scripture is wrong and misleading, or else the shed blood of Jesus Christ is a reality, and our response to it determines our eternal destiny: Heaven or hell. I am all for being sensitive, tolerant, and as politically correct as possible, but truth is truth and Christ's work on the cross, if true, must be proclaimed no matter how people respond. Salvation is not to be found in some idol-filled Hindu temple with demon-looking gods, nor by following Buddha's Enlightened Way, nor in yielding to the teachings of Muhammad. If salvation could be earned any other way than through the cross of Christ, then Christ died needlessly. We could tell God, "*You made a mistake. We've found another way to Heaven other than through the cross of Christ.*"—The weight of evidence and the message of scripture, is that our choices do matter and that there will be eternal consequences, whether good or bad, Heaven or hell. [Revelation 20:10-15].

CONCLUSION

Allow me to close with the following illustrations:

I once had a patient tell me she didn't feel good enough to go to Heaven. I said, "*You're right. That's why we need a Savior.*" I then told her, "*It is like the brother and sister who had gotten their school pictures. The sister was complaining about how bad her pictures were. She said, 'These pictures just don't do me justice. Her brother replied, 'You don't want justice. you want mercy!'*"—How true. While the God we read about in scripture is a God of incredible holiness and justice, he is also a God of mercy and forgiveness. The following story illustrates the love of God and what I've been trying to explain.

The story is told of a woman who received a phone call from the emergency room of a hospital late one night stating that her dad might be dying. She hastily threw on some clothes, and began frantically driving the 200 miles to where her father was. As she was going through a small southern town, she looked in her rear view mirror, and there was a police car chasing her. Because she was going so fast, the officer didn't merely give her a ticket, he arrested her. The next day she appeared before the county judge. As he looked at the officer's report, he said, "*Ma'am, do you realize you were going almost 90 miles per hour in a 35 mile an hour speed zone!? Your fine is either \$300 or three days in jail.*"

The young woman said, "*No, your honor, you don't understand. I don't have \$300 with me, and I can't spend*

three days in jail. I must see my father. He's dying!" The judge said, *"I'm sorry too, young lady, because the law says you must pay \$300 or spend three days in jail!"*

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

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

I once visited a hospice patient, an old hillbilly-sort of fellow who lived in an old farm house back in the sticks. He'd not been to church in over seventy years. I asked him, *"John [not his real name], this is a big question, but how are you doing spiritually? Do you feel at peace with God?"* He responded, *"No, I think I'm going to that other place [hell]."* I then asked him if he'd heard the story Jesus told about the prodigal son [Luke 15]. He said, *"No."*

So, I proceeded to tell him the story of the young man who took his share of his father's inheritance and left home at an early age, where he proceeded to waste all his money in wild living. Then, Jesus said, a famine hit the land and before long the young lad hit bottom. Mustering his courage, he decided to return to his father, like a dog with its tail between its legs, totally whipped. The Bible says that while the young man was still a ways from home, the father [representing God] saw him, ran to him, hugged and kissed him, put a ring on his finger, a robe on his back, killed the fatted calf, and threw a party.

I told John, *"Do you know that, to my knowledge, the only time the image is ever used of God running in the Bible, is when He ran to that son, hugged him, and welcomed him home?"* Then I said, *"John, if you want to know how God feels about you, that's it. It is never too late. Better late than never."* Then I asked, *"John, are you ready to come home? Are you willing to come back to God?"* He thought it over and finally said, *"Yes."*—I then shared a prayer with him and invited him to pray along with me, which he did. Two days later he died. I fully expect to see him when I get to Heaven.

The prayer I shared with him went something like this: *"Dear Lord Jesus, I thank You for loving me. I am sorry for the sin, and pride, and lack of trust that has kept me from You. I believe You died on the cross and rose again to pay for my sin which has separated me from You. As best as I know how, right now, I place my life in Your hands. I invite You to come into my life. Forgive me of my sin and make me the person You want me to be. Calm my fears, carry my burdens, and open my heart to receive Your love. Thank You for hearing this prayer. Amen."*

Another woman, a hospice patient of mine and a member of Unity church, had a dramatic spiritual encounter. Years ago she had left her Christian denomination because of the hypocrisy she had seen, and became agnostic. Later, she joined Unity, and while she loved her friends there, there remained a deep spiritual void. As we talked at length, I never *preached* to her, but I would try to answer her questions as honestly and straight forward as I could; much as I've attempted to do in this paper. One day she let me know that she had thought it over and decided that she would like to recommit her life to Christ. And she did. From then on she was a changed person. Where there was an emptiness there was now peace and a sense of God's presence. Before she died she asked me to preach her funeral at her Unity Church. She wanted me to share with them the peace she had found in Christ.

To my pleasant surprise the people at Unity were respectful and accepting of what I had to say. I could tell I made a few people uncomfortable, but as a whole I was warmly received. My sermon was based on the "self-evident" truths mentioned at the front of this booklet. Those who had seen this patient the last few weeks of her life had seen the change which occurred in her as she yielded her life to Christ and invited him to become her Lord and Savior. I have no doubt that I shall one day see her in Heaven, and what a joyous reunion that will be.

I close with the words of Jesus. He said, *"He who comes to me, I will never cast out."* [John 6:37] The question is, *"Will you come?"*—There is no single question of greater importance that you will ever have to answer in this lifetime. It is one thing to have Jesus as your hero, your role model. It is quite another thing to have a personal relationship with him, to intimately know him. I have tried to lay out the alternatives as lovingly, and persuasively as I can. I urge you to check everything I've said against the Bible. If you are willing to say, *"Yes,"* to Christ's invitation, may I encourage you to pray the prayer I shared with John. The words are not magical. The important thing is that

they come from your heart.

C.S. Lewis once said, “*Joy is the serious business of Heaven.*” I believe this with all my heart. Incredible, eternal joy awaits those who are adopted into the family of God. My prayer is that you will know his joy, both now and eternally. May his peace be yours.

—With love and respect, Timothy Cross.