
TALK THEM INTO IT

The Truth about Making Christians

JONATHAN FISK

DARK SHORE

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“Scrawl runes upon your gates, and let the spittle flow!”

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TRUST JESUS

For you, and your friend, and your enemy too.

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LET ME SUGGEST

You do *not* highlight, but instead jot light notes on a scratch paper as you read this book. Aim to take a tip or two for each chapter. (They are short for that reason!)

Then, before you next come to read, take a moment to translate, clean up, and elaborate on your previous notes.

You will find a world of understanding opening up beneath you.

This technique is called “smart noting,” though what you call it does not matter. Do it, and you will 10x your comprehension, absorption and application of the material in this book.

But smart noting is not what this book is about, because I full stopped writing a book about smart noting in order to use the smart noting theory to write this book *for you*.

Because the content of this book is the most important content in the entire world.

It has changed your life already.

It will again.

CHRISTIANITY PROMISES CONVERSION

IT'S NOT HARD

NOT IF BY hard you mean complex.

You don't need an array of expertise, though you will need a bit of beggar's grit.

It takes discipline to engage your patience in a conversation with a mind that is hostile to God. But you must do so, if you are ever going to help the people you know ask and answer the important questions of life together.

This is a "how to" book for learning what the Holy Spirit is doing today. It is a simple manual for getting people baptized into the Kingdom of Jesus:

You talk them into it.

YES

YOU CAN TALK people into being Christian.

Quite honestly, that's the only way it ever happens.

One might nitpick about the power of prayer, the movements of the Spirit, the regeneration of baptism, or the love by which the world ought know we are Christians. But none of that does any good to the perishing. As much as our love might prompt the world's inquiry, or our prayers may bend God's sovereign ear, or the Spirit might prepare men's hearts, no saint of the heights nor sinner of the depths comes to be a Christian without hearing the life and the deeds of Jesus, the Nazarene.

WHERE IS THE DEBATER OF THIS AGE?

THE AGE we live in is a white noise monstrosity of shouting and soundbites. Conversation is rarely about being clear, much less about discovering what is right. Rather, it is most often a game of winning and a show of trivial one-upmanship.

But that is no excuse for sensible Christians to slack off on redeeming the time.

At the very least, we must ourselves be interested in truth being true. For if truth is otherwise only in the eye of the beholder, then so also is the ability to authentically share a sunset.

But as we shall see, it is not only the “reasons” the unbeliever gives against believing that must be explored, but more importantly the one false religion which lurks beneath his many pompously wiki-parroted, flesh-slathering “excuses.”

THERE IS NO CHRISTIAN MARTIAL ART

CHRISTIANITY IS the full-spirited embrace of a martial life.

Christianity is the religion of honest suffering.

One does not demonstrate fear and trembling while reclining on a cushion. And one is less likely to speak out loud the words of eternal life if one has never known the fear of the Lord.

Christianity is martyrdom, or it is little more than a parlor game for the effete.

Christianity is *witness*. It is not the personal testimonies of men, but the certain words of the Living God.

Christianity does not have a martial art because it is against the martial life. Christians are no more pacifists than we are barbarians. We will aim so as to safely disarm. We will preserve, even if it means sacrificing.

Christianity learns freely from the common sense wisdom of all martial arts, and gladly remains a disciple so as to teach what all the masters cannot know:

The goal is not to kill the opponent. The goal is to *deliver* the final word.

FOR THE SAKE OF CONFESSING CHRIST

WE DO NOT DEFEND the existence of God any more than a man defends himself to the protestations of an ant. The asserted reign of Jesus Christ in his public resurrection from the dead is all there need be.

He is the banner. He is the ensign. Not his name only, but also his deeds. Not his life only, but also his crucifixion. Not mere words alone, but most certainly by the power of words.

CONFLICT AVOIDANCE IS THE DEFINITION OF COWARDICE

WHEN THE SPIRIT of the Holy God is at work, conflict is not allowed to fester in the shadows. For the path of Jesus, if anything, is reconciliation. The conscience set free in Christ's bloody outpouring cannot long bide idly by while the sun burns and another generation of Western Christians watch the West fade into the white noise sea.

Telling the truth is both a duty and a virtue.

It is as well a great game.

Finally, it is also a spiritual warfare.

It is a war of mind-killing, an ordeal of shame-letting, a heaven at the foot of a cross.

THE IMMEDIATE THING TO DO IS...

START NOW.

Decide that you are finished being a quietist Christian.

Decide you are finished settling for a lukewarm version of your religion.

Decide to believe what you already know to be true for everything that it's worth.

Emblazon it in your conscience that living in the safety of shadows is for suckers. It is the complete fool who does not know his own God's words, yet supposes he shall convert others to follow as well.

Decide that the heritage of immortal glory, the fact that adopted into the bloodline of Jesus you now **cannot die**, is worth immeasurably more than the potted-meat of clinging to and fearing this life's storms and calms.

Confess, and do not deny, but confess that **grace is a free gift**, the receiving of which is also the giving of it all away again.

One cannot be a Christian and not imitate Christ.

One cannot imitate Christ without speaking about him.

FIRST WORLD CHRISTIANS ARE FRAGILE

THERE ARE few demographics more risk-averse, both as struggling 21st century organizations, and as ingrained prejudices of cultural fear, than “white” Anglo-Saxon Protestantism.

White people are afraid of *everybody*.

That’s why so many still cling to their puritanical strategies even long after shedding their original Christian veneer.

But more than this, television has made us weak.

And stupid.

And, worse than both, *numb*.

The worst thing you can do to a modern man is fail to make him laugh.

We are pitiful daisies, swift to wither without entertainments raining down upon us like manna from above.

But...

WE'RE NOT DEAD YET

THE CHURCH of Jesus Christ doesn't snuff out just because it smolders for a generation or six.

Peddlers can dance for the children to scoff at them, and it is not up to us to stop them.

But it *is* up to us, you and me and any other simple Christian of honest faith and biblical commitment, to stand upon the ruins of this dusk of a new dark age, as the coals of post-colonial, post-institutional, post-fake-news modern dystopia of an era.

CONVERSION RESULTS FROM CONVERSATION

CONVERSIONS

THAT A MAN BECOME aware he is a Christian is the work of only one person within this age: the Holy Spirit of Jesus Christ.

For the washing of “regeneration and renewing” that makes unbelievers into Christians is the Holy Spirit’s operation upon all mankind, as Saint Titus is taught by Saint Paul.

This operation is that which the faithful say the Lord speaks of in the seventeenth chapter of Saint Luke, wherein he says that men who have done their duty deserve no profit for it. In the end, they have only done what they were created to do.

What fool rewards the chair he has built for being itself?

Here, the Christian person is not only the creation of Almighty God (that is, the one whom God has created), but also his redemption (that is, the one whom God has redeemed).

The Christian, though not the cause of salvation from

death, is nonetheless a member of full participation in its effects.

This action affects itself, not outside, but inside the heart of the Christian.

This action is caused not inside, but outside the heart of the Christian and pagan alike, in the substantial speaking of the words of everlasting life by the risen man, Jesus of Nazareth.

NOBODY WINS MORE PEOPLE FOR JESUS BY TRYING HARDER

WORDS TRAVEL one mind at a time.

Start now.

But don't become the wrong kind of zealot.

This will not be complex ,but neither will it be trivial. Every young boy is a pup spoiled for war until the taste of real war spoils him. And worse for wear still if he is not spoiled at all, but infused with that spirit that lives and loves to hate his likeness and brother.

This will be simple. But it will not be easy.

Remember, **consistency** is more important than flare or speed. You can't rush wizardry and no conversation should be a race. Slow turns out to be pretty smooth, and smooth, especially in a pinch, turns out to be plenty fast enough to matter.

LET YOUR COMMON SENSE BE EVIDENT TO ALL

KEEP IT SIMPLE.

Fear no man.

In everything, by whisper and groan, pray for the dying men.

With thanksgiving in your heart for Jesus, beg for the souls of your countrymen, your children, and the age.

The peace, which God alone declares, shall guard your heart in Christ Jesus' promises, bold as water, thick as blood.

For whatever is noble, and whatever is true, whatever is just, and whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, and what may be of good report, if there is any virtue in any thing, whatever be then worthy of man's praise, meditate on these things as such beloved creations of God which, you, his redemption incarnate, may now see as the bridge of trust-building between yourself and all opponents to the Gospel.

BEING KINDLY CURIOUS NEVER LOSES

WHAT YOU SAY and how you say it are a marriage that we shall call *communication*.

Neither what you say alone, nor how you say it alone, is possible. Your words and your delivery are one.

But you spoke. Someone listened and got upset even though you didn't mean it that way.

That is what some call *miscommunication*, but which I prefer to call *Babel*.

Babel is a curse. This is not a myth but a true and spiritual binding that the sovereign God-King of gods has lain upon humanity. Some might complain about the unfairness of this. The trick is that the alternative was to allow our universally cataclysmic failsafe feature to run its course: evil eats itself.

The point is that Christianity teaches the sad fact that God is constantly sustaining a supernal jinx on our every conversation. It is the finest of Derrida-Dadaist heavenly flummoxing. The resulting cacophonous admixture of narcissistically well-meant intentions and deliveries is

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much, much better than humanity becoming so smart we self-destruct.

Thank you, Jesus.

THE SPIRIT AND BODY OF MAN ARE INDISTINGUISHABLE

ALL TALK of the soul apart from the body is Marxist gibberish (or, Grecian, if you prefer a more Republican antagonist).

Your mind, your emotions, and the chemistry of their (*your!*) physical design, are a glorious singularity.

You are not divisible.

When your body bleeds, it is your *spirit* that hurts.

When your spirit grieves, it is your *body* that feels it.

The Buddha says you are nothing, and the universe is one and all.

The Christ says the Almighty made you out of the universe, combined with living breath by God's Spirit, but not without also being a being *of* earth.

You pray with your body, or you will not pray with your mind.

You confess with your mouth, or you do not believe it is so.

HOW YOU SAY AND WHAT YOU SAY ARE ONE, BUT NOT THE SAME

PEOPLE HEAR what you say by means of how you say it. This is why you are more likely to buy a tool from a nice salesman.

The delivery of words and meaning are one and the same in how we experience them. But in practice and learning, they are two completely different things.

Many smart people are complete idiots.

Even fools are thought wise if they learn to hold their tongues.

The father's duty to his family is to learn: a) what to teach with knowledge, and b) how to speak with wisdom.

The Christian's duty to his God is to learn: a) what to tell the world that you believe, and b) how to not be an arse about it.

YOU CAN'T TALK IF YOU DON'T LISTEN

IN ORDER TO speak with a friend, there must be a binary reality: that is, there must be two people who can both do two things: talk and listen.

This means that the first lesson of good talking is to learn how to ask a good question.

This is why small talk is so boring. Few people have learned to ask any questions at all.

In order to befriend the mind that is set against Christ, you must learn to ask the most important questions. This cannot be learned with a checklist. It is the art of listening to a friend. It takes time.

Yet genuine curiosity in an opponent's core creeds, your willingness to hear and understand his meaning and his life's needs, is the shadowed pathway on which your own confession shall shine as bright as day without your much even trying.

DIPLOMATICS IS WHO YOU ARE, WHAT YOU SAY, AND HOW YOU LOOK

TO ALLOW ourselves as Christians to believe that we are free to wander blithely about, living generally selfish and fractured lives, as if our words and deeds do not matter to the faith and salvation of both us and our children is the great catastrophe of the American Christian century.

The idea that we could dance with the devil, let him pep us up with industry, and croon us to sleep with vinyl, and it would not affect us was (and remains) lunacy.

“Come out from her, my people,” does not mean *“follow crazy loners into the wilderness.”* But it does mean that there should be a clear distinction in your ways and mannerisms in life from the current version of the apostate culture around you.

You cannot win a war against denim or pot, for God did not institute it.

But you had damned well better win your war against failing to say the Creed, the Lord’s Prayer, and the Ten Commandments out loud in the morning, and all that such a life of faithful speaking implies: by promises pure and

CONVERSION RESULTS FROM CONVERSATION

holy, you shall awaken, mind freed from mental slavery, living a bodily life which believes it more and more, no matter how large the raging infernos grow.

DIPLOMACY IS DIPLOMATICS WITH AUTHORIZATION

CHRISTIANITY IS and has always been an aggressively pacifistic religion when it comes to its divine commissioning to fill the earth and subdue it by doing nothing more than repeating Jesus words and rituals to each other.

Conversion is not the strategy but the mission. It is also exclusively the prerogative of God to enact.

A holy manna of blessing is being poured out upon mankind.

The strategy is not sales, but assault.

The assault is not physical, but verbal.

The verbs are neither demanding nor abusive.

The arsenal is a radical piece of good news.

Our mouths are the vessels by which he is enacting this great salvation among us.

HE IS RISEN

THE DIPLOMAT'S power and purpose is his office.

An officer is an official who has been charged with an office (whether or not there is a copier to help get the task done).

The task is the point of an office, and the office is the authorization to do the task.

God makes a baby, and father and mother are officially bound. This means there is much work to do in an office, but the work itself is not the office.

The office is the official authority.

The official authority of the diplomat is the will of the power that sent him.

When it comes to asserting, and reasserting, the historic fact that Jesus of Nazareth is risen from the dead, thereby announcing the transaction of buying the universe at the ultimate blood price from this age's Dark Prince, Jesus has authorized *everybody*.

MY SHEEP HEAR MY VOICE

THIS DOES NOT MEAN that all Christians are authorized to do all things.

But it does mean that there is only one thing that makes a Christian, and that is the same thing which sustains a Christian: talk about the life, death, resurrection, ascension and return of the everlasting King of all men, Jesus, the Christ.

This is deep enough to never finish learning.

But you only start really learning once you start to talk about it.

WE MUST LEARN TO CONVERSE IN MEANINGFUL AND CONGENIAL DEPTHS

ALL DIPLOMACY REQUIRES:

1. A true exchange of information
2. Potential for ulterior motive
3. Consistent enough return to engage again

You won't long be friends with someone who never follows through, who lies 7% of the time, and who brings no real substance to anything ever.

Your goal in the diplomacy of our Lord is to give away the best and truest information that there is. But in order to do this well, you will need the discipline to handle two things:

1. Knowing the most basic knowledge yourself.
2. The training to enter a conversation armed to listen well enough, and ask enough of the right questions, in order to open up the opportunity to speak it.

Some fools will whine that this might be “manipulative.” But they still watch TV, so we will leave them under their bridges and remember that these are the simple steps one must take in learning how not to be a jerk to his

friends. Those who complain about teaching such things can only either be:

1. Entirely ignorant of their possibility (i.e., “not being a jerk”).
2. Preferring the information lay buried (i.e., “liking the fact that you get to be a jerk and no one notices”).

NO CHRISTIAN SEEKS TO MANIPULATE ANOTHER SPIRIT, EVEN (AND ESPECIALLY) AN EVIL ONE

ALL CHRISTIANS SEEK to benefit and build up all, according to the divine orders so readily observed by all creation, and also revealed with such poetry in the prophets and apostles.

A true exchange of knowledge cannot occur without the genuine exercise of *self-control*.

Self-control is not a spiritual gift the Holy Ghost gives to some Christians, but not others. It is one elemental outgrowth of the organic resurrection of your body through faith alone.

It is less that faith without works is “dead,” as that faith without works is *not* faith.

Self-control is also not faith. It is willpower.

You will do well to start using yours on the things that matter, like how to listen to people you talk to, in order to formulate a follow up *question*.

DISCERNMENT OF ULTERIOR MOTIVES

REQUIRES PATIENCE.

You will not get it right until you've learned how to get it wrong and pivot.

Bringing consistent returns to your relationships with others should be the easy part for you. You claim to be a Christian after all. Even if you are not a gem about it, ensuring that your “yes” means “yes” and your “no” means “no” is beyond no man but a depraved liar (and by that, I mean a man intent on remaining so).

Christians will not be depraved liars, but honest fools if nothing else, with eyes on the empty tomb and feet at the foot of the cross, and a world laughing and burning around us while we pray.

They will not know our love by our niceties, but by our fidelity, both to them and to each other.

For in our Lord, there is no darkness at all.

IF THEY HATE YOU, THAT'S JUST WHAT JESUS SAID WOULD HAPPEN

SO GET USED TO IT.

Life is not fair, and thank God or we'd all already be burning in hell.

Now, what's not fair is for you to whine about it every time you have to suffer a little public shame, as if anything in life were actually about you and your feelings to begin with.

Your feelings are a gift from God. All of them. Even the hurt ones.

But your feelings are not life. They are not even you. They are a way that you feel. For the moment, usually.

The moment of shame when someone scolds you and shames your person because you have said something that Jesus said to say is just that.

A moment.

In which they hate Jesus so much that their religion demands that they hate you too.

EMOTION AND REASON ARE LOVERS

THE HUMAN BREATHES for the sake of three things:

1. His heart
2. His mind
3. His body

These three cannot be separated. You are all three and they will not be taken from you except in death.

What the mind knows to be true, the heart must feel, whether with ill motive or true.

What the heart feels to be true, the body must incorporate, whether for the worse or for the better.

What the body incorporates, the mind must eventually understand, if not today, then at the judgment.

Trust will let neither feeling, nor reason, nor their conflicting results in your life, tell you that who you are is something other than what God has surely said of you.

Heart, mind and body join on the act of believing, which is itself a passive response that the Holy Spirit creates every time he speaks,

“He is risen.”

**TO CONVERSE IS TO MUTUALLY
CAPTURE**

WITHOUT CLEAR TERMINOLOGY

WE HAVE NOTHING TO SAY.

Any conversation you have with anyone needs to be in a language that they understand.

If you are a Christian, that means you should be most interested in learning the language of your opponent. By this I do not necessarily mean Swahili or French. Rather, I mean the more subtle nuances of your mother language, wherein disagreement often hides behind the complex meanings of words. If when you both say, “apple,” one means *apple* and one means *orange*, until you figure that out you will not get much further.

Look at it this way: everyone is living in their own heads, walking around all day like floating personal universes, not a two of them ever more than a touch overlapping in experience.

Nobody feels it the same way you do, and that is because God is awesome. Each of our lives was tailor-crafted by him to be so, unique in all the glory of an artist at work. It is Babel that gums it all up into confusion.

But the Christian is God’s secret weapon. The Chris-

tian is the undiscovered country come early, come incarnate, and come unashamed.

The Christian is already dead. And, as any grave digger can tell you, if the dead are anything besides a festering stench waiting to happen, it's that they are great listeners.

GOOD LISTENING MEANS GOOD ASKING

THE CHRISTIAN KNOWS we enter every conversation with an unbeliever at a disadvantage. He may lie, and we may not.

How then to both protect ourselves from duping, as well as fulfill our duty to announce that the end of the ages has come upon us in meaningful and personal one-to-one ways?

It's as simple as shutting up and taking one or two mental notes.

People assume that silence in a conversation means lack of influence. But it is not the length of a speech that matters, only its impact.

There are many values that learning to wield silence with patience and self-control produce. But the one pertinent here is that it is an act of *assertiveness*. It is the key to a good *offense*. It is not first a tactical delaying, nor meant as a defensive maneuver.

Listening carefully is the beginning of your *all-out assault*.

HOW?

LISTENING IS the aggressive reconnaissance necessary in order to clear the battlefield of the unseen tripwires and rigged explosives that always lay buried beneath the power of assumptions.

Like the military crew who stealth out, who “take” and disarm the mine, the actively listening person is hunting for unvoiced assumptions, especially those powerful spiritual ideologies of darkness, such as those which attack marriage or require abstinence from certain foods for spiritual reasons (strange, indeed, for the evolutionist to believe!).

The goal is to listen for the unique or specialized words your pre-friend uses, those words you wouldn't have used. Zoom in on that “foreign” tongue like a laser. This is where you may begin to build your bridges over the river Babel.

TAKE AWAY THE POWER OF ASSUMPTION BY ASKING FOR CLARIFICATION

NO MATTER how many foreign tongue terms you hear your opponent share, zoom in on the most interesting one and ask for more information. “Take” the word and declare it the ground for mutual understanding to be built upon.

Hello, how are you?

I am fine.

Excellent! Pray tell, what means “fine”?

The ultimate goal is to prevent imbalanced assumptions from running the conversation.

You are a Nazi.

Maybe I am? I wouldn't know. Please help me understand, what is a “Nazi”?

In a court of law you can always get yourself declared mad by answering everything with a question. That doesn't mean they won't still eat you.

The point is that our Kingdom is founded on honest wording. Our Lord does not peddle in hidden meanings.

Thus, the dutiful Christian will adopt a personal posture of clear meaning to his words in all his engage-

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ments. And this will be made all the more possible the more he adopts the unbeatable strategy of asking better and better questions.

DISCIPLES ASK

IT DOESN'T MATTER what your discipline is. It is all the same.

There must be a master. He is not a lord of men, but a lord of skill.

There is then a man who envies his skill and aspires to it. If the master will allow it, he then shall be a disciple.

Of course, the first rule for all disciples is to listen. It is a poor sport who cannot hear the whistle or will not hear the coach.

But it is the *power* of the disciple we want for ourselves now. It is the disciple's path to mastery, the final definition of his discipleship.

The disciple stays close enough to the master to have the power to ask still more questions.

WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY THAT?

NOTICE the genius with which our Lord has designed our warfare.

Our discipline is, of itself, everlasting and insurmountable, for he is risen, indeed, never to die again.

As such, we, like the wizard Daniel, have nothing to fear from the many disciplines of men, for they all be religious and false in the same manner, and they all be secular and true within the design Scripture declares as “creation.”

No other philosophy may be quite so bold, though many have learned to mimic its divinity.

The point is that Christians are supernaturally unique in our freedom to honestly explore the religions of others as a disciple might, without fear of it ever being anything more than another spin on the devil’s ancient heresy.

Knowing the difference *is* the battle. The Christian truth is to be known already. The pagan truth is free to be learned, in order to clarify, remove confusion about differences, seek for commonalities, and gladly find similarities.

This only happens when you ask.

ONE RULE: MANY STYLES: PICK ONE

WHAT DO you mean by that?

How did you come to that conclusion?

Can you clear up that part about...?

What do you think about...?

Can you help me understand...?

What confuses me is...?

Have you ever considered...?

PICK one and practice it at home. The bonus power is that in any and every conversation, these questions are a ***sign of respect***. By asking to be the disciple, you have taken the power of directing the conversation by exchanging it for the honor that comes with your opponent being perceived as the master, for that he rightly is.

You have merely admitted it and sat back to receive the liar's best diplomacy for his errors. If he be a remotely honest man, he has also, perhaps not unwittingly, put you in a position to truly help him.

UNITY IS DEFINITION

YOU CAN'T HATE words and make sense at the same time.

You can't believe there is no truth and be practiced at thinking clearly.

We poor sinners certainly can hold contradictory and hypocritical positions, even for a lifetime with both prejudice and ignorance at once.

Miserable is our estate, so much so that we do not smell it.

If you want to have friends, you must learn to talk. You must find it in yourself to listen to someone else in order to find their words and make them your own.

What does that mean? is a spirituality of **precision**. Repeating the opponent's main idea as a question, "*So you believe it is like this, is that right?*" prunes away misunderstanding and enacts the double-bonus of displaying your own integrity as a listener and providing the transparent possibility of having your mind changed.

Christians, according to our definition, **love** having our minds changed. This is because we much prefer to be in

the light than in the darkness. If we must repent, God bless the brother who restored us.

This does not mean Christians expect to have our minds changed on the matter of our Lord's resurrection. It would be like expecting someone to convince you that there are not two continents, or that we all live inside a machine that uses our bodies as batteries while feeding us drugs to make us satiated.

Mythologies are great fun. But we are living in *this* common reality. It is one thing to assert your religion is better because of its many fine ideas. It is quite another to assert that your religion is simply the history we see unfolding before our eyes.

But this is why we ask first. We cannot expect the unawakened to want to join us on this journey of transfiguration, for it is death to his flesh; and his flesh is the only "me" he knows.

That is why this is the Christian duty: that we regenerated, who know better than the zombie hordes of fallen men, put our skin in the game of thrones and altars. Like Elijah of old, we shall not doubt that our promises remain true. Give us only an even field and an honest judge, and Christianity shall raise you from the dead.

DON'T TROLL THE BAIT

THERE IS ALWAYS A STARTING ASSUMPTION. Finding it is the only way to hope for agreement on anything.

But rule number one of finding yourself in a debate with a skeptic is to remember that the goal is not to win. The goal is to agree.

If we are to agree, then let us become the disciples and cede mastery to him for the sake of conversation.

This means you must not answer the scoffer's salvos, no matter how studied you be. Claim the rights of discipleship. Demand definitions.

Just ask another question.

I'm sorry, but there was a lot in what you just said. Can you give me something like an example to talk about?

This is especially important when your opponent is a prejudiced antagonist. In such a case, his goal will always be to assert that the Christian story is flawed. Rather than rise to the defense, simply shrug and ask him to lead you down the more enlightened path of his story.

This is called claiming the **burden of proof**, and it is not rocket science.

**IF SOMEONE TELLS A STORY, IT IS ON THEM TO
DEFEND IT**

ANYONE WHO CHALLENGES the Christian faith does so on the basis of an alternative gospel.

A different story than Jesus' story.

Since he has been so brazen as to assault the private practice of your religion based upon the presumed superiority of his own story, the least he can do is instruct you in the way you should go by illustrating his own gleaming example of enlightened skin in the game.

Do not let him off lightly. It is the presumed story that he must be asked to tell. For in the telling of it, it must come out of the dusty shadows of confirmation bias and stand up to the scrutiny of pragmatic living.

FOR EXAMPLE

NEVER UNDERESTIMATE the completely stronghold-shattering power a simple question can exact:

You are at dinner with friends. An extended acquaintance, whom you don't know well, after noticing you genuflect before eating, says, "Don't you know that there isn't anyone really listening?"

The temptation is to go eye for eye, troll for troll, and let the anger of man rise to God's defense.

But God can defend himself. You only need become the wise disciple and watch.

"No. I didn't know that. What do you mean?"

The silence which will undoubtedly follow will tell all parties in the room very quickly who is the honest man, and who is the cynic. But your goal is not humiliation. Your goal is truth and this man's life.

"I have heard arguments against God's existence, but they have not convinced me that Jesus is not risen from the dead. But I'm certainly open to the possibility of my own errors, being that's sort of the point of Christianity. But please, I'd honestly love to bear your thoughts...."

One need not speak the King's English. One need only care about the other person and believe enough in your own God's proof to comfortably ask as much from those who would contend against him.

Season your conversation so as to help all people, be they friend or foe, earn the right to profess whatever religion they feel confident enough to live without shame.

YOU WILL NEVER “NOT KNOW WHAT TO SAY” IF YOU TAKE GENUINE INTEREST IN PEOPLE’S OPINIONS

THIS IS **EXPONENTIALLY** true for topics of disagreement. The more you disagree and the more willing interest in alternative positions you show, the more the opponent will become interested in your own. (He will possibly assume that you agree with him. A well placed follow-up question, i.e., “*What are your thoughts about [alternate idea]?*” is the antidote for this.)

The real point is that every time you are able to agree on an answer to your question, be it a definition, a term, a point or an entire school of philosophy, you are personally building an actual friendship with this person. Over time, this relationship, sometimes called *social capital*, is the foundation upon which your once-opponent-now-friend will eventually be willing to allow a fair hearing of our Lord’s diplomacy.

GOOD QUESTIONS DON'T GLITTER LIKE GOLD

BUT YOU DO NEED to mine for them.

Sometimes a nugget will be sitting right on the surface, such as jewelry of religious meaning or the label on a piece of clothing. But to build real trust you must build real trust.

You can't fake that. You can't abuse it.

Unless you are a liar.

But then, you are going to hell for that.

For the rest of us Christians who desire to build rather than break trust until we die or the world ends, it is our task to become such excellent disciples of both our own religion and that version of the devil's that we are to meet and learn of in our friends and neighbors, that we are able to assert our own religious promises and insights without ever giving up the role of questioner.

There is no checklist for this. There is only the question, "How long was I able to entertain my friend by listening carefully and learning by asking questions?"

Like every single muscle God gave you, the more you use it, the better you get at using it.

DON'T CHANGE THE TOPIC

CHASING RABBITS WON'T HELP us.

Believe that in due time, and with faithful devotion to your own Christianity, the topic will arise from below, as if your opponent's heart can't help but seek the news of Jesus' resurrection.

We know, of course, that the unbeliever does not seek the Lord, but flees from him. But we also know that he everlastingly seeks self-justification for his life. In this, it is a certainty that any talk of life, given time, will turn to talk of the spirit of man, which is man's religion, unless Jesus gives him the new and redeemed one.

Your conversation, and your opponent's own surprise at needing to ask you questions rather than argue, is the divinely ordained place where that happens, whether your opponent is your wife, your child, your boss or your life-long enemy.

IT'S ALL COMMON SENSE

ASK, don't tell.

You mean, seek specific clarifications by asking perceptive questions rather than just arguing?

Yup.

Capture your opponent's words in order to use them as your own platform, focusing on words you can agree on.

A genuinely curious friendship does this automagically.

You must seek and destroy obscurity and assumption through requests for more explanation.

Remember, few people ever tire of hearing themselves talk.

Never let the lie, the uncertainty, the fake news or the half-truth stand without asking it to step out of the shadows into the light.

Now, we turn to that light: the particularly glorious and universally assumable fact that, wherever our discourses might take us in the world of religions and peoples, the gluttonously atrophied practices of the superstitious rarely, if ever, hold up against just a few questions of common sense.

IT NEVER HURTS TO ASK

ASKING QUESTIONS ALWAYS HAS THE ADVANTAGE

1. *What do you mean by that?* is the fastest and most precise quick-draw possible. Nothing beats a good blaster at your side except a good blaster you can shoot with force every time, right?

2. *Can you say that again?* auto-snipes bald assumptions so naturally that your intended volley to open an easy and honest discussion might inadvertently murder your opponent's position. This will result in a pregnant pause, which itself reveals that the opponent has not thought through his boast.

This is the time for a well-placed and graceful offer of a mulligan on your end. Rephrase your own question as a softball-olive-branch offertory, *I might even have misheard, and I find this fascinating, so, would you mind repeating the question?*

3. *Hmmmm?* avoids giving the wrong answer, doesn't it?

4. *Hub?* means you will never misunderstand the question unless you are trying to, but who would do that?

5. *May I be your student?* makes it impossible for you to be perceived as a social aggressor. Against barbarians and

the civilized alike, this is a powerful posture, don't you think?

6. *May I take a note or two while we chat?* makes you smarter. Write while you listen to manifoldly amplify your mental clarity. Translate those first notes one more time into something more cogent and watch the power of words start to bend space-time to your everlasting advantage. I can understand your skepticism, but have you tried it yet?

7. *Would you tell me more about this?* helps people grow in their own understanding of themselves. Provided you are a true conversant, as opposed to an echo chamber, it is a great, good work to listen and ask kind but probing questions. Can you imagine such a congregational dynamic at your church?

8. In the master/disciple role, the master does most of the work, burning energy combining thoughts and speech, and thereby unable to concentrate as well on other potentially focus-draining tasks like reading your emotions or chewing without choking. You, on the other hand, are free to listen with immense precision, giving full effect to your next seven-word question.

It might be compared to a fight between two boxers, where one may only ever jab, and the other may only ever upper cut to the chin.

That's not a fair fight.

However, if you've never stepped in the ring before, don't expect too many trophies. The diplomatic disciple's work is not inside the conversation, but before and after it, as you attend to and study a true knowledge of your own Christianity.

HE WHO ASKS THE BEST QUESTIONS FINDS THE BEST ANSWERS

NONE COULD ANSWER his questions a word, so from that day on, they no longer gave him opportunity to speak.

Jesus, in Matthew 22 shows the almighty power of asking the right questions.

Now we want to build on another almighty power: **creation.**

Existence itself is proof to you that there is a reality, and that 95% of it appears to make common and obvious sense.

This is called the law of non-contradiction, or, more commonly, what we mean by the word **reason** or **logic.**

As the atheist well believes, logic is all but unassailable when it is able to guard itself from confirmation bias (or, the tendency to selectively remember what we'd rather believe.)

It is that very bias that kind, logical questions are a magical weapon for exposing.

ASSUME YOUR OPPONENT LIVES ON THE SAME PLANET YOU DO

THIS MEANS THAT EVERY DAY, regardless of his professed mythologies, he actuates his life by means of common sense.

He may boast about how there is no up or down since we live on a globe, but he has no skin in that game. It is a pissing contest for sophists.

He doesn't run home and throw all his groceries in the air, shouting, "There is no downside!" No, he puts the bags **down**, then empties them by putting their contents up and over and every which where.

This means that **common sense** is something he assumes to be true.

This is an advantage, both because it **is** true, and because your religion has an explanation for why we should trust it, whereas his mythology does not.

THE ONLY WAY TO SEE THIS IS A TEST DRIVE

YOU MUST TEST your mettle and you must temper steel. To do any less with your religion is to tacitly admit that you think it *is* just a mythology after all.

Christianity, being history rather than mythology, is bold in its claims and the ability to test them. Find the bones of Jesus and we are, indeed, still in our damnation then....

But Christ is raised. This is the test: false religions cannot stand up to the same, simple scrutiny which the facts of the resurrection of Jesus demand.

All the more, the only way to truly learn this is to test it out yourself, as Jesus said in Saint Matthew 10, "*Whoever confesses me before men....*"

SELF-DECEPTION IS NOT LOGICAL

ASKING honest questions can help all of us overcome our inherent confirmation bias. Being turned inward on ourselves from birth, humans are *concupiscently* bound to personally developed prejudices.

This can be about the human rights of another person or the value of broccoli. Confirmation bias is real, and we all demonstrate it. It's what the bible calls "sin."

Logic, while it may be used in part by the clever to weave excuses for their spiritual biases, is never the true foundation of falsehood. Rather, it is something of an anti-lie jackhammer.

THIS LIE WILL SELF-DESTRUCT

THE DEFINITION of a lie is that it is a claim for truth that must defeat itself.

This sentence cannot be true.

Weird, isn't it?

It's weird because, in a cosmic way, it doesn't exist. It's just a bunch of noise given power by the fallen state of your good human imagination.

But the definition of a lie is that it can't be true. It doesn't exist. It is vapor, until we make it our own.

The awesome part is that words which try to exist in contradiction to reality don't work *except* on humans. The natural design God commanded into creation only bends straight, no matter our huffing and puffing.

As a result, against all lies, reality itself rises to your aid.

EVERY SENTENCE IS A TRUE/FALSE CLAIM

YOU TALK, and sounds to describe reality come out. Your unbelieving opponent hears your question and says, “*True*, because....”

Because we are able to talk about true and false, we may begin applying our agreements as the shared *truths* and *falsehoods* that make us friends.

This means we share a *moral hierarchy* of some kind and agreement that there are true goods and true evils.

This is only common sense. But establishing this foundational level of it will be very important to pinpointing the buttresses in your friend’s moral hierarchy which, gradually, by his own admission, he will reveal to not actually exist.

Talk is cheap, especially among the idolaters.

QUI BONO?

WHO BENEFITS?

Not all biases are created equal. Not all fudging on our personal spirituality tracker is destructive in the same way or at the same pace.

Both lies and truth do have hierarchies of value in themselves.

That value which will always be primary to fallen humans is ***incentive***.

Blood is thicker than water, and a natural man may only be trusted as far as there is either a carrot or a stick involved, and not much further.

This is the key to the mythology of your opponent's personalized pantheon of idolized rights and wrongs. (This is where that pen and paper will really come in handy.) You can always be certain that he will be a reliable witness to his own bias, and without the true God, those biases must eventually come into conflict either with each other, or, just as often, with him.

It is easy to ignore what you don't like when you only eat at smorgasbords.

It's another thing when you insist everyone join you. If that is your myth, then you must still be prepared to make a good case for it if you have any hope of convincing me to abandon mine.

THE PROFESSIONAL LIAR IS ALWAYS AN “EXPERT”

APPEALS TO AUTHORITY are as old as time.

That’s not quite true. They are as old as the fall of man.

But even the devil’s appeal to authority by which he duped Woman and swindled Adam was ultimately an appeal to God’s true existence.

This shall be our breastplate.

There is no appeal to authority that does not also intuitively appeal to a form of God. This appeal you must hunt down and capture with all vigilance, for it will be a dearly guarded, secret chamber of the heart and mind that shall here be exposed as the wound on to which our Christ shall pour the wellspring of his everlasting hope.

The modern lie of the “expert” is the lunacy of assuming that simply because one man has a piece of paper with some fine and squiggled mythology on it about the merry land of Har Vard, he therefore is also equipped to laudably opine on any and every topic by which he might gaslight others.

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A true expert in any field knows well enough the severe limitations of ever attempting to convey expertise to the apprentice. Here, again, truth is less a checklist than ***just the way things actually are.***

THE SCHOLAR WHO SAYS THAT SCHOLARSHIP DOES NOT LIE

Is the greatest liar of all.

Experts and scholars, doctors and lawyers, lovers and haters, children and bunny rabbits are still slaves to their own *incentives*.

Veganism is impossible without supplementation.

Communism is impossible without an organizer.

Birth control consumes and destroys every community which adopts it.

Anarchy is a hypocrite the moment it talks.

“Judge not,” is a funny kind of thing for the Lord and Judge of all to say.

Usually what the proud man thinks it is, is not what he thinks it is.

THIS IS WHERE YOU CAN HELP

IF YOU CAN'T LIVE your mythology without contradicting it, then it can't be held as a common truth, a common sense of the thing.

Talk is cheap, as Saint James tells us in his much misunderstood epistle. Hold a man's words to what he does to see the worth of his religion.

Many people hold contradicting positions on all manner of things throughout life due to confirmation bias. But almost none of us want to think of ourselves that way. We want to believe that we are authentic people in pursuit of the best possible ends.

Obviously there is much disagreement on those ends, but that is the point. Your personal engagement with Christianity is the light shining in the dark places of your friend's life, bringing not only the wisdom of God's Commandments with your lifestyle, but also the grace to admit your own hypocrisies, root out your own contradictions, and repent of any bias but that imputed via the Word of God.

CAN YOU STAND ON YOUR HEAD?

IT IS ADMITTEDLY MUCH EASIER if you can take your head off safely and set it on the floor. Most of us were able to balance on a ball as a kid.

But don't feel left out. The notion is absurd.

The natural fool cannot tell the difference between light and darkness, rock and sand. He can add, and read, and call a spade a spade. But when it comes to his own mythology, there will be a curtain of absurdity over his eyes.

It was ancient aliens! (Ah, yes, a god of the gaps all along.)

The point is to reduce the story to its absurdity by following its implications to their logical conclusions.

It is not a child, it is an embryo? So then, what is the difference between an embryo and a child?

No lie can stand up to the reduction to absurdity line of questioning. Just keep mining for terminology until your opponent must admit that the words embryo and child are both referring to the same common sense reality.

Now, you can have a real conversation about it.

YOU CAN'T THINK FORWARD IN CLICKBAIT

A COMMON QUESTION arises when you help your friend realize that his mythology has advocated two mutually exclusive realities, such as that *racism is bad* and *we are all macro-evolved from a mysterious big bang*.

With only a pinch of knowledge about both topics, you can drive a truck through that contradiction.

So, tell me again how, if we all arose by survival of the fittest, you come by the idea that all humans are now equally fit to survive?

Most people have not thought this through half as much as they have their toothpaste.

The goal is not, *Aha!* But, when your opponent's eyes recognize the impossible juxtaposition, together you can grow in understanding that in an age of white noise, it is easy to forget that facts alone do not make an idea.

CUTTING OFF MUNITIONS

WHEN YOU GO to war against the country that makes your bullets, you have a very short window.

This is why the longer our conversations go, the more Christianity has the advantage. In all true friendships, we expose and rub off our rough edges and oddly exclusive positions. In the meantime, the more words of agreement we capture, the closer we come to the time when the opponent reaches for some more ammo and finds out there is none left.

Again, every conversion will be unique, and there is no timetable. But I can assure you that if you hang around asking good, honest questions long enough, you will together expose *the problem of evil*.

The problem of evil is that evil is a real problem, even for philosophers who prefer to opine that it is a figment of imagination or other drivel.

No one likes its results. No one can explain it. And, by and large, we consider it mostly God's problem. If it's not his fault for making us in it, it's his fault for not getting us out of it.

It all sounds very good, complete with crocodile tears and a pre-written list of demands for after the concession. But just as the problem with having an invisible jet is remembering where you parked it, so also the trick with mythologic complaints about evil is that they need God's help even to attack him.

ONLY A TOTAL FOOL CAN'T COMPARE APPLES TO ORANGES

WE'VE AGREED with our unbelieving friend that we live in a commonsense universe. Hence, we can talk, and converse on new and divergent ideas, and apply them with similar results to our own lives.

We've also seen that in order to do this, that is, *in order to make friendships of any kind*, unbelievers establish a conversationally shared moral hierarchy through an interchange of myth/storytelling, from the mundane to the esoteric.

Both these unique relationships and their unique complaints about God's world's evils have no alternative story to support their existence.

The moment you call anything "good" or "evil," it is up to you explain those words as part of your story about the commonsense universe without contradicting yourself. When you share personal judgments to build friendships or to complain of evils, you step out of the world of "science" and into the world of moral religion.

If you wish to argue that it is a better story to think

there is no God, then you must first go back to the beginning and define your concept of “better.”

But first, you have a larger problem, which is explaining how you suppose for yourself the power to explain to begin with.

REASON IS QUEEN, BUT ONLY IF YOU BELIEVE IT

YOU CAN'T PROVE REASON.

It's marvelous.

You simply must *assume* that life makes sense. Nothing can teach you this. Science cannot study until after you have assumed its ability to reliably do so.

Life is faith. It's just a question of which stories you trust.

If I try to prove reason to be reasonable, I must rely on reason to make the claim. If I assert that the foundation of reason is insanity (like the gurus of the 20th century West), I deserve the collapse of my own house around me as I pull it down.

The Christian is not worried. God made man in his image. He gave us reason and all our senses and still sustains them.

That is not the problem. The problem is explaining the story of common sense without the existence of a Creator.

PUT ALL REASONABLE CLAIMS TO THE QUESTIONING TEST

TO DO SO, you must confess that we live in a binary reality.

That's a way of saying that to know one thing, you must know two things.

To know light, you must know shadow. To know pain, you must know pleasure. To know yes, you must know no.

You must make judgments.

You will. You do.

This is the binary. Yes. No. Left. Right. Sleep. Wake. Stop. Go.

All day, all of us.

But this means that not a one of us is actually a moral relativist. Not a one of us believes that there is no karma, no divine judgement, no going around and coming around.

We all live lives of binary practicality, regardless of our espoused mythologies.

Knowing this, first about your self, and second about your opponent, is a leverage of extreme wisdom. You *already know* his religion is himself and that he is both a poor god and a poor devout.

All your questions need do is empathize with the encroaching despair of his honest answers and their increasingly foreboding implications.

A PERSON DOES NOT LIKE TO KNOW HE IS CHANGING HIS MIND

IT OFFENDS pride to believe of oneself the potential for the worst and most deplorable evils of your own hierarchy.

For this reason, “reasons” for not believing in the Godhead of Jesus of Nazareth are very rarely rational. They are hook and crook excuses, a mishmash of sloppily badgered together memories marshaled mostly in preparation for the very day of judgment their story is laboring so hard to deny the existence thereof.

When kindly examined with the scrutiny of logic, many reveal themselves to be little more than *a priori* prejudices.

GOD DOES NOT CARE WHAT A PERSON LIKES

REGARDLESS OF WHICH mythology taught you to disagree, that does not change the fact that you live in his world.

People of false religion are renters. Of their bodies.

They do all they can to make this sound like a pleasant idea.

But there is not a funeral experience on earth that brings joy to men's hearts.

GOD IS THE ONLY TRUE 0 TO 1

BEFORE THE WHEEL, there were no better wheels.

After the wheel, we're not done yet making more wheels.

The difference between the world with zero wheels and the world with at least one wheel is monumental.

The difference between the world with at least one wheel and the world with at least two wheels is exponentially minimized by comparison.

Once the invention has occurred, everything else is just imitation.

Once a good thing exists, all that remains is the praise of replication.

0 TO 1 IS NON-REPEATABLE

TO CREATE good can only be done by God.

To be good can only be achieved by being created good by God.

This is neither luck nor determinism.

But it certainly works in the Christian's favor.

It means all that we need is the chance to be heard, and all that remains is to announce that the battle is already won.

IT'S JUST COMMON SENSE

LOVE IS NEVER ALONE

“YOU” cannot exist in isolation.

It takes two to tango.

Who you choose to dance with depends on your own *ideals*.

That you have ideals shows you have a *moral compass*. Some things you call “good” and some things you call “bad.” That is, you make *judgments*, and you base those judgments on your ability to read the judgments/ideals of others.

Through the arbitrary hierarchy of your *assumptions*, human relationships exist.

This *natural order* can either be the accident of exotic, deadly chaos, or the intent of a loving Designer.

If, in your mythology, order is the result of chaos without explanation, then you have misdiagnosed either one or the other quite severely.

THE ODDS ARE

IF YOU DO THE MATH, the over/under on the existence of an intelligent, higher, and even “more good” sentience than humans is not even close.

Knowing this won't help much, because no matter how much they opine about the myths of “science” like ancient aliens, most people never liked math.

Most people don't like math because they don't like getting wrong answers.

Most people have their answers before they hear the question.

Some of them grew up in cultish, legalistic homes that made them hate the theory of “God” so much that no matter how privileged and beyond accident everything about our universe proves itself to be, math doesn't heal their pain.

Inheritance is the manner in which your father taught you to see God.

Prejudice and pain are often bedfellows, but that does not excuse the repayment of evil with yet more evil.

Nor does it change the ***words of life***.

The diplomatic disciple does not come to prove or cajole, but simply to be ready for the moment the tables are turned and the student becomes the master; after truly caring about the spirit of your opponent, your friend asks you to give an explanation for the hope that is within you.

What do you say?

YOU MUST KNOW SOMETHING ABOUT YOUR RELIGION

OR IT IS NOT your religion.

THIS LITTLE BOOK WILL NOT...

GIVE you all the knowledge your Christian faith shall discover in the journey our Lord has prepared for you, being a diplomatic disciple and remaining so until the day you dance into your grave with the name of Jesus held high.

You wouldn't want to have an adventure by bullet point, anyway.

BUT THIS BOOK WILL GIVE YOU THE WORDS OF LIFE

WE KNOW that the Holy Spirit is always driving us into the regeneration of a lively and saving faith. We also know that the immediacy of this encounter only happens within the medium of the words of life.

The difficulty is that not all who hear wisdom calling rise to believe it.

But both the Bible and Christian history make plain which words of the religion matter most when it comes to conversion.

Think of it as the keystone, or the biblical rosetta, a doorway into the Bible's history, not its branches, but its root.

The words of life are the daily bread on which all your future hopes rest. They are also the self-same, permanent formula for unleashing the conversion potential of others.

It is easy to forget them. The sin of boredom with God is plentiful among lukewarm Christianity.

It is also easy to forget that they are not only necessary for us to hear to remain believers, they are also ***the only way*** to convert someone to Christianity.

Yet, they are rarely said.

Why? Because the enemy is real, and he would silence you.

Jesus sees this, and loves you.

THE WORDS OF LIFE KILL FEAR

THEY ARE NOT MAGIC, technically.

They are the living breath of God.

Magic is when humans try to make the gods (or God) do something.

Speaking the words of life is not making God do anything.

It is God making you do something.

And that something is “kill fear.”

THERE IS NO FEAR IN LOVE

AND, perfect love anathematizes fear.

When you speak the words of life, the fear you drive out first is your own.

Because you love your opponent, friend or foe, with the love by which Christ has loved you, because the Spirit alone has inspired you to listen to and walk with this other person's pain, your fear of shame diminishes in the sunlight of that resurrection in which you believe the moment you begin to speak it.

YOU NEED NOT SPEAK WITHOUT SELF-DOUBT

BUT YOU MUST BELIEVE what you say, when you say it.

If you need to read the essence of your religion off a notecard in order to remember it, you really can't much expect your opponent to think you yourself have given much commitment to it. Why then should he?

But this is the moment we want.

This is why you have walked with your foe and in his shoes. This is why you have listened to his pain.

You know with abiding conviction that he is no different in his honest despair than you are, and that there is but one, universal antidote.

When two hypocrites tell the truth together, you have the definition of repentance.

THIS IS HONESTY BOOT CAMP

IF YOU HOPE to convert your friends and neighbors to the world's only religion of grace, then you must convert to it yourself!

It's never about you.

It's not about your local congregation, especially not about her budget.

It's about the fact that programs and sales don't work, and we have seen the results of this for years.

You can't trick people into rising from the dead, and no one is going to join the religion of a people who never manage to speak of it simply because it is a great religion.

If you are afraid of speaking out loud about your own religion, then why do you have it? Sounds dreadful.

Anyone who fakes a relationship in order to manipulate another, for any reason, is a wolf, or being led by one.

All other plans, visions, goals, quests, crusades, opinions, ideas, forecasts, hopes, dreams, and gospels are mythologies by definition.

Your religion is not a mythology. It is the common-

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sense questions that cannot fail but pave the way for the words of life to answer.

So, put on your big kid pants and turn the page.

THE WORDS OF LIFE

THE UNAVOIDABLE, living truth and guaranteed toolbox for talking unbelievers into Christianity is:

1. He is risen.
2. You are paid for.
3. You cannot die now.
4. He won't be long anyway.
5. There is water to seal it.
6. There is food to feed it.
7. This is Christianity.

That's it.

Of course, there is much more.

But no, there is not more. Not for conversion. Not for the thick battles of your own dark night of the soul.

When you are in the trenches, you don't want theories and platitudes. You want armor and munitions.

That's what this is.

You don't need to defend it. You don't need to understand its epic depths.

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You just need to believe it.

Over and over again.

I suggest you write it down and post it somewhere you will see it often, such as by the bathroom mirror.

The best toolbox in the world won't do you a lick of good if you forget that it exists.

THE RESURRECTION IS ALWAYS NEWS

EVEN BELIEVERS ARE MADE forgetful by our flesh. In order *to* believe, we need to hear the words, that is, *be filled with the Spirit* over and over again. If they seem simple and dull to you, then you must deeply consider them all the more.

For herein you have not only the words of life for converting unbelievers to Christ, but the same words you need ongoing throughout your Christian life in order to bolster your faithful confidence.

Speaking to yourself in the mirror is tougher than you think. It's doubly difficult to do so while speaking the words of life. Maybe you already know that. If not, it will temper you to try it. You will be alone, but for the angels, and they will not laugh at you. But you will feel silly all the same.

That is the devil. He is not there. He cannot be everywhere at once. But he is your master according to your flesh, that is, the blood-lineage of Adam. This means that you always fear him and his ways, and often seek to protect yourself. It also means that if you have not prac-

ticed talking about Jesus, that you are going to feel awkward looking into the darks of your own eyes and preaching the Gospel to yourself.

That's your flesh dying as you talk. Losing emphasis.

Over time, more and more of the blinders will fall off.

This is what you must rejoice to share: the understanding that faith in Jesus grows one understanding at a time, and every gain makes the angels sing, including your morning renewal.

JUST YOU, THE MIRROR, AND THE ARMIES OF HEAVEN

REMEMBERING how hard it is to remember is the value of the ordeal.

The world is shouting lies, all day every day. Lies to shame you. Lies to silence you. Lies to steal your faith.

So, brushing your hair or clipping your 'stache, since you desire to participate in Christian conversion of others, remember that every day you must convert yourself.

No matter how smart you think you are, you forget things. Lots of things. More than you remember forgetting by an epic long shot.

Starting new every morning will show you how much this impacts your *faith*. It will show you how much your faith *forgets* every day. Every day, this habit will teach you to remember how good it is to be reminded of the words of life.

TALK YOURSELF INTO CHRISTIANITY

EVERY DAY.

Start with the words of life. Preach without shame their substantial, emotional, unassailable good news, the shield and buckler of your salvation.

This will create, not in you, but in the words themselves upon your lips, emotions of hope, confidence and certainty.

They will be weak. Don't expect much of your flesh. Like becoming a wizard, cognitive behavioral therapy doesn't work overnight. Whether with a shrink or in the mirror, disciplining your feelings by intentionally building day after day on recognizable convictions will *change* how you feel.

It won't remove the pain. But the pain will have a reason, and like a warrior born, you will have more ammo in your pocket than you were expecting to find.

YOU WILL WANT TO ELABORATE

MY VERSION of the words of life is not the only one. It's just the most succinct and memorable I could make it. But as soon as you want to make your own "good news" *trigger words*, you should go right ahead.

Only, be careful not to subtract the content. Instead, consider how you might start to elaborate on each point in a conversation.

Take that first note of the words of life that you made, or make another. Come back tonight or tomorrow and write it out again, giving each point three sentences or notions. If you can think up three of your favorite Bible verses and write them out, or write out some of their key words, that is even better.

The goal is: "elaborate, summarize and expand" the words of life into the biblical and commonsense talk that is most exciting to you.

Come back one more time the next day and gist it back down to six or ten points again. Supercharge it with your favorite images and ideas. Or, start with mine as the trigger to expand into yours.

ALWAYS START WITH THE RESURRECTION

THIS IS the **zero to one** moment of faith.

If we honestly tell ourselves we are trying to make Christians, then our salvos must always be peppered with the assertion that, whether others believe it or not, the **possibility** of the resurrection of Jesus must be accepted as fair game.

There is no Christian faith until “He is risen,” and “He is risen” captures the entire message of the Christian faith’s good news.

Before “*He is risen*” there is nothing **to** believe.

Once one believes that Jesus of Nazareth rose from the dead, rare indeed will be the stubborn unwillingness that resists the remaining teachings of Christ unless taught to do so by a hireling.

If your opponent will **not** concede you this kindness in the conversation, then he does **not** desire a conversation. If he will not grant your argument the benefit of possible doubt, then you have no choice but to retreat on the matter once more into diplomatic questioning.

How is it logical to refuse me the courtesy of suspending doubt for the sake of illustrating my point?

(If this kind of antagonist is your opponent, you may enjoy skipping ahead to the ***Appendices of Trolls*** at the back of the book.)

FROM POSSIBLE TO PLAUSIBLE

ONCE AN OPPONENT HAS FOUND ENOUGH common sense to admit that Christianity might be possible, it means they are ready for you to talk them into it.

A flicker of faith, however dim, is ready to be fed into belief. All openly hostile antagonists will have refused to have come with you so far.

Even here, you cannot make them believe by what you do or do not do next.

But you can ***give them something to believe.***

A few key facts is all it will take to move beyond plausible to probable, for history doesn't just show that the resurrection of Jesus was possible.

With all the facts on the table, it is his ***not*** rising from the dead that becomes evidently ***impossible.***

As the saying goes, when you eliminate all other possibilities, whatever remains, however improbable, must be the truth.

HOW DO YOU KNOW ANYTHING?

ONE WAY: a witness.

There are two types of witnesses: yourself and someone else.

How do you know you are not crazy? You are *not* the only witness.

Two or three good witnesses make a thing quite sure, unless they are liars in cahoots.

There were over five hundred witnesses to the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth. At the time it was recorded, you could have met and talked to all of them.

At least eight of them wrote detailed accounts that we can still read today.

They are, bar none, the most reliable ancient documents that science can find imaginable. Nothing else even comes close. By every test of history, they are from the hands of the men who they say they are from.

But that's just the Bible. There is more.

START WITH JESUS

OUR LORD WAS a real human who lived at the time that our religion says he did.

Suetonius, a historian who wrote from 80-120 A.D., is well known for chronicling the 49 A.D. Jewish riots in Claudius Caesar's Rome. These were indirectly connected to Christianity's rising presence in the city synagogues and resulted in Christians, such as Aquila and Priscilla, leaving Rome as detailed in Acts 18:2.

“Because Jews at Rome caused continuous disturbances at the instigation of one ‘Chrestus,’ [Caesar] expelled them from the city.”

But this early dating (49 A.D.!) proves it outside the Bible: Jesus was real.

THE CRUCIFIXION IS NOT A MYSTERY

THE DEATH and burial of Jesus is one of the most recorded events in all ancient history.

Tacitus, the great historian of Rome, lived from 55-120 A.D., in his *Annals* left us:

“Christus, from whom the name had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius Caesar, at the hands of one of our procurators.”

Records of weather in ancient Rome are not common, but Julius Africanus, a Christian historian writing in 221 A.D., references the lost works of the historian Thallus, a Roman dated to 52 A.D.:

“On the whole earth there pressed a most fearful darkness; and rocks were rent by an earthquake, and many places in Judea and other districts were thrown down. This darkness Thallus, in his third book of his History, calls, as appears to me without reason, an eclipse of the sun.”

Even the Jewish Talmud stands with us:

“On the Eve of Passover, Joshua was hanged...because he has practiced sorcery and enticed Israel to apostasy.”

THE EMPTY TOMB IS THE RUB

TACITUS, Suetonius, Justin Martyr, Saul of Tarsus and Simon the fisherman, to name a few, left written records of the empty tomb.

The empty tomb was no conspiracy theory. It was a controversy connected to multiple other public events including riots in Rome and legal disturbances throughout the known world.

But never in all of the commotion do the opponents to Christianity produce a body from the tomb.

Such a hoax would have been very clever!

If anyone ever thought of it, it was too late. After all, you can't blame them for assuming no one would believe such a ridiculously improbable story.

So, instead, they invented the *stolen body theory*, thereby corroborating the empty tomb as solid history for time immemorial.

To this day, it still remains the skeptic's (sad) best hope.

This is the rub!

Look twice. Make twice the note.

Once the tomb is acknowledged as historical fact, the path to good faith stands opened too.

If you want to argue that Jesus is dead, that is fine. But you can't argue that his body was in his tomb without allowing me to, in return, ask if you always do history by just making stuff up whenever you want to.

JEWS DITCH THE SABBATH

THEY MEET up on Sunday instead, calling it *The Lord's Day*, because, as they say, it is the day on which he rose from the dead.

Perhaps it is not immediately clear to you how impossible it is to imagine anything causing thousands of pious, Second Temple Jews to abandon the Sabbath for Sunday.

This is, after all, the very issue which got Jesus killed.

They themselves tell you in their letters, *Jesus is truly risen from the dead, and that changes everything.*

UNBELIEVERS CONVERT

HOW DO you convert the unbelieving brother of Jesus to believe in Jesus *after* Jesus is dead?

With a stolen body?

This skeptical blood relation of Jesus became a Christian and one of the martyrs mentioned in Saint Luke's *Acts*. Why?

He saw the risen Jesus face to face.

That's his story, and he stuck to it until he was thrown off a cliff for it.

If you're going to call him a liar, it's on you to explain his conversion. Why would an unbelieving relation of Jesus convert to believing in Christianity only after his dead brother *didn't* rise from the dead like he had said he would so many times before?

There is no common sense answer for such a preposterous thing.

ENEMIES CONVERT

IF JAMES IS a bit awkward for the skeptics to explain, Saul of Tarsus is a seal on the figurative coffin.

Better known by his Greek name, Paul, the radically-Jewish scholar, organizer, and lawyer, Saul publicly opposed the idea of Jesus' resurrection, oversaw a brutal street murder, and helped arrest Christians in the hope of executing them.

Then, he became a Christian.

It's very hard to explain. But *he says* that Jesus appeared risen to him, last of all, as one untimely born.

"Jesus made me do it," says the repentant terrorist from beyond the grave.

You can try to call Paul mad. But you're just making stuff up again.

It is not a debate. Your friend who has already acknowledged the possibility of belief isn't going to be arguing with you. He's going to be asking the same common sense question right there with you.

If Jesus didn't rise from the dead, *how in the hell do you explain Saint Paul?*

THE STOLEN BODY DOES NOT AGREE

IF THE STOLEN body story were true, I'm not sure how that Hebrew prince on his warpath to Damascus fell off his horse and went blind. "Lying about it" makes as much sense as pushing the "self-destruct" button on life, because that's effectively what he did.

Paul is not the only Apostle the stolen body does not explain. The rest of them fled Jesus' capture, hid in locked rooms even after hearing of his resurrection, and, at times, vehemently cursed the idea of believing in his resurrection.

Then, as they tell it, they each in turn met him, risen from the dead.

But if they stole the body, these are all lies they made up and wrote into Christian history in order to ensure they all died the brutal, early deaths they'd fled from in Gethsemane.

That's some heady survivors' guilt.

Someone always talks in a heist.

None of this adds up to anything like a motive.

So, who stole Jesus? There was nothing to gain for anyone, and everything to lose.

For everyone. Hence, seal, guard, stone, ...

But maybe they were hiding in that upper room and there was a knock at the door.

Jesus? We thought you were dead.

He crawls in on his hands and knees, hacking bloody cough and pressing his pierced and ragged hand to his side to stop the ongoing bleed out from the heart wound.

No, he sputters. I'm risen....

This marvel of ingenuity is called the **swoon theory**, i.e., Jesus never died. He just, kind of maybe, you know, passed out.

For a bit.

And then got up.

And rolled away the stone. And scared off the guards. And then crawled home.

CO₂ poisoning causes brain death 12 minutes or less after legs are broken or the crucified passes out, but who is worried about facts when making things up to suit our assumptions and ignore reality? The skepticism parade is just getting started:

The best part of this story is when the band of sneak-mode disciples show up, scared to death but ready to steal Jesus, only to find he's wandered off leaving a trail of blood.

This is called **mutual exclusivity**. You might know it as "not adding up," and it's easy to spot when your kids are explaining the broken window, but more difficult in the midst of skeptics pandering their conveniently forgetful anti-resurrection apologetics.

The result is that you must defend either the **stolen body** as theory or the **swoon** as theory. The attempt to

defend them both betrays that your opponent, in fact, honestly believes neither, or has never thought about it more than a moment in passing.

If the latter, help him think. If the former, help him admit he is not satisfied with such patently silly answers. Who could be? It's gaslighting if there ever was such a thing.

THEN THERE WERE ALL THOSE DRUGS

WHEN ALL OTHER APPEALS FAIL, the lowbrow *hallucination* theory is trotted out: Peter, James and John Zebedee, Mary the mother of Jesus, Mary the wife of Clopas, and like 500 other people, including Paul eventually, all had spontaneous, joint-ish, group-and-individual hallucinations.

In these “not visions” they organically convinced themselves that they *had* all seen Jesus alive, even though none of them were expecting it. From here, they mostly went merrily to early, brutal deaths thanks to this toxic communal mind-plague.

This from the party of “science.”

OK. Let’s grant it! They all hallucinated Christianity accidentally into existence. Awesome. But then, what happened to the body again? Who told them it was missing? And Saul of Tarsus? Really?

The more it tries to add up, the more it all falls down.

GOOD QUESTIONS SEEK LOGIC

THEY, therefore, also expose its absence.

Telling a consistent story about the rise of 1st Century Christianity out of Second Temple Judaism (which *did* happen, so it *must* have happened *somehow*) limits your ability to mix and match.

There can be only one.

1. Stolen
 2. Swooned
 3. Hallucinated
- or...
4. Resurrected

The *common sense* flaws in the three are not like the flaw of the fourth. That flaw is less logic and more assumption, “*al la a priori*.”

“*I don't want to believe it.*”

It is not an easy thing to do. It is, in fact, impossible.

Except that *the words of life* do impossible work all on their own.

He is risen. You have spoken. Rejoice, and let Jesus be the Savior.

SEEN PROBABILITIES

FAITH BREATHES into existence the moment your friend imagines the plausibility of “*He is risen*” as *good news*. The moment he sees the potential for the regeneration of his mind or heart in the idea of the resurrection, *that is* the regeneration of his mind or heart in the idea of the resurrection. That is the *hope* of the resurrection.

As you know, this is a hope like no other.

But it is also a scattered seed that an old nasty crow can snatch away before it can take root.

Again (and this cannot be emphasized enough), that is *none of your concern*. You do not get to save people. You get to watch Jesus do it through his words in your life. It is quite possible that your overt fears are in the pilot seat of your attempts to save your opponent, and that this human interference on your part is the very thing inhibiting the free regeneration of faith in him by the Spirit’s speaking the simple words of life through you.

Getting out of the way means believing you have nothing more to offer than good questions and the same *perfected* answers, over and over again.

The key is not to track down the precise “sales pitch” instance of conversion, so much as to believe that it must inevitably happen as a result of an authentic but simple understanding. If your friend keeps asking and listening to you repeat the words of Jesus, it is not a question of *if* he will believe, but *when* he will believe.

At a time you will *not* be able to perceive, your opponent will experience a glimmer of hope in what you say, even as you are saying it.

This is the kindling of personal and active faith in Jesus Christ, the one and only LORD and Son of the Triune Godhead.

So long as it is fanned into flame by more of the same good news that sparked it, it shall never die.

The only way to ensure that is for you to *keep talking*.

Don't stop. Don't worry. Don't pressure. Just relish the telling. This is your God! This is your King. Herald what you know to be true, and believe it yourself for all its worth.

This is not a test to pass. This is not a game to win.

This is humanity being reconciled to each other in the voice of our Creator given flesh by means of his Spirit returning to us.

This is why you've laughed, and this is why you've cried, why you have mourned, and why you have danced, why you have loved, and why love lost has hurt so much.

This is the fact that there is one who wipes away your tears, and you know him by faith alone in these words:

1. He is risen.
2. You are paid for.
3. You cannot die now.
4. He won't be long anyway.

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5. There is water to seal it.
6. There is food to feed it.
7. This is Christianity.

KEEP TALKING

FAITH DOES NOT ALWAYS BURST onto the scene. Trying to seal the deal ahead of time and on your own, with a pile of poorly conceived human gimmicks and self-interested motivations, doesn't win you a single brownie point in heaven, and it is a great way to make people despise both you and the Jesus you preach.

No need to be rude. Pause for questions. Honor the clock.

Keep giving more words of life to believe. Elaborate. Rely on your private devotion and study. Supplement from recent themes at church. Don't be shy about mentioning your pastor if you don't know an answer, and whatever you do, make sure before you leave that you set up a time to meet again and talk more about Scripture.

But far worse than over-sharing is anxiety over how much or how little to tell of your Lord's glory.

Worry is unbelief, the opposite of prayer, and always counter-productive to your own joy.

It's not up to you anyway. What you ***cannot*** do doesn't matter. It's what you ***can*** do that makes all the difference.

Relish the old, old story of Jesus and his blood.

Jesus' resurrection is a life-changing fact, a mind-altering promise, and distinct, trumpet sound of the Living God establishing his redeemed and true relationship with us all.

THERE IS ALWAYS MORE TO KNOW ABOUT YOUR RELIGION

OR IT IS NOT your religion.

Your personalized walk with Jesus will never be so personal that it is not shared with all Christians, for we are one.

The ground on which we sojourn is the immanently reasonable message of the resurrection of Jesus, and the record of his words and mighty deeds given in the Bible.

It is a feast of immortal growth in hope and wisdom that is the true knowledge of God.

The world will make our paths wide and varied, and our glorious ethnic heritages bring deep value and perspective, as all families and brotherhoods know well.

But that does not mean we have no universal *creed*.

It does not mean that we don't *all* believe *something* that is in fact *salvation in action*.

You now have it at your fingertips and ready-made for your lips.

There is nothing more to *do* beyond embracing that free joy that your God is behind it all to begin with, and he is almighty. From there, I think, you will find intuitive

curiosity in your neighbor to be a refreshing wind that God himself will bring into your circle.

In fact, if I'm not much mistaken, odds are better than average that if you haven't had that happen already, you will before you have taken the time to read and contemplate the remainder of this book.

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

THE WAY IS NARROW

FEW FIND IT.

Any diplomat must understand two things: his message, and that the results are out of his control.

You would think that there are two potential results to every message: *favorable* and *unfavorable*. And you would think that the more favorable result of your conversation is your friend's regenerating faith.

God agrees. He does not desire the deaths of the wicked, but would rather they came to a knowledge of his truth and lived.

Nonetheless, he has informed us that the final outcome will be ... not that.

What does that mean? Arguments about that have rifted protestantism for a long, long time. I have my answers, but the fact is that none of us need those answers to believe and do the first principle in this book.

If you are a Christian, be you papist, paternalist, Mar Thomast, or fundamentalist, you can agree that these words are our shared, unified, single *Christianity*. This means that whether you are a pentecostal-anabaptist,

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Lutheran, Calvinist, Campbellite, United African Episcopal Methodist, dead orthodox, Nuevo heterodox or even, God help us, heretics, you can use these words with Almighty God's guarantee that they are the one and only way that *he* is making more of us.

If heretics start using these words with the Bible, they will not be heretics for long!

IT'S NOT ABOUT HOW MANY

IT'S ABOUT WHAT KIND.

The rifts in Christianity on this matter are real. And while it has far greater ramifications than angels dancing on the heads of pins, the debate can sound equally as esoteric to the unbeliever's needs.

For that reason, I will not present in this work a detailed apologetic attempting to harmonize it all with footnotes. Rather, what follows is a list of common places and ways a person might react to the Word of God in the Bible.

I will trust our Lord to continue to lead all whom he calls beyond the first words of life, and on into the deeper water their faith shall enjoy. But first, I will convict myself on the substance of what we all know "can't not be true." Then, I will endeavor to talk everyone and anyone I find into a more unshakeable and vocal version of their own Christianity.

For the elect you meet, that is, for the Christian, life-long and converting, that is, for any one who believes the words of life when they are spoken, the words themselves

are the fountain of believing itself. That fountain of regenerating trust *is* glorious salvation enacted on “you,” created by the words, in you, again, forever, every time the words are heard, spoken, and spoken again by you, “Alleluia, Amen.”

But there are those who not only resist the Holy Spirit in the way natural men originally do, but who put up such a fight that they might be said to *always* resist the Holy Spirit. Whatever this means, it includes a potential level of resistance to news of Christ’s resurrection after which the Holy Spirit, *with the same words*, enacts the alienating work of hardening, trapping the reprobate within his own conceits as they set themselves *against* the words.

It may be imagined as a horribly tailor-made, virtual reality prison of the mind, built by folly’s own hands to restrain the rebellious person in an ever shrinking world-view mind until the clarifying Day of Judgment.

The same end awaits all other unbelievers as well, such as those who feign faith but remain hypocritical worshipers of mammon, who say “Amen!” the loudest, but always vote for their dollars.

Likewise, there are those who shipwreck their faith, honest seeded believers, taken root and growing. Whether for the fear of suffering given too much root, or the zeal for pleasure blotting out the sun, these honest elect turn themselves reprobate again.

My point is that it happens. The words of life become, to some, the stench of death. They become the means by which your friend is kept from faith.

The harder you try, the more he will stand condemned.

WHAT IS THAT TO YOU?

SHALL the clay scold the potter?

You, Christian, are not the Master.

You are not the Maker.

You are the diplomat.

The good diplomat seeks to do his duty.

What does that mean now?

It means believing that what has led you this far in the book has been the effort to learn all that a Christian can humanly do to save a friend from the raging and eternal inferno of hell and that what comes next is not what a Christian does, humanly speaking.

The Holy Spirit, like he fights for you, always fights for your friend. We are never told the signs of a sinner so hardened that he cannot repent and be saved. We are not instructed to look for such evils. We are told instead to believe that if the words given to save a man become his damnation, then in the end, that is in fact the most favorable result.

God says so.

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So expect resistance, not to fear it, but to endure it in order to just keep right on speaking more of the only answer there is.

TALK THEM INTO LIFE

THE WORDS of life will *always* do their work.

You must trust them more than your friend.

You must trust them more than yourself.

You will. Because that is what *Christianity* does.

You can wait, and you are the diplomatic disciple to do so.

If at any time you must retreat to tired defenses and broken strongholds that you've defeated together before, remember the maxim that a demon driven out doesn't always stay there. A converting man, in the process, like a dog might with its own vomit, will return again and again to his patterns of self deception.

This does not have to be the end of potential conversion. It means instead that you must return to looking at the vomit with him, and help him through honest questioning to come to see the common sense in not sniffing or eating vomit.

Walk back to common sense. Walk back to good questions.

Do not waste time defending Christianity. Remember

the slow drip from *possibility* to *plausibility* to *probability*.

If it were only about “reason,” the whole thing might go faster. But it is about *trust*, and that is what you will earn even more of it in the currency of good will by walking with your friend through his existential crises a second, seventh and four-hundred-ninetieth time.

Help him expose his excuses and faulty justifications. Because he is your friend, he will thank you for your patience and understanding in listening carefully without judgment.

When he is ready, you have only to begin your story again.

Then, declare what is written. Promise what is sealed.

Your friend has exhausted “reason’s” excuses for not believing the obviousness of Christianity. But you are not here to win or to sneak in Christianity while he is disoriented or distracted.

Christianity is no such alt-theory simply vying for a place with the other gods.

Now, you stand a diplomat from the future, a blood-bought citizen of the Great King, whose only true ambition is the good name of an honest man.

You will rise. You will grow. And you will find yourself, step by step, day by day, verse by verse, *inspired* by the *words of life* to speak the words of life not only to yourself again, but to any who will give you an honest ear, even though he formerly be your bitterest and most distrusted enemy.

That itself *is* the salvation.

Now. Here.

Us.

We are not waiting for the physical experience of

immortality without sin. We already are living the physical experience of immortality yet still dying. The salvation is not merely the knowledge that in the end we shall be saved. It is the free mind and heart and spirit that now, if nothing else, can spit in death's eye and laugh at the threats of gods and kings.

No man can chain the mind and conscience unleashed by the words of life.

That's why we keep saying them.

We translate. We elaborate. We act.

We seek detail and reasoning. We find nuance and passion.

But we do not detract.

We do not let the subject get changed.

We stick with the words of life because we know that in a back alley scrap with the devil, you don't want knock-off munitions or a pocket knife.

In a back alley scrap with the devil, **you** have nothing to lose.

To know that you have nothing to lose and everything to gain, no matter what the future might bring, not as a hope, but as a conviction and certainty, is to take up arms in the beautiful war.

This scrap is between the devil and the Holy Spirit.

You are the prize.

And the Holy Spirit is a **jealous** God.

THE APPENDICES OF DIPLOMINTATION

THE WORDS OF LIFE SHORTHAND

To CONFESS your religion accurately in a pinch:

- He is risen.
- You (therefore) are paid for.
- You (therefore) cannot die now.
- He won't be long now anyway.
- There is water to seal it.
- There is food to feed it.
- This is Christianity (“the Church”).

KEYS TO A DIPLOMATIC CONVERSATION TOWARD CONVERSION

- Use genuine questions as a tool to discover your opponent's basic assumption/belief system.
- Use further questions and conversation as a tool for taking those assumptions for a commonsense test-drive.
- Use your opponent's commitment to logic as a tool for holding him accountable to his own unreconciled hypocrisies.
- Use the ***words of life*** shorthand to confess your religion accurately at the best potential moment of hearing.

CONVERSION IS ABOUT RELATIONSHIPS

ALL RELATIONSHIPS ARE a time of conversion.

This is why family dinners matter. Conversation at supper is a time of group conversion to each other. That is, to have a relationship is to become more like that person, at least in some way.

Humans use our conversations to start and break relationships in order to have greater control over the type of people we want to become.

Some of us are better at it than others, but all of us can always improve.

Here are a few further resources that, though from unorthodox sources, provide further opportunity for learning in this kind of wisdom:

Daring Greatly *Brené Brown*

Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus
John Gray

How to Win Friends and Influence People *Dale Carnegie*

Hurt 2.0 *Chap Clark*

Strategy and the Fat Smoker *David Maister*

There are more. None of the above sources are without their dangers, but they do provide key insights into the created order which Christian wisdom literature such as Proverbs, the Psalms, and James all affirm in their own language.

The value of these books, like all those written in pursuit of an honest, commonsense study of creation, is that one need not be a Christian to find the works of the Christian God to be, in fact, what he called them.

So, these books are what the scholastics called *anthropology*. Anthropology is the study of the human.

These are not sources to seek Christian guidance from, but rather the shrewd insights which unbelievers might see more clearly than we dovish Christians.

Christians can learn about the weather from pagans and we can share inquiries into the rise and fall of nations.

All such conversation is a conversion forward into understanding. The Christian diplomat merely adopts a philanthropic view of tactics and intentionality.

Since we know common sense to be true, our faith in the resurrection is not undone but vindicated. Since we know the resurrection is both true and makes sense, we need not fear that its words fail to carry the plausibility of inspiring Spirit-breathed saving faith. We know that salvation works by the the idea of Jesus' resurrection rooting in your imagination and replacing all other ideological idolatries with the confident hope of a certain future.

Christian conversions happen in conversations in which patient, self-controlled Christians wait for a friend to struggle long enough with the words of life to discover their surface truth, and so desire to dig deeper.

Conversations and relationships are what the reconciliation between God and all men is all about.

It is about that which is out of joint coming back into place.

It is about that which was torn asunder being mended whole.

It is about that which was good as dead now having a true new hope.

And it is all free gift, alpha to omega.

YOU DON'T SURPASS BEING BORN AGAIN

CHRISTIAN SALVATION NEVER ENDS.

Every moment you remember or speak the words of life, your regeneration regenerates, over and over again.

Mindless repetition won't help here.

Heartless songs are not worth singing.

None of our lips are pure.

None of our motivations are without narcissism.

And none of our flaws are beyond the antidote.

What is that magical formula?

Just these imputed words and all that they everlastingly effect:

He is risen. You are paid for. You cannot die now.

He won't be long anyway.

There is water to seal it. There is food to feed it.

This is Christianity.

THE APPENDICES OF TROLLS

TROLLS SUCK

SO DON'T BE ONE.
And don't feed them.

NOT ONLINE. NOT EVER.

DON'T FEED THE TROLLS.

But no one in your real life is actually a troll.

So feed the people in your real life with eye contact, charity and time. But don't be afraid to bust out the best troll tactics on your friends and neighbors as you find you have Christian need.

TROLLS EXIST, DESPITE THE COMMAND TO LOVE

HATERS GONNA HATE.

Christianity is a religion of love. But that has never stopped non-loving barbarians from hating it. And us. And killing us.

With fire. And wild animals.

So, yeah, there are people who, uninterested in truth, simply don't listen to anyone, but who still like to interrupt, disorient, mock, and otherwise disrupt happiness in general.

As a rule, they are bullies.

As a rule, they like to play the "trolls don't exist" card.

THE MOT AND BAILEY

THE MOT IS A MEDIEVAL TOWN.

The bailey is a fortress at its heart.

Trolls sling mud from bridges in the mot. But they never really fight there. They retreat instead to the safety of the fortress from which to accuse you of being a rude aggressor.

The bailey, the fortress, will be some moral so great you cannot assail it, such as *reason*, or *science*, or *tolerance*.

The mot, the town, will be the falsehood the troll wishes to defend. But the moment you engage, he retreats to the great moral and accuses you of being against it.

Beware the subject changers.

BUILD WALLS NOT BRIDGES

TROLLS LIVE UNDER BRIDGES. Don't help them.

Build walls, then talk.

Let your "yes" be "yes" and your "no" be "no." Set firm boundaries with a troll at all costs and hold them.

Don't feed the trolls.

You know that once a person has made it clear he has no intention of listening to you, you cannot expect him to play fair in the conversation. His confirmation bias will not allow it.

The natural man cheats. He must. It is his only honest move.

FEAR IS THE TROLL FEEDER

PANIC, as a rule, is bad.

Stay calm.

When you first see a troll, it is natural to panic and build him a bridge. You run out and say, *Oh, I'm sorry. Did I offend you? How may I change myself to help you?*

This is the worst thing you can do. You just fed the troll.

Now, you will have no respite, for your fearful pandering is the very thing his raving hunger for any attention craves most, and, like a bad dog under the table, he will not unlearn quickly.

It is a match made in hell.

And the internet.

Repeatedly.

COURTESY IS A WALL THAT UNITES

WHEN YOU KNOW where people stand, you can dance rather than step on toes.

I'm not quite finished yet... may be an interruption you are required to employ with an aggressive troll.

In the event that you are interrupted repeatedly, your own silence will always speak much louder than shouting back. This is doubly true if on camera.

The only reasonable hope is to appeal to a shared moral standard, like kindness.

Barbarians don't care.

SHUN BARBARIANISM

BE A PRACTICED TALKER AND LISTENER. Learn to spot dishonest rhetoric and chicanery, and narrate the debate.

Call out the topics, the answers, and the interruptions. Hope that a place of understanding might be discovered.

Pray it.

Remember that even so, after all this, even barbarians can be readily lured with the timely placed, *What do you mean by that?*

A TROLL'S ONLY HOPE

- You find his practiced, authentic religion.
- You help him test that religion's common sense with your questions.
- You ask him to explain his hypocrisies until he admits he'd like a better way.
- He takes you seriously and carefully assesses his sad life of hopeless despair while you tell him about the resurrection of Jesus.

GET MORE GOOD

“Scrawl runes upon your gates, and let the spittle flow!”

Rev. Fisk’s other best-selling works can be found at [https://
www.amazon.com/Jonathan-M-Fisk/](https://www.amazon.com/Jonathan-M-Fisk/)

BROKEN: Seven Christian Rules that Every Christian Ought to Break dissects the seven most common lies the devil uses to steal your grace and hope.

ECHO: Unbroken Truth Worth Repeating summarizes all the highlights of Christianity’s full story in twenty memorable concepts, principles and prayers.

Without Flesh: Why the Church is Dying Even though Jesus is Alive pinpoints the single most impera-

tive thing to do right away to slow the decline of your congregation's faithfulness.

JOIN THE RESISTANCE

Us, the Chill, is a network of pro-bono volunteers committed to the spread of “mad” Christianity.

The **MadPx Mondays** weekly news magazine data mines for the news and content you need to fight the good fight in this dark and evil age. It’s free: sign up here: <https://www.subscribepage.com/lowojo>

Mad Christianity is the entertainment channel of Rev. Jonathan Fisk. You can find more at revfisk.com or at youtube.com/revfiskj.

Dark Shore (D.S.C.) is a sole-proprietorship has been captivating imaginations with the Words of Christ since 2020.

