

BAHAI

The one true religion?

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by **Bart Larson**

INTRODUCTION

At the outset, let me say that I have had utmost respect for every Bahai I’ve known. I have consistently been met with gentleness, graciousness and warmth. Morally, the Bahai’s I have known seem honest, trustworthy and downright nice people. The devotion and commitment I have witnessed among Bahai’s puts many Christians to shame. And, frankly speaking, there are many wonderful teachings to be found in the Bahai faith. From a purely human point of view, the Bahai faith is superior to most religions. I agree that it will bring earthly unity and peace among people who are willing to practice it. To me the Bahai faith sounds good. It is reasonable. And, it seeks to unify a world torn apart by religion. There are two major problem, and I want to say this as kindly as I can. The Bahai faith is *not* based on historical truth, and logically there is no way to harmonize certain religious faiths as the Bahai religion seeks to do.

As a Christian, I invite you to hear my concerns. Whether you agree or not, you will [hopefully] come to a better understanding of Christianity, and a deeper personal faith. If you ever hope to win Christians over to the Bahai faith, there are certain issues you must address. While I cannot speak for all Christians, I think it safe to say I speak for the majority of Christians who treat the Bible as their main source of authority; which would include most Protestants and Catholics.

Before you hear what I have to say, I have a favor to ask of you. Would you acquire a Bible, if you don’t already have one, and simply look up the verses I quote? For example, there are many books written about Plato, but if you really want to get to know Plato there comes a time you must actually read the works of Plato. The same is true concerning the writings of Jesus and his followers. Don’t take my word for what they say, or rely on what you’ve been taught by others. Read it for yourself. If you also have a copy of the Qur’an [Koran], look up what it has to say as well. Why is this important? Because the Bahai faith is built on Christianity and Islam. Islam and Christianity are historical religions with clearly defined beliefs which are recorded in the Bible and the Qur’an. Baha’u’llah claimed to be God’s last prophet, with Muhammad and Jesus as his spiritual predecessors. If Baha’u’llah was seriously mistaken about either Jesus or Muhammad, then it would probably mean he was wrong about himself. That is why it is important that you settle these issues for yourself. Do your homework. Get all the facts.

THE FOUNDATION OF CHRISTIANITY

The New Testament, and virtually all the writings of the early church fathers, teach that salvation depends upon placing one’s faith in Jesus and accepting him for who he is, the *Son of God* [I’ll define this term later].

Jesus once told some religious Jews, “. . . if you do not believe that I am the one I claim to be, you will indeed die in your sins.” (John 8:24). According to the New Testament and the teachings of Jesus, to believe wrongly about Jesus is a big deal. To knowingly refuse to consider his claims could be spiritual suicide. Jesus said that “*No one comes to the Father [God] except through me.*” [John 14:6b]. Acts 4:12 says, “*Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.*”—Christians believe there is salvation in only *one name*—and it’s not Muhammad, Buddha, Krishna, Confucius, Baha’u’llah, Moses, or Abraham, but JESUS.

Why are Christians so hung up on there only being one way to Heaven? It all hinges on the blood of Jesus Christ. According to the New Testament, when Jesus Christ died on a Roman cross, He wasn’t merely a good Jew, or some

prophet dying a martyr's death. The central theme and message of Christianity is that the eternal God chose to become a man, to write himself into his own story, so to speak [Philippians 2:6,7; John 1:1, 14], to die for the sins of his rebellious world [Acts 20:28; John 1:10-12; 3:16-18], to be buried, and then be resurrected on the third day [I Corinthians 15:3-4]. Anyone who hopes to have salvation must place his/her faith in Jesus [John 1:12; Romans 1:16; I John 5:11-13, etc.]. The New Testament instructs Christians to *defend* this faith which was "*once for all delivered to the saints*" [Jude 1:3]. No allowance is made for other religions. The apostle Paul even went so far as to say that if anyone preaches a *different gospel*, even an angel, "*let him be accursed (damned)*" [Galatians 1:6-9].

The Bible teaches that salvation comes only through the sacrificial blood of Jesus. It is not found in some dark idol-filled Hindu temple with demon-looking gods, or by following Buddha's Enlightened Way, or in surrendering to the teachings of Muhammad or Baha'u'llah. According to the New Testament, if salvation could be earned in some other way it would be like telling God, "You made a mistake. You didn't have to come and die after all. We found salvation another way."

The blood Jesus shed on the cross is central to everything Christians believe. Christianity claims to be an *eternal* faith, bound by an eternal, unbreakable covenant resulting in eternal redemption [Hebrews 9:12-28]. Either the shed blood of Jesus Christ on the cross paid the penalty for your sins and mine, or the Christian message of eternal salvation being found only in Jesus is wrong. The New Testament says, "*If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth [speaking of Jesus's sacrificial death], no sacrifice for sins is left [which rules out other religions and other means of salvation], but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God . . . How much more severely do you think a man deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God under foot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant . . .*" [Hebrews 10:26-29]

I believe with all my heart that the love and peace you believe in, and want to pass on to others, is actually found in the person of Christ.—It is his compassion and love you long for in your heart of hearts, whether you realize it or not. Jesus claims to be "*the way, the truth and the life*" [John 14:6]. He does not merely claim to be one of the ways, or to point to truth. He *is* truth. He *is* life. To miss him is to miss life itself. [Those are his words, not mine.] The universal world peace the Bahai faith seeks to establish will actually come about when Jesus, the Prince of Peace, comes to rule and reign over the world [Matthew 24,25; Revelation 19-22]. Before this happens, Jesus predicted that there would be many false teachers and false Messiahs proclaiming other ways to world peace [Matthew 24:22-24].

I believe there is a spiritual battle being fought for your very soul as you read this. Satan, who is very real, will do anything he can to keep you from the truth.—Before you read any further, may I suggest you pray the following prayer?—"To the true and living God, Maker of heaven and earth, I pray that You will open my mind and heart to Your truth. Confirm in my heart and my mind what is true. Grant me the faith to believe You, and the courage to obey You, no matter what the cost. Amen."

APPLYING COMMON SENSE TO YOUR BELIEFS

As you know, the Bahai teaches that the major world religions are progressive in nature, with each building upon the former, with the Bahai faith being God's way of unifying them into one true religion. One of your own writers stated "*. . . Baha'u'llah disclaims any intention to belittle any of the **Prophets** gone before Him . . . to abrogate the **fundamentals of their doctrines**, to disregard any of their **revealed books** . . .*" [Shoghi Effendi, *The Promised Day Is Come*, page 108, emphasis mine.] Baha'u'llah and the Bahai faith teaches that each of the *prophets*, their *doctrines*, and their *sacred writings* are to be honored and accepted. Here's where the problems arise.

There are HUGE historical and theological contradictions between the different prophets, doctrines, and books which Baha'u'llah says are all true. Logically, the teachings of the various religions *cannot* be reconciled.—Not only do they differ on key issues, such as salvation, but they disagree about the very character and nature of God. Hindus, for example, believe in a *pantheistic*, impersonal God. [Pantheism comes from the Greek word *pan*, meaning *all*. It is the belief that all things are God: you, me, rocks, good, evil, etc.] Hindus are also *polytheistic*, meaning they believe in many *gods*. [According to Hindu belief, the impersonal Universal World Soul, Brahma, has many manifestations of lesser gods.] Other faiths, such as Judaism, Islam and Christianity are monotheistic [believing in only one God], that God is separate from His creation [just as an artist and his painting are not one and the same], and that God is infinitely personal.

Just as no one is ever half pregnant, either they are or they aren't, in like fashion God is either personal and has feelings, or else God is impersonal and has no feelings. Either God is one or God is many. There is no way to reconcile the concept that God is three in one [Trinity] with the millions of Hindu gods of good and evil. Truth and common sense

says you can't have it both ways. If the Hindu view of God is correct, then evil is also part of God's nature, since God is *everything*. This is diametrically opposed to the holy, sinless God of Judaism, Christianity and Islam which teaches that evil is of Satan and not of God. Is there any way of reconciling these fundamental differences?—No.

IS TRUTH RELATIVE?

At the heart of all these differences is one over-riding question, “What is truth?”—Is truth relative, subject to change, or are God's ways, God's truth and God's character basically unchanging?—Why do I ask?—Because if God is unchanging [Malachi 3:6; Hebrews 13:8], then there is no way to reconcile the differences between all of the various world religions. On the other hand, if truth is relative and not absolute in nature, then people could rationalize anything, including the contradictions between the different faiths by saying God is changing.

If I properly understand the Bahai religion, the only way you can logically hold the beliefs you do is to treat truth as relative. The trouble, of course, is that if God speaks out of both sides of His mouth, then you really have no way of knowing anything. If one religion says hell exists [Christianity], and another religion says hell doesn't exist [Hinduism], and you say, “both are true,” then by what standard or basis do you know anything?

To me relativism is intellectual suicide. To say, “There are no absolutes,” is an *absolute* statement. To remark, “There is no such thing as absolute *truth*,” opens one to the question, “And you know this to be *true*?” If a person states, “You can't *know* anything for sure,” I would reply, “And you *know* this for sure?” The very notion of relativism is based on logical contradictions.

Can you imagine life in our world if we really lived by relativism? You might go to a hospital and the doctor would tell you, “It doesn't matter which medicines you take as long as you are sincere. Everything's relative.”—Would you keep going to that doctor?—No. In real life, beliefs and behaviors do matter. When you drive your car or fly in an airplane, do you act as though everything is relative? No. If I thought the law of gravity was relative, I'd never fly in an airplane again.

As you look at the world God created, does it seem as if God established absolutes, or do we live in a relativistic universe where there are no absolutes, no certainties?—I think it is pretty obvious that God's physical laws don't change. Our understanding of them may change, and one law may counteract another law, but the laws themselves do not change. If God's physical laws don't change, then why would you expect the nature of God, and God's spiritual laws, to be relative?

Truth is different than sincerity. Instinctively you and I know that. No matter how much you and I might want Santa Claus to be real for our children, the fact remains, there is no real Santa Claus at the North Pole, and Rudolph the red-nosed reindeer doesn't exist. Being sincere or wanting something to be true has nothing to do with whether it *is* true. I could wish with all my heart that all religions were equally true and that everyone is going to Heaven, but a reality check makes me realize that it just isn't so. This world of ours is filled with sincere people who are sincerely wrong.

So, does it really matter what a person believes as long as he or she is sincere? Can Hinduism and the Christianity both be true? Does it really matter? Is the character and the nature of God an unshakable, unchangeable reality?

Let me give you the Judeo-Christian answer.—If you were the eternal Creator-God, reigning in unimaginable glory, fully holy and blameless, would it matter to you whether people thought of you as a cow, or a snake, or some idol? Would it matter to you if they blamed you for evil when, with all of your being, you hated evil? I think it would.—According to the Bible, such people are under the wrath and judgment of God. God hates idolatry. [Read the first chapter of the book of Romans in the New Testament to see how God feels about such things.]

WHO IS JESUS?

The Bahai faith places Jesus on a par with other men and other alleged prophets of God [Abraham, Moses, Krishna, Muhammad, etc.]. It teaches that Jesus was a good teacher and prophet, nothing more. This, however, is *not* the position of the New Testament. As I mentioned earlier, according to the Bible, God became a man in the person of Jesus Christ in order to die for the sins of the world. To put Jesus on a par with other men is to totally miss what Jesus claimed. He claimed to be the eternal Creator-God become man [Hebrews 1:1, John 1:1, 10, 14, Colossians 1:16-18, 2:9, etc.].

On more than one occasion Jesus took the well-known Jewish name for God, *I AM* [translated *Yahweh* in Hebrew; Exodus 3:14], and used it to refer to Himself [John 8:58; Mark 14:62, John 6:35, 48; 8:24; 10:7; 18:5.] To say that the Jews were upset is an understatement. They were furious and wanted to kill Him. In fact, it was this same claim to be God [Yahweh] which got Jesus crucified.—In answering the high priest's question about whether He was the *Son of the*

Most High in Mark 14:61-64, Jesus answered “*I AM,*” which was the Jewish way of saying *Yahweh*. In no uncertain terms, Jesus let it be known that He was God come in the flesh. In John 5:18 we read, “*For this reason, the Jews tried all the harder to kill him; not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.*” In John 10:33 the Pharisees were ready to stone Jesus. They said, “*We are not stoning you for any of these [miracles], but for blasphemy, because you, a mere man, claim to be God.*”

According to the Christian faith, Jesus is God. This is, and has always been, the historical position of the church.

WHO WAS/IS MUHAMMAD?

A major premise and argument of the Bahai faith is that each prophet is greater than the one before, with God’s last and best prophet being Baha’u’llah. Correct? In practical terms this means that Islam should be greater than Christianity, and that Muhammad should be greater than Jesus. [Which, of course, is a problem if Jesus is God. How could Muhammad be greater than God?] It also means that at one time Islam was a legitimate, God-ordained religion.—Was Muhammad greater than Jesus?—Did Islam originate in the heart of God? Have a look and decide for yourself.

Muhammad, like Baha’u’llah, acknowledged that Jesus Christ was a true prophet and that the books about Jesus should be *believed*. Surah 3:84 [in the Qur’an] reads, “***We believe in Allah, AND in what Has been revealed to us AND what was revealed to Abraham, Ismail, Isaac, Jacob, AND the Tribes, AND in (THE BOOKS) given to Moses, Jesus, AND the Prophets, from their Lord we make no distinction***” (*emphasis mine*).

Muhammad stated that the “books” by “Moses” (e.g., the first five books of the Old Testament, known to Jews as the Torah), the “prophets” (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel and the 12 minor prophets), as well as the books about “Jesus” (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, the writings of Paul and all the other New Testament writers) were to be “*believed.*” Muhammad and Baha’u’llah both said the same things about the Bible, that it is to be believed.

Here is where the first major contradiction and/or lie occurs. Muhammad says these writings are to be *believed*, yet he and Muslims deny virtually everything these books really teaches about Israel, Jews, salvation and the person of Jesus. How can this be? If the Bible is truly the Word of God, as he professed, why are Muslims forbidden to read the Bible, even with threats of death?—Perhaps it is because any Muslim who honestly compared the Bible with the Qur’an could figure out that either Muhammad didn’t know what he was talking about, or else he was lying when he told his followers the Bible should be *believed*. Either way, Muhammad would be exposed as a false prophet. There is no way to harmonize the Bible’s teaching with the Qur’an.

The writings from the Bible, which Muhammad said are to be *believed*, are historical documents. The Bible of his day is the same Bible we use today, just as the Qur’an of today is the same Qur’an used 1,300 years ago. The followers of any particular religion generally take painstaking efforts to be sure that they accurately copy and/or translate the documents upon which their faith is founded. (That only stands to reason. Who’d want to mess up the inspired words of God?) Reason alone should tell us that our copies of the Bible and Qur’an should be historically reliable. There is no historical evidence for a significantly different Bible ever existing. The same Bible we have today is the one Muhammad said should be *believed*.

There are over 24,600 partial or complete ancient manuscripts of the New Testament in both Latin and Greek in existence today. Most very old documents have fewer than 10 original copies in existence, yet they are still considered “A-I” historical documents by historians. For example, there are only 7 copies of the works of Plato, 20 copies of Tacitus and 5 copies of the writings of Aristotle. Did you know that even if all of the New Testament manuscripts were destroyed, we could still reconstruct all of the New Testament from the writings of the early church fathers before the year 325 A.D., with the exception of about eleven verses? Even non-Christian historians have to admit that by all scientific, archaeological, and historical standards applied to any ancient manuscript, the New Testament we have today is over 99.9 percent reliable. Not one word in a 1,000 is in question, and no major doctrine is in doubt. Anyone can dispute its message, not so its historicity.

How could Muhammad have been so uninformed about the true teachings of the Bible? I believe it was through no fault of his own. Muslim scholars, such as Syed Ahmed Khan Bahador, believe Muhammad was “*Ummee*” [illiterate]. Muhammad probably could not read or write, but had to rely on what others told him about the Bible. Even if Muhammad could read, there was no Arabic translation of the Bible until after his death. No wonder he was so uninformed about its content.—He never read it firsthand. There is strong evidence to suggest that he got much of his [mis]information about Christianity from some false teachers within Christendom known as Gnostics. (Read: “*History Of The Christian Church,*” Vol. IV, by Schaff, Eerdmans Pub. I’ll tell you more about the Gnostics later.)

Am I saying that Islam is all false or all bad just because Muhammad was uninformed? Of course not. There are

many wonderful teachings in Islam and in the Qur'an, just as there is in the Bahai faith. You may have heard the illustration, "If the devil comes to us dressed as the devil, we are not fooled. If he comes to us disguised as an angel of light, he is very dangerous indeed."—A half-truth is more dangerous and more easily believed than a whole lie. That is what makes Islam so dangerous, in my opinion.

IS THE BIBLE COMPATIBLE WITH THE QUR'AN?

Here's where you have an advantage over the Muslim. No one is going to kill you if you read the Bible or the Qur'an. You can easily check out what I'm about to tell you.

What are the major contradictions I see between the Bible and the Qur'an?

1. The Qur'an denies that Jesus is the "Son of God." According to Surah 9:30 Allah has no "son."—This is not what the New Testament teaches. Jesus is referred to as the "Son of God," "Son of the Most High," etc. approximately 80 times in the New Testament. In fact, as noted earlier, it was Jesus's claim to be the Son of God that led to His execution (Mark 14:61-62). The Jews considered his claims blasphemous and deserving of death.

John, one of Jesus's disciples, wrote, "*For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.*" (John 3:16-18).

Jesus is unmistakably called the *Son of God* in Scripture. He even calls Himself by that title in John 10:36.

Those who are unaccustomed to Christian teachings about Jesus being the "Son of God," often have legitimate confusion over what we mean, and what the New Testament actually teaches about Jesus being the "Son of God." Let me try to explain.

Some mistakenly interpret "Son" in the literal sense, just as Abraham had a *son*, Ishmael. Interpreting the word *son* this way leads to many foolish speculations about God having sex, or God having a wife, etc. (Catholics, who call Mary "the Mother of God," only add to the confusion. Mary was the earthly mother of Jesus [God appearing in human flesh], not the actual "mother" of God Almighty. Their terminology is unfortunate and unbiblical.)—I believe as Muslims do, that God is eternal, that God is Spirit, and that God is one. [We do not believe in three Gods.]

When the Bible uses the phrase, Son of God, it means that Jesus was God-become-man.

The word *Son* was used of Jesus in at least four ways in the Bible: Son of Mary, Son of David, Son of Man, Son of God. Those four terms together describe the natural relationship of Jesus to the Father and to humanity. Except for the first one, the Son of Mary, the other three uses of the word *Son* are used figuratively, not literally. Let me briefly define each use of the word.

SON OF MARY

According to His human nature, Jesus had one parent, Mary. In this sense, Jesus of Nazareth was literally and physically a "son." The man Jesus had no literal earthly, biological father. He was virgin born (as Surah 3:45-47 in the Qur'an affirms). The only real "Father" the man Jesus had was God. The seed implanted in Mary was from God's Holy Spirit (not an angel or some alien from outer space). Even though Jesus entered our world by being born in a stable in Bethlehem, scripture very clearly teaches that Jesus, as God, existed before becoming a man. [See: John 1:1, 14; Philipians 2:6, 7; John 17:5, etc.]

SON OF DAVID

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

SON OF MAN

The term Son of Man is distinctly Jewish and was first used in the Old Testament. The term "man" means "mankind" [plural] not a "man" [singular]. The word "son," as used in the phrase *son of man*, is again clearly figurative. It shows that Jesus was fully man.

SON OF GOD

The term "*Son of God*" implies the full deity of Christ, just as the term "*Son of Man*," as discussed earlier, implied His full humanity. [See the Appendix at the back of this booklet where I show clear biblical evidence that Jesus is God.]

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

The term "Son of God," or its equivalent such as "Son of the Most High," is used over 80 times of Jesus in the New Testament.

Muhammad was wrong concerning the Bible's teaching that Jesus is the "Son of God."

2. A second major area where the Qur'an contradicts the Bible is regarding the historical crucifixion of Christ. In Surah 4:157 it says ". . . they killed him (Jesus) not, nor crucified him, but so it was made to appear to them . . ." I was told by a former missionary in an Islamic country that most Muslims are taught that Judas, one of Jesus's disciples, was actually crucified in His place. To take the cross and the crucifixion out of Christianity is to rob Christianity of its central theme; that Jesus Christ, the *Son of God*, entered this world to die for the sins of the world on the cross. How can Muhammad say the books about Jesus are to be believed and then deny something so foundational to all of Christendom?

Matthew 16:21 says, "*From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.*" In I Corinthians 15:3-6 the apostle Paul wrote, "*For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred . . .*" In Revelation 1:17 Jesus said, ". . . *Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last, I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever!*"

The Old Testament prophets foretold Jesus' death (e.g., Psalm 22, Isaiah 53, Zechariah 12:10-11). His resurrection was also prophesied in Psalm 16:10—cf., Acts 2:24-32.

Jesus Christ was publically crucified with many onlookers present, including His own mother. It is inconceivable to believe that Mary (His mother) could have mistaken Judas for Jesus on the cross, especially since Jesus spoke to her from the cross (John 19:26). John, one of Jesus's closest disciples, considered the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus of such importance that he devoted half of his gospel to just the last two weeks of Jesus's life, with the main focus being upon the crucifixion and resurrection.—(Read the Gospel of John for yourself.)

Many of those present at Jesus's crucifixion had heard Jesus teach and had seen Him perform miracles. Further, how could the enemies of Jesus, who wanted him dead, be so stupid as to crucify the wrong guy? Jesus had to endure several trials before his crucifixion (e.g., before Caiaphas, the Sanhedrin, before Pilate, before Herod, etc.) Who were they supposedly interrogating? Judas?—No. The Bible clearly teaches that after Judas's betrayal of Jesus, Judas went out and hung himself (Matthew 27:5). Judas was not crucified.

So where did Muhammad get such an erroneous, non-biblical idea about Jesus only "appearing" to be crucified? There is a very simple explanation.

A major heresy of the early church centered around a group of people known as "Gnostics." Gnostics believed that Jesus was God, that all flesh was evil, and it was inconceivable to them that God would actually become flesh and blood (even though Jesus clearly taught that He did—see Luke 24:38-43). Gnostics taught that Jesus was a spirit who only "appeared" to be flesh. Since you cannot crucify a spirit, they taught that Jesus only "appeared" to have been crucified.

The whole book of I John in the New Testament is written to counteract the Gnostic's heresy about Jesus. The apostle John wrote that any spirit that would deny that "Jesus came in the flesh" is not of God (see I John 4:1,2).

As far as we know, Muhammad had contact with some Gnostics (possibly Sabaeans or people connected with the sect of Basilides). He may have taken some of their false teachings about Jesus and Judas, and woven it into his theology of Jesus only appearing to be crucified. In any event, Muhammad twisted what the gnostics taught, as well as what the New Testament teaches.

I do not wish to sound mean-spirited, but you must understand that Muhammad's teaching in the Qur'an has little historical credibility concerning the crucifixion. Virtually all of Muhammad's teaching about the crucifixion is fiction, at best, and a distortion of ALL historical facts (whether secular, Gnostic, or Christian).—Check the evidence for yourself. Read the eyewitness accounts by Jesus's disciples in the document Muhammad says is to be believed, the Bible. Then compare it with the Qur'an.

Muhammad's rewriting the historical account of Christ's crucifixion is one of the greatest and most tragic lies of all time. Whether he did it maliciously, whether he was misinformed, whether he was spinning a religious tale in the hopes of gaining political, economic, or military gain, whether he was deceived by some Gnostics, or whether he listened to some lying voice in his head, the truth is that almost one-sixth of the current world's population (the whole Islamic world) has believed his lie. Thus, the one thing above all else that the Bible says must be believed to receive salvation has been stolen from the hearts and minds of millions upon millions of people.

3. The Qur'an (Surah 5:73) denies the Biblical teaching of the Trinity, that the "one" eternal God, who is one,

exists as three entities: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. (See Matthew 28:19 in the New Testament where the one “name” [singular in Greek] modifies “the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.) Christians do not believe in 3 Gods. Just as people have a mind, body and spirit, and are yet one, so God is three in one.

Although the actual word “Trinity” is never mentioned in the Bible, the concept is clearly taught. [See the *Appendix* at the back of this booklet for scriptural examples.]

The Qur’an, on the other hand, teaches in Surah 5:73 that anyone who believes in the Trinity has committed a horrible “blasphemy” and that a very “grievous penalty” awaits Christians. In essence this verse teaches that 99.9% of all Christians (excluding a few small sects) are going to hell or will receive some severe punishment for believing in the Trinity, even though this is a foundational belief clearly set forth in the New Testament.

Even the early Christian document, *The Gospel Of Thomas*, discovered in 1945, teaches the Trinity. A Muslim friend of mine gave me a copy of *The Gospel Of Thomas* thinking it would cast doubt on the historicity of the New Testament. Quite the contrary. In Logion 44 of *The Gospel of Thomas*, it states, “One who blasphemes the Father, it will be forgiven him, and the one who blasphemes the Son, it will be forgiven him, but one who blasphemes the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either on earth or in Heaven.”

There are several crucial points to observe about this passage from the *Gospel of Thomas*. (1) This verse merely paraphrases Matthew 12:31,32 in the New Testament. (2) Since only God can be *blasphemed*, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit must have been considered God by the writer of the *Gospel of Thomas*. People do not “blaspheme” people. Muhammad may be disrespected, but only God can be *blasphemed*. (3) Because Christians only believe in “one” God (not three), then the Father, Son and Holy Spirit must comprise one God (the Trinity).

4. The Qur’an clearly denies the deity of Christ in Surah 3:83-84. As you probably know, Christians believe (based on the teachings of the New Testament) that Jesus, before becoming a man, existed in the “form” (nature) of God [Philippians 1:6] and that he took a second “form” (nature) and became a man with all of the limitations of humanity [Philippians 2:6-7]. Christ has two natures, both God and man [cf., Romans 1:3-4].

Even the *Gospel of Thomas*, in Logion 77, affirms the deity of Christ as Jesus, speaking about Himself, says, “I am the light which is from above [all things], I am [all things], [all things] came forth from me and [all things] reached me...”

The parallels between this verse and the New Testament are identical. It parallels John’s references to Jesus coming to earth from heaven [John 6:38,51; 8:42], that He came as the “light of the world” [John 1:4,9; 8:12; 9:5], and that Jesus is the eternal “I AM” [John 8:58—a reference to the name of God as “I AM” in Exodus 3:14—also see John 8:24]. It also matches Paul’s references to Jesus as Creator-God, and Jesus as the originator of “all things” in Colossians 1:16-18; John 1:1-18; and Hebrews 1:1-3.

See the *Appendix* at the end of this booklet for biblical evidence concerning the deity of Christ and Trinity.

HOW ISLAM SPREAD

To accurately judge any religion I believe one needs to examine the practices and the teachings of the founder of that faith. The hallmark of Jesus’s teaching, and that of the early church was love. [I would argue that the behavior of the Crusaders and the institutionalized church during the Inquisition was almost totally anti-Christian.]

What was one of the hallmarks of Muhammad’s teaching, his behavior, and his followers’ behavior?—War.

There is one thing which bothers me deeply about Islamic history. Right from the very beginning of Islam, Muslims have a history of killing, or threatening to kill, anyone who disagrees with them. While the early first century church grew in spite of intense persecutions, with others’ swords at its throat, Islam grew by putting the sword to the throat of others.

Virtually all of Islam’s growth in the centuries following Muhammad’s death in June of 632 A.D. came not through love, grace, compelling preaching, or the moving of God’s Spirit, where people could freely choose to believe in Islam. Rather, Islam grew primarily through military campaigns, threats, intense persecutions, burdensome taxation, slavery, and mass killings.—I’m not trying to be unkind, but this is documentable history.

History records that Islamic armies would come to a city (often a Christian city). People in the city would be given three choices: (1) convert to Islam (2) retain their religion and pay very burdensome taxes called *jizya* (which would force most Christians to convert to Islam over the next few generations or else force them to live in dire poverty), or (3) “*resist and we will kill you.*”—This is how Islam spread. About half of Christendom fell prey to Islamic rule as country after country was conquered.

The military campaigns were first started by Muhammad. He unified Arabia by means of war and by making various tribal treaties. In one battle against the Koreish, in 627 A.D., history records he massacred 600 Jews in one day and sold their wives and children into slavery.

The “*believe as I do, or I’ll kill you*” approach to evangelism worked quite effectively. With time those who converted to Islam may have rationalized their conversion. Those who defended the truth and their property rights, out of personal conviction, were no longer a threat either.—They were killed.

In a few short years, Islam became exceedingly powerful. Within 21 years of Muhammad’s death, Islam ruled a land mass equivalent to the size of the Roman Empire. Within a hundred years, Islamic armies had conquered most of the Middle East, and parts of India, North Africa, China and Europe.

Because opposing voices to Islam were swiftly silenced (killed), it was easy for people raised as Muslims to assume their beliefs were of God. They never heard anything that would make them believe otherwise. Why? Because people were afraid to speak up for fear of being killed or punished.

Allow me to draw an analogy. Let’s pretend a tribe of people believed the moon was made of cheese. Through various means they put together an army and systematically began conquering neighboring tribes. Everyone they conquered had a choice: confess that the moon is made of cheese, lose most of their wealth, or be killed.—Some died, many more chose poverty, but most made the new confession of faith.

Soon this movement ruled a small country. Within a few more years it controlled most of a continent as its adherents numbered into the millions. All of their children were raised to believe the moon was made of cheese. Their books reflected this belief. Anyone who taught differently was killed or severely punished. Any son or daughter who converted to a different belief was either killed or disowned. Fear ruled the day—and the moon remained made of cheese.—Question: How is this story any different from Islam? To me the parallels are virtually identical. Islam, from my perspective, effectively built a spiritual and intellectual wall around itself.

By combining fact with fiction, Islam did indeed sound true. However, all the facts, especially statements about Jesus’s death, were never given a chance to be cross-examined. Many of the facts were true, many were not. Out of fear of death, or fear of extreme reprisal, the falsehoods within Islam were never addressed publically. Anyone who questioned the truthfulness of Islam was immediately and severely silenced [often murdered].—The sad fact is, very little has changed since then.

WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS?

As a Bahai, can you see why Christians cannot accept your premise that Islam is a progressive step up on Christianity, and that Muhammad was a greater prophet than Jesus? Islam is a major step down from true Christianity.

Instead of love, there was/is violence. Observe the warlike nature of the Islamic people today, and you will see that they still retain the spirit of Muhammad. Contrast this with the non-violence of Jesus, the early church, and the church of today. Note the emphasis upon love that Jesus tried to instill in His followers. Look at the orphanages, hospitals, and other humanitarian ministries around the world being done in the name of Jesus, versus what Islam is doing.

The notable exceptions in church history, where the church became violent, such as the Crusades and Inquisition were not done in the Spirit of Christ, nor in keeping with what the New Testament teaches. Those who committed these atrocities in the name of Christ were, I believe, wolves dressed in sheep’s clothing. The New Testament warned about such intruders to the faith [e.g., Acts 20:29]. Jesus said that the way people would know His true followers was by their “love” [John 13:34,35]. Is Islam a movement of love? Were Muhammad and his followers kind, loving men; or were they violent warriors? If you know history, you know the answer.

If you happen to be a woman, this is especially true. Would you rather live in a Christian nation, or an Islamic country where you are considered the property of your husband, who has the right to beat you if you are disobedient, and to demand sex when he wants? Compare this with how women, by and large, are treated with dignity and respect within Christianity.

In summary, Muhammad, for whatever reason, distorted the true historical accounts of Jesus and the early church. He and his followers are responsible for the murder of millions of Jews and Christians, right up to the present time. He said that the books about Jesus are *true* and to *be believed*, and yet his teachings deny what these books really teach. Therefore, at the risk of seeming narrow-minded and offensive, Islam is a false religion.

Any religion, such as the Bahai faith, which teaches that Islam is compatible with Christianity, that the Bible and the Qur'an do not contradict each other, is wrong. Someone has their wires crossed.

Because the Bahai faith teaches that Islam and Christianity are compatible, it means that Baha'u'llah's teachings in this area are wrong. Though sincere, and possibly well-intentioned, Baha'u'llah was sincerely *wrong*.

Question: if Baha'u'llah's core teaching in this one major area is wrong, what other teachings might also be wrong, especially regarding the Christian faith?

I am not trying to be disrespectful or insensitive concerning your beliefs. However, speaking logically and historically, Islam and the Bahai faith have serious problems. By showing some of the possible falsehoods within Islam and the Bahai faith, I have not proven Christianity to be true. Therefore, in love, I ask you to weigh the evidence that Christianity is the one true religion (as taught by Jesus and His disciples). That which Muhammad and Baha'u'llah said was *once* true, I proclaim to you as still true today.

WHAT ARE THE FACTS SUPPORTING CHRISTIANITY?

Some think of Christianity as “escapism,” or as “pie in the sky.” The real issue, of course, is whether it is *true*. Is there really “pie in the sky”? To say, “There is a tunnel under this prison” may be an escapist idea, but it may also be true. So how can you determine whether Christianity is true? Actually it is not as hard as you may think.

There are a lot of religions and people saying what God is or is not like, and whether or not He even exists. The only one who can say for sure whether God exists, and what He is like, is God Himself. As simple as this is, it is an important point to grasp. Only God can give the final word on Himself.

Suppose one day a man [Jesus] walked this earth claiming to be God, saying that he was “THE way . . . THE truth . . . THE life” [John 14:6, emphasis mine]. What if he claimed to be the incarnation of Yahweh [the Hebrew name for God, John 8:58]. Now this would be something you could easily investigate.—Any person claiming to be God would either be psychotic with delusions of grandeur [crazy], a deceiver out to pull off one of the greatest scams of all time, or, this person might actually be the incarnation of God.—Possibly God had chosen to write Himself into His own story and become a man, just as He did with Abraham in Genesis 18, 19.

In essence, this is what the Bible teaches concerning Jesus. In the New Testament Jesus is called almost every major name used to describe God in the Old Testament [See Appendix at the back of this booklet.] Even though Jesus taught that God is the only one worthy of worship [Matthew 4:10] He, nevertheless, received worship [Matthew 28:9,17]. It even says the angels of God are to worship Him [Hebrews 1:6]. If Jesus were not God, He had no right being called God or allowing others to treat Him as God. It would be the ultimate in blasphemy and arrogance. Jesus, a Jew, would have known that.

To believe that Jesus was *just* a good teacher, assuming He really claimed to be God, would be out of the question. He would either be much more than a *good teacher* [i.e., God], or much less [i.e., a liar or lunatic]. Think of the hundreds of thousands who have died martyr's deaths because of His claims. If He is not God, these people died for a lie, for a false idol.

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

There can be no middle ground. Just as no one is ever half-pregnant [one is either pregnant or not pregnant], in like manner, Jesus is either God or he isn't.—Lunatic, liar or Lord, you choose.

If you really want to know the truth about God, it is not intellectually wise to ignore the life and teachings of the only major religious leader in all of history, and a Jew at that, who actually claimed to be God: Jesus. He is too important a figure to pass over lightly. He did live, and He stands alone in the claims He made.

Christ produced anger, hatred, or worship from the people of His day. To take a middle-of-the-road position concerning Him is to totally fail to grasp the claims He made. The enemies of Jesus clearly understood His claim to divinity. They tried to kill Him for blasphemy because He claimed *equality* and *oneness* with God [e.g., John 5:18; 8:58-59; 10:33, Mark 14:6 1-64, etc.]. All of the main writers of the New Testament, such as Rabbi Saul [Paul], and the apostle John, clear-

ly taught the deity of Jesus [e.g., Colossians 2:9; Philippians 2:6,7; Romans 9:5; John 1:1,14; Hebrews 1:1, etc.].

This is even more staggering when we realize that those saying these things were monotheistic Jews. [They believed in “one God.”] They were not talking about Jesus being a *god* in some polytheistic [many gods], Hindu sort of way. No, they worshiped Jesus as the incarnation of the One Almighty God [e.g., Matthew 28:9, John 20:28, Hebrews 1:6, Revelation 5:8-14, Philippians 2:10,11].

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

That is why Christianity is such an exclusive religion, and why Christians sometimes seem so narrow-minded. If Christ's claims are true, then there is no other choice but to proclaim Him as God incarnate. Jesus taught that He was the *only* way to God [e.g., John 8:24, 14:6; see also, Acts 4:12]. Christianity is not a matter of likes or dislikes, but an issue of whether Jesus was telling the truth. Because Christ claims to be God, His teachings are to be regarded more highly than any other religion, or other religious leaders in the world. It does not mean we are to be disrespectful of other religions, or that 100% of what they teach is wrong, but Christians have an obligation to tell the world about Jesus and His astounding claims [see Matthew 28:19-20].

Rather than questioning the severity and harshness of God in making the way to Himself so seemingly narrow, teaching that Jesus is the *only* way to God, maybe we should look at the severity of sin, and the harshness of the human condition, which would make it necessary for a holy God to go to such extremes to win mankind back to Himself. According to scripture God entered this world for the express purpose of dying for the sins of the world [Isaiah 53; John 3:16; Acts 2:23].

Before we travel any further, let me summarize some of the major evidences, as I see them, that Jesus was telling the truth. Again, you be the judge.

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

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

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

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

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

Would these men have willingly died for something they knew to be a lie?—Would you die for a lie, especially if it involved saying that some man had risen from the dead, when you really knew his body was decomposing somewhere? I don't think you would, and neither would I.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Using a Jewish calendar, which operated on 360 days per year, starting at the time Artaxerxes issued his decree, going forward 483 years, it comes out exactly to the week Jesus was crucified [April 6th, 32 A.D.].

Let me write out Daniel 9:24-27 in italics, with my comments in brackets. Hopefully, it will make sense to you. It says,

“*Seventy sevens* [a term sometimes translated “week,” or a 7 year period of time.—The same term was used of Jacob who worked for Laban for 7 years and fulfilled Rachael’s week. See: Genesis 19:28.] *are decreed for your people* [Daniel was a Jew, therefore these “people” are Jews] *and your holy city* [Jerusalem] *to finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness* [usually through the offering of a sacrificial lamb, except this time the Lamb of God was the Messiah: see Isaiah 53:1-12], *to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy. Know and understand this: From the issuing of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem* [which was in 445 B.C. by King Artaxerxes of Persia] *until the Anointed One* [Messiah, Christ], *the ruler, comes there will be seven sevens* [$7 \times 7 = 49$ years], *and sixty-two sevens* [$62 \times 7 = 434$ years]. Add these 434 years to the 49 years and you have a grand total of 483 years, . . . *after the sixty-two sevens the Anointed One* [Messiah] *will be cut off* [die] *and will have nothing. The people* [Romans] *of the ruler who will come* [Titus] *will destroy the city* [Jerusalem] *and the sanctuary* [which Titus did destroy in 70 A.D.]”—[If you really want to understand this prophecy, get a copy of the small book *Daniel’s Prophecy Of The Seventy Weeks* by McClain and read it.]

According to this passage, the Messiah had to be *cut off* [killed] before the destruction of the temple, which we know occurred in 70 A.D. when Titus and his soldiers destroyed Jerusalem, and burned the temple. What famous Jewish religious figure, claiming to be the Messiah, was born in Bethlehem, died having his hands and feet pierced, on a Day of Atonement, exactly 483 years from when Artaxerxes gave his decree, and before Titus destroyed the sanctuary in 70 A.D.?—There was only one person.—Jesus!

If the first 69 weeks were literal, what happened to the 70th week you say? I believe that the Bible teaches that this 70th week has yet to be fulfilled. It will be uniquely Jewish. Christians call it the Great Tribulation [Matthew 24; Revelation 4-19]. In the Hebrew Bible, it is known as the time of Jacob’s Trouble, or the Day Of The Lord [Jeremiah 30:2-7; Zephaniah 1:14-18; Zechariah 14:1-9]. In between the 69th and 70th week is the church age, where God’s mercy, grace and salvation has been extended to the Gentiles [as foretold in Isaiah 49:6].

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

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

Some scholars used to say that the Bible writers had taken events from the past, and written about them in such a way

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

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

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

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

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

a. Virtually all prophecy centers around the nation of Israel, because God has not forgotten His promises to the Jewish people. [There are also some wonderful prophecies for non-Jews.] The Bible predicted that Israel would become a nation again [Daniel 9:27; Ezekiel 37:1-14]. After almost 2,500 years Israel did in 1948. Let me share a quote from Dr. Paul Meier concerning Israel becoming a nation:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

c. As mentioned, the Bible has a great deal to say about a 7 year period on the earth known as the Great Tribulation [Daniel 9:26-27; Matthew 24; Revelation 4-19; Jeremiah 30:7; etc.]. It is the 70th "week" Daniel talked about in the passage we examined earlier. It is a time when *all hell will break loose* on earth. Revelation 8:7-11 describes some of what will happen during this time. It says that a third of the earth will be destroyed by fire, and a third of the world's waters

will turn to *wormwood* [poisonous]. It is interesting; the word *wormwood*, in Russian, is the word *Chernobyl*. Chernobyl, as you recall, was the nuclear power plant that underwent a meltdown and spread radioactivity over much of Europe and Russia.

Most consider this judgment either an asteroid hitting one of earth's oceans [which could cause earthquakes and nuclear power plant meltdowns], or else the result of nuclear war. For example, after the U.S.A. dropped the first atomic bomb on Hiroshima in World War II, thousands of people died, not only from the bomb blast itself, but also from drinking water contaminated by radioactive fallout.

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

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

At the time of this writing, with the instability of the world economy, it is very likely that there could be an economic collapse in the not too distant future.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

There are many more prophecies I could list, but I want you to see that what the Bible talks about is as real today

as when it was written. In fact, the book of Revelation in the Bible is much easier to believe and understand now than when it was written almost 2,000 years ago.

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

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

STEPS TO KNOWING GOD

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Spiritual Law #3: Christ is the only way to God. He died to pay the penalty for our sin. By his death, Jesus bridged the gap between a holy God and sinful man. Either we go to God by way of Jesus, or we do not get to God [II Thessalonians 1:8-9; John 3:16; Romans 5:8, Acts 20:28; I Timothy 2:5].

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

per hour above the speed limit, her fine would be \$300 or three days in jail.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

When you die, how can you be sure you will go to Heaven to be with God? The Bible says, “*And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may KNOW you have eternal life.*” [I John 5:11-13, emphasis mine]—How can you *know* you have eternal life? Does it depend on

how you feel, or upon circumstances? No. It depends on God's promise. God promises that if you *believe* in Christ, and commit your life to him, you can *know* you have eternal life.

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

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

A TIME OF DECISION

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

No one has a deciding vote in this decision but you. God votes for you. Satan, who is also very real, votes against you. I pray that you will cast your deciding vote before it is too late. As I understand scripture, there are no second chances in another life [Hebrews 9:27]. Jesus stands at the door of your heart knocking. Will you open the door and let him in [Revelation 3:20]?

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

When you are ready, may I suggest the following prayer, or one like it: "*Dear Jesus, I thank you for loving me. I am sorry for the ways that I have sinned against you. I believe you died on the cross for my sin. As best as I know how, right*

now, I invite you to come into my life. Please forgive me, and cleanse me from all my sin. Make me the person you want me to be. I need you. I willingly yield my life to you. Thank you for hearing my prayer. Amen.”

These words are not magical. The important thing is that you mean them. Once you have invited Jesus Christ to be a part of your life, I encourage you to find a loving church where the Bible is both honored and taught. Make public your commitment to Christ by getting baptized [Matthew 28:19,20; Acts 10:47, 48a]. Visit several churches before you pick a church. Pray about it, and listen to your heart. God can lead you. It is sort of like trying on a new pair of shoes. You don't necessarily want to buy the first pair you try on.

Continue to pray, read scripture, and allow God to speak to you. If you're a student in high school, check out such groups as Campus Life, Young Life, Fellowship of Christian Athletes, K-Life, etc. If you are in college, there are some wonderful college ministries such as Campus Crusade For Christ, the Navigators, Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship, etc. Groups such as these are a great way to begin to grow and to find support throughout the week. Even if you are not a student, call one of these groups and ask them to suggest some good churches in your area.

The story is told of a native witch doctor who had done much evil in his life, causing much needless suffering through his witchcraft. As a result of the love and work of some Christian missionaries, he yielded his heart to Christ. Later, he called a tribal meeting to share with his village the transformation that had occurred in his life. He said that before he came to know Christ, it was as though there was an evil dog in him that made him do cruel, hateful things. When he repented, and asked Christ into his life, he said it was as though a powerful dog of love and peace came to live in him.

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

There are spiritual battles that will go on in your life. Just as God and angels are real, Satan and his demons are also real. The New Testament has much to say about them. Beside the books I've mentioned thus far, there are two books I highly recommend to help you understand, gain, and maintain spiritual victory in your walk with Christ. The two books are: *Victory Over the Darkness* and *The Bondage Breaker* by Dr. Neil Anderson.

Another book I highly recommend, which will help you learn of the awesome love God has for you, is *Search For Significance* by Robert McGee.

If possible, I urge you to read such authors as Charles Swindoll, Josh McDowell, and Max Lucado. If you like somewhat heavier philosophical reading, try C.S. Lewis [e.g., *Mere Christianity*, *The Weight Of Glory*, *The Screwtape Letters*], or Peter Kreeft [e.g., *Making Sense Out Of Suffering*, *Heaven The Heart's Deepest Longing*, etc.].

To grow as a new believer, I suggest you contact any of the following Christian organizations for their assistance and literature. You can most likely get their addresses from a library, a Christian bookstore, or you may access them over the internet:

Billy Graham Evangelistic Assoc.: <http://www.graham-assn.org>
Campus Crusade For Christ: <http://www.ccci.org>
Fellowship Of Christian Athletes: <http://www.gospel.com.net/fca/>
Freedom In Christ Ministries: <http://www.ficm.org>
Great Commission Ministries: <http://www.greatcommission.org>
Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship: <http://www.ivpress.com>
Josh McDowell Ministries: <http://www.ccci.org/josh/>
The Navigators: <http://www.gospelcom.net/navs/>
Youth For Christ: <http://www.gospelcom.net/yfc/>

Log onto <http://www.gospelcom.net/> for addresses of other Christian organizations and resources.—Keep feeding the good side.

C.S. Lewis once remarked, “*Joy is the serious business of Heaven.*” If Heaven is true, as Jesus taught it is, then no sacrifice or cost is too great to please the *One* who loves you. Set your heart and your mind on the reality of Heaven [Colossians 3:1,2; Matthew 6:19-21]. Let it motivate you all the days of your life.

May His grace and peace be yours.

APPENDIX I:

EVIDENCE FOR THE DEITY OF CHRIST [that Christ is both God and man] AND TRINITY

One of the strongest proof that Jesus is God, is that He co-equally shared the same names, titles and attributes as God:

Jehovah: John 8:58 [In the Greek, the words “I AM” are present tense, not “I was.” For example, the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament, translates “I AM” in Exodus 3:14 as *ego eimi*. Exodus 3:14, you recall, is where God declares His name to be “**I AM**” [translated Yahweh, or Jehovah]. The same Greek words, *ego eimi*, are also used in the following passages where Jesus says, “**I am** the bread of life,” “**I am** the living water,” “**I am** the door of the Sheep,” “Unless you believe **I am** he . . .,” “**I am** he,” etc. See also: **Mark 14:62, John 6:35, 48; 8:24; 10:7; 18:5.**]

God: Hebrews 1:8, I Peter 1:1 [In Greek, both God and Savior modify Jesus Christ], John 1:1 [cf. verse 14], Titus 2:13; Acts 20:28.

Alpha and Omega: Revelation 22:13 [cf. v. 16],

First and Last: Revelation 2:8 [cf. Isaiah 44:6]

Lord: Philippians 2:10-11 [and many, many other times in the New Testament, *Lord* is used of Jesus in the divine sense.]

Savior: Isaiah 43:10 vs. Titus 2:3, 13,

King: Revelations 19:16,

Judge: John 5:22,

Holy One: Acts 3:14,

Light: John 8:12,

Rock: I Corinthians 10:3,4,

Redeemer: Psalm 49:7; 130:7-8; Acts 20:28,

Shepherd: I Peter 5:4,

Healer: Acts 9:34,

Creator: Hebrews 1:1,2; John 1:3,10; Colossians 1:15-18,

Giver of Life: I Corinthians 15:45; John 17:2,

Forgiver of Sins: Mark 2:7-11,

Omnipresent: Matthew 28:20,

Immutable (unchanging): Hebrews 13:8,

Eternal: Isaiah 9:6,

Spoke as God: Matthew 23:34-37, and

Was worshiped as God: Hebrews 1:6, John 9:38; Matthew 28:17 [In each instance, it is the same Greek root word as Matthew 4:10, where Jesus told Satan that only God is to be *worshiped*. The NWT Bible translates the same Greek word as *worship* in Revelation 5:14. Question: why do you suppose the NWT changes the word *worship* to *obeisance* in passages related to Jesus, and yet translates the same Greek word as *worship* in passages referring to God?]

IS THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY TRUE AND IS THE HOLY SPIRIT GOD?

I have chosen to include a condensed overview of the doctrine of the Trinity. While the term “*Trinity*” is never used in scripture, there is overwhelming evidence to support this doctrine. My goal is not to explain the Trinity (I can’t), but rather to show that it is Biblical. This topic could easily be another book/booklet in itself, therefore, I have chosen to follow an outline format with little elaboration. I encourage you to look up the scriptures for yourself.

Succinctly stated, I define the doctrine of the Trinity (the triunity of God) as follows: The one, eternal, creator God has eternally existed as three Persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Each member of the Godhead bears the name “God” (as we shall see). They stand in an I-Thou relationship (i.e., there is love and communication between the members of the Godhead). Each one bears all the attributes of Deity, including personality, feelings, omniscience, eternalness, etc.

BIBLICAL EVIDENCE FOR TRINITY

1. Grammatical:

A. Plural Pronouns Used For God

1. *Elohim* is the Hebrew word for God. It comes from two Hebrew words, *El* (or *Eloah*), which is the word translated “god.” “*In*” is the plural ending. For example, in Genesis 1:1 it says, “In the beginning God (plural) created (singular) the heav-

ens and the earth.”

2. The terms *us* or *our* are sometimes used by God when referring to Himself (Genesis 1:26; 3:22; 11:7; Isaiah 6:8).
3. In Ecclesiastes 12:1 the word *creator* is actually plural in Hebrew. In Isaiah 54:5 the word *maker* is plural in Hebrew. This is consistent with the concept of the Trinity, as **all three members of the Godhead are said to be creator(s)**.
Father: Genesis 1:1; Psalm 95:5-6
Son: John 1:2-3,10; Colossians 1:15-18; Hebrews 1:2,10.
Holy Spirit: Genesis 1:2; Psalm 104:30.
4. Deuteronomy 6:4 is one of the premiere verses in all of scripture expressing the oneness of God. What is not often realized is how the plurality of God is shown in this verse. The verse reads “Hear, O Israel: The LORD (Yahweh, singular) is our God (elohim, plural). The LORD (Yahweh, singular) is one (plural).” [We are used to thinking of the word “one” as singular. In this case it is plural; just as man and woman become *one*.]
5. In the New Testament, Matthew 28:19 gives one of the clearest evidences for the doctrine of the Trinity. Jesus said we are to “. . . baptize in **the name** (singular) of the **Father, Son and Holy Spirit**” (emphasis mine). This verse shows that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit comprise one name. If they were not one, the verse would read “names.”
6. In numerous places in the Old Testament two Yahweh’s or two elohim’s are mentioned: Genesis 19:24; Psalms 45:6-7; Isaiah 44:6; Hosea 1:7; Zechariah 1:12-14; 2:8-9.

B. Other Places In The Bible Where The Trinity Is Indicated: II Samuel 23:2,3; Isaiah 48:16-17; 59:20-21; 63:8-16.

C. Places In The New Testament Where The Trinity Is Shown: Matthew 3:16-17; 22:43-45; 28:19; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 1:35; 3:21-22; John 3:34-36; 14:26; 16:13-15; Acts 2:32-33,38-39; 20:21-23; Romans 15:16,30; I Corinthians 12:4-6; II Corinthians 3:4-6; 13:14 (cf., Numbers 6:24-26); Ephesians 1:3-14 (vv. 3-6 = **Father**, vv. 4-12 = **Son**, vv. 13,14 = **Holy Spirit**); Ephesians 2:18-22; 3:14-17; 4:4-6; II Thessalonians 2:13-14; I Timothy 3:15-16; Hebrews 9:14; 10:7-15; I Peter 1:2.

D. The Interpersonal Relationships Between The Father, Son and Holy Spirit Are Clearly Shown:

1. Between The Father And Son:

- a. **They are one:** John 8:19; 10:28-30; 12:45; 13:20; 14:7-9; II Corinthians 1:21; Colossians 1:15.
- b. **They are distinct:** Psalms 2:7,11-12; 110:1; Daniel 7:13; Matthew 11:27; Luke 3:22; John 3:16-17; 5:17,23,26; 14:23; 15:1; 17:5; 18, 21,23; Hebrews 12:23-24.

2. Between Jesus And The Holy Spirit

- a. **They are one:** John 7:37-19; Acts 16:6,7; Romans 8:9-11; Galatians 4:6 (cf., 3:5,14); I Peter 1:11; I John 5:7 (cf., John 14:6); Revelation 19:10.
- b. **They are distinct:** John 14:16,-17; 16:7,14; Romans 8:26-27,34; I Corinthians 12:3.

3. The Father And The Holy Spirit

- a. **They are one:** I Corinthians 12:3; Matthew 10:20; Romans 8:9; Ephesians 2:22; Hebrews 10:15-16 (cf. Jeremiah 31:33).
- b. **They are distinct:** Isaiah 48:16; John 14:26; I Corinthians 2:10,11.

D. The Deity Of God The Father And The Son: I have tried to show that Jesus and the Father coequally share the same names and attributes. They each are referred to as eternal, omnipotent, omnipresent, worthy of worship, etc.

E. The Deity Of The Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is the third member of the Trinity. Contrary to the teachings of some, the Holy Spirit is not an *it*, or some impersonal energy force. As you will see, the Holy Spirit bears the attributes of deity. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God Himself.—He:

1. **Is called God:** I John 4:2,3; I Corinthians 2:4-5,10-16; II Corinthians 3:17; Matthew 10:20; John 4:24; Acts 28:25-28.
2. **Is called Jehovah (Yahweh):** Hebrews 3:7-11 (cf. 4:4); 10:15,16; Numbers 11:29.
3. **Is “Most High” :** Luke 1:35.
4. **Speaks:** II Samuel 23:2-3; Mark 13:11; Acts 1:16, 13:2; 20:23; I Corinthians 12:3.
5. **Teaches:** Nehemiah 9:20; Luke 12:12.
6. **Is omnipresent:** Psalm 139:7.

7. **Is referred to with personal pronouns:** John 16:14; Acts 13:2.
8. **Was lied to:** Acts 5:3,4.
9. **Performs miracles:** ICorinthians 12:9-10.
10. **Is Christ's Spirit:** Romans 8:9.
11. **Commands:** Acts 8:29; 13:2-4.
12. **Gives life:** John 6:63 (cf., Psalm 36:9 [Father], John 5:21 [Son]) and II Corinthians 3:6.
13. **Can be blasphemed** (a clear sign of deity!—One does not blaspheme an “*it*.”): Mark 3:29.
14. **Thinks:** Romans 8:27.
15. **Bestows eternal life:** Galatians 6:8.
16. **Has emotions:** Romans 14:17; Ephesians 4:30.
17. **Is omniscient:** ICorinthians 2:11; 12:8
18. **Is eternal:** Hebrews 9:14 . . . and the list could go on an on.

G. Conclusion

Is the term Trinity used in scripture? No. Is the concept clearly taught. Yes.

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