

**COME NOW,
LET US REASON
TOGETHER**

ISAIAH 1:18

Let Us Speak the Truth In Love

Ephesians 4:15

Response to Objections
Raised by a Pastor
Against the Bahá'í Faith

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Come Now, Let Us Reason Together

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*“Come now, let us reason together,” saith
the Lord.* *Isaiah 1:18*

Prove all things; hold that which is good.
I Thessalonians 5:21

*Always be prepared to give an answer to
everyone who asks you to give the reason
for the hope that you have. But do this
with gentleness and respect. I Peter 3:15*

*I myself will give you power of utterance
and a wisdom which no opponent will be
able to resist or refute. Christ (Luke 21:15)*

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Dear Pastor

Let Us Reason Together

Isaiah 1:18

*The first to present his case seems right, till
another comes forward and questions him.*

Proverbs 18:17

Come Now, Let Us Reason Together and its sequel—*Let Us Speak the Truth in Love*—are written in response to objections raised by a pastor to certain Bahá'í beliefs and principles. He expressed his objections in a letter after reading *One God, Many Faiths; One Garden, Many Flowers*; and its sequel *Heaven's Most Glorious Gift*—two introductory books I have written about the Bahá'í Faith.*

* These two volumes respond to questions many people ask about the Bahá'í Faith. You can find the author's response to most of those question in "Pamphlets" on this Website: www.globalperspective.org

I have quoted the pastor's entire letter under the "Questions and Comments" in this volume, and then presented my responses to his objections. *Let Us Speak the Truth in Love* offers further facts in support of this volume.

This book is not addressed to just one pastor, but to all faithful Christians, leaders and laity alike. The pastor's letter presents a cross-section of questions and objections raised by many Christians.

Dear Pastor:

You deserve much credit for taking the time to read my book. This is a rare phenomenon! For this achievement, I offer you my deepest gratitude and most profound appreciation.

Please do not be surprised by my lengthy response. The questions you have raised are critical. They represent the thinking of millions of other sincere and thoughtful Christians like yourself. They deserve the most serious attention.

I have done my best to respond to your questions and concerns with courtesy and gentleness. I have tried to follow these admonitions:

How blest are those of a gentle spirit...How blest are the peacemakers. Christ (Matt. 5:5,9)

Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone. Colossians 4:6

Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the

hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect... I Peter 3:15

What kind of answer do Peter and Paul ask us to give?

What I am saying is *true* and *reasonable*. Acts 26:25

At no time have I asked you to accept a point, however insignificant, without offering both biblical references and logical reasons. To be dependable, faith must be sustained by evidence, otherwise every impostor is as right as every true believer. Reason must prevail. God Himself asks us to use that very gift:

“Come now, let us reason together,” says the Lord. Isaiah 1:18

“Present your case,” says the Lord. “Set forth your arguments,” says Jacob’s King. Isaiah 41:21

Prove all things... I Thessalonians 5:21

It was by the power of proof that St. Paul spread the message of Jesus to the Jews and Gentiles (Acts 17:2,17; 18:4). Did God give us the gift of reason for no reason?

But reason alone cannot move the hearts. The mind is sublime, but without the support of the heart, it remains powerless. I have tried to blend love and reason in a balanced dose.

...let us speak the truth in love. Ephesians 4:15

Because of my intense desire “to see right prevail” (Matt. 5:6), I have made a strong appeal to your conscience to continue your investigation of Bahá’u’lláh’s message and to listen with a new heart. The cost of failing to investigate is enormous; the eternal life is at stake. Can you afford to risk that most precious of all gifts?

No man can obtain everlasting life, unless he embraceth the truth of this inestimable, this wondrous, and sublime Revelation.¹ Bahá’u’lláh

My reason for the strong appeal is my love for truth. My intention is to inform you of the most abundant outpouring of grace in this great day of the Lord. My motive is to inspire you to reach out while there is yet time, before opportunities are gone.

How blest are those who hunger and thirst to see right prevail; they will be satisfied.

Christ (Matt. 5:6)

If at times you feel I have passed my limits, please forgive me. My purpose is not to exert pressure, but to inspire. I always enjoy an open dialogue—an exchange of ideas with freedom, kindness, and respect.

Let me assure you that I have no desire to turn you, or anyone else, into a reluctant believer. Believing is an act of free will; it should never be burdened by pressure. The following quotations from both the Bahá’í and Christian Scriptures eulogize the principle of freedom:

Consort with all men, O people of Bahá, in a spirit of friendliness and fellowship. If ye be aware of a certain truth, if ye possess a jewel, of which others are deprived, share it with them in a language of utmost kindness and good-will. If it be accepted, if it fulfill its purpose, your object is attained. If any one should refuse it, leave him unto himself, and beseech God to guide him. Beware lest ye deal unkindly with him. A kindly tongue is the lodestone of the hearts of men. It is the bread of the spirit, it clotheth the words with meaning, it is the fountain of the light of wisdom and understanding.²

Bahá'u'lláh

I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.

Christ (Rev. 3:20)

As you can see, Jesus promises to knock gently at the doors of our hearts, but not to knock them down. As He knocks at the doors of our hearts, so must we knock at the door of His Kingdom until it is opened:

Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.

Christ (Matt. 7:7)

Let me assure you further that I have absolutely no desire to win an argument; that stands contrary to God's guidance:

Beware lest ye contend with any one, nay, strive to make him aware of the truth with kindly manner and most convincing exhortation.³

Bahá'u'lláh

A fool's lips enter into contention...

Proverbs 18:6

...shun every form of dispute.⁴ 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Don't have anything to do with foolish and stupid arguments, because you know they produce quarrels. And the Lord's servant must not quarrel; instead, he must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth...

II Timothy 2:23-25

Instead of quoting all of your letter at once, and then offering answers, I have divided it according to the topics you have raised in the order you raised them. In each case I have first quoted you, under the subheading "Questions and Comments," and then offered my response.

I hope and pray that you will give me the honor of continuing this dialogue with you as long as faith, hope, and patience endure. May God fill your life with grace and an abundance of blessings.

Faithfully yours,

Hugh Motlagh

Part I

Bahá'í Faith

A Brief History

Bahá'í Faith

A Brief History

If you are unfamiliar with the Bahá'í Faith, its claims, and its mission, a brief introduction to its Central Figures will prove helpful.

The Herald

The Bahá'í Era began in 1844, with the declaration of a young man called the Báb (the Gate). The Báb was born in Shíráz, in southern Persia, in 1819; declared His mission in 1844; and was martyred in 1850, at age 30.

The Báb said He had been called to an exalted and glorious Mission: to proclaim the dawning of a new day in the spiritual history of the world, the long-cherished-and-awaited ***Day of the Lord***, the approach of the age of restoration and renewal, when “all things are made new” (Rev. 21:5).

Verily this is none other than the sovereign Truth; it is the Path which God hath laid out for all that are in heaven and on earth. Let him who will, take for himself the right path unto his Lord.¹

The Báb

The Báb's Message spread swiftly, like the glimmerings of dawn, summoning the seekers of the Kingdom and preparing them for the rising of the Sun. Before long, the light of the Lord would unveil its countenance, shining with unmatched glory and dazzling splendor.

The Báb's Message threatened the establishment. Religious and political leaders alike set out to destroy Him. His triumph meant the decline of their powers. They were the same kind of people to whom Christ came, and they felt and acted in the same way.

During His brief ministry on earth, in spite of imprisonment and exile, the Báb revealed an abundance of scriptures, unveiling mysteries, offering new hope and knowledge, and paving the way for the advent of a divine Teacher who would disclose even greater treasures of truth.

Although an independent Messenger, the Báb served primarily as *the Gate* to Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation. His prime mission, like that of John the Baptist, was not to found a new Faith but to awaken the seekers of truth, and to prepare them for the advent of the long-expected world Savior and Redeemer.

The Báb asked His followers again and again to be ready, to be receptive to the call of the next Redeemer, and to give Him their full allegiance. For He knew that the advent of Bahá'u'lláh would pose a severe test to His own followers:

Take ye heed, therefore, lest ye deprive yourselves of attaining the presence of Him Who is the Manifestation of God...and be ye careful lest ye be deterred from attaining unto the ocean of His good-pleasure...²

The Báb praised Bahá'u'lláh in the most exquisite and enchanting terms, expressing utter humility toward Him. The following passage shows how the Báb viewed Himself in relation to Bahá'u'lláh:

Consecrate Thou, O my God, the whole of this Tree [the Báb] unto Him, that from it may be revealed all the fruits created by God within it...By Thy glory! I have not wished that this Tree should ever bear any branch, leaf, or fruit that would fail to bow down before Him...And shouldst Thou behold, O my God, any branch, leaf, or fruit upon Me that hath failed to bow down before Him, on the day of His Revelation, cut it off, O My God, from that Tree, for it is not of Me, nor shall it return unto Me.³

To show His humility, the Báb likened Himself to a ring on Bahá'u'lláh's hand. The metaphor is the quintessence of beauty and simplicity:

I myself am, verily, but a ring upon the hand of Him Whom God shall make manifest—glorified be His mention! He turneth it as He pleaseth...⁴

The humility expressed by the Báb toward Bahá'u'lláh is comparable to that expressed by John the Baptist toward Jesus:

After me comes one who is mightier than I. I am not fit to unfasten his shoes... Mark 1:7

As the Scriptures reveal, Elijah was to appear twice, once before the first advent of Jesus—a prophecy fulfilled by John the Baptist—and again before the second advent, a time distinguished and described as “the great day of the Lord:” “Behold I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and dreadful day of the Lord” (Malachi 4:5). The Báb’s advent thus accorded with the preceding prophecy, fulfilling the promise of the Scriptures that a Messenger would once again herald the dawn of the New Age.

The new Revelation came into being in Shíráz, in the land of Elam, the biblical name for a district now in southern Persia, a land prophesied in the Scriptures to become the seat of God’s throne in the last days: “I will set my throne in Elam...saith the Lord” (Jeremiah 49:38).

The teachings of the Báb challenged, threatened, and soon began to uproot the established dogmas and superstitions of the day, leading to turmoil and opposition throughout the land. As a result of the collaboration of the religious leaders and the state, exactly as in the time of Jesus, the Báb was imprisoned, exiled, and eventually executed. His ministry lasted slightly over six years.

The Founder

About two and a half years after the Báb's martyrdom, Bahá'u'lláh received the first intimation of His Revelation. He declared Himself the One promised by all great religions of the past. In an Epistle to the king of Persia, He describes His spiritual transformation by the divine power:

O King! I was but a man like others, asleep upon My couch, when lo, the breezes of the All-Glorious were wafted over Me, and taught Me the knowledge of all that hath been. This thing is not from Me, but from One Who is Almighty and All-Knowing. And He bade Me lift up My voice between earth and heaven, and for this there befell Me what hath caused the tears of every man of understanding to flow.⁵

He compared Himself to a frail leaf stirred by the Lord:

This is but a leaf which the winds of the will of thy Lord, the Almighty, the All-Praised, have stirred. Can it be still when the tempestuous winds are blowing? Nay, by Him Who is the Lord of all Names and Attributes! They move it as they list...His all-compelling summons hath reached Me, and caused Me to speak His praise amidst all people. I was indeed as one dead when His behest was uttered. The hand of the will of thy Lord, the Compassionate, the Merciful, transformed Me.⁶

One night, in a dream, these exalted words were heard on every side: “Verily, We shall render Thee victorious by Thyself and by Thy Pen. Grieve Thou not for that which hath befallen Thee, neither be Thou afraid, for Thou art in safety. Erelong will God raise up the treasures of the earth—men who will aid Thee through Thyself and through Thy Name...”⁷

Bahá’u’lláh, born to one of the most distinguished families in 19th-Century Persia, was expected to follow in the footsteps of His illustrious father. Instead of living the princely life, He endured and accepted a life of anguish and affliction, of tests and trials. He chose 40 years of imprisonment and exile in place of earthly joys and riches. A humble life in prison held more glories than the pomp of kings; poverty excelled the pursuit of a princely life, and self-sacrifice surpassed “the ease and pleasures of a passing day.”

Like His Herald, the Báb, Bahá’u’lláh encountered severe opposition and oppression from the onset of His ministry to the very end, especially from those who feared the loss of their powers. And in spite of grave danger to His life, Bahá’u’lláh declined to live in concealment. Instead of escaping afflictions, He welcomed them; instead of mourning, He rejoiced; instead of grieving, He gloried and exulted. To a cruel, cunning, and powerful religious leader, who had tortured and put to death some of the most distinguished disciples of the new Faith, Bahá’u’lláh wrote:

Thinkest thou that We fear thy cruelty? Know thou and be well assured that from the first day...We offered up Our souls, and Our bodies ...in the path of God, the Exalted, the Great, and We glory therein amongst all created things...⁸

The masses, religious leaders, and the state combined their efforts and powers against Bahá'u'lláh. They said, "this man wishes to suppress and destroy the religion, the law, the nation and the empire."⁹ But the persecution of the new Faith in the land of its origin could not obscure the radiance or suppress the love and devotion of its determined believers; on the contrary, the oppression and cruelty intensified the ever-spreading flame of faith among the heroic followers. It also activated the dormant curiosities of the masses, strengthening the determination and enflaming the desire of multitudes of devoted seekers athirst for truth.

The oppressors had to find a new solution—banishment. They banished Bahá'u'lláh from city to city, and from country to country, each time hoping that the next destination would prove fatal, would at last stifle or extinguish Bahá'u'lláh's overwhelming and ever-expanding influence. But it was a vain hope. Exile, like a wind, carried His message to the lands beyond.

At last, His adversaries found an ideal city, one which they thought would unquestionably contain the influence of the charming and persuasive prisoner. The city was 'Akká, "a solitary desert,"

an extremely desolate and remote place in the Holy Land, governed by the most deadly elements. So they banished Bahá'u'lláh for the fourth time; but they failed again. Bahá'u'lláh's influence could not be contained; it continued to spread with an ever-increasing tempo. He prevailed over all adversities, all suppressions and oppositions.

In response to the efforts of His oppressors, Bahá'u'lláh wrote:

Though the forces of the nations be arrayed against Him, though the kings of the earth be leagued to undermine His Cause, the power of His might shall stand unshaken.¹⁰

In a talk given in Chicago in 1912, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Bahá'u'lláh's Son and appointed interpreter of His teachings, described the suffering as well as the mission of Bahá'u'lláh:

For the betterment of the world Bahá'u'lláh endured all the hardships, ordeals and vicissitudes of life, sacrificing His very being and comfort, forfeiting His estates, possessions and honor—all that pertains to human existence—not for one year, nay, rather, for nearly fifty years. During this long period He was subjected to persecution and abuse, was cast into prison, was banished from His native land, underwent severities and humiliation and was exiled four times. He was first exiled from Persia to Baghdad, thence to Constantinople, thence to Rumelia and finally to the great prison-fortress of 'Akká in Syria, where He passed the

remainder of His life. Every day a new oppression and abuse was heaped upon Him until He winged His flight from the dungeon to the supreme world and returned to His Lord. He endured these ordeals and difficulties in order that this earthly human world might become heavenly, that the illumination of the divine Kingdom should become a reality in human hearts, that the individual members of mankind might progress...and the happiness of the world of humanity be assured.¹¹

Although a prisoner and exile, Bahá'u'lláh enjoyed unexampled freedom and honor during His later days in 'Akká. People marveled at His powers to overcome His enemies, to rise above all obstacles. They said: "This man is a prince, not a prisoner."

After Bahá'u'lláh's exile to the Holy Land, many came to recognize the significance of the move. For it fulfilled the myriads of Scriptural prophecies pointing to the Holy Land as the seat of the Lord of the last days, and specifically to 'Akká (or Achor) as "the solitary place" which shall "rejoice, and blossom as the rose" (Isaiah 35:35), as "a door of hope" (Hosea 2:15), and as "a resting place for all those who seek God" (Isaiah 65:10). They noted with wonder and awe that the prophecies had been fulfilled, not by Bahá'u'lláh's own choosing, but by the cunning of His adversaries, who had planned and plotted to extinguish His light.

Was it chance or destiny that Bahá'u'lláh should have been sent to the Promised Land as a prisoner,

not of His own free Will but by the will of those who had sought to destroy Him and everything He stood for? Is this how God chooses to fulfill His promises? Regarding the blessedness of the Holy Land, Bahá'u'lláh wrote:

This Holy Land hath been mentioned and extolled in all the sacred Scriptures. In it have appeared the Prophets of God and His chosen Ones. This is the wilderness in which all the Messengers of God have wandered, from which their cry, "Here am I, here am I, O my God" was raised. This is the promised Land in which He Who is the Revelation of God was destined to be made manifest. This is the Vale of God's unsearchable decree, the snow-white Spot, the Land of unfading splendor. Whatever hath come to pass in this Day hath been foretold in the Scriptures of old.¹²

Bahá'u'lláh's final place of banishment, the Holy Land, is now the World Center of the Bahá'í Faith, fulfilling the words of the Holy Ones of the past. On the slopes of Mt. Carmel—adjacent to 'Akká—stands the seat of the Universal House of Justice, the source of guidance and inspiration for the Bahá'í world and, in the future, for the entire planet:

Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow to it. Many people shall come and

say, "Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths"...They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore.

Isaiah 2:2-4

Here on the slopes of Mt. Carmel, Bahá'u'lláh (meaning *Glory of the Lord*) pitched His tent with the utmost glory and grandeur, fulfilling Isaiah's prophecy that Carmel (literally, *the Vineyard of the Lord*) "shall see the glory of the Lord and the excellency of our God" (Isaiah 35:1-2). Bahá'u'lláh's sojourn in the Vineyard of the Lord further fulfilled and made evident the purpose of Jesus' prophetic words, pointing to the advent of the Lord of the Vineyard in the last days (Matt. 21:33-40).

Jesus' prophecy reached full realization when the remains of Bahá'u'lláh's martyred Herald, the Báb, were laid to rest on the slopes of Mt. Carmel. For He, too, had assumed a title similar to that of Bahá'u'lláh, namely *Rabb*, meaning *the Lord*.

In the following passages, Bahá'u'lláh exalts Carmel, also known as the Mountain of the Lord, in the most majestic and moving terms:

Rejoice, for God hath in this Day established upon thee His throne, hath made thee the dawning-place of His signs and the dayspring of the evidences of His Revelation. Well is it

with him that circleth around thee, that proclaimeth the revelation of thy glory...Seize thou the Chalice of Immortality in the name of thy Lord, the All-Glorious, and give thanks unto Him, inasmuch as He, in token of His mercy unto thee, hath turned thy sorrow into gladness, and transmuted thy grief into blissful joy.¹³

Bahá'u'lláh also glorified Christ in the most moving terms:

Know thou that when the Son of Man yielded up His breath to God, the whole creation wept with a great weeping. By sacrificing Himself, however, a fresh capacity was infused into all created things...Blessed is the man who, with a face beaming with light, hath turned towards Him.¹⁴

Note Bahá'u'lláh's compassion for the sufferings Jesus endured, and also the supreme titles by which He glorified the Son of God:

Reflect how Jesus, *the Spirit of God*, was, notwithstanding His extreme meekness and perfect tender-heartedness, treated by His enemies. So fierce was the opposition which He, *the Essence of Being* and *Lord of the visible and invisible*, had to face, that He had nowhere to lay His head.¹⁵

The Exemplar

Example has more followers than reason. We unconsciously imitate what pleases us, and approximate to the characters we most admire.

Christian Bovee

The gap between the ideal and the real often is too wide to be filled in by the workings of the mind: concrete examples are required. Sometimes a simple story, demonstrating a noble act of service, can do more to stir and inspire the human spirit than countless pages of pronouncements.

Bahá'u'lláh left not only the supreme legacy of His Words but also a Son—'Abdu'l-Bahá—who gave life to the Words by living them with absolute and unfailing devotion, One who transformed the ideal into the real, One who served as the perfect Model or Exemplar for the teachings of the new Revelation.

'Abdu'l-Bahá—Servant of Glory—served as a perfect Exemplar, as a link between the reachable and the unreachable, between the actual and the ideal, as the model of purity and nobility for all humanity.

In the life of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, we can find the limits of human potential, the farthest bounds to which the human mind can soar. We can see man fully unfolding the divine in himself by casting off every trace of darkness; we can see man perfect and saintly, hallowed and heavenly; we can see the self set ablaze with love and rapture, utterly

humbled before God and man; we can see the heart made holy and radiant; we can see the spirit sanctified with service, forgiveness, pain, and patience; we can see the flesh made subservient to the spirit, the human soul reaching out to the divine; we can discern man in his angelic image, as the purest and most wondrous fruit of creation, as the mirror of providence, as the source of every human virtue, as the loftiest and most splendid fulfillment of the words, "Blessed be God, the most exalted Creator."

'Abdu'l-Bahá fulfilled this divine directive more than any other human being:

Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father
is perfect. Christ (Matt. 5:48)

Never before has such a legacy been conferred upon the world. To know the life of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, or even to glimpse His grandeur, is an achievement filled with unimagined dramas and ecstasies, a task worthy of anyone's endeavors. For it portrays simply and plainly the full profile of the human potential, the exalted destiny ordained for us if we but turn to the Light, and attune our souls to the supreme Power.

Part II

The Dialogue

Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me. To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

Christ (Rev. 3:20-22)

Let your waist be girded and your lamps burning; and you yourselves *be like men who wait for their master, when he will return from the wedding, that when he comes and knocks they may open to him immediately.* Blessed are those servants whom the master, when he comes, will find watching. Assuredly, I say to you that he will gird himself and have them sit down to eat, and will come and serve them.

Christ (Luke 12:35-37)

The Dialogue

“Questions and Comments” from the Pastor, and “Response” from the Author

Questions and Comments

Bahá'í teachings certainly contain lofty goals for peaceful relations among humanity, which is admirable. Unfortunately, from what I have read of your understanding of the Bahá'í worldview, a fundamental problem exists in the foundation of all that the Bahá'í Faith bases its claims upon. This is the belief that all religions are, in essence, from the same source, and that the great teachers of these religions are authentic Messengers from God.

I am rather surprised that an educated person such as yourself would acknowledge such an obvious

falsehood. It is evident that these religions have greatly varying opinions as to what is the nature of God, why do we exist, what separates us from God, how do we atone for our sin, and other foundational differences that cannot be harmonized. In fact, these various religions are so different in their foundational principles and worldviews that they cannot all be true at any one time in history or even throughout all of history. It is possible that one of them is true, and if that is the case, then the rest are false. You cannot in good conscience declare that all are authentic Saviors or Redeemers from God.

Response

You indicate that there are foundational differences between the great religions of the world. Let me start with an analogy. Suppose you had never seen the sun, but suddenly saw it through a multi-colored glass. What do you think you would conclude? You would be puzzled and confused. You might conclude that there were several suns with various colors. But as soon as you removed the glass, you would recognize the oneness of the sun. That is how the followers of each of the great faiths see themselves and others. They look from behind the screen of ancestral beliefs and traditions. I have prepared a test, which contains brief quotations from various religions on several topics. Readers are asked to guess where the quotes come from.

Those who take the test say it is impossible to tell any difference. Following are a few examples selected from that test:

Identify the source of each of the following statements by circling the code letter for each source in the left column. After you have completed the test, check your responses against the key in the footnote.

Codes: J: Judaism; C: Christianity; I: Islam;
B: Bahá'í Faith

- | | |
|---------|--|
| J C I B | 1. Through knowledge shall the just be delivered. |
| J C I B | 2. Let the wise listen and add to their learning. |
| J C I B | 3. O my Lord, increase knowledge unto me. |
| J C I B | 4. Let him then who will, take the way to his Lord. |
| J C I B | 5. Whoever is thirsty, let him come. |
| J C I B | 6. Our God and your God is one. |
| J C I B | 7. The Lord our God is one Lord. |
| J C I B | 8. Truly your God is but one, Lord of the heavens and the earth. |
| J C I B | 9. Is there any God beside Me, or any Creator? |

- J C I B 10. Glory to God.
- J C I B 11. Glory be to God!
- J C I B 12. The heavens declare the glory of
 God.
- J C I B 13. All things...declare His glory...yet
 ye understand not.
- J C I B 14. The angel said, "O Mary! Verily
 God announceth to thee the Word
 from Him: His name shall be
 Messiah Jesus."
- J C I B 15. O Mary! Verily hath God chosen
 thee above the women of the
 worlds.
- J C I B 16. No one is good except God alone.
- J C I B 17. God is the source of My being.
- J C I B 18. I call only upon My Lord.
- J C I B 19. I can of My own self do nothing.
- J C I B 20. My sole work is preaching from
 God, and His message.
- J C I B 21. I only follow My Lord's utter-
 ances to Me.
- J C I B 22. This is God, My Lord: in Him do
 I put My trust.
- J C I B 23. There is no power nor strength but
 in God alone.

- J C I B 24. The source of all evil is for man to turn away from his Lord and set his heart on things ungodly.
- J C I B 25. True knowledge...is the knowledge of God.
- J C I B 26. For every one of you his paramount duty is to choose for himself that on which no others may infringe and none usurp from him. Such a thing...is the love of God.
- J C I B 27. For everything there is a sign. The sign of love is fortitude under My decree and patience under My trials.
- J C I B 28. The source of all glory is acceptance of whatsoever the Lord hath bestowed, and contentment with that which God hath ordained.*

★ **References:** (1) Proverbs 11:9; (2) Proverbs 1:7; (3) Qur'án 30:113; (4) Qur'án 73:19; (5) Revelation 22:17; (6) Qur'án 29:45; (7) Mark 12:29; (8) Qur'án 37:4-5; (9) Isaiah 44:8; (10) Luke 2:14; (11) Qur'án 12:108; (12) Psalms 19:1; (13) Qur'án 17:44; (14) Qur'án 3:40; (15) Qur'án 3:37; (16) Luke 18:20; (17) John 8:42; (18) Qur'án 72:20; (19) John 15:5; (20) Qur'án 72:23; (21) Qur'án 7:202; (22) Qur'án 42:8; (23) Bahá'u'lláh, *The Book of Certitude*, p. 252; (24) Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 156; (25) The Báb, *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 89; (26) Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 261; (27) Bahá'u'lláh, *The Hidden Words of Bahá'u'lláh* (Arabic), no. 48; (28) Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 155.

If you associate intimately with Bahá'ís, Muslims, Buddhists, Jews, or Hindus, you will discover that a good Muslim lives exactly like a good Christian, and a bad Muslim exactly like a bad Christian. The same is true with the followers of other faiths. Remember that Jesus did not say, "Ye shall know them by their theology." He said, "Ye shall know them by their fruits." According to St. Paul, "fruits" are spiritual attributes such as "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control" (Gal. 5:22). The obstacles that make you see differences between the great religions are the colored glasses: theological theories and beliefs, which have divided all faiths into sects and denominations. All great faiths teach the same virtues; they bear the same fruits.

You have raised a few specific questions to show different worldviews among great religions. Let me offer the Bahá'í answers to those questions.

Question: What is the nature of God?

Answer: As the Bible teaches that God is love, so do the Bahá'í Scriptures. The same attributes—All-Knowing, All-Wise, etc.—found in the Bible about God are also found in Bahá'í Writings. I am unaware of any differences.

Question: Why do we exist?

Answer:

- To know, to love, to worship, and to glorify God.

- To develop our potential, to become as perfect as possible.
- To become worthy of the Glory of God and fit for everlasting life.
- To create a world of love, justice, peace, and prosperity; to build God's Kingdom, to bring heaven to earth.

Question: What separates us from God?

Answer: Our lack of desire for fellowship with Him; our inclination toward our selfish desires, which leads us to sin and separation from God and His great Redeemers.

Question: How do we atone for our sins?

Answer:

- By turning to God and opening our hearts and souls to Him; by standing before Him with absolute love, humility, and trust, praying for His grace, and asking Him with all sincerity to forgive our sins.
- And then supporting and proving our sincerity by loving all His creatures, obeying His commandments, and acknowledging His latest Manifestation.

You, of course, believe that only Jesus can forgive our sins. Statements like this are found abundantly in Christian publications:

No other religious leader claimed to...have the power to take away our sins...¹

But it was God who gave Jesus the power to forgive sins. “By myself I can do nothing” (John 5:30), Jesus said. That same God gave that same power to both the Báb and Bahá’u’lláh and to all the other great Messengers.

All forgiveness floweth, in this Day, from God, Him to Whom none can compare, with Whom no partners can be joined, the Sovereign Protector of all men, and the Concealer of their sins!² Bahá’u’lláh

Beware that ye deny not the favor of God after it hath been sent down unto you. Better is this for you than that which ye possess; for that which is yours perisheth, whilst that which is with God endureth. He, in truth, ordaineth what He pleaseth. *Verily, the breezes of forgiveness have been wafted from the direction of your Lord, the God of Mercy; whoso turneth thereunto, shall be cleansed of his sins,* and of all pain and sickness. Happy the man that hath turned towards them, and woe betide him that hath turned aside.³ Bahá’u’lláh

*Whosoever acknowledged His truth and turned unto Him...all his sins were remitted and forgiven.*⁴ Bahá’u’lláh

If ye follow the Cause of God, We will forgive you your sins, and if ye turn aside from Our command, We will, in truth, condemn your souls in Our Book, unto the Most Great Fire [of remoteness from God].⁵ The Báb

Many Christian teachers speak as if the idea of being saved by grace is taught only in the Gospel. They make this assumption without investigation. Statements like this are found abundantly in Christian publications:

Grace is what God may be free to do for the lost, after Christ has died on behalf of them.⁶

Grace...is that unmerited favor of God towards fallen man...for the sake of Christ...⁷

Did not God show His grace to the people of Israel by bringing them to the Promised Land in spite of their unrighteousness (Deut. 9:5-6)?

...the Lord God merciful and gracious...

Exodus 34:6

...show me now your way, that I may know you, and that I may find grace in your sight.

Exodus 33:13

Has God shown His grace also through His other great Messengers? Bahá'u'lláh's Writings contain countless references to the grace of God—in fact, many times more than you find in the Gospels. Here are a few examples:

This is the Day in which God's most excellent *favours* have been poured out upon men, the Day in which His most mighty *grace* hath been infused into all created things.⁸

The whole duty of man in this Day is to attain that share of the flood of *grace* which God poureth forth for him.⁹

That hour is now come. The world is illumined with the effulgent glory of His countenance. And yet, behold how far its peoples have strayed from His path!...Its **grace** is being poured out upon men. Fill thy cup, and drink in, in His Name, the Most Holy, the All-Praised.¹⁰

Look not upon the creatures of God except with the eye of kindness and of mercy, for Our loving providence hath pervaded all created things, and Our **grace** encompassed the earth and the heavens.¹¹

O people! In this blessed, this glorious Day, deprive not yourselves of the liberal effusions of bounty which the Lord of abounding **grace** hath vouchsafed unto you. In this Day showers of wisdom and utterance are pouring down from the clouds of divine mercy. Well is it with them who judge His Cause with fairness, and woe betide the unjust.¹²

This is how the Qur'án begins:

Praise be to God, Lord of the world! The compassionate, the **merciful**!...Guide us on the straight path, the path of those on whom thou hath bestowed thy **grace**... Qur'án 1:1-5

...verily to you God is most kind and **merciful**. Qur'án 57:9

The Qur'án teaches that if it were not for the grace of God, not a single human being would remain alive. According to Dr. Huston Smith, author of *The World's Religions*, the Qur'án contains 192

references to “God’s compassion and mercy against 17 references to His wrath and vengeance.” These are the attributes he quotes from the Qur’án:

The Holy, the Peaceful, the Faithful, the Guardian over His servants, the Shelterer of the orphan, the Guide of the erring, the Deliverer from every affliction, the Friend of the bereaved, the Consoler of the afflicted; in His hand is good, and He is the generous Lord, the Gracious, the Hearer, the Near-at-Hand, the Compassionate, the Merciful, the Very-Forgiving, whose love for man is more tender than that of the mother-bird for her young.¹³

Can you see any differences between the God of the Bible and the God of the Qur’án?

What foundational differences can you find between Bahá’í and biblical teachings? Different theologians may have their own varying versions, but all the preceding worldviews or principles declared in the Bahá’í Writings are supported in the Bible.

Let me clarify a few points. We should recognize that the teachings of past religions have been altered through the centuries. Further, the Scriptures of several religions have been lost altogether.

Consider this question: Do you believe that the beliefs of all Christian denominations currently reflect **your** worldview? The Christian Broadcasting Radio often refers to several major Christian denominations—such as the Mormon Faith and the Worldwide Church of God—as cults. If churches

within Christianity deviate from what Jesus taught, should we not expect similar deviations in other religions? Is it not true that some Christians consider the Popes infallible while others have called them the Antichrist?

Consider this statement from a Christian denomination. It shows how one religion with one book and one Savior can lead to such conflicting and contradictory interpretations:

...almost every major doctrine taught in the churches today is not found in the Bible.¹⁴

As the differences between Christian churches point to deviation from what Jesus taught, much of the differences between various religions also point to deviations of their followers from the original teachings of their Messengers. Whatever made Christians stray from the original teachings of Jesus has also made the followers of other faiths stray from the teachings of their Messengers. I am quite certain that between the Bible and the Bahá'í Scriptures there are no differences concerning fundamental issues. The differences lie only in human interpretation and understanding. And that is what has always divided past religions, including Christianity.

Consider the extent of misunderstanding that prevails today about the true essence of religion from the present belief and practices of the followers of two of the great faiths of the world: Hinduism and Buddhism. Christians have one Bible, Jews

have one Torah, Muslims have one Qur'án. What about Hindus and Buddhists? They have:

...a rich and often contradictory library of literally thousands of texts, many of which have formed the basis for various sects and subdivisions of adherence to the original teachings on which they were based. Buddhism, for example, differs radically in both practice and doctrine from Sri Lanka to Tibet, from Thailand to China, from Burma to Japan. Hinduism contains the teachings of Manu alongside the heroic legends of the Mahabharata, and embraces the sermons of the Bhagavad Gita together with the lyric poetry of the Upanishads.¹⁵

The Bible uses the metaphor of “Shepherd” for God’s Voice as spoken by His great Messengers, “sheep” for the ones who must hear and obey their commands, and “flock” or “sheep pen” for a group of people who live in a specific geographical area with specific social needs under a divine Shepherd. The people of Israel were an example of a flock among many others. To them, God sent Moses, the prophets, and finally Jesus. Consider this statement from Jesus:

I was sent only to the sheep of Israel.

Matthew 15:24

Note the use of the word “only,” which points to the uniqueness of each age and the flock or group of people for whom a Messenger is sent. Otherwise why would Jesus say “only”? Up to now, each Shepherd has come for only one “flock” of

people. For instance, Krishna came primarily for the people of India, Buddha mainly for the residents of East Asia, Muhammad mostly for those of Arab countries. Although every one of the past religions had the *potential* to become universal, it could not achieve that purpose for reasons such as geographical separation.

Now notice this statement from Jesus:

I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me—just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep. ***I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen.*** I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and ***there shall be one flock and one shepherd.***

John 10:14-16

Who are the “other sheep” that did not belong to the Jewish flock? People like the Arabs, the Hindus, the Persians, the Chinese, and the Native Americans. And who is the “I” that speaks? The divine Voice in Christ. The One who is the first and the last, the Alpha and the Omega (Rev. 1:8).

Please remember that the One who owned the Jewish flock, also owned other flocks. He loved them also and guided them to the paradise of His presence. A good shepherd not only gives his life for his sheep, he also refuses to show favoritism toward some of them. He loves equally every sheep in his pasture.

Will the Shepherd's various flocks remain separate forever? No! When the time is ripe, as Jesus declared, they will be gathered together and unified under one supreme Command. All the sheep of the earth will hear and recognize the heavenly Voice. From then on, "there shall be one flock and one shepherd" (verse 6).

We can hear the same divine Voice giving us the same message found in the Hebrew Scriptures:

I will save my flock, and they shall be ravaged no more...Then I will set over them *one shepherd* to take care of them... Ezekiel 34:22-23

We can see how clearly Jesus predicted the coming of a faith that will bring together all these flocks—all these diverse religions—under one supreme Command. Bahá'ís believe that the divine Shepherd that Jesus spoke about has come. He invites the followers of all faiths to set aside their misconceptions, their sense of superiority, and join together under one universal faith:

*We, verily, have come to unite and weld together all that dwell on earth.*¹⁶ Bahá'u'lláh

O contending peoples and kindreds of the earth! Set your faces towards unity, and let the radiance of its light shine upon you...There can be no doubt whatever that the peoples of the world, of whatever race or religion, derive their inspiration from one heavenly Source, and are the subjects of one God. The difference between the ordinances under which they abide

should be attributed to the varying requirements and exigencies of the age in which they were revealed. All of them, except a few which are the outcome of human perversity, were ordained of God, and are a reflection of His Will and Purpose. Arise and, armed with the power of faith, shatter to pieces the gods of your vain imaginings, the sowers of dissension amongst you. Cleave unto that which draweth you together and uniteth you.¹⁷ Bahá'u'lláh

Hebrew prophecies clearly lend support to the prophecy of “one fold and one shepherd:”

On that day the Lord shall be one and his name the one name. Zechariah 14:9

And I...am about to come and gather all nations and tongues, and they will come and see My glory. Isaiah 66:18

Note the use of “My glory.” Whose glory? The Glory of God, the English translation of the word *Bahá'u'lláh*. Christ also said that He will come in the glory of His Father (Matt. 16:27). If we replace “Father” with “God,” we get “Glory of God.” At first, the name *Bahá'u'lláh* sounds strange to many people. And yet it is found many times throughout the Scriptures. The reason it sounds strange is this: Bahá'ís do not translate the name into various languages. To make “Bahá'u'lláh” a familiar title to all nations, we would have to translate it into hundreds of languages. If you heard the name *Jesus Christ* in some other languages, you would not recognize it. Since this is

the age of oneness, the name of Bahá'u'lláh is also the same in all languages, as Hebrew Scriptures predict that His name shall be one.

When St. Paul presented his message to the people of Athens, they called him a “babbler” because the name Jesus Christ sounded foreign to them.

“What is this babbler trying to say?” Others remarked, “He seems to be advocating foreign gods.”

Acts 17:18

But the open-minded among the people of Athens declared:

May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting? You are bringing some strange ideas to our ears, and we want to know what they mean.

Acts 17:19-20

Let us once again go back to the message of universality taught in the Scriptures.

Is God the God of Jews only? Is He not the God of Gentiles also?

Romans 3:29

Who are the Gentiles? Those who lived outside the Jewish flock, either before the advent of Christ or after. The word may refer to any nation beyond the scope of the Jews.

Consider also this verse:

God does not show favoritism but accepts men from every nation who fear him and do what is right.

Acts 10:34-35

If God failed to send Messengers to all nations, would it not imply favoritism? How many centuries did it take before Native Americans, Chinese, and Indians heard about Jesus? Why would God ignore so many people for so many centuries?

The idea of universality is found throughout the Scriptures, yet theologians for the most part ignore it. Instead of acknowledging the oneness of religion, they look for verses that, on the *surface*, imply a message of superiority and separation. Perhaps the most widely quoted verse from the Gospel is this:

I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

Christ (John 14:6)

The only interpretation offered for this verse by theologians is that Jesus is *the only* Savior—past, present, and future. Never have I seen any view that even slightly differs from this. Let us now examine Bahá'u'lláh's interpretation, the One who claims to be the Lord—the only One who, as Paul confirms, has the right to interpret the Word of God: “Therefore, judge nothing before the appointed time; wait till the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness” (I Cor. 4:5). Bahá'u'lláh's Writings clearly indicate that the “I am” in that verse and similar verses refers to the divine Voice in Jesus, who speaks in every age and utters the same message. We hear His Voice through various Messengers and Names, but the Speaker is always One and the same:

This is the way [to God]; walk in it.

Isaiah 30:21

I am the way, the truth and the light.¹⁸

Zoroaster

I am the way and the truth and the life.

Christ (John 14:6)

Just this path, there is no other.¹⁹

Buddha

Follow me: this is the right way [to God].

Muhammad (Qur'án 43:61)

This is the Way of God for all the inhabitants of earth and heaven and all that lieth betwixt them. No God is there but Me, the Almighty, the Inaccessible, the Most Exalted.²⁰ The Báb

This is the Way of God unto all who are in the heavens and all who are on the earth.²¹

Bahá'u'lláh

The one Speaker is both the Beginning and the End:

Say:❖ O ye that have strayed and lost your way!...Behold, He is now come...He Who is both the Beginning and the End...is now manifest before your eyes.²²

Bahá'u'lláh

For they [the great Messengers] are all but one person, one soul, one spirit, one being, one revelation. They are all the manifestation of the “Beginning” and the “End,” the “First” and the “Last,” the “Seen” and “Hidden”—all of which

❖ “Say” in this context is an equivalent to the biblical phrase: “Thus says the Lord.”

pertain to Him Who is the innermost Spirit of Spirits and eternal Essence of Essences.²³

Bahá'u'lláh

That same divine Voice spoke the same message through Jesus:

“I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty.” Revelation 1:8

I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. Revelation 21:6

Every sacred Scripture contains and repeats an everlasting and evolving truth:

This [the Qur’án] is that which is written in the former Books. Qur’án 87:18

And it is in the Books of the former. Qur’án 26:196

God’s way has been and always will be perfect:

His way is perfect. Psalms 18:30

Is not Bahá'u'lláh's interpretation more reasonable? Does it not support the principle of universality proclaimed by Paul? Does it not also establish God's justice by showing no favoritism towards any one of His many flocks? Further, who has given the theologians the right to interpret God's Word? Are they infallible? Are they not asked to postpone their judgment, and to wait for the Lord to come and decode the mysteries (I Cor. 4:5)?

It is amazing how a single misinterpreted idea can lead to such divisive consequences among the followers of the great religions. It is amazing how it has closed the hearts and minds of millions of Christians to a truth so evident, to a principle so reasonable: *the progressive revelation of truth*.

Questions and Comments

For example, it sounds as if the major tenet of the Bahá'í Faith is the investigation of truth. It sounds as if correct knowledge is all that is required. In Christianity, the major tenet is following the Truth that Jesus claimed to be. This is found in John 5:16-40, 6:25-69. It is not merely head knowledge as if this were a class assignment but absolute obedience to the One who claimed to be God in the flesh. The Truth is not merely a set of teachings or philosophy but the person of Jesus Christ.

Response

Just as it is in Christianity, the major tenet in the Bahá'í Faith is following and loving the truth. Independent investigation of truth *is what leads us to the truth. The goal is the truth; investigation is the means*. What you are implying is that you need not investigate the truth; you already know it. The question is this: If you did not investigate, then how did you know? If we eliminate investigation, then every person on our planet is as right as every other person.

Was it not for a failure to investigate the truth that the Pharisees denied Jesus? Note ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s explanation of this point:

Had they [the Pharisees] investigated sincerely for themselves, they would surely have believed in Him, respected Him and bowed before Him in reverence. They would have considered His manifestation the greatest bestowal upon mankind. They would have accepted Him as the very Savior of man; but, alas, they were veiled, they held to imitations of ancestral beliefs and hearsay and did not investigate the truth of Christ.²⁴

[The Pharisees] paid no heed to His [Jesus’] splendors and regarded not His proofs. Else would they have acknowledged His words, and borne witness to the verses He revealed, confessed the truth of His utterances, sought shelter under the protective shadow of His banner, learned of His signs and tokens, and rejoiced in His blissful tidings.²⁵

You state that the Truth is “the person of Jesus Christ.” You are absolutely right. Bahá’u’lláh often compares Himself and other Redeemers to the sun. How can we recognize the sun? By seeing it:

The proof of the sun is the light thereof, which shineth and envelopeth all things.²⁶ Bahá’u’lláh

How can we see the light of Jesus and Bahá’u’lláh? How can we know? Anyone can make a claim; only by evidence can we separate the deceptive from the divine. Jesus said, “by their fruits you

will know them” (Matt. 7:20). That statement obviously applies to Jesus Himself. How can we tell Jesus Christ is divine? By His works—by what He said, what He did, and what He produced.

Christians, for the most part, do not investigate the Bahá’í Faith. They feel certain that, according to their theology, such a Faith cannot be true in any way. Why? Because they firmly believe that Jesus will come from the sky. They have absolutely no doubt about this conviction.

As you know, many Christians also believe that Jesus will come to lift them suddenly and mysteriously to heaven. This is called “the rapture,” that literally means “to snatch away.” The majority of Christians act as if “seek and ye shall find” (Matt. 7:7) has no relevance to the Second Advent. They feel as if their only role is to wait and perhaps to watch the sky. The Heavenly Thief, they theorize, is Powerful and All-Seeing. He will find them. Thus they reverse the two roles. Instead of believing that it is their responsibility to look for the Thief, they act as if it is *His* responsibility to look for them. This belief has taken all initiative away from the majority of Christians. It has made them self-satisfied and complacent.

This seemingly simple but glamorous view of the heavenly *descent* of Christ and the heavenly *ascent* of Christians violates the most fundamental principle that binds us to our Creator: our freedom of choice. God has so much respect for the gift of freedom He has bestowed on human beings that He has consistently allowed them to torture, humiliate,

and kill the Ones He loves the most: the supreme Manifestations of His glory, His great Messengers. This literal interpretation of prophecies indicates that human freedom will suddenly be violated—that, for the first time in history, God will alter His design.

Consider the consequences of the theory of physical descent and ascent—never mentioned by theologians. Who are the ones who will be raptured to heaven? All of them, we are told, will be Christian. Being a true follower of Jesus, theologians assert, is the only line of distinction that will be drawn. If you are in good standing as a Christian, then you will be lifted to heaven. If you are in bad standing, you will suffer on earth and be destroyed. If you belong to any other religion or to no religion, then your destiny will be destruction. What are the implications of this theory? One of them is that God's standard for taking people to heaven or destroying them on earth will be controlled mainly by chance, by which geographical part of the planet a person happens to be born in, and by what choices one's ancestors happened to make centuries ago.

Which race, which people, will have the best chance of being raptured to heaven? As we know, Christians live, for the most part, in Europe, America, and Australasia. Thus, a person has a much better chance of being raptured if he or she happens to be born in one of those three continents. A person will also have a better chance of going to heaven if he or she is white, because

those continents are populated mainly by Caucasians. As you can see, this implies that God is a racist—an evil quality for which we condemn even fallible human beings. Prominent Christian authors even offer estimates of the number of good Christians who will be raptured to heaven!

Christian theologians present this theory as if it is the absolute truth, without ever asking the critical questions raised here. Believing in this theory is the first and foremost stumbling block to the commandment that the true believers in Jesus must seek and search, that they must always be ready and never lose sight of watching for the heavenly Thief, as the five foolish maidens did (Matt. 25:1-13). As that parable teaches, the Bridegroom came and left, but those maidens missed Him. And because of their negligence, they were not allowed to enter the banquet of the Kingdom.

And what is the theory of heavenly descent and ascent based on? On two assumptions:

- **Assumption 1:** Virtually all prophecies of the Second Advent are literal.
- **Assumption 2:** Christian theologians are infallible in making **Assumption 1**.

That is all! Are not these exactly the same assumptions the Pharisees made? Should not their example awaken all sincere Christians from the dreams of waiting to be snatched away? And where in the Bible does God tell us that all His prophecies are literal? Nowhere! On the contrary, we are told that He speaks in parables and that His Word

must be understood spiritually (I Cor. 2:14). Is it then wise to build one's eternal destiny on such unfounded assumptions made by fallible people? Do not the enormous consequences justify and even require a full investigation of Bahá'u'lláh's mission?

The topic of the "Independent Search for Truth" gave you the false impression that "correct knowledge is all that is required." You then add that in Christianity "the Truth is not merely a set of teachings or philosophy but the person of Jesus Christ" and obedience to Him.

You are in perfect agreement with Bahá'í teachings. The Spirit of God in His great Messengers and Redeemers is "the living waters." That Spirit is the source of all life, both physical and spiritual. But how can we discover that source of life? By knowing and following a map. Knowledge is that map.

God is both our true Lover and Beloved. Our goal is not to simply fall in love with the map that leads us to our Beloved. Our goal is always God as He manifests Himself and makes His love reachable to us through His supreme Saviors and Redeemers. The Glory, the Light, the Love, and the Perfection of God in a humble Man called Jesus Christ, who in this age is called, Bahá'u'lláh, the Glory of God, is the very Object and Goal of all creation. Consider these statements from Bahá'u'lláh, who refers to the Spirit of God in Himself as "the Object of all knowledge:"

Arise in the name of *Him Who is the Object of all knowledge*, and, with absolute detachment from the learning of men, lift up your voices and proclaim His Cause.²⁷

We beseech God to strengthen thee with His power, and enable thee to recognize *Him Who is the Source of all knowledge*, that thou mayest detach thyself from all human learning, for, “what would it profit any man to strive after learning when he hath already found and recognized Him Who is the Object of all knowledge?” Cleave to the Root of Knowledge, and to Him Who is the Fountain thereof, that thou mayest find thyself independent of all who claim to be well versed in human learning...²⁸

Lo! *He Who is the Object of all knowledge is come*...Every revelation of grace, every evidence of goodly gifts emanateth from Him and unto Him doth it return.²⁹

We have decreed, O people, that the highest and last end of all learning be the recognition of *Him Who is the Object of all knowledge*; and yet, behold how ye have allowed your learning to shut you out, as by a veil, from Him Who is the Day Spring of this Light, through Whom every hidden thing hath been revealed.³⁰

As a rule, our relationship with God starts with the mind, but always ends with the heart. Our ultimate purpose is to love God, but we cannot love Him unless we know Him. Seeking is knocking on the

door. Unless the door is opened, we cannot see our eternal Lover and Beloved.

Loving God and His creation is not only the central teaching of Jesus Christ but also of Bahá'u'lláh. Consider these statements from 'Abdu'l-Bahá:

In the world of humanity the greatest king and sovereign is love.³¹

Love is the greatest law in this vast universe of God!³²

The essence of Bahá'u'lláh's Teaching is all-embracing love, for love includeth every excellence of humankind. It causeth every soul to go forward. It bestoweth on each one, for a heritage, immortal life.³³

Love is heaven's kindly light...the living link that uniteth God with man...Love is the most great law...Love is the spirit of life...³⁴

Until love takes possession of the heart no other divine bounty can be revealed in it.³⁵

Questions and Comments

Let me turn your attention to some of the truth statements you have made in your book. To begin with, you declare that miracles are not important to the truth or validity of a Messenger, then you go on to say that the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh performed miracles to prove their authenticity to their first followers. Is this not a contradiction? If miracles are not important, why did the Báb and

Bahá'u'lláh perform any at all? If they did perform them, why is it that you refer to them as proof of the authenticity of their message? Is not this a sign that they are counterfeits? How can you refer to miracles performed as “only historically, and not as evidence” and have this not be a proof-texting of the validity of the founders of the Bahá'í Faith?

To say that miracles are only important to “awaken the truth seekers” is only so much double talk. If the miracles did not happen, then even to refer to them at all is dealing in falsehood and deception and the promulgation of a lie. If they did happen, then they are vitally important, whether people use them to come to faith or not. You cannot make this distinction of awareness versus belief. Actions cannot be separate from the person as if our actions have no bearing on who or what we are.

Response

The Báb and Bahá'u'lláh did not perform miracles to prove their authenticity. Does the sun shine to prove anything? The sun shines because of its nature. At no time did I refer to miracles as proof of the authenticity of the message of the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh. In the book, I discussed the martyrdom of the Báb, and then indicated that I referred to it not to show a miracle, but to present a significant event in history. Although the Báb's martyrdom appears miraculous, it can be attributed to chance. I left the reader free to come to his or her own conclusions.

What I did indicate was this: If miracles are to serve any purpose, it is to awaken the truth seekers, to get their attention. This was my personal deduction based on my own understanding of what purpose miracles may serve. Let me offer an example to show the difference between using miracles as evidence and using them as a means of awakening. Let us say you are a teacher and you want to motivate your students to learn astronomy. Perhaps you produce a beautiful poster for your topic. The poster does not prove anything; it only gets your students' attention. That is the purpose miracles should serve.

You indicate that we cannot separate an action from a person, but can we not attach different meanings to what a person does? For instance, can we not say an individual is charitable either for selfish or unselfish reasons? Similarly, we have a choice to attribute different meanings to miracles.

A danger of using miracles as proofs is that there is often no clear line between a miracle and magic. Note the remarkable similarity between the two as defined in the dictionary:

Miracle: an action or event that is impossible according to ordinary laws of nature.

Magic: having special powers that are not normal or natural, so that you can do impossible things; a secret power used to control events or do impossible things, by saying special words or performing special actions.³⁶

A man from India, known as Sai Baba, has many followers who attribute miracles to him. In my travels, I met a few of them who glorified him and testified to having witnessed his supernatural powers. If miracles are the true standard, how can we separate a Christ from a Sai Baba? How can we distinguish the work of our Creator from such a leader who claims to be God?

As the book of Exodus reports, Aaron performed some incredible miracles, far more difficult than the phenomenon of the empty tomb. "But the magicians did the same thing by their secret arts" (Exodus 8:7). What value has a faith that rests on such a fragile foundation, on one that can be copied by magicians?

Note what Jesus says about "signs and wonders," which are the same as miracles:

For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. Matthew 24:24

But can you find any verses in the Scriptures that warn us to watch, "for false christs and false prophets who will arise and show *wonderful fruits and teachings* so as to deceive, if possible, even the elect"? No, deceivers can produce "great signs and wonders" but they can never bring words and teachings that match or even come close to the Word of God. Jesus downgrades the value of miracles as a dependable proof, but He never downgrades, however slightly, the station of "fruits" or the Word of God as the evidence of

truth, as a reliable means of separating a true Christ from a false Christ.

If signs and wonders can deceive even the elect, who have keen insight, what will be the deceptive powers of those wonders over the masses of Christians whose inner spiritual guide falls short of that of the elect? Why, then, do people believe exactly the opposite of what Jesus teaches? Why do they disobey or downgrade a commandment or a sign that specifies the most distinguishing feature of a true prophet or a true Christ?

You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles? Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Therefore by their fruits you will know them.

Christ (Matt. 7:16-20)

Many reasons account for people's love for signs and wonders:

- Belief in miracles as evidence takes all responsibility away from the believers. They do not need to take the time to read volumes or go to meetings. All they need to do is to wait and wish. When the Lord comes, they will see Him. Why, then, waste precious time?
- It is exhilarating to see a most magnificent and dramatic display of glory and power in the sky.

- It feels so good to be on the side of the saved, to see the fulfillment of one's dreams and wishes in a moment of glory.

These tendencies, found in all human beings, have been strengthened through centuries of reinforcement. They have created a state of absolute self-satisfaction, complacency, and self-righteousness. They have destroyed all initiative, and all curiosity. Consider these verses:

Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me. To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. Christ (Rev. 3:20-22)

What do you think the Spirit says to the churches?

- I will knock at the door of your heart. I will invite you to My banquet.
- You must overcome your complacency, which prevents you from opening your heart to My knocking.

From the message of “knocking,” Jesus moves to the message of “overcoming.” It is clear the two are related. They indicate that His church will have the freedom to deny Him; it will have the choice to close its door to Him. Jesus’ prophecy ends with, “He who has an ear, let him hear.” Do

the churches hear this message? Will the custodians of the church continue to keep their hearts and the hearts of their congregations closed to the knocking of their Lord? Will they continue to tell people not to look anywhere except in their own denomination? Will they continue to tell them to wish and wait until Jesus comes from the sky to take them away?

The following verses from Luke support the need for knocking, exactly as do the verses of Revelation:

Let your waist be girded and your lamps burning; and you yourselves *be like men who wait for their master*, when he will return from the wedding, *that when he comes and knocks they may open to him immediately*. Blessed are those servants whom the master, when he comes, will find *watching*. Assuredly, I say to you that he will gird himself and have them sit down to *eat*, and will come and serve them.

Christ (Luke 12:35-37)

In both passages, Jesus promises to have food with those who are watchful and humble, who open their hearts and invite Him into their lives. What is the promised food? It is the Word of God, “the fruits of Spirit.” God’s greatest and most wondrous gift to us is His Word or His Revelation, known also as “*the Bread* which cometh down from Heaven:”

That which is preeminent above all other gifts, is incorruptible in nature, and pertaineth to God Himself, is the gift of Divine Revelation.

Every bounty conferred by the Creator upon man, be it material or spiritual, is subservient unto this. It is, in its essence, and will ever so remain, the Bread which cometh down from Heaven. *It is God's supreme testimony, the clearest evidence of His truth, the sign of His consummate bounty, the token of His all-encompassing mercy, the proof of His most loving providence, the symbol of His most perfect grace.*³⁷

Bahá'u'lláh

Ponder the inner meanings of these verses:

And the devil said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread." But Jesus answered him, saying, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.'"

Luke 4:3-4

Seeking physical miracles, these verses imply, is a demonic act. It is worthy of the devil. We see the fulfillment of this principle in the prevalence of cults who deceive people by all kinds of miraculous deceptions and claims. Why did Jesus call Peter—who was the Rock of His Church—Satan (Matt. 16:23)? Because at that moment Peter shifted his thinking from the divine to human desire: winning by the sheer imposition of miraculous powers. Why did Jesus choose such a strong word to describe a beloved disciple? Because of the supreme significance of the principle involved. Because of the impassioned longing of human beings for miracles and the evil consequences of that longing. It was the desire for miracles that caused the rejection and crucifixion of Jesus. That

is how evil this seemingly innocent desire can be. In spite of all His instructions and insights, Jesus' disciples were so attached to worldly victory that, even up to the point of the resurrection, they continued to believe that somehow Jesus would destroy His enemies and set Himself free with a sudden burst of divine power. They could not abandon the idea of a supreme King reigning with great glory and power, just as today most Christians cannot detach themselves from a similar belief.

God's greatest gift to us is His Word, sent by His Messengers. Consider the first verse of a parable Jesus used to remind Christians of the manner of His return:

Now when one of those who sat at the table with Him heard these things, He said to him, "Blessed is he who shall eat bread in the kingdom of God!"
Luke 14:15

What bread is worthy of the Kingdom of God? Earthly or heavenly? Is it a blending of flour, water, and yeast, or a blending of the thoughts of God? Note how Bahá'u'lláh describes this bread:

This is the food that conferreth everlasting life upon the pure in heart and the illumined in spirit. This is the bread of which it is said: "Lord, send down upon us Thy bread from heaven." This bread shall never be withheld from them that deserve it, nor can it ever be exhausted...

O the pity! that man should deprive himself of this goodly gift, this imperishable bounty, this everlasting life. It behooveth him to prize this food that cometh from heaven, that perchance, through the wondrous favors of the Sun of Truth, the dead may be brought to life, and withered souls be quickened by the infinite Spirit.³⁸

Ponder how Bahá'u'lláh exalts the Word of God:

Each one of these verses is unto all the peoples of the world an unfailing testimony and a glorious proof of His truth. Each of them verily sufficeth all mankind, wert thou to meditate upon the verses of God.³⁹

Miracles are of two kinds: material and spiritual. Material miracles are the function of scientists; spiritual miracles the work of Saviors—of God's supreme Messengers. Computers, cars, telephones, and airplanes—these are material miracles. Thousands of scientists are involved daily in performing them. Spiritual miracles, on the scale that God's great Saviors perform, are extremely rare. We have had just a few Figures, since the beginning of history, such as Abraham, Noah, Krishna, Moses, Zoroaster, Buddha, Christ, Muhammad, and in this age, the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh. What miracle do these Messengers perform? Take Jesus Christ, a man from a rather poor family, born in a little, unknown town, with no worldly distinctions. Yet that poor man has influenced the world more than all the scientists who have ever lived. This miracle

is a million times more of a miracle than discovering a cure for cancer or flying in the air. For without love, it doesn't matter if people get cancer or not. Without morals, it doesn't matter if people live or die, walk or fly.

See how many conquering kings there have been, how many statesmen and princes, powerful organizers, all of whom have disappeared, whereas the breezes of Christ are still blowing; His light is still shining; His melody is still resounding; His standard is still waving; His armies are still fighting; His heavenly voice is still sweetly melodious; His clouds are still showering gems; His lightning is still flashing; His reflection is still clear and brilliant; His splendor is still radiating and luminous; and it is the same with those souls who are under His protection and are shining with His light.⁴⁰

'Abdu'l-Bahá

The material miracle says: I will *impress* you with my visible and overwhelming powers. The spiritual miracle says: I will *invite* you by my invisible and spiritual powers. Which miracle is worthy of God?

If you wanted to discover who were your true friends, how would you go about it? Would you put yourself in a poor and humble position, or would you put yourself in a rich and powerful position? What kind of friends would you attract if you were poor? Only the sincere ones. What kind would you attract if you were rich? Many

kinds of people with many motives. If this example makes sense to us, why should it not make sense to God? God always conceals His great glory in a humble human being who knocks at our hearts to test our loyalty and sincerity. The sincere do not look at His material poverty, they look at His spiritual riches: His Word.

Does God have the right to test us? Do we have the right to test Him?

Thou shalt not test the Lord your God...

Deuteronomy 6:16

So they quarreled with Moses and said, "Give us water to drink." Moses replied, "Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you put the Lord to the test?"

Exodus 17:2

Is not anticipating miracles the same as testing God?

Miracles should not be considered a reliable proof of divine authority. God Himself tells us that He sometimes allows a deceiver to perform miracles in order to test the faith of His true believers:

If a prophet, or one who foretells by dreams, appears among you and announces to you a miraculous sign or wonder, and if the sign or wonder of which he has spoken takes place, and he says, "Let us follow other gods" (gods you have not known) "and let us worship them," you must not listen to the words of that prophet or dreamer. The Lord your God is testing you to find out whether you love him with all your heart and with all your soul. Deuteronomy 13:1-3

Consider this scenario. Suppose the year is 27 A.D., and you are a Jew living in Palestine. Jesus comes to you and says, "I am the Messiah, the Christ." How would you respond to Him? What would you say? How would you know He is the One? Please take as much time as you need to write your response. The purpose of writing is to bring you as close to reality as possible.

Here is a question: If you told Jesus that He must prove Himself by a miracle, have you not violated God's clear commandment that we should not test Him? And if you asked for a miracle, and He did perform it, would you be ready to accept Him? Would you not think in your heart that He may be a clever magician or a sly psychic?

What then is the answer? It is this: God has always proved His presence in His Saviors by spiritual, rather than physical miracles. That is the only way we can know Him, and that is the only standard He uses to know us. Everything about the lives of the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh is a spiritual miracle far beyond the reach of any human being. These miracles number in the thousands. The only way you can find out about them is to read Bahá'í history. Here are few references you may wish to review:

- *God Passes By*, 412 pages.⁴¹ This is a comprehensive history of the first century of the Bahá'í Faith.
- *The Dawn-Breakers*, 685 pages.⁴² Contains a detailed account of the life of the Báb and some of His followers.

- *Release the Sun*, 250 pages,⁴³ and *Hour of the Dawn*, 212 pages.⁴⁴ These books basically offer a summary of *The Dawn-Breakers*.
- *Bahá'u'lláh, the King of Glory*, 539 pages.⁴⁵ This title presents a detailed account of the life of Bahá'u'lláh and some of His followers.
- *Robe of Light*, 230 pages,⁴⁶ and *Day of Glory*, 206 pages.⁴⁷ These books offer brief histories of Bahá'u'lláh's life and some of His followers.
- *Vignettes from the Life of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, 238 pages.⁴⁸ This offers many inspiring stories about the life of 'Abdu'l-Bahá.
- *Memorials of the Faithful*, 206 pages.⁴⁹ Offers a brief account, from the pen of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, of the lives of some of the early Bahá'ís.
- *The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh*, four volumes.⁵⁰ This contains a record of many significant events in Bahá'í history.

Many people have been blessed to recognize Bahá'u'lláh through dreams and visions. Their whole lives have been transformed by one spiritual miracle: a clear, meaningful, and unmistakable dream. In spite of their great numbers, they are still the exception rather than the rule. But they may offer a response to your heart's desire for miracles. In Bahá'í literature, you can find many examples of such dreams. Most of them are not translated into English. Perhaps the best sources in English at this time are *A Wondrous World*, *Stories from the Life of Bahá'u'lláh*, and *Stories from the Delight of Hearts*.

To base one's faith on miracles is to build one's spiritual destiny on one's eyes rather than on one's mind, heart, and soul. Which is more reliable and testable? A magical act that vanishes or a magnificent miracle—the Word—that endures? The eyes see physical miracles such as works of magic; the heart sees spiritual miracles, such as the Word of God, and the life of the One who utters them. Which is more worthy of God? In the following verse, the Báb asks us to acknowledge the evidence that our Creator Himself has established as proof of His presence, and not to prefer our own selfish desires based on illusions:

It is incumbent upon a lowly servant to acquiesce to whatever proof God hath appointed, and not to follow his own idle fancy.⁵¹

If we are humble, then we must accept what God Himself designates as the proof of His presence in His Messengers; otherwise we have shown pride before Him.

Why did Jesus ask His disciples not to talk about His miracles (Matt. 9:30; 8:4)? Because He did not want to be recognized by His miraculous powers. He wanted to express His love for the sick; He wished to help people, but not to put on display His supernatural gifts. Jesus' desire to keep His miracles a secret indicates that, even when God demonstrates His supreme powers over natural laws, He tries to hide them. He does not feel "proud" of "impressing" people in this way. He does not want to be known as the Supreme

Magician of the universe. He wants us to find His great glory and power in His magnificent Word, uttered by humble and lowly human beings who endure poverty, imprisonment, torture, and death at the hands of His meanest and most wretched creatures.

We can be proud when we discover God's glory in such seemingly ordinary people. Here lie the beauty and wonder of our relationship with our Creator. We search for Him and discover His divine splendor in a seemingly ordinary person born in a little town like Nazareth in Palestine or a city like Tihrán in Persia—a country steeped in religious prejudice and known mostly for revolution, persecution, war, and violence. This is the challenge and wonder of life, always presenting us with newer and bigger surprises. It is like discovering a vast cache of riches not in a guarded museum in London, Paris, or New York, but in the slums of Calcutta or Rio de Janeiro; treasures that have been showered not upon the powerful, the rich, and the famous, but upon the poorest of the poor.

Who discovered the heavenly riches concealed in Jesus? The poor or the powerful? The prominent leaders or the prostitutes?

Jesus said to them, "I tell you the truth, the tax collectors [people of low status] and the prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you.

Matthew 21:31

The same happened with John the Baptist:

For John came to you to show you the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes did.

Christ (Matt. 21:32)

If there were no other verses in the Gospel, these two references about the kind of people who accepted John and Jesus should awaken every true lover of Christ, every sincere Christian. Why would astute and educated scholars reject the Son of God, but prostitutes—who held perhaps the lowest position in society—accept Him? This fact should transform the thinking of every pastor and priest, every seminary student, every Bible scholar and teacher. Why did the established people, prominent leaders, and teachers fail to see the light of God in Jesus, but the prostitutes saw that light? Does this not indicate that knowledge often creates pride; that education crystallizes people's thinking; that being in a position of power has no relevance to knowing the truth; that seeing God comes from in-sight, not out-sight; that degrees—Ph.D.s, D.Th.s, and D.D.s—do not make a person more spiritually qualified; and that lowly people should not depend on the powerful?

Who were Jesus' distinguished disciples? As 'Abdu'l-Bahá notes:

The two great apostles, St. Peter and St. John the Evangelist, were once simple, humble workmen, toiling for their daily bread. By the Power of the Holy Spirit their souls were illumined, and they received the eternal blessings of the Lord Christ.⁵²

Today, who would resemble John and Peter? Not professors at Dallas Theological Seminary but auto workers in Detroit and Lansing; not a famous TV evangelist but unknown fishermen in Florida; not a well-known theologian in the Vatican but simple and pure-hearted farmers in Michigan and unskilled laborers in Arkansas and Alabama.

It was this contrast—a humble, poor Savior supported mostly by ordinary people like fishermen and prostitutes—that made the story of Jesus so memorable, such a source of wonder and inspiration for so many generations. A similar contrast characterizes the history of the Bahá'í Faith.

A humble person from Persia claims to be the Lord of the new age and the Herald of One greater than Himself. He endures torture, imprisonment, and exile. He offers His life as the Lamb of God, with absolute love and devotion, to someone He has never met. A few years later, another person, equally humble and seemingly helpless, claims to be the One promised not only by the Báb but by all the great Messengers of the past. He, too, suffers, with absolute devotion to God, every humiliation and pain for the rest of His life. Two great Beings claim to manifest the Spirit of God, the Word by which the universe came into being; and they accept suffering and humiliation at the hands of the most wretched people. It is this contrast that makes the story of the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh so dramatic and memorable, a tale that will be told and retold for ages to come.

There is still another mystery and miracle in the divine drama: Those who arise to uproot the heavenly Flower, like the gust of a strong wind, only serve to spread its fragrance. As ‘Abdu’l-Bahá notes:

We know that all the falsehoods spread about Christ and His apostles and all the books written against Him, only led the people to inquire into His doctrine; then, having seen the beauty and inhaled the fragrance, they walked evermore amidst the roses and the fruits of that celestial garden.⁵³

Questions and Comments

In the Bible, Jesus talks to the people and says that even if you don’t believe in me because of my words, believe in me because of the miracles that I perform (John 10:37-38). Now if miracles are not important to believing in Jesus, one of many Messengers from God in your opinion, why would Jesus say such a thing? Jesus, this great Teacher and Manifestation of God, is in contradiction with Bahá’í teaching, for He wants you to look to the miracles as a starting point for believing in Him. Both cannot be true.

Response

You refer to John 10:38 to show that Christ used miracles as evidence of His mission. I checked

nine translations in my possession (ASV, NASB, NRSV, KJV, NKJV, TEV, NWT, JB, NIV). Among all those translations, only one—*The New International Version*—uses the word “miracle.” All other translations use “works.” *The Revised English Bible* and *The New English Bible* use the word “deed”; *The New Testament in Modern English* uses “in the things that I do”; and *The Everyday Bible* “what I do.” Obviously there is a difference in translation between these thirteen versions versus the NIV.

I then checked *The NIV Study Bible*, which has extensive footnotes. The footnote indicates that the literal meaning of the Greek word is *works*. To justify the use of “miracle” in place of “works,” the translators add this statement: “The miracles were [part] of Jesus’ works.” In other words, they selected only *one* part of Jesus’ works, and used that one part as the meaning of the word in the text! Why not use the exact word Jesus used? It has an excellent equivalent in English: It is “works!”

After using the word “miracle” in place of “works,” the authors of *The NIV Study Bible* add this statement: “It was Jesus’ quality of life, not peoples’ inability to explain his marvels, that he primarily spoke of here.”⁵⁴ As you can see, after using an inadequate word in the text, the authors have tried to do justice to Jesus’ statement by acknowledging what He really meant by that word: *the quality of His life*. Why make a poor translation, and then explain the truth in the footnote of a study guide few people buy?

The Amplified Version offers the major or essential alternatives in English for each Greek word used in the Gospel. Those alternatives shed some knowledge on the various shades of meanings of the original Greek. In relation to the word “works” in John 10:38, *it offers no alternative*. Apparently “works” or “deeds” covers the meaning of the original Greek word quite adequately. Are the *NV* translators trying to inject their theology into the text of the Scriptures?

Questions and Comments

You also refer to the resurrection of Jesus as being irrelevant to the truth of who Jesus is. The physical resurrection of Jesus is fundamental to Christianity, and those who say there is no resurrection are not Christians. In I Corinthians 15:12-19, Paul says “that if Christ is not raised ...then we are still in our sins,” and that, “if our hope is only for this life, then we are to be pitied more than all men,” for our hope is in the physical resurrection of the body. This is fundamental to Christianity, and I realize that the Bahá’í Faith believes only in a spiritual afterlife, which means that the two are in contradiction with one another and only one can be true.

Response

You indicate that anyone who does not believe in physical resurrection of Jesus is not Christian. In support of that statement you quote St. Paul:

...if Christ is not raised...then we are still in sin.
I Corinthians 15:17

In the verses you quoted, St. Paul does not specify whether he means physical or spiritual resurrection. After quoting Paul, you blend your own thought and theology in the same sentence with his words by adding, “for our hope is in the physical resurrection of the body.” Nowhere does Paul attach the word *physical* to *resurrection*. If you read further in the same discourse, you will find that he does just the opposite. Because the topic of resurrection is so fundamental to Christians, let us study Paul’s pronouncement verse by verse. After referring to the supreme significance of resurrection, Paul poses this question:

But someone may ask, “How are the dead raised? With what kind of body will they come?” How foolish! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies.

I Corinthians 15:35-36

Here Paul declares that resurrection can take place only after death. We both agree on this point. Then he offers an example of transformation to show how something changes into something else:

When you sow, you do not plant the body that will be, but just a seed... I Corinthians 15:37

A body is not planted in the womb, but rather an egg and a sperm, which have the potential to turn into a body.

But God gives it a body as he has determined, and to each kind of seed he gives its own body. I Corinthians 15:38

God gives each person a unique body. The seeds may appear alike, but the physical form of each person is unlike any other.

All flesh is not the same: Men have one kind of flesh, animals have another, birds another and fish another. There are also heavenly bodies and there are earthly bodies; but the splendor of the heavenly bodies is one kind, and the splendor of the earthly bodies is another. The sun has one kind of splendor, the moon another and the stars another; and star differs from star in splendor. I Corinthians 15:39-41

There are different kinds of animals with different flesh and bone structures. For instance, different species have different kinds of cells. There are various creatures on this planet, some advanced, some primitive. (Human beings and bacteria are both physical beings.) But there is another category of differences, declares Paul, between the earthly bodies and the heavenly. The splendors of heavenly bodies are much greater.

So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is *sown a natural body*, it is *raised a spiritual body*. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.

I Corinthians 15:42-44

As there is an immense difference between physical beings, so is there between the physical body and the spiritual body. The physical body is sown or planted on this earth as a perishable substance. But when it dies and is resurrected, it is raised as a spiritual substance that is imperishable. Compared to the spiritual, anything worldly and physical has no value, no honor. Only the spiritual can carry glory and honor. Why? Because our body is not our true essence. The eventual destiny of all flesh—that of both human beings and animals—is to turn into dust. That is not true of our spiritual essence. It is the spirit that reflects the image of God. It is the spirit that recognizes, loves, worships, and glorifies God. That is our precious essence, which is preserved and raised imperishable. We are born into this world physically, and then born into the next world spiritually.

Once again note how clearly St. Paul confirms the duality of human nature and links our eternal life to our spiritual nature:

...it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. I Corinthians 15:44

Jesus clearly confirms the principle of duality:

That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.
John 3:6

After clarifying the dual nature of humans, Paul refers to the spiritual advancement of humanity, then offers this remarkable and definitive conclusion:

I declare to you, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.

I Corinthians 15:50

Could a statement be more clear or more conclusive? Christ's divine splendor radiated from His Soul, not His body. The final destiny of the body is the dust. It does not have the capacity to contain the imperishable bounties and gifts of God.

In Chapter 7 of Romans, St. Paul confirms again the insignificance of the flesh compared to the mind and the soul:

For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells... Romans 7:18

So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin.

Romans 7:25

Note the perfect harmony between the words of Jesus and Paul:

The Spirit gives life; *the flesh counts for nothing. The words* I have spoken to you *are spirit* and they are life. Christ (John 6:63)

In this passage, Jesus once again confirms the dual nature of reality: spirit and flesh. He also *equates the Spirit with His Word*. Finally, He undermines the value of anything material, which would include material miracles.

What Jesus is saying is this: Seek My true miracles in My Word, not in anything that pertains to the

perishable world of flesh. By far Jesus' mightiest miracle was His Word. His Word had such creative power, it breathed new life into the world.

As St. Paul declares, the physical body is subject to corruption (I Cor. 15:42, 44), and the eternal existence of that body stands contrary to the message of this verse:

...God raised Him from the dead, never to decay...
Acts 13:34

Everything seen by physical eye is subject to disintegration and corruption:

So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For *what is seen is temporary*, but what is unseen is eternal.

II Corinthians 4:18

Examine also this verse according to *The Amplified Bible* and *The New English Bible*:

In His human body He was put to death but He was made alive *in* the spirit. I Peter 3:18

Most translations read, "*by* the spirit:"

He was put to death in the body but made alive *by* the Spirit...

Which translation is more reasonable? According to a Christian source:

In the Greek text the words "flesh" and "spirit" are put in contrast to each other, and both are in the dative case; so, if a translator uses the rendering "*by* the spirit" he should

also consistently say “*by* the flesh,” or if he uses “*in* the flesh” he should also say “*in* the spirit.”⁵⁵

Such a usage in English is called parallel. The verse declares that Jesus died *in* the body, but lived *in* the spirit. Further, Jesus did not need to be brought back to life by the Spirit. He was the Spirit of God. That Spirit never dies. At resurrection, it simply detached itself from the physical frame.

According to a Christian source, after the crucifixion, Jesus appeared to His despairing disciples in a “materialized” body to give them full confidence in His divine powers and supremacy. Such “materialized” appearances also occurred before the advent of Jesus. According to this source:

...in the past, angels had materialized in order to be seen by men; they had eaten, and some had even married and fathered children (Gen. 6:4; 19:1-3).⁵⁶

If we accept this possibility—that spiritual beings can appear in material form, a fact confirmed by noted author Dr. Kübler-Ross⁵⁷—we may understand how Jesus could pass through physical obstacles, why His appearance changed from time to time, and why some of His disciples did not recognize Him.

The story of Lazarus is among the richest and most instructive stories of the Bible, yet seldom are its lessons recognized or appreciated. Let us

review this wonderful story and the lessons it teaches.

There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day. At his gate was laid a beggar named Lazarus, covered with sores and longing to eat what fell from the rich man's table. Even the dogs came and licked his sores. The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried. In hell, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side. Luke 16:19-23

Here is the rest of the story—a dialogue between Abraham and the rich man:

- **The rich man:** “Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire [of remoteness from God].”
- **Abraham:** “Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in agony. And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us.”
- **The rich man:** “Then I beg you, father, send Lazarus to my father's house, for I have five brothers. Let him warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.”

- **Abraham:** “They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them.”
- **The rich man:** “No, father Abraham...but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.”
- **Abraham:** “If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets [to the Word of God], they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead” (Luke 16:24-31).

What lessons does this marvelous story teach us?

- All people survive death, even evil people.
- The human soul remains conscious of its past memories.
- Every human being will face the consequences of his or her deeds.
- Hell (remoteness from God) and heaven (nearness to God) are true; an impassable gulf separates the people of heaven from those of hell.
- The choices we make are critical. They will lead us either toward the light of nearness to God or toward the fire of remoteness from God.
- The time to make a choice between hell and heaven is now, while we enjoy an earthly life, while we are being tested. After death, everyone will know “the answer,” everyone will want to go to heaven. But after “the answer” is known, it will be impossible for those who have failed in their earthly test to pass through “the impassable chasm” that separates hell from heaven.

- The Word of God is a greater miracle than the resurrection of a dead person from a grave.
- Physical miracles have little if any value. *Those who are not spiritually receptive will not be convinced, even if they see with their own eyes a dead body rise out of a grave.*

Note how this verse from the Qur'án clearly supports the message of the Gospel:

Even if We [God] opened to them a gate from heaven, toward which they [the deniers] could ascend, they would say, "Our eyes have been intoxicated; we have been bewitched by sorcery."
Qur'án 15:15

The story of Lazarus completely undermines the significance of resurrection as proof or evidence. It teaches us this critical lesson: The place to look for proof is not in a grave but in the beautiful garden of the Word of God. The spirit must be motivated through spiritual, not material miracles. The power of God's Word is mightier than all other forces in the universe, than all other miracles. It was through that Word that the universe came into being.

The lessons this story teaches are confirmed in Bahá'í sacred Scriptures. Using miracles as evidence of divine power is so unworthy of God and so demeaning to His glory that He Himself condemns it in the strongest words.

An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign...
Christ (Matt. 12:39)

Would God use as evidence of His truth something that He condemns so vehemently? Could God choose a stronger word to communicate His message?

We must be loyal to what the Creator Himself has established as the ultimate evidence of Himself: His Word. His Words are so distinguished, so supreme, they shine brightly as the sun among the works of others.

God shows His most awesome and miraculous wonders in His Word. Consider the Báb. His ministry only lasted about six years (from the age of 25 to 30), yet He wrote about 20 volumes in the most beautiful style with the most profound meanings, mainly in a language other than His mother tongue. His speed of revealing and recording the sacred Word was limited only by the speed of His hand. He made no revisions, changes, or corrections in His Writings, and sometimes, while His pen was moving with astonishing speed, He would hold a conversation with those around Him:

The rapidity of the Báb's composition, and the force and originality of His style, had excited his [a scholar's] surprise and admiration. He was amazed to find that, whilst revealing His commentary, and without lessening the speed of His writing, He was able to answer whatever questions those who were present were moved to ask Him.⁵⁸

Dependence on resurrection as evidence of Jesus' divine distinction is an example of the human

desire to defy the laws of nature. This longing for miracles is so strong that it even conquered the soul of St. Peter, perhaps Jesus' most distinguished disciple. Jesus' disciples did not want a suffering Savior who would be crucified; they wanted a conqueror. It was for this unshakable belief that Jesus rebuked Peter:

Then Jesus turned and said to Peter "...you are a stumbling block to me. You think as men think, not as God thinks." Matthew 16:23 NEB

"You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men."
Matthew 16:23 NIV

No wonder Jesus said:

What is highly valued among men is detestable in God's sight.
Luke 16:15

What do human beings value? Anything that is *not* spiritual: money, comfort, glamour, and entertainment. What is the difference between a miracle and a popular entertainment we call magic?

To see the difference between the body and the spirit, consider the analogy of the heavenly and the earthly bodies cited by St. Paul:

...the splendor of the heavenly bodies is one kind, and the splendor of the earthly bodies is another...
I Corinthians 15:40

Paul then likens the spirit to the sun and the body to the moon. What happens to the moon when the sun withholds its splendor? It turns to darkness.

The same happens to the body when the spirit departs. After that analogy Paul concludes:

So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. I Corinthians 15:42-44

Bahá'u'lláh also uses the analogy of the sun:

Consider again the sun when it is completely hidden behind the clouds. Though the earth is still illumined with its light, yet the measure of light which it receiveth is considerably reduced. Not until the clouds have dispersed, can the sun shine again in the plenitude of its glory. Neither the presence of the cloud nor its absence can, in any way, affect the inherent splendor of the sun. The soul of man is the sun by which his body is illumined, and from which it draweth its sustenance, and should be so regarded.⁵⁹

Although the soul is the most marvelous creation in the universe, it can manifest its supreme potential only if it turns to God:

Know thou, of a truth, that if the soul of man hath walked in the ways of God, it will, assuredly, return and be gathered to the glory of the Beloved. By the righteousness of God! It shall attain a station such as no pen can depict, or tongue describe. The soul that hath remained

faithful to the Cause of God, and stood unwaveringly firm in His Path shall, after his ascension, be possessed of such power that all the worlds which the Almighty hath created can benefit through him.⁶⁰ Bahá'u'lláh

As Paul declares, and Bahá'u'lláh confirms, all the glory goes to the soul. Observe how Bahá'u'lláh describes the soul:

Know, verily, that the soul is a sign of God, a heavenly gem whose reality the most learned of men hath failed to grasp, and whose mystery no mind, however acute, can ever hope to unravel. It is the first among all created things to declare the excellence of its Creator, the first to recognize His glory, to cleave to His truth, and to bow down in adoration before Him. If it be faithful to God, it will reflect His light, and will, eventually, return unto Him. If it fail, however, in its allegiance to its Creator, it will become a victim to self and passion, and will, in the end, sink in their depths.⁶¹

As we noted, Jesus Himself confirms the supremacy of the spirit and utter insignificance of the body:

The spirit gives life, the flesh is of no avail.

Christ (John 6:63)

Our capacity to think, to reason, and to understand comes from our spirit:

But it is the spirit in a man, the breath of the Almighty, that gives him understanding.

Job 32:8

Christ's and Paul's glorification of the spirit is in perfect harmony with Bahá'u'lláh's teachings. As Paul implies and all sacred Scriptures declare, at death, the spirit returns to God, and the body to dust:

Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it. Ecclesiastes 12:7

Verily, we are God's, and to Him shall we return.⁶² Bahá'u'lláh

Our body is only a cage; when it dies, the spirit returns to God:

...as long as we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord...and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord. II Corinthians 5:6-9

Christ clearly stated that He came from heaven:

I have come down from heaven.. John 6:38

Who is the "I"? His body or His Spirit? Did people understand His spiritual message? They did not (John 6:42). What then came from heaven?

...the reality of Christ, the Spirit of Christ, the perfections of Christ all came from heaven. Consequently, by saying He was the bread which came from heaven He meant that the perfections which He showed forth were divine perfections, that the blessings within Him were heavenly gifts...⁶³ 'Abdu'l-Bahá

The capacities of His [Christ's] human body were limited but the strength of His spirit was vast, infinite, immeasurable. Men asked, "Why does He say He is of God?" If they had understood the reality of Christ, they would have known that the body of His humanity was a cloud that hid His Divinity. The world only saw His human form, and therefore wondered how He could have "come down from Heaven."⁶⁴

Abdu'l-Bahá

Even today, many mistake the real Jesus.

The reality of Christ is ever-living, everlasting, eternal. For that divine reality there is no beginning, no ending, and, therefore, there can be no death.⁶⁵

Abdu'l-Bahá

The reality of Christ was always in heaven and will always be. This is the intention of the text of the Gospel. For while Jesus Christ walked upon the earth, He said, "The Son of Man is in heaven."⁶⁶

Abdu'l-Bahá

It is not Bahá'ís alone who believe in the spiritual resurrection of Jesus. Bishop John Shelby Spong, an astute scholar of the Bible, has written an entire book, *Resurrection: Myth or Reality?*⁶⁷ to prove that the Resurrection was indeed spiritual. He goes into details that are beyond the scope of this response. Here is what he states about the discourse of St. Paul, from which you quoted to show the significance of resurrection:

For Paul there were no empty tombs, no disappearance from the grave of the physical

body, no physical resurrection, no physical appearance of a Christ who would eat fish, offer his wounds for inspection, or rise physically into the sky after an appropriate length of time. None of these ideas can be found in reading Paul. For Paul the body of Jesus who died was perishable, weak, physical. The Jesus who was raised was clothed by the raising God with a body fit for God's kingdom. It was imperishable, glorified, and spiritual.

...Paul was the earliest author in what we now call the New Testament, and in his writings there was no resurrection of a physical body. Indeed Paul specifically denied that claim.⁶⁸

Again:

It was not a "flesh and blood" body fit to inhabit this earth. It was rather a "spiritual body" designed for life in the kingdom of God. That is a vast difference. "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God," Paul asserted, "nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable" (I Cor. 15:50). I do not know how Paul could have been any more specific.⁶⁹

According to the Bible, God is Spirit, and Jesus sits at the right hand of God (Mark 16:19). Imagine for a moment, the combination of Spirit and body. To think that God is Spirit, but Jesus is both body—which carries no honors—and Spirit is to demean His divine station. St. Paul describes Christ as "the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of His being" (Hebrews 1:3). How can we have

Spirit on one side and body and Spirit on the other, and describe them as “the exact representation”?

If we accept the traditional beliefs of physical resurrection, we have to make all kinds of assumptions about “the requirements of flesh” in the spiritual world. Such thoughts and assumptions serve only to lower the supremacy of the Spirit of Christ, whom Bahá’u’lláh calls the Lord of the visible and invisible.

The following statements from St. Paul should be written in gold, framed, and displayed in every home and house of worship:

This is what we speak...*expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words...the things that come from the Spirit of God...are spiritually discerned.*

I Corinthians 2:13-14

...*the letter kills, but the Spirit* [spirit KJV and NKJ] *gives life.*

II Corinthians 3:6

Why is Paul’s statement so significant? Because ignoring it has been the prime cause of the denial of all the great Messengers. It was strict adherence to the letter of the prophecy and the law that crucified Christ. Consider this example. The punishment for breaking the Sabbath, according to the laws of Moses, was death. In that law alone the Jews could have found an excuse for condemning Jesus to death. The letter of the law can be that powerful and dangerous.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá confirms St. Paul’s declaration that the Word of God must be spiritually discerned:

All the texts and teachings of the holy Testaments have intrinsic spiritual meanings. They are not to be taken literally. I, therefore, pray in your behalf that you may be given the power of understanding these inner real meanings of the Holy Scriptures and may become informed of the mysteries deposited in the words of the Bible so that you may attain eternal life and that your hearts may be attracted to the Kingdom of God. May your souls be illumined by the light of the Words of God, and may you become repositories of the mysteries of God, for no comfort is greater and no happiness is sweeter than spiritual comprehension of the divine teachings.⁷⁰

Let us continue to put literal-mindedness to the test. At the point of leaving His body, Jesus declared,

Father, into your hands I commit my *spirit*.

Luke 23:46

What happens at death to the body and to the spirit? The first goes to grave, the second to God:

...the dust returns to the ground it came from,
and the spirit returns to God who gave it.

Ecclesiastes 12:7

Jesus promised to the humble thief that they would be in paradise that same day. According to the theory of physical resurrection, Jesus stayed in heaven for three days in Spirit, and then His Spirit returned to the earth and claimed its body! Was Jesus' Spirit not adequate for Him during

those three days? If the thief did not need his body, why would Jesus need His? Is Jesus the only person with a body in heaven?

Literal-mindedness creates another discrepancy in Jesus' promise. He told the thief that they would meet in paradise on that day of crucifixion. If Jesus waited three days before being raised from the dead, how could He keep His promise of being with the thief on that first day? Now consider the complexities of dealing with this question alone. Let us see how noted theologian and author Dr. Archer Gleason, Professor of Old Testament and Semitic Studies and Acting Dean at Fuller Theological Seminary, resolves this riddle. Here are the main components of his theory:

- Jesus told the thief they would meet that day—Friday—in *paradise*. He did not say in *heaven*.
- Paradise and heaven are separate places.
- For the first three days, Jesus and the thief stayed in a place called *infernal* (hell-like) paradise.
- Before the time of Jesus' resurrection, infernal paradise was located somewhere in hell.
- After staying three days in infernal paradise, Jesus ascended to heaven.
- When Jesus made this journey, He took the "hell-like" paradise with Him to heaven.
- Before Jesus made this journey, all the saints, Messengers, and Prophets had lived in infernal paradise.

- When Jesus made His journey, He lifted not only the infernal paradise to heaven but also all those saints, Messengers, and Prophets.
- Therefore, Jesus and the thief went to paradise on Friday, and then left together for heaven on Monday.

It may be helpful to read Dr. Gleason's complex theory in His own words:

Luke 23:43 records Christ's promise to the repentant thief who hung on an adjacent cross: "Truly I say to you, today you will be with Me in paradise." But was it not until the following Monday that Christ rose from the grave and ascended to heaven? If Christ Himself was not in paradise until Sunday, how could the repentant thief have been there with him? The answer lies in the location of "paradise" on Good Friday.

Apparently paradise was not exalted to heaven until Easter Day...It was not yet lifted up to heaven but it may well have been a section of hades [hell], reserved for believers who had died in the faith but who would not be admitted into the glorious presence of God in heaven until the price of redemption had been actually paid on Calvary.

Doubtless it was to the infernal paradise that the souls of Jesus and the repentant thief repaired after they each died on Friday afternoon. But then on Easter Sunday, after the risen Christ had

first appeared to Mary Magdalene (John 20:17) and her two companions (Matt. 28:9), presumably He then took up with Him to glory all the inhabitants of infernal paradise (including Abraham, Lazarus, and the repentant thief)...

Presumably He led the whole band of liberated captives from hades (i.e., the whole population of preresurrection paradise) up to the glory of the highest heaven, the abode of the Triune God.⁷¹

Behold the complexities, the costs, and the astonishing consequences of trying to defend a literal reading of the Gospel. When a person believes in the truth of a doctrine, his or her imagination creates a world in which that doctrine appears true. Consider the incredible assumptions Dr. Gleason makes, such as saying that paradise was located in hell, and then Jesus moved it to heaven! Consider also his astonishing assertion that all the Messengers, Prophets, and loved ones of God were sent to hell-like paradise until Jesus arrived and rescued them!

If we honor St. Paul's declaration that the Word of God must be discerned spiritually (I Cor. 2:13-14), nothing stands out of place. This simple solution makes everything fit with perfect precision. Like a master key, it unlocks and resolves all the mysteries of the Scriptures.

Let us continue our test of literal reading. According to the Gospel, at the time of Jesus' death, many others came out of their graves:

At that moment...The tombs broke open and ***the bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life***. They came out of the tombs, and after Jesus' resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many people.

Matthew 27:51-53

First question: Who were the many? We do not have a single reference to the identity of even one of them. "Many" people rising out of their graves is perhaps the biggest and the most astonishing news in all of history. What happened to the raised? What news did they bring from the other side? How did they behave? What was their mission? And how did they die again? Such an event is so awesome, so astonishing, it would cast terror in the hearts of the most apathetic and complacent people. It might turn every atheist into a timid believer, and every sinner into a fearful servant of God. How could such incredible news have gone unnoticed by the historians of the time? How could it not shake the religious and political leaders of that age? Aside from this, those who rose out of their graves were people who had died years, decades, or perhaps centuries earlier. They were not Christians, yet they accomplished what some believe to be the ultimate proof of Jesus' greatness, the distinguishing mark of His mission. Would not the realization that many non-Christians also rose from the dead undermine that belief? Would it not undermine the arguments that try to establish Jesus' greatness or uniqueness on the miracle of His resurrection?

God has given us a mind with which to reason. "Let us reason together, says the Lord." If one story about the resurrection is literal, the others must also be literal. This is just one example of the problems and pitfalls of being literal-minded. Once again, if we follow the guidance of the Gospel that the Word of God must be viewed in the light of the spirit of the Scriptures, not in the dark closet of its "letters," then everything fits. If we remove that light, then the letters fall in disarray.

Trying to approach the Word of God with a literal mind is like having a manuscript of a thousand pages scattered by the wind. You keep running after one page, and the moment you grasp it, the wind blows more pages from your hand. It is an ever-losing game. The odds against winning are astronomical. The most astute minds of the ages have tried to collect those "scattered pages" over the course of 2,000 years, and as the example of Dr. Gleason shows, all they have accomplished is to submit more pages to the wind.

Only when literal truth is challenged are we able to float in the profound and limitless sea of ultimate truth.⁷²

Bishop Spong

What is the purpose of believing in bodily resurrection? To show that Jesus overcame death, that He was divine, all-powerful, the Word by which the universe came into being. Bahá'ís acknowledge all of these. Why, then, disagree about "the letter of the law" (how Jesus went to heaven), which divides us, when we are in perfect agreement about "the spirit of the law" (Jesus is divine and

alive)? Why should this difference of views prevent you from looking at the thousands of signs and evidences that testify to the divine station of Bahá'u'lláh?

Suppose Bahá'u'lláh confirmed the physical resurrection of Jesus. Would that make any difference in your attitude towards Him? Would that make you open your heart to Him? Assume that archaeologists suddenly discover the crucified body of Jesus. Would you deny Jesus because of this discovery? Is it wise to build one's faith on an empty tomb when we have the Word of God by which He created the entire universe?

Many Christians use the resurrection as a convenient way to absolve themselves of their awesome responsibility to look into Bahá'u'lláh's claim and the monumental evidence He presents to prove it. By focusing only on the resurrection, which is physical, at the expense of who Christ really was, they ignore the Spirit. For Christ was the Spirit of God, and that is what matters.

Would you call Bishop Spong a non-Christian because of his belief in the *spiritual* resurrection of Jesus? Would God close to him the door of His Kingdom because of that belief? Suppose you are wrong in *your* views about resurrection. Would God prevent you from entering His Kingdom for that reason?

If a Jewish person looks for excuses to deny or ignore the first Advent of Jesus, he can find many.

The same holds true for Christians who build their faith on physical resurrection and the letters of the name J-E-S-U-S, instead of His Spirit—which manifested itself in Bahá'u'lláh with great glory and power. In fact, the idea of finding excuses to stay out of God's banquet is clearly predicted by Jesus:

A certain man gave a great supper and invited many, and sent his servant at supper time to say to those who were invited, "Come, for all things are now ready." *But they all with one accord began to make excuses.* The first said to him, "I have bought a piece of ground, and I must go and see it. *I ask you to have me excused.*" And another said, "I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to test them. *I ask you to have me excused.*" Still another said, "I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come." So that servant came and reported these things to his master.

Luke 14:16-21

Since literal-mindedness lies at the root of all differences between Bahá'í and Christian interpretation, let us continue to put it to the test of both reason and the Scripture. Let us apply St. Paul's instruction—that the Word of God must be discerned spiritually—to his own word. Consider this verse:

And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms...

Ephesians 2:6

Consider the spiritual language. Paul is alive, yet he is speaking in the past tense, saying that already he has been raised up. Literally speaking, the statement makes no sense. How can a person be resurrected from the grave before going to the grave? Spiritually speaking, the statement makes perfect sense. Without the life of the Spirit, we are dead, lying in invisible coffins. The breath of the Holy Spirit raises us from the gloom of the grave to the paradise of joy and peace, from the grief of darkness to the glory of God, from the hell of death to the heaven of loving and living. Without the knowledge of God, we are as perishable as flowers that bloom and soon vanish:

My people perish for want of knowledge.

Hosea 4:6

Instinctively, we know that when Paul says, “God raised us up with Christ and seated us with Him in the heavenly realms,” he is speaking in spiritual language. But when we read something about the future, about the Second Advent, we somehow shift from the spiritual to the literal. This shift in thinking is mostly subconscious; it comes from mental conditioning. Consider this verse, which is almost always taken literally:

For my Father’s will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.

John 6:40

When is the last day? It is our day. How can a person be lifted? By making his or her soul as

light and pure as the air in the forest. The humbler and lighter we are, the higher we will rise.

The Lord lifts up the humble; He casts the wicked down to the ground. Psalms 147:6

See also Psalms 113:7; 18:48

What does God lift? The body or the soul?

The Lord...brings down to the grave and brings up...He brings low and lifts up. ***He raises the poor from the dust*** and lifts the beggar from the ash heap, to set them among princes and make them inherit the throne of glory. I Samuel 2:6-8

Whom does God lift and set among the princes? The humble, "the poor in spirit:"

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Christ (Matt. 5:3)

St. Paul understands Jesus' language. He asks us to interpret His Word by spiritual standards, because he is well aware of people's instinctive and strong tendencies towards literal-mindedness. Ponder the meaning of this message uttered by Jesus:

And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself. Christ (John 12:32)

Can we attach a literal meaning to this statement? "All peoples" include Chinese, Japanese, Russians, and Native Americans, who at that time knew nothing about the First Advent. Yet Jesus "drew" them also.

Consider also these verses from St. Paul:

But everything exposed by the light becomes visible, for it is light that makes everything visible. This is why it is said: “Wake up, O sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.”
Ephesians 5:13-14

Who is the “sleeper” and why is he asked to “wake up” and “rise from the dead”? The sleeper is the one deprived of the light of God. He is invited to awaken and to behold the Sun of Truth shining high on the horizon. No wonder Jesus uttered two seemingly opposite prophecies. He compared His coming both to an invisible thief in the night *and* to a bright sun descending from above, a sun so brilliant, no “eye” could miss it. A sleeper cannot tell the sun from a thief. His world is surrounded by “darkness” and his life is filled with “dreams.” The sun is invisible to him. What about the awakened one? Can he not behold the beauty of the sun? Can he miss what the heavens declare?

The heavens declare the glory of God...

Psalms 19:1

I have heard so many Bahá’ís make statements such as these:

- I can’t understand why I did not “see” Bahá’u’lláh at the beginning of my search.
- Why did it take me so long to know Him, to “see” the truth of His Word?
- Why can’t others “see” Him?

- Now it is so obvious who Bahá'u'lláh is. Why wasn't it before? Why did I not "see" Him earlier?

Let me acknowledge my own spiritual transformation. Earlier in my life, I too was in a similar position. At the beginning, I could not "see" the Thief; now I "see" Him as brightly as the sun. This phenomenon of "visibility and invisibility" is complex, mysterious, and miraculous. The only explanation I have is this: The gift of "seeing" the glory of God is so precious that the Creator, in His infinite Wisdom, protects it and even conceals it from us until we can appreciate it. He wants to keep that gift precious. He is intimately involved in allowing a soul to "see" Him or not to "see" Him.

Since literal-mindedness is the first and foremost obstacle that prevents Christians from examining Bahá'u'lláh's supreme Revelation, let us continue to put it to the test of both reason and the Scripture.

Let us assume you own a Buick Special, which you like, but it is rusting and falling apart. You hear about a new model of the same car and go to a car show to see it. When you face the car, you have three choices:

- Look for differences.
- Look for similarities.
- Look for both differences and similarities.

Which is the best choice? The last one, of course. What will happen if you look for differences and

pass judgment on that basis alone? Suppose the new model differs from the old because of its looks, which you don't like. And because of this difference you say, "This car is not for me." This simple analogy illustrates how the majority of Christians approach and assess the Bahá'í Faith. They keep looking for a difference until they find one. Then they say, "This Faith is not for me." What will happen if they take a little time and go beyond looks and labels? They will find hundreds of similarities between the Bahá'í Revelation and Christian Revelation. For instance, Bahá'ís acknowledge the divine and infallible station of Jesus Christ. They believe in His conception by the Holy Spirit. They accept and confirm the truth of the Gospels. They differ with orthodox Christians only in this: They attribute to the Scriptures more spiritual meanings than literal; we might say, they are more symbolic-minded than literal-minded. Amazingly, *any reason a Christian can find for rejecting Bahá'u'lláh can be traced to this one issue.*

You now have a choice, as does every other Christian, to search either for differences, for similarities, or for both. If you search for differences, you do not need to read a single verse from the Bahá'í Scriptures. You can reject Bahá'u'lláh on account of only His name. But if you search for similarities, you will discover a vast spectrum of common beliefs. Against such a vast spectrum of harmony, you will find only this

one *symbolic* difference: *Some of the biblical verses that traditionally have been considered literal are declared to be symbolic.* The difference is only symbolic because, by becoming a Bahá'í, you will lose nothing. You will continue to love Jesus Christ as much as before, and even more. You will love Him more because you will find that all His promises have been fulfilled. You will continue to read and love the Bible as much as before, and even more because you will “hear” that same “Voice” in the Bahá'í Scriptures. You will continue to love God as much as before, and even more because you will experience His awesome and splendid presence in Bahá'u'lláh. You will lose absolutely nothing. All you will do is shift your emphasis from *material* miracles to *spiritual* miracles; from being *literal-minded* to *spiritual-minded*. That is all! *There is no other difference.* Is it wise to reject this supreme Revelation because of only one symbolic difference?

Bahá'u'lláh offers as much forgiveness of sin as does Jesus. He has come with the same Spirit and the same authority. Bahá'u'lláh offers as much truth and life as does Jesus. He has come with the same Spirit, He is the same One, the Word, the Logos, only with a new name—Bahá'u'lláh, the Glory of God.

What does Jesus offer? He offers Truth, the Way to God, forgiveness of sin, grace, and everlasting life with the Lord in heaven. Bahá'u'lláh offers all those heavenly gifts:

The Way of God:	This is <i>the Way of God</i> unto all who are in the heavens and all who are on the earth. ⁷³
Truth:	This, verily, is <i>the truth, the certain truth</i>.⁷⁴ He Who knoweth all things, Himself testifieth to <i>the truth</i> of these words.⁷⁵ The Sun of <i>Truth</i>* shineth resplendently, at the bidding of the Lord...⁷⁶
Forgiveness of sin:	Verily, the breezes of <i>forgiveness</i> have been wafted from the direction of your Lord, the God of Mercy; whoso turneth thereunto, shall be <i>cleansed of his sins</i> , and of all pain and sickness. Happy the man that hath turned towards them, and woe betide him that hath turned aside. ⁷⁷
Salvation:	We, verily, have come for your sakes, and have borne the misfortunes of the world for your <i>salvation</i> . ⁷⁸
Grace:	This is the Day in which God's most excellent <i>favours</i> have been poured out upon men, the Day in

* In the *Concordance to the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, there are over 440 references to *true* and *truth*.

which His most mighty *grace* hath been infused into all created things.⁷⁹

**Everlasting
life:**

O the pity! that man should deprive himself of this goodly *gift*, this imperishable bounty, this *everlasting life*.⁸⁰

**The Tree of
Life:**

Verily this is that Most Great Beauty [of God], foretold in the Books of the Messengers, through Whom *truth shall be distinguished from error* and the wisdom of every command shall be tested. Verily He is *the Tree of Life* that bringeth forth *the fruits of God*, the Exalted, the Powerful, the Great.⁸¹

Behold God's reassurance to you and to all those who fear that by accepting His new Redeemer they may lose something:

And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all that he has given me, but raise them up at the last day.

Christ (John 6:39)

It seems everything that happens now has also happened in the past. Note what Jesus said to the Jews:

...new wine must be poured into new wineskins. And no one after drinking old wine wants the new, for he says, "The old is better."

Luke 5:38-39

Now read what the Christian scholar F. F. Bruce wrote about that statement by Jesus:

Jesus compares his message of the kingdom of God to new wine, which cannot be contained in old wineskins that have lost their elasticity. The old wineskins were the rules and forms of traditional religion...New teaching is disturbing; it forces people to think, to revise their ideas and attitudes. Religious people tend to be conservative, to suspect innovations ...Jesus found that much [of the] resistance to accepting his message, on the part...of well-intentioned and pious people, arose simply from this attachment to old ways and old ideas. They had stood the test of time; why should they be changed?⁸²

The fundamental truths never change; they are repeated in new ways, according to our maturity. Love, truth, eternal life, grace, and forgiveness never cease, because they reflect God Himself. The wine of eternal life may come in various bottles, but it has the same intoxicating essence. Bahá'u'lláh repeatedly invites us to drink of *this new heavenly wine*. The wine comes from the fruits of God's celestial garden.

Each of these statements reflects God's great power and glory. They cannot be produced except in the Heavenly Orchard:

That hour is now come. The world is illumined with the effulgent glory of His countenance. And yet, behold how far its peoples have

strayed from His path! None have believed in Him except them who, through the power of the Lord of Names, have shattered the idols of their vain imaginings and corrupt desires and entered the city of certitude. The seal of the choice *Wine of His Revelation* hath, in this Day and in His Name, the Self-Sufficing, been broken. Its grace is being poured out upon men. Fill thy cup, and drink in, in His Name, the Most Holy, the All-Praised.⁸³

The Best-Beloved is come. In His right hand is the sealed *Wine of His name*. Happy is the man that turneth unto Him, and drinketh his fill, and exclaimeth: "Praise be to Thee, O Revealer of the signs of God!" By the righteousness of the Almighty! Every hidden thing hath been manifested through the power of truth. All the favors of God have been sent down, as a token of His grace. The waters of everlasting life have, in their fullness, been proffered unto men. Every single cup hath been borne round by the hand of the Well-Beloved. Draw near, and tarry not, though it be for one short moment.⁸⁴

The people of the left hand sigh and bemoan. The people of the right abide in noble habitations: they quaff the *Wine that is life* indeed, from the hands of the All-Merciful, and are, verily, the blissful.⁸⁵

Say: Is there any doubt concerning God? Behold how He hath come down from the heaven of His grace, girded with power and invested

with sovereignty. Is there any doubt concerning His signs? Open ye your eyes, and consider His clear evidence. Paradise is on your right hand, and hath been brought nigh unto you, while Hell hath been made to blaze. Witness its devouring flame. Haste ye to enter into Paradise, as a token of Our mercy unto you, and drink ye from the hands of the All-Merciful the *Wine that is life indeed*.⁸⁶

Ascend unto My heaven, that thou mayest obtain the joy of reunion, and from the chalice of imperishable glory quaff the *peerless wine*.⁸⁷

Cleanse thyself from the defilement of riches and in perfect peace advance into the realm of poverty; that from the well-spring of detachment thou mayest quaff the *wine of immortal life*.⁸⁸

Turn not away thine eyes from the matchless *wine of the immortal Beloved*, and open them not to foul and mortal dregs. Take from the hands of the divine Cup-bearer the chalice of immortal life, that all wisdom may be thine, and that thou mayest hearken unto the mystic voice calling from the realm of the invisible. Cry aloud, ye that are of low aim! Wherefore have ye turned away from My holy and *immortal wine* unto evanescent water?⁸⁹

The Jews had the same concerns and fears that you have now. Jesus reassured them of His heavenly intentions:

Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. Matthew 5:17

Every gift that God offered to humanity through His Word, the Anointed One, Christ, is being offered again through that same Word, but with a new name, the Glory of God, Bahá'u'lláh. How incredible that a few letters have concealed such an awesome glory! How amazing that, for one symbolic difference, so many people refuse to investigate the message of Bahá'u'lláh! How astonishing that they disregard hundreds of similarities between the two great Redeemers, yet see the one symbolic difference!

In *Lord of Lords*, the sequel to *I Shall Come Again*, you will find a list of 86 similarities between Jesus and the Báb. That book presents countless literal prophecies to prove a perfect parallel between biblical predictions and Bahá'í history. The parallels are astonishing. Is it then wise, is it biblically sound, to ignore all these evidences for that one symbolic difference?

I think God has offered us mountains and mountains of evidence, and one excuse for those who do not want to see those mountains. It is amazing how that one symbolic difference, like a thick and gloomy cloud, has concealed the brilliant Sun of God, Bahá'u'lláh:

This Cause is too evident to be obscured, and too conspicuous to be concealed. *It shineth as the sun in its meridian glory.*⁹⁰ Bahá'u'lláh

Say: "***The True One is come evident as the shining sun***; O pity that He should have come into the city of the blind!"⁹¹ Bahá'u'lláh

Even if you fail to study those hundreds of fulfilled prophecies in the Bahá'í Revelation and look only at Bahá'u'lláh's Word, you will see it shine with the splendor of the sun:

Say: "O people! The Sun of Utterance beameth forth in this day, above the horizon of bounty... Purge and sanctify your breasts, and your hearts, and your ears, and your eyes with the living waters of the utterance of the All-Merciful, and set, then, your faces towards Him."⁹²
Bahá'u'lláh

...the Word which is uttered by God shineth and flasheth as the sun amidst the books of men. Happy the man that hath discovered it, and recognized it, and said: "Praised be Thou, Who art the Desire of the world, and thanks be to Thee, O Well-Beloved of the hearts of such as are devoted to Thee!"⁹³ Bahá'u'lláh

The following is a statement addressed to a religious leader. Ponder how serious it is to deny Bahá'u'lláh. To deny Him, He states, equals denying all the Messengers of God.

O thou who art reputed for thy learning! Bid men to do that which is praiseworthy, and be not of such as tarry. Observe thou with a keen eye. ***The Sun of Truth shineth resplendently, at the bidding of the Lord*** of the kingdom of utterance, and the King of the heaven of

knowledge...Repudiation hath not veiled it, and ten thousand hosts arrayed against it were powerless to withhold it from shining. ***Thou canst excuse thyself no longer. Either thou must recognize it, or—God forbid—arise and deny all the Prophets!***⁹⁴ Bahá'u'lláh

Here is another statement with the same message:

Be thou assured in thyself that verily, ***he who turns away from this Beauty [Bahá'u'lláh] hath also turned away from the Messengers of the past and showeth pride towards God from all eternity to all eternity.***⁹⁵ Bahá'u'lláh

Jesus said, “When a man believes in Me, he does not believe in Me only, but in the one who sent Me” (John 12:44). The reverse is also true. Denying Christ or Bahá'u'lláh is the same as denying God Himself.

Bahá'u'lláh is the Spirit of Jesus. How can you believe in Jesus and deny Bahá'u'lláh? They are one; they are the Logos, the Word of God made flesh (John 1:14). How can you believe in the Sun and deny the Sun? How can you believe in the Son and deny the Father?

Since literal-mindedness is the straw to which many Christians cling, let us put it to further tests. Consider the literal meaning of the following passage as a way of justifying the cruel death of Jesus:

But the prophet who presumes to speak a word in My name, which I have not commanded

him to speak, or who speaks in the name of other gods, ***that prophet shall die.***

Deuteronomy 18:20

The fact that Jesus was killed, the Jews could argue, is clear evidence of His falsehood. The contemporaries of Jesus who were attached to the “letter” of the Scriptures also could use the literal meaning of this passage to discredit Him:

For Moses truly said to the fathers, “The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your brethren. Him you shall hear in all things, whatever He says to you. And it shall be that ***every soul who will not hear that Prophet shall be utterly destroyed*** from among the people.”

Acts 3:22-23

The Jews living in the first century could say, “We did not ‘hear’ Jesus and we are not destroyed. Thus Jesus cannot be the Prophet promised by Moses.” This is how perilous the LETTER can be. One verse, devoid of the spirit, can exterminate the eternal life of a nation.

But how does “the letter” kill? It narrows the range of thinking. It lets the believer be controlled by the appearance rather than the inner essence of ideas. Concern for appearance becomes such a dominant force in the hearts of the literal-minded, that they lose sight of the Spirit. That is exactly what happened to the Pharisees. Can it not also happen to Christians? Spiritual traps are easy to fall into. Even Jesus’ dear disciples were vulnerable. Thus He warned them:

Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation.

Christ (Matt. 26:41)

Traps of tradition and temptation are always concealed. Can Christians not fall into the same trap? If it is not easy to fall into a trap, why are we asked so often to be watchful? What kind of a snare requires watchfulness?

But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that Day come on you unexpectedly. *For it will come as a snare on all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch therefore*, and pray always that you may be counted worthy *to escape* all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man.

Christ (Luke 21:34-36)

Can Catholics say, “We are an exception, the trap will not catch us”? Can Baptists or Methodists or Mormons say, “We are an exception. We have the right doctrine. We will not be entrapped”? No, the snare, Jesus declares, will entrap “*all* who dwell on the face of the *whole* earth.”

A snare is always kept hidden. Only the insane would fall into a visible trap. What keeps people away from the Son of Man is hidden. Christians do not see it. This is in perfect harmony with the metaphor of *a thief in the night* and the command to be watchful and alert. People must first look for the hidden snare that keeps them away from the Thief. Once they free themselves, they

must look for the Thief, who is also hidden from their sight.

What makes a good trap? A good trap is one that is hard to detect and easy to fall into. In the preceding passage, Jesus offers two significant examples of entrapment. One is concern for worldly cares or material needs and demands; the other is drunkenness, or a state of unawareness. One (the world) comes from without; the other (a sleepy self) comes from within. This is exactly the state of the church today. It is totally unaware of the “unexpected coming of that Day” and ***totally unaware of its unawareness!*** What can we expect from such a state of mind? Can we expect any response other than apathy and a lack of interest in the news of the coming of the Master? Jesus also asks us to pray “to escape all those things.” What are those things? The things that entrap us.

The state of unawareness or drunkenness is induced by these deficiencies and powerful tranquilizers:

- Tradition
- Complacency and apathy
- The joy of staying in one’s comfort zone. (I am quite happy and pleased with what I have.)
- The countless millions of leaders, scholars, and ordinary people who are on one’s side. (Security is in numbers.)
- Fear of the loss of love, popularity, power, and material interests.

- Lack of faith
- Illusions of supremacy
- Desire for a miraculous display of power and glory by one's own Redeemer against His powerful enemies and outsiders.
- Clinging to the letter of the law, for it is easier to understand.

As stated in *King of Kings*:

Reasons for denial are extremely complex, interrelated, and circular. For instance, people deny because of ignorance. But what causes ignorance? Perhaps laziness. What causes laziness? Perhaps lack of purpose. What causes lack of purpose? Perhaps ignorance.

Can we find deeper reasons for ignorance? Yes, ignorance can be purposeful. Why? Perhaps because of fear. Why? Because the believer fears the loss of his spiritual possessions. Why? Because he lacks faith. Why? Because he keeps himself intentionally ignorant.

The same rule applies to the *strategies* people use to remain ignorant. Instead of investigating, a person may depend on religious leaders. Why? Perhaps he does not want to take the time to investigate. Why? Because he is worldly. Why? Because he lacks faith. Why? Because he is ignorant. Why? Because he depends on religious leaders.

Why do religious leaders deny? By far their most common strategy is literal-mindedness.

Why? Because they have been taught by their theology professors. Why are the theology professors literal-minded? Because of tradition. Why? Because it is easy to stay on the track. Why? Because they keep themselves ignorant. Why? Because they lack faith.

But when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth? (Luke 18:8). At that time many will turn away from the faith (Matt. 24:10). The love of most will grow cold (Matt. 24:12).

Jesus knew the immense obstacles His followers would face in recognizing Him in His Second Advent. He knew the awesome powers of the invisible trap of tradition, and the passionate desire to be loyal to religious heritage. He knew His beloved followers would face mountains of illusions and attachments. To move them into action—into detachment, humility, and love for truth—He offered the most magnificent gifts, the most glorious blessings to those who arise, climb with all their might, and overcome those mountains:

I am coming soon...

Him who overcomes (Rev. 3:11-12):

- *Will inherit all things* (Rev. 21:7).
- I will be his God and he *will be my son* (Rev. 21:7).
- I will give the right *to sit with me on my throne* (Rev. 3:21).

- I will give the right *to eat from the tree of life* which is in the paradise of God (Rev. 2:7).
- I will make him *a pillar in the temple of my God* (Rev. 3:12).
- I will...give him *the morning star* (Rev. 2:28).
- I...will *acknowledge his name* before my Father (Rev. 3:5).
- I will *never erase his name* from the book of life (Rev. 3:5).
- I will *write on him the name of my God* (Rev. 3:12).
- I will write on him...*the name of the city of my God* (Rev. 3:12).
- I will also give him *a white stone with a new name* (Rev. 2:17).
- *I will also write on him my new name*. He who has an [spiritual] ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches (Rev. 3:12).

A person can find countless excuses in “the letters” of the Scriptures to deny or discredit the Spirit who revealed them. That is why so many believers become atheists and agnostics. That is why, at one time, the church persecuted scientists. That is why Christians were prevented from translating the Bible, and a few faced death for attempting it. That is why millions of people have slaughtered one another in the name of God. That is what has divided the one church of Christ into hundreds, perhaps thousands of denominations.

Note what the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh declare to religious leaders who care more about the letter of the law than the Law-Giver:

Ye spend all your days contriving forms and rules for the principles of your Faith, while that which profiteth you in all this is to comprehend the good-pleasure of your Lord and unitedly to become well-acquainted with His supreme Purpose.⁹⁶ The Báb

They cleave to the obscure intricacies of knowledge, when He, Who is the Object of all knowledge, shineth as the sun. They see the sun with their own eyes, and yet question that brilliant Orb as to the proof of its light.⁹⁷

Bahá'u'lláh

Adherence to the letter can kill not only the spirit but also the body. What are the consequences of taking these verses literally?

When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze.

Isaiah 43:2

How many Christians have died from drinking poison and playing with dangerous snakes, because they took the words of the Gospel literally (Mark 16:18)? Literal-mindedness is so dangerous that it caused an eminent Christian scholar and Bible interpreter—Origen of Alexandria—to mutilate his body with terrible consequences. He took Matthew 19:12 literally.⁹⁸

Consider one more example of literal-mindedness that poses the greatest obstacle to Christians, that prevents them from making even a cursory examination of Bahá'u'lláh's claim: the coming of Jesus on the clouds. If you take Jesus' coming from the sky literally, you must take all other prophecies about His return literally, for instance, this one:

...the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, *in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel...* II Thessalonians 1:7-8

Will Jesus, the gentle, loving Shepherd, come to burn His sheep? It is easy to form an abstract, impersonal view of killing and burning, as some generals speak of the glory of war and the exhilaration of victory. It is also easy to think of strange, far-away people scorched to death. Let us bring this idea closer to home. Think about the people you know. Write the names of a few of your friends, relatives, and neighbors who deserve to be scorched. Please descend from theory to reality. Does your loving conscience allow you to engage in this cruelty? Would you do it? Why, then, would Jesus, who is the essence and embodiment of gentleness and love, engage in what you yourself abhor?

Even if Jesus decided to destroy these millions of mostly ignorant people, why would He need to set fire to them? Is Jesus not All-Powerful? Could He not simply make them disappear from the face of the earth? Is it in His nature to torture people before putting an end to their misery?

Forget for a moment the followers of other faiths. The prophecy indicates that all those who fail to obey the Gospel must face the fire. Christians are included. What percentage of Christians obey the Gospel? Statistics gathered by Christian researchers indicate that they cheat as often and as much as the rest of the population. The differences, if any, are insignificant.

I can give you countless other examples showing the numerous contradictions and absurdities that result from literal-mindedness. Why insist on this one point, when by making a transition from literal to spiritual, from the letter to the spirit, everything falls into place like a perfect jigsaw puzzle? Why set reason aside and follow imagination and tradition?

Look at the Gospel of the Lord Christ and see how glorious it is! Yet even today men fail to understand its priceless beauty, and misinterpret its words of wisdom.⁹⁹ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Consider this analogy. Assume that the entire human population is a class in which a thousand students are registered. The teacher gives this class a test with 100 questions. What scores do you think the students will receive? From 0 to 100. There will be students at every point of the distribution. Some will have 100, some 99, some 98, and so on. As a teacher, you have no problem assigning grades to these scores. A bad grade does not mean the end of the world or the end of a student’s life. He or she can try again for a better grade, or simply drop out of school. Now

assume that the punishment for a low score is not a bad grade, but death. Again, you would have to draw a line somewhere. You would have to choose a cutoff score. What should it be? Should the cutting point be 39 or 40? Should it be 38 or 37? Let us assume you settle for 40. The difference of one point would determine whether people would live or die. Would your conscience allow you to engage in this cruelty? Is this not exactly what the literal interpretation of Paul's prophecy implies?

Whom would Jesus kill? At what point would He spare lives? How many Chinese would He kill? How many bushmen from Africa? How many Native Americans? How many Muslims? How many Jews? How many Hindus? How many Bahá'ís? Where would He draw a line? Would He spare 15-year-olds or 14-year-olds? Would He kill old people? Would He kill people in hospitals? Would he kill people with low IQs?

The idea that Jesus will come to kill thousands of millions of people is the most astonishing and incredible belief! It raises Jesus to the ranks of the most cruel and despotic rulers on earth. And yet this is what millions of literal-minded Christians continue to believe.

Consider this verse:

I have come to set fire to the earth...

Christ (Luke 12:49)

Was Jesus a global arsonist? Why then did He make that statement? Because God speaks in a unique

language. By “setting fire,” Jesus meant destruction of the old ways of thinking and the old order of things. Bahá’u’lláh uses “fire” with a similar meaning:

Be thou as a flame of fire to My enemies and
a river of life eternal to My loved ones, and
be not of those who doubt.¹⁰⁰

With His divine declaration, Jesus set fire to the established empire of illusions built by the people of Israel over the course of 1,500 years. Bahá’u’lláh has engulfed the world in the same raging fire. With a stroke of His pen, He has uprooted the gigantic tree of theological theories that were carefully cultivated and displayed as the truth—theories that are rooted in 2,000 years of tradition and imitation. Only God has such a power. Only He has the Vision and the Wisdom to accomplish such a marvelous miracle.

We must understand God according to *His* standards, not our own ways. Spiritual truths must be discerned spiritually. It was the refusal to understand God’s Word by His standard that caused the Pharisees to condemn Jesus. Has history repeated itself? Are not the majority of Christians following in the footsteps of Pharisees? Please keep pondering the following words day and night until they penetrate the depths of your heart and soul:

The letter kills, but the spirit gives life.

II Corinthians 3:6

*The things that come from the Spirit of God
are spiritually discerned.* I Corinthians 2:13-14

The topic of resurrection deserves further discussion. Here I have tried to respond to the brief passage you quoted from St. Paul, in the context of the rest of his discourse. A book written by a Bahá'í (*The Wine of Astonishment*) has an excellent chapter on resurrection.

Questions and Comments

As to miracles in the apostolic age, Jesus said before He ascended back to heaven that His followers would perform miracles. They would cast out demons and heal the sick (Mark 16:17-18). The Book of Acts is full of miracles that the followers of Jesus performed. Even today, miracles take place when the Good News of Jesus Christ is preached. These are both the outer and the more sublime inner miracles of regenerated lives that are filled with the Holy Spirit.

Response

Bahá'ís do not deny miracles; miracles occur all the time. When God is in power, miracles are inevitable. Over the years I have heard about many miraculous events in the lives of Bahá'ís.

People of many faiths witnessed the miracles of Bahá'u'lláh. The following is an example of His healing miracles, recorded in *Memorials of the Faithful*, a book written by 'Abdu'l-Bahá about the life of a few devoted disciples of Bahá'u'lláh:

Another of those who emigrated to Baghdad was Shaykh Sádiq...His detachment from the things of this world and his attachment to the life of the spirit are indescribable. He was love embodied, tenderness personified. Day and night, he commemorated God. Utterly unconscious of this world and all that is therein, he dwelt continually on God, remaining submerged in supplications and prayers. Most of the time, tears poured from his eyes. The Blessed Beauty [Bahá'u'lláh] singled him out for special favor, and whenever He turned His attention toward Sádiq, His loving-kindness was clear to see.

On a certain day they brought word that Sádiq was at the point of death. I went to his bedside and found him breathing his last. He was suffering from ileus, an abdominal pain and swelling. I hurried to Bahá'u'lláh and described his condition. "Go," He said. "Place your hand on the distended area and speak the words: 'O Thou the Healer!'"

I went back. I saw that the affected part had swollen up to the size of an apple; it was hard as stone, in constant motion, twisting, and coiling about itself like a snake. I placed my hand upon it; I turned toward God and, humbly beseeching Him, I repeated the words, "O Thou the Healer!" Instantly the sick man rose up. The ileus vanished; the swelling was carried off.¹⁰¹

Here is another story from the same book:

Mírzá Ja'far was patient and long-suffering, a faithful attendant at the Holy Threshold. He was a servant to all the friends, working day and night. A quiet man, sparing of speech, in all things relying entirely upon God. He continued to serve in Adrianople until the banishment to 'Akká was brought about and he too was made a prisoner. He was grateful for this, continually offering thanks, and saying, "Praise be to God! I am in the fully-laden Ark!"

The Prison was a garden of roses to him, and his narrow cell a wide and fragrant place. At the time when we were in the barracks he fell dangerously ill and was confined to his bed. He suffered many complications, until finally the doctor gave him up and would visit him no more. Then the sick man breathed his last. Mírzá Áqá Ján ran to Bahá'u'lláh, with word of the death. Not only had the patient ceased to breathe, but his body was already going limp. His family were gathered about him, mourning him, shedding bitter tears. The Blessed Beauty [Bahá'u'lláh] said, "Go; chant the prayer of Yá Shafi—O Thou, the Healer—and Mírzá Ja'far will come alive. Very rapidly, he will be as well as ever." I reached his bedside. His body was cold and all the signs of death were present. Slowly, he began to stir; soon he could move his limbs, and before an hour had passed he lifted his head, sat up, and proceeded to laugh and tell jokes.

He lived for a long time after that, occupied as ever with serving the friends. This giving service was a point of pride with him: to all, he was a servant. He was always modest and humble, calling God to mind, and to the highest degree full of hope and faith. Finally, while in the Most Great Prison, he abandoned this earthly life and winged his way to the life beyond.¹⁰²

You may say, “How do I know ‘Abdu’l-Bahá did not make up these stories?” First, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá did not write them to prove Bahá’u’lláh’s divine powers. He simply recorded them as a part of history. Second, there were other witnesses involved. And third, we have numerous testimonials from many people about ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s character. He was as perfect a human being as anyone can ever be. His love, self-sacrifice, and nobility stand beyond anyone’s understanding. For His humanitarian endeavors during World War I, He was knighted by the British government. Much literature is available about His saintly life.

Dreams and visions are the most common and direct links of communication between God and human beings. Our Creator always has given us evidence of His supreme powers by guiding us through the miracle of dreams and visions.

...thou spakest in vision to thy saints...

Psalms 89:19

There are several books in print about people who have had dreams and visions about Bahá’u’lláh. Let me cite a few examples. Mírzá Muhammad-Taqí

was a nobleman who suffered beyond measure for his beliefs. He was one of the early disciples of the Báb, and was once attacked and beaten so severely that his survival seemed a miracle. After he was left for dead, somehow he managed to drag his mangled body to the outskirts of the city, where he dropped to the ground and fell asleep. Here is what happened next, in his own words:

While sleeping, I dreamed about the Ancient Beauty [Bahá'u'lláh]. Even though I had never seen Him, yet I was certain that this was He, and that He was in Baghdád. He addressed these words to me: "Despite the injuries heaped upon you, We extended Our protection that you might remain alive. Be not grieved, and come to Me in Baghdád."

"But I have no money," I replied, "nor am I able to stand on my feet."

"You do rely upon God?" were His next words, to which I replied, "I have always relied upon God."

At this point I awoke, and to my great amazement saw that a caravan had set up camp on the banks of the very river beside which I have been sleeping. It turned out that they were pilgrims traveling to Karbilá, many of whom had come on foot from Kirmán.

Someone emerged from a tent and, to my great surprise, came straight over to me and asked me to follow him. Overcome with astonishment,

I remained rooted to the spot. He repeated his words. I followed him and we entered the tent. There I saw that several people were attending a man of striking appearance who, as a sign of respect to me, arose and then seated me next to himself. "During the night," he told me, "I dreamed that the Imám Husayn [a saintly and highly revered Figure in Islám] had entrusted to my care a person with the same appearance and features which I behold in you, and he told me, 'This Hájí is my guest. He should accompany you to Karbilá.'" So, you are my guest as far as Karbilá.

And so, without the usual formalities of introduction, this distinguished gentleman took me with him, and he would often remark: "The Imám has guided you to me, and has emphasized that you be shown the utmost hospitality."

When we reached Baghdád I told him, "This is where we part." He replied that I was to accompany him as far as Karbilá, but I plained that "the same blessed Personage Who entrusted me to your care also came to me in a dream and invited me to come to Baghdád. Therefore, I shall remain here, and will not continue the journey to Karbilá."

My host paled as he heard these words, and in a very apologetic manner replied: "To be truthful, the Imám Husayn had directed me to take you as far as Baghdád." And, with the utmost kindness, he bade me farewell.

When I came into the presence of the Blessed Beauty, I recognized Him as that same holy Personage Whom I had seen in my dream, and I was favored with His limitless grace.¹⁰³

Recently more than 200 Bahá'ís in Iran were given a choice to deny their Faith or die. They chose to die. Among them were a man named (Yad'u'lláh) and his 18-year old daughter, Mona (1965-1983). Mona was one of more than 20,000 Bahá'ís who have chosen the honor of dying for their Lord rather than the shame of denying the truth. These martyrs represent a cross-section of society. Many of them were highly educated. How could people who loved life choose death? They were among the noblest citizens of our planet, the kind who stand by their principles no matter what the cost. God also intervened: Many of them received inspiration and support through dreams and visions. Let me quote a dream Mona had before she was martyred:

Beginning at the age of 13, Mona had begun to dream and write about her father's death in a startling way. Some of these writings are now preserved among her papers. Ten months before she was killed, Mona had another extraordinary dream which was later related by family and friends.

She had been saying prayers at her home with a small group of friends for several hours. After they left her home, she was so moved by the prayers that she went into the living room, meditated quietly and then fell asleep.

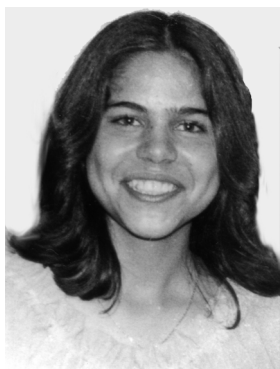
In her dream she saw Bahá'u'lláh entering the room. The Blessed Beauty [Bahá'u'lláh] went out into an adjoining chamber and brought out a box containing a beautiful red cape. He unwrapped it in front of her, saying, "This is the cape of martyrdom in my path. Do you accept it?" Mona was speechless with happiness. Finally, she said, "Whatever pleases you."

Bahá'u'lláh put the cape back in the box and returned to the adjoining room bringing back with Him a second box, containing a black cape, which he unwrapped and said, "This black cape symbolizes sorrow in my path. Do you accept it?" Mona replied, "How beautiful are the tears shed in Thy path."

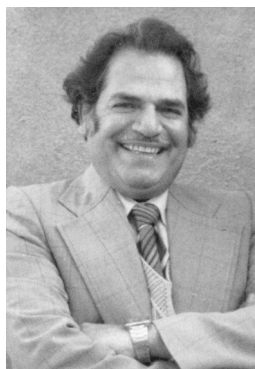
He put the cape back in the box and again returned to the other room, emerging with yet a third box containing an elaborately-beaded blue cape of the same design as the others. Without a word of hesitation, He placed the cape around her shoulders, and said, "This is the cape of service."

Then He seated Himself in the chair and said to Mona: "Come and take a picture with Me!" Mona was breathless with astonishment at the bounties being showered on her and could hardly walk. She looked up and saw a man sitting behind an old-fashioned camera covered by a cloth. Bahá'u'lláh repeated his instruction, but Mona could not move.

Then Bahá'u'lláh took her arm, saying [to a photographer], "Mehdi, take our picture." And he took a picture of them together. The flash of the camera wakened Mona abruptly and she pleaded tearfully to be able to finish her dream, and then fell asleep again. At this time Bahá'u'lláh had left the room. Only the photographer, Mehdi, remained, carrying the tripod and camera on his shoulder as if to leave. Mehdi turned around and asked Mona to convey his love to his children. But Mona could not tell which "Mehdi" he was, since there were many people by that name in the long history of the Bahá'í Faith and even in her own community. But still he looked familiar to her. [At this point] Mehdi noticed that Mona did not recognize him. As he was leaving the room he turned to Mona and said, "I am Mehdi Anvari." Mona instantly recognized him as one of the Bahá'ís of Shíráz who had been recently martyred.¹⁰⁴



Mona Mahmud-Nizhad



Yad'u'llah Mahmud-Nizhad

Mona was among ten women from the city of Shíráz who were hanged on the same day. Among them was another young lady named Zarrin. She was distinguished not only spiritually but also intellectually. She had earned many honors, such as graduating as the valedictorian of her high school. She had committed to memory an entire volume of Bahá'u'lláh's works. Her knowledge and devotion astonished the Muslim religious leaders, who tried to force her to deny her Faith. In spite of her distinctions, she felt unworthy of God. "For two years Zarrin was troubled by her failure to serve the Cause by the standards she had set for herself. Night after night she would pray and weep until finally she had a dream, which she described in this way:"

I dreamed that Bahá'u'lláh...came to the blessed house of the Báb [in Shíráz], and all the friends...were coming to visit. I also went, but I had not the courage to enter. I stood at the door of the house of the Báb. I saw Bahá'u'lláh and the friends approaching Him one by one and then leaving. Then there was no one else, and I was still standing at the door. I saw that Bahá'u'lláh stood up and began to mount the stairs to the room of the Báb. In my heart I said, "O my God! Woe is me! Even now there was an opportunity to meet Him, but I was unworthy." Suddenly Bahá'u'lláh turned His beautiful face and said, "Come in." I entered and attained His Presence. He embraced me; He laid my head on his blessed chest; then He held my head and asked, "Why are

you so upset? *You will finally achieve that which you desire.*”¹⁰⁵

Shortly before her death, Zarrin had also this vision:

Believe me—with my own eyes I beheld the Abhá Kingdom,[✧] and there the nearby angels were sprinkling flowers on those bodies so that this area of the celestial garden became the envy of Paradise. The divine musicians were playing the heavenly harps, and the souls of the martyrs sang out in glorious harmony. The messenger-angel of the Invisible World proclaimed, “By My beauty! to tinge thy hair with thy blood is greater in My sight than the creation of the universe and the light of both worlds...”^{★106}

This dream was published in a Bahá’í magazine, *Deepen*.

One of the young Bahá’ís of the city of Kirmán [in Iran] had just started his mandatory military service in his town when one day he was approached by one of the mullás [Muslim religious leaders] who are resident at military garrisons and provide spiritual guidance to the soldiers. This mullá was referred to as “Haji” and when he found out that this young man was a Bahá’í, he approached him and instructed him to publicly announce at next morning’s

✧ Literally, *the Most Glorious Kingdom*. It refers to paradise or the heavenly kingdom.

★ The quotation comes from *The Hidden Words of Bahá’u’lláh*.

prayer assembly that he is a Bahá'í, so that everyone would know. The young Bahá'í obeyed and agreed to comply with this instruction. So the next morning when all the soldiers assembled to pray and to receive the day's instructions, the young Bahá'í went in front of the crowd and announced that he had been instructed by Haji to tell everyone that he is a Bahá'í in case anyone would wish not to associate with him.

When he returned back to his duties, the Haji approached him again and with great anger said, "I told you only to say that you are a Bahá'í. I didn't ask you to give a lecture and tell them why...and now you have to be punished." So the Haji instructed the other men to throw the young Bahá'í into a toilet room and keep him locked there until further instructions.

So they locked him in a washroom and, except for giving him a little food and water every day, they kept him locked up. Almost two weeks of his detention had passed when one night this young Bahá'í soldier had a dream of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. In the dream 'Abdu'l-Bahá addressed him with these words: "You have passed your test very well."

The next morning, some soldiers opened the washroom door and in great hurry took him to meet the Haji. When they entered the room, the Haji seemed very shaken and upset. With a trembling voice he said, "The reason I released you from detention is that last night I had a very vivid dream in which a turbaned

siyyid (holy man) addressed me and said, ‘Why have you imprisoned my son? You have only three days to release him and ask for his forgiveness.’ So I am releasing you,” Haji said, “and I am begging for your forgiveness, and I will not go until you have forgiven me.” The young Bahá’í soldier forgave him.

Exactly three days later the Haji died. Just before he died, he told the story to his wife and children and said to them, “Follow the way and example of this youth the rest of your lives...”¹⁰⁷

In recent years, I have noticed that most of the people who investigate the Bahá’í Faith in our community receive certain clues in their dreams. Let me quote the latest one. Recently I gave several books and a video to a lady who expressed an interest in learning about Bahá’u’lláh. She said she loved God and had constantly prayed since the age of 11. She is a student and quite busy, yet she managed to read several pages every day from one of the books and to pray for guidance. A few weeks after starting her search, she related this dream:

I found a treasure chest. When I opened it, I saw a scroll, partly opened. The scroll contained material, which I recognized to be from the writings of Bahá’u’lláh. I tried to read it, but could not. Suddenly someone from behind—whom I did not see—tapped on my shoulder and said, ‘In due time you will understand.’

Over the years I have been blessed by a number of wonderful dreams. On the basis of these dreams and a few others by my friends and family members, I am convinced Bahá'u'lláh knows our most secret thoughts.

Let me cite a dream I had recently. Bahá'u'lláh has revealed a prayer for those who face difficulties. Just before going to bed, I read that prayer for a relative who qualified for the purpose for which this prayer was revealed. That same night I saw 'Abdu'l-Bahá in front of a small audience, speaking and showing a few small posters. When He finished His talk, I went toward Him and saw two posters on the table. I said, "You did not show us these posters." He then picked the one on the top and said something like, "This contains the destiny of the world." As He spoke, His face glowed with such love, joy, and radiance that profoundly affected my soul. This feeling continued for a while after I woke up.

Somehow in my mind I connected this dream with the request I had made to God. The obvious link was the timing. I had the dream the same night I read the special prayer and asked Bahá'u'lláh to intervene.

Is there a link between these two posters and what happened? It is extremely difficult to know; dreams are intentionally made symbolic. Here is a possibility. The two posters may symbolize human destiny. One poster may portray that which is already predetermined, such as the advent of great Redeemers at specific times in history; this is

unchangeable. The other poster may symbolize that which is not predetermined, such as how we respond to God's call to bring peace and prosperity to this planet. Granting of my request may have been of this kind. It is also possible that the incident was not predetermined and would have taken place as it did. I was simply given a clue in advance of the outcome. This dream by itself does not prove anything, but when we realize that 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Bahá'u'lláh, and the Báb have appeared thousands of times to thousands of people, then we must acknowledge that they are not ordinary beings, but endowed with superhuman powers.

I believe early Christians who gave their lives for Jesus were also inspired and sustained by dreams and visions. Even today we have evidence of Jesus' divine power to appear in people's dreams and visions. Over the course of centuries, He has communicated with millions of Christians; a volume of such dreams has been published. I have quoted two dreams about the "thief-like" coming of Jesus dreamt by Christians. One of them is cited in *I Shall Come Again*, the other in *Seek and Ye Shall Find*. Both of these dreams confirm the Bahá'í interpretation that, to those who are asleep, Jesus in His Second Advent has remained as invisible as a thief in the dark of the night, but to those who are awake and aware, with "eyes" to see, He has shone and will continue to shine as brightly as the sun with supreme glory and power.

There also is a video by Reinee Pasarow, in which she presents the astonishing near-death visions that guided her to Bahá'u'lláh. You will find her story extremely credible. I have not known anyone who has doubted her. Enclosed is a copy of that video. Please take the time to view it.

Let me point out once again that I do not present the stories of healing miracles and dreams and visions to prove the station of Bahá'u'lláh, but rather to satisfy your curiosity and interest in the supernatural.

Questions and Comments

You profess that the Bahá'í Faith is to be the unifying and all-encompassing religion in this world and yet at the same time we see many paths to the One God. If all the religions listed in your diagram can bring us to God, why then do we need a new religion? Are they not good enough to bring about peace in this world? The Bahá'í Faith cannot be the harmonization of all these religions, for to do so would be to ignore the major tenets of these various religions that are in conflict with each other and make them less than they really are. The Bahá'í Faith then becomes merely another religion claiming that it has the truth.

Response

In the past, God has sent Redeemers to specific geographic areas for specific times and groups of people. At the time of Jesus, America was beyond the reach of Asia; each nation was an “island.” Only now is the world connected as one community. Because of this new capacity, Bahá’u’lláh has come to unify all those “islands” under one divine Kingdom, on earth as it is in heaven:

Verily I say, in this most mighty Revelation, all the Dispensations of the past have attained their highest, their final consummation. Thus counsellcth you your Lord, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise. Praise be to God, the Lord of all worlds.¹⁰⁸

Bahá’u’lláh

All great religions of the past are good and perfect, but they were not designed for this age. What first graders learn is perfect for first graders, but not for twelfth graders. Every religion is “the way, the truth, and the life” designed for a specific age. When that age passes, God sends a new teacher with new instructions adapted to new learners.

When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things.

I Corinthians 13:11

Each of the great Messengers came with a unique name, background, and Scripture, yet they all manifested and were empowered by the same Spirit.

There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit.
I Corinthians 12:4

The fundamentals of all great faiths of God are one. Only when we see them through colored-glasses do we see differences. Much of the conflicts come from personal theological perspectives of previous learners who felt comfortable in their grade. This is exactly how the Jews felt at the time of Jesus.

Jesus accomplished the goal of unity, but within a smaller scope. He attracted diverse groups with various beliefs and unified them. The Jews who became Christians did not renounce the fundamentals of their Scriptures. The same is true with those who become Bahá'ís. A Bahá'í loves the Bible and tries to practice its counsels as much as a Christian does. Virtues never change:

The counsel of the Lord stands forever...
Psalms 33:11

But as time goes on, people forget the everlasting counsels. The new Redeemer reminds them and inspires them to remember and live up to their covenant with God. Jesus confirmed the virtues Moses proclaimed. Bahá'u'lláh has come to promote those same virtues. He has asked us a thousand times and more to live a saintly and sacred life:

Be generous in prosperity, and thankful in adversity. Be worthy of the trust of thy neighbor, and look upon him with a bright and friendly face. Be a treasure to the poor, an admonisher

to the rich, an answerer of the cry of the needy, a preserver of the sanctity of thy pledge. Be fair in thy judgment, and guarded in thy speech. Be unjust to no man, and show all meekness to all men. Be as a lamp unto them that walk in darkness, a joy to the sorrowful, a sea for the thirsty, a haven for the distressed, an upholder and defender of the victim of oppression. Let integrity and uprightness distinguish all thine acts. Be a home for the stranger, a balm to the suffering, a tower of strength for the fugitive. Be eyes to the blind, and a guiding light unto the feet of the erring. Be an ornament to the countenance of truth, a crown to the brow of fidelity, a pillar of the temple of righteousness, a breath of life to the body of mankind, an ensign of the hosts of justice, a luminary above the horizon of virtue, a dew to the soil of the human heart, an ark on the ocean of knowledge, a sun in the heaven of bounty, a gem on the diadem of wisdom, a shining light in the firmament of thy generation, a fruit upon the tree of humility.¹⁰⁹

Bahá'u'lláh

Questions and Comments

Perhaps you don't realize this, but the belief that all religions are unified and point to the same God is a separate religious belief in and of itself that may or may not be true. It is a faith statement.

Response

The belief that all great religions come from God is not merely “a faith statement.” As stated earlier, it is both a biblical and rational principle. The Bible mentions the names of some Messengers like Noah, Abraham, and Moses, but omits others like Krishna, Buddha, and Zoroaster. But does this mean that anyone whose name does not appear in the Bible is false? This is only an assumption theologians have made and people have accepted without questioning. Think of this example. Suppose you write your memoirs. You have four uncles, but for some reason, you write about only three of them. Does this omission prove that the fourth uncle did not exist?

We cannot simply assume that the Bible contains *all* the basic facts of history. As we know, only parts of Jesus’ teachings were recorded and preserved.

God’s justice demands that *all* His children be guided to His presence, that *all* of them have a chance to know Him and to love Him. To show God’s universal love for us, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá quotes this verse from the Gospel:

He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. Christ (Matt. 5:45)

‘Abdu’l-Bahá then interprets the verse:

The meaning of this declaration is that the mercy of God encircles all mankind, that not a single individual is deprived of the mercy of

God, and no soul is denied the resplendent bestowals of God.¹¹⁰

Is God less than the sun, an object of His own creation? Would He reveal His glory to the people of Palestine, but not of Persia? Would He manifest His splendor to residents of Europe, but not to Native Americans?

Another evidence that testifies to the truth of great religions—such as Hinduism, Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, and Islam—is their endurance. God allows broken and abused branches in His garden, but He promises to uproot or burn a tree that He Himself does not plant:

Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be pulled up by the roots.

Christ (Matt. 15:13)

Beware of false prophets...You will know them by their fruits...Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

Christ (Matt. 7:15, 16, 19)

...if this plan or this work [of Jesus] is of men, it will come to nothing; but if it is of God, you cannot overthrow it; lest you even be found to fight against God.

Acts 5:38-39

See also Deuteronomy 18:20

This passage also testifies to the endurance of a religion as an evidence of its divine origin:

For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, and do not return there, but water the earth, and make it bring forth and bud, that it

may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.

Isaiah 55:10-11

The Qur'án confirms the same principle by the same analogy. This statement may be a reference to the words of Jesus:

Have you not seen that God has compared a good word to a good tree? Its roots are firmly fixed, and its branches reach out for heaven. It gives its produce every season by the leave of its Lord. Thus God cites examples that people may understand and remember. And a bad word is like a bad tree. It is uprooted and not allowed to endure.

Qur'án 14:24-26

Consider Hinduism, with more than 700 million followers. Its origin goes back as far as 1500 B.C. Could such a religion have survived without God's blessing? You may say, "But the Hindus worship many Gods." The belief in multiple Gods is obviously a deviation from the divine teachings. Some spiritually enlightened Hindus acknowledge this fact. We can find similar deviations in all religions. Some authorities believe that the Hindu belief in multiple Gods started with the idea that every being, every atom, reflects or manifests the Creator. That idea is similar to David's declaration that "the heaven declares the glory of God" (Psa. 19:1). Since people have a strong imagination, the

Hindus began to stretch this truth beyond its limits, to the point of believing that almost everything is a God. Did not the Jews at some point become idol worshippers? Did they not worship golden calves?

Let us consider another example. You may attribute the prevailing violence in the Middle East to Islam. But can we not find similar examples of violence in the history to Christianity? It is believed that more Christians have been killed by Christians than by any other group. Who were the prime players in the last two world wars? What do these wars say about Christ? Only that some Christians deviated from His teachings.

God does not allow a new religion to take root and prosper without His permission, but He has allowed each of the world's great religions to decline, deteriorate, and be divided into denominations, sects, and cults. Atrocities committed in the name of religion is an evidence of this. Every religion, like a tree, has a life cycle. It starts with a small beginning, like a mustard seed; it continues to grow, and finally it declines. Broken, fallen, and rotten leaves and branches on the ground are part of the plan. This is a universal law that describes all past religions.

Unfortunately, human beings become strongly attached to the ancient tree. Branches keep breaking and falling, but people keep reattaching them to the tree. According to *Christianity Today*, the one church of Christ has been divided into 25,000

denominations, sects, and cults. Do you believe they all represent the true teachings of Jesus?

In almost every page of the Qur'án, God is exalted and glorified. There is a book called *God's 99 Names*. The title comes from the 99 names in the Qur'án that glorify God. Every verse of the Qur'án is attributed to the one Creator of the universe. Would God allow such a Faith to prosper in His name, without His permission? Would He allow Muhammad to establish, without His blessings, one of the greatest civilizations the world has ever known? Would He allow a false prophet plant a tree in His name—a tree that would endure for more than a thousand years? Would He allow an impostor to deceive thousands of millions of people by the power of God's name? If we truly believe in the Bible, this is absolutely impossible.

What did Muhammad say about Jesus? According to 'Abdu'l-Bahá, the Qur'án states that:

...Christ was the Word of God, that He was the Spirit of God, that Jesus Christ came into this world through the quickening breaths of the Holy Spirit and that Mary, His mother, was holy and sanctified. In the Qur'án a whole chapter is devoted to the story of Jesus.¹¹¹

Why, then, do most Christians deny the truth of all great faiths except Judaism? Because of tradition. People, for the most part, do not investigate the truth for themselves. They accept whatever their parents and pastors teach them. Their loyalty to family

and religious tradition is a far more powerful force than their thirst for truth.

To prevent people from thinking and questioning, the theologians of all religions repeatedly emphasize what people already believe and would like to hear, and ignore what fails to fit their theories or what makes people wonder. For instance, I have never seen the scriptural references about endurance—such as, Matthew 15:13; 7:19, and Isaiah 55:10-11—applied to the great religions of the world. Nor have I seen them applied to Christian faith. Those verses are simply ignored in favor of the ones that imply exclusiveness and superiority. Any thoughtful person who hears about endurance as evidence of the truth of Christianity may say, “What about Islam, or Hinduism, or Buddhism?” If people raised that question, what answer would theologians give? What answer would *you* give?

Emphasis on the superiority of one’s own faith is practiced in virtually all past religions. This may explain why almost every person born into a Christian culture remains a Christian, every person born into a Jewish culture remains Jewish, every person born into a Muslim culture remains a Muslim. People simply imitate their beliefs, just as they imitate their mother tongue and local accent.

That is why investigation of truth with an open mind and a humble heart is the key to true knowledge and the very heart of heaven.

Questions and Comments

It is also possible that there may be an even newer revelation or manifestation from God that is yet to come that will surpass the Bahá'í Faith, if I understand your worldview correctly. It would be rather egotistical to think that the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh were the last pointers to God, if I were a Bahá'í. For, if there have been many manifestations of God throughout the ages, then it stands to reason that there will continue to be more to come.

Response

You are perfectly correct. Bahá'ís believe that God will continue to send new Manifestations or Messengers to humanity. The process of progressive revelation of knowledge and truth will never end. Apparently I did not make this point clear enough in the book. The following passage from the Báb clarifies this point:

Indeed no religion shall We ever inaugurate unless it be renewed in the days to come. This is a promise We solemnly have made. Verily We are supreme over all things...¹¹²

Questions and Comments

[In *Heaven's Most Glorious Gift*] you seem to be implying that Christianity is a cult, and that the Bahá'í Faith is the true religion. How can you then

claim that the Bahá'í Faith is in agreement with the truth of Christianity? If you go to a Christian under the guise of supporting the tenets of the Christian faith and yet really believe that Christianity is wrong, you are being duplicitous and dishonest in your dealing with Christians. This is certainly not something that the Báb or Bahá'u'lláh would condone, is it? You cannot say that the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh are in agreement or are the fulfillment of the Christian faith but then really believe that Christianity is a false religion, for then you make the two founders of the Bahá'í Faith to be liars and the fulfillment of a lie.

Response

In the section entitled “*What Is the Difference Between Religion and Cult?*” I did my best to show that there is a clear and conclusive difference between what great Messengers of the past have taught and what their followers practice in their name. In no way did I imply that Christianity, as taught by Jesus Christ, is a cult. To imply that message in any way is sheer blasphemy. As indicated in that section, my intentions in introducing the topic were as follow:

- To show that the Bahá'í Faith is not a cult.
- To demonstrate what happens to the pure teachings of a religion, such as Christianity, as time goes on.

- To show that every religion is designed for a specific span of time; when a religion's span or age ends, then some of its *social* teachings, such as rules of marriage and divorce, become outdated, irrelevant, and impractical.
- And to indicate why we need a *new* Revelation from God to restore religion's lost purity and relevance.

Take the first point. As you may know, some Christian leaders have accused the Bahá'í Faith of being a cult. They have attributed to the Bahá'í Faith what you have assumed I have attributed to Christianity, which I did not.

If you were falsely accused of something, would you not defend yourself? Would you not present every bit of evidence to absolve yourself of the accusation? That is exactly what I did. I compared Christianity and the Bahá'í Faith *as they are practiced today*. In each of the categories listed, I showed that *in this age* the Christian lifestyle is closer to cultish practices than the Bahá'í lifestyle. My point in *Heaven's Most Glorious Gift* was to demonstrate that if the word "cult" describes the Bahá'í Faith, it describes today's Christian churches even more closely. What is unfair about this comparison? Would you not do the same if I accused your church or your religion of being a cult?

My intention was not to show that Christianity is a cult but rather demonstrate the fulfillment of biblical prophecies concerning the decline of the church in the last days. The evidence of the decline

is widespread apathy, conformity to tradition, and a lack of genuine interest in critical thinking and independent investigation of truth. Let us examine some of these prophecies. To whom is this prophecy directed?

People will be...always learning but never able to acknowledge the truth...

II Timothy 3:2-7

When has there been so much learning as today? When have there been so many universities and seminary schools? When have there been so many books about the Second Advent? If one part of the prophecy (people will be always learning) is true, cannot the other part (but never able to acknowledge the truth) be true also?

To whom is this prophecy directed?

...their religion is but the precept of men,
learnt by rote.

Isaiah 29:13

The prophecy is not directed at atheists and agnostics; it is directed at religious people! But who are “*they*”? Are they not the ones who go to churches, synagogues, and mosques? Can a denomination be exempt from these and other similar prophecies? Can any evangelist, bishop, or scholar claim an exception? Is not the fact that no one claims to be the object of these prophecies in itself an evidence of their fulfillment? How does a person learn “by rote”? Simply by imitating and repeating as children learn the alphabet. Rote learning does not require rational thinking. The teacher utters a sentence,

and children repeat it. Is not this a perfect description of the way most people learn and accept the dogmas and beliefs of their church, synagogue, or mosque? Is it not the way they learn to look down on other belief systems? Is it not the way they learn that they must accept their religion by faith rather than by reason? Is it not the way they learn not to investigate other religions? Note what a Muslim scholar says about the way Muslims learn and understand their faith:

Generally, Muslims are taught not to use their minds in religious matters...Purportedly, the use of the mind in religious matters would lead us astray. If the mind may not be used in religious matters, why may it be used in other matters?...On the contrary, the teachings of the Qur'án give the mind a noble place. God deems human beings who do not use their minds worse than animals! (Qur'án 7:179). God bars those who do not use their minds from the fold of the faithful (Qur'án 10:100).¹¹³

To whom is this prophecy addressed?

For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. ***They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths.***

II Timothy 4:3-4

Who are *they*? Does not *they* refer to Christians? A person must first be on the true path to be able to turn away from it.

Consider also this prophecy from Jesus:

At that time many will turn away from the faith... Christ (Matt. 24:10)

What faith do people turn away from? Is it not faith in God and the Word of God? Are Christians excluded? Does not the statement refer also to religious leaders? What happens when people lose their faith? Do they remain receptive to the truth? Can you find a religious leader who will say, “Yes, this prophecy refers to me”? Then to whom does it refer? Are religious leaders humble enough to say, “We are in the same position as were the Pharisees at the time of Jesus”?

Why was Jesus rejected? Was it not because people had lost their faith? Note how Jesus addressed the people of His time. One word refers to a lack of faith, the other to a lack of character or integrity:

O *faithless* and *perverse* generation, how long shall I be with you and bear with you?

Luke 9:41

If the lack of faith led to the denial of Jesus in His First Advent, could not the same condition—lack of faith—lead to the same consequence: denial of Jesus in His Second Advent?

What is the spiritual state of our time, and how can it be measured? Our moral values are the best indicators of our faith and thermometers of our soul. Hundreds of statistics can be given about the moral decline of our age. But let me limit myself by citing only a clue about the moral state of the

religious leaders of our time, who must serve as models of virtues for others. As you may know, several books—such as *Lead Us Not Into Temptations*—have been published, and several TV documentaries have been aired concerning the sexual involvement of priests with children, and the hundreds of millions of dollars the church has paid to settle lawsuits. According to an expert interviewed on 20/20, at any given time, 50 percent of American priests are sexually active. What about Protestant pastors? According to a study quoted in *Focus on the Family*, a highly respected Christian magazine, 37 percent of pastors “confess to having been involved in inappropriate sexual behavior with someone in the church.”¹¹⁴ Another study indicates that 40 percent of pastors admit involvement in pornography.¹¹⁵ Christian psychologist, Dr. James Dobson made this statement on a Christian broadcasting station, “Up to 90 percent of pastors are struggling with sexual frustrations and temptations.”

Let us be a little more humble, let us not start with age-old assumptions that may be untrue. Let us keep our hearts soft, and our minds open:

Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion.

Hebrews 3:15

Why has the world not seen this bright and beautiful Light of God? Why has it ignored such a splendid revelation of God’s glory? Here, Bahá’u’lláh singles out lack of “independent investigation of truth” as the cause:

For the people are wandering in the paths of *delusion*, bereft of discernment *to see God with their own eyes, or hear His Melody with their own ears*...Thus have their *superstitions* become veils between them and their own hearts and kept them from the path of God, the Exalted, the Great.¹¹⁶ Bahá'u'lláh

What prevented the people of Israel from recognizing Jesus? Prevailing superstitions, false assumptions, and delusions. As Bahá'u'lláh declares, the same holds true today.

My second reason for introducing the topic of cults was to show that certain social teachings of Christianity are outdated, as were some of the social teachings of Moses at the time of the First Advent. Take the law of a tooth for a tooth and an eye for an eye. Did not Jesus abrogate that law? Why did He abrogate it? Because the times had changed. The same holds true today. When a social teaching or a law becomes outdated or irrelevant, God sends a new one to replace it. Please think of this one example: The New Testament does not forbid slavery. It indicates that it is okay to have a slave, as long as you treat him or her kindly. Is that practical today?

When humanity is ready to take a step forward, God sends new teachings to help us make the move. At the time of Jesus, the world was not ready to abandon slavery; at the time of Bahá'u'lláh, it was. Tolerating slavery does not make Christianity

a cult. It reflects the progressive nature of humanity and God's wisdom in offering only the teachings that our souls and societies can "bear." This is why Jesus said:

I have much more to say to you, ***more than you can now bear***. But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. ***He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears***, and he will tell you what is yet to come. John 16:12-13

Bahá'u'lláh declares Himself the Spirit of Truth, prophesied by Jesus:

Verily, He Who is the Spirit of Truth is come to guide you unto all truth. ***He speaketh not as prompted by His own self, but as bidden by Him Who is the All-Knowing, the All-Wise.***¹¹⁷

In seminary schools, professors of theology teach that "the Spirit of Truth" does not point to a person who comes in human form. They say it refers to a Spirit—the Holy Spirit. Is their assumption valid? "Let us reason together, declares the Lord" (Isaiah 1:18). How can the Holy Spirit communicate with us? How can it teach us truths so lofty that even Jesus did not teach them? How can it tell us "what is yet to come"? Please note that Jesus refers to the Spirit of Truth as an individual who ***comes***. He says, "when He the Spirit of Truth is come." The Holy Spirit is always present. It does not come and go. Jesus said, "I am always with you to the end of age" (Matt.

28:20). Was not the Holy Spirit always present in Jesus? And was not Jesus always present in the lives of His true believers?

Further, we have about 2,000 years of Christian history. Can you name even one person who qualifies for the honor of teaching us truths that even Jesus did not teach? Can you name one person who has guided us “into all truth”? Can you name one person who has told us “what is yet to come”? Bahá’u’lláh has fulfilled all these requirements. He wrote a hundred volumes. He revealed truths we need for the next thousand years and more. He predicted the downfall of the kings and rulers of the earth with perfect accuracy.

Christian authors and teachers try to explain or clarify only the truths Jesus taught. What would happen if one of them added something, if he went beyond what Christ proclaimed? Will he not instantly lose his credibility?

Consider this example: Bahá’u’lláh declares a truth which, as your letter testifies, you are unable to bear. That truth is the fundamental oneness and divine origin of all great religions. Today most Christians are still struggling with that truth.

To recognize the truth of this one teaching of Bahá’u’lláh, consider this passage from the Bible: “God does not show favoritism” (Acts 10:34). How can God send only one religion to only one geographical part of the planet, and not show favoritism? How would you feel if your parents taught your brothers and sisters about Jesus, but

neglected you? Would that not be favoritism? When we sacrifice reason at the altar of tradition and theology, then religion becomes myth and superstition. It violates the clear principles of justice and truth. It moves the believer toward cultish practices and beliefs. That is what has happened to all past religions. This is what the Gospels predicted would happen to the teachings of Jesus. And that is why Bahá'u'lláh has come: to bring us into a new and beautiful garden laden with fruits of reason, justice, love, and truth.

Consider this statement from Jesus:

For the Son of man came to seek and save
what was lost. Luke 19:10

What was lost, and what did Jesus restore? Faith in God and the practice of what that faith requires. This is why He called the people of His time “a faithless and perverse generation” (Luke 9:41). Jesus has come again, and for the same reason He came 2,000 years ago, but with a new name. He has come to bring us the blessings of an abundant life, to crown our days and destiny with joy and freedom. As Jesus gave His life to redeem us, so did the Báb, and so did Bahá'u'lláh sacrifice all His worldly comforts. They accepted a life of suffering, imprisonment, and exile:

The Ancient Beauty [Bahá'u'lláh] hath consented to be bound with chains that mankind may be released from its bondage, and hath accepted to be made a prisoner within this most mighty Stronghold ['Akká prison] that the

whole world may attain unto true liberty. He hath drained to its dregs the cup of sorrow, that all the peoples of the earth may attain unto abiding joy, and be filled with gladness. This is of the mercy of your Lord, the Compassionate, the Most Merciful. We have accepted to be abased, O believers in the Unity of God, that ye may be exalted, and have suffered manifold afflictions, that ye might prosper and flourish.¹¹⁸

Bahá'u'lláh

Bahá'u'lláh sacrificed His earthly life to give heavenly life to the world and to unify its contending nations and religions under one Kingdom, the Kingdom of God:

As My tribulations multiplied, so did My love for God and for His Cause increase, in such wise that all that befell Me from the hosts of the wayward was powerless to deter Me from My purpose. Should they hide Me away in the depths of the earth, yet would they find Me riding aloft on the clouds, and calling out unto God, the Lord of strength and of might. I have offered Myself up in the way of God, and I yearn after tribulations in My love for Him, and for the sake of His good-pleasure. Unto this bear witness the woes which now afflict Me, the like of which no other man hath suffered. Every single hair of Mine head calleth out that which the Burning Bush uttered on Sinai, and each vein of My body invoketh God and saith: "O would I had been severed in Thy path, so that the world might be quickened, and all

its peoples be united!” Thus hath it been decreed by Him Who is the All-Knowing, the All-Informed.¹¹⁹ Bahá'u'lláh

Questions and Comments

You are faced with either accepting that Christianity is true and that the Bahá'í Faith is false or visa versa. They cannot both be true or the one be a fulfillment of the other, for their foundational worldviews are at odds with each other. You are faced with a decision to make; either profess that the Bahá'í Faith is true and stop pointing to Christianity as a proof-text for Bahá'í, or follow Jesus and renounce the Bahá'í Faith as false. To continue to point to the Bible as proof of the truth of your Faith is to be dishonest.

Response

You are giving me two choices. Why can I not believe in both Christ and Bahá'u'lláh? Could not a Jew present you with a similar question? Could he not say, “Either profess that Christianity is true and stop using Judaism as a proof-test for it, or follow Moses and renounce Christianity as false”? And could he not add, as you did, “To continue to point to Hebrew Scriptures as proof of the truth of Christianity is to be dishonest”? How would you respond? Would you not say, “All Scripture is by inspiration” (II Timothy 3:16)? Would you not point out that God gave the prophecies in the Hebrew Scriptures to help the Jews recognize

His promised Messiah? Would you not say, “God would not allow those 300 prophecies to be fulfilled by Jesus, if He were a liar”? Would you not conclude that it would be utterly unjust to allow a deceiver to fulfill God’s prophecies?

Let me ask you this: How could a just Creator punish people for accepting someone who fulfills His prophecies? The Báb and Bahá’u’lláh have fulfilled some 1,800 prophecies from the Bible alone. Asking me to stop using the fulfillment of biblical prophecies as an evidence of the Bahá’í Faith is like denying the commandment and the guidance of the Bible itself:

...for prophecy never came by the will of man,
but holy men of God spoke as they were
moved by the Holy Spirit. II Peter 1:21

Did not Christ use prophecies to prove his own position?

Then he [Jesus] began with Moses and all the prophets, and explained to them [the Jews] the passages which referred to himself in every part of the scriptures. Luke 24:27

These are the Scriptures that testify about me,
yet you refuse to come to me to have life.

Christ (John 5:39-40)

See also Acts 28:23

Surprisingly, in your letter you referred me to these verses:

You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life.

These are the Scriptures that testify about me,
yet you refuse to come to me to have life.

John 5:39-40

As you can see, once again Jesus declares Hebrew prophecies an evidence of His divine station.

Why did the Jews deny Jesus? Because they lacked faith in what they professed to be the Word of God:

Your accuser is Moses, on whom your hopes are set. If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me. But since you do not believe what he wrote, how are you going to believe what I say?

Christ (John 5:45-47)

Have not Christian scholars written thousands of volumes to show that Jesus Christ fulfilled the prophecies of Hebrew Scriptures? Then why do you object to my using biblical prophecies as an evidence of the Bahá'í Faith?

Does not our Creator invite us to reason?

“Come now, let us reason together,” says the Lord.

Isaiah 1:18

Test all things; hold fast what is good.

I Thessalonians 5:21

...do not despise prophetic utterances, but bring them all to the test... I Thessalonians 5:20-21

Is not disregarding biblical passages that the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh have fulfilled the same as despising those passages? Did God give us the gift of reason for no reason?

Neglect not the gift that is in thee.

I Timothy 4:14

You have had a copy of *I Shall Come Again* for more than a year. In your letter you made no mention of that book. Have you read it to discover the astonishing array of biblical prophecies the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh have fulfilled? If not, why not? Christians have been praying for the Second Coming of Christ for 2,000 years. Now that He is come with manifest proofs, why are you hesitant to investigate His claim? Your main reason is probably this: Bahá'u'lláh has not fulfilled your expectations. He has not fulfilled the prophecies *the way you interpret them*. Please respond to the following question. Please indicate for what purpose was the following verse given? Perhaps you wish it did not exist. Please look at it; it glows as clearly and brightly as the sun:

Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time; wait till the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of men's hearts.

I Corinthians 4:5

Because of its prime significance, let us use another translation of the same verse:

So do not make any hasty or premature judgments before the time when the Lord comes [again], for He will both bring to light the secret things that are (now hidden) in darkness, and disclose and expose the (secret) aims (motives

and purposes) of hearts. Then every man will receive his (due) commendation from God.

I Corinthians 4:5 (The Amplified Bible)

Why was the preceding commandment given? And to whom is the following guidance directed?

...no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation.

II Peter 1:20

Is not your interpretation or that of any other Christian a private, personal interpretation? Is not every human being fallible? Then what makes you believe that your interpretation is accurate? Why do you not obey the command of the Scripture that you should let the Lord bring to light what is hidden in darkness? Bahá'u'lláh is the Lord, the One who knows all mysteries.

Do not the conflicting interpretations indicate that Christian leaders and interpreters of the Word of God lack wisdom to understand the true meaning of prophecies? If prophecies are not "hidden in darkness," then what is? Were they not also hidden in darkness at the time of the First Advent?

Do you believe in all the Bible, or only in the verses that support your theology?

Much of the Bible was destined to remain closed (Dan. 12:9). Bahá'u'lláh has brought to light what was hidden in darkness. He has opened the Book:

Bahá'u'lláh spread the Cause of Christ and opened the book of the Christians and Jews.¹²⁰

‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Consider the past. Did not all Jewish leaders at the time of Jesus misunderstand the prophecies? What difference is there between the Christians of today and the Jews of the time of Jesus? What biblical evidence proclaims them to be infallible in interpreting the Word of God? To whom do the preceding commands apply? Who can fairly claim to be exempt from them?

Do you expect Christ in His Second Advent to conform to *your* interpretation, when you are told not to make any premature judgment, but to wait for the appointed time of the Lord? If you know the meaning of the Scripture, then why should Jesus come?

Everything that happens now has happened before. Every day, every year, every century, every millenium teaches us lessons. We can grow only by learning these lessons, just as we can grow individually from our personal experiences. Consider what a Jewish woman said in the first century, how Jesus responded, and how relevant His response is to this century:

The woman said to Him, "I know that Messiah is coming" (who is called Christ). "When He comes, He will tell us all things." Jesus said to her, "I who speak to you am He."

John 4:25-26

How relevant is this brief exchange of ideas to our time! What a wonderful lesson it teaches us! The task of explaining everything is given exclusively to the One sent by God, whether He is

called the Anointed One (Christ) or the Glory of God (Bahá'u'lláh). That is one of the reasons He comes. He comes to explain to us what everything means. He does not come to hear *our* explanations, illusions, and false assumptions. How obvious is this lesson! How evident is this truth! How clear is this principle! Why do so many have difficulty learning and accepting this simple lesson?

Consider the authority with which Bahá'u'lláh addresses religious leaders, who act as if they possess the truth; as if the One who comes must conform to *their* standards of interpretation:

Say: O leaders of religion! Weigh not the Book of God with such standards and sciences as are current amongst you, for the Book itself is the unerring balance established amongst men. In this most perfect Balance whatsoever the peoples and kindreds of the earth possess must be weighed, while the measure of its weight should be tested according to its own standard, did ye but know it.¹²¹

Say: O leaders of religion!...The eye of My loving-kindness weepeth sore over you, inasmuch as ye have failed to recognize the One upon Whom ye have been calling in the daytime and in the night season, at even and at morn.¹²²

O ye leaders of religion! Who is the man amongst you that can rival Me in vision or insight? Where is he to be found that dareth to claim to be My equal in utterance or wisdom? No, by My Lord, the All-Merciful! All on the

earth shall pass away; and this is the face of your Lord, the Almighty, the Well-Beloved.

We have decreed, O people, that the highest and last end of all learning be the recognition of Him Who is the Object of all knowledge; and yet, behold how ye have allowed your learning to shut you out, as by a veil, from Him Who is the Dayspring of this Light, through Whom every hidden thing hath been revealed. Could ye but discover the source whence the splendor of this utterance is diffused, ye would cast away the peoples of the world and all that they possess, and would draw nigh unto this most blessed Seat of glory.¹²³

Bahá'u'lláh's declaration is in perfect harmony with the words of the Gospel. When Jesus reinterpreted the purpose of the Sabbath, the Jews objected. How did Jesus respond? He simply relied on His authority as the Lord:

Then he said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath."

Mark 2:27-28

Jesus owned the Sabbath. He was the sovereign authority, the One who revealed that law. It was all His, and He could do with it as He pleased. No Pharisee, no scribe had any right to object. Bahá'u'lláh manifests the same Spirit that appeared in Jesus. He is the Lord of the Scriptures. He owns them. He is the One who revealed them. He can interpret His Word any way He pleases.

If you were a Jew at the time of Jesus, and heard Him proclaim that He was the Lord of the Sabbath, what would you say? Please take a moment and write your response. Writing will make you more objective.

Further, how can any theologian assume that he is right, when there are several thousand Christian denominations in the world that disagree even about the most fundamental truths of the Gospel? Please ponder the following quotation from a devoted Christian scholar (Dr. Robert Lightner, Th.D.), who has written a book in an attempt to bring peace among warring factions or schools of prophecy:

Through the years, differing methods of biblical interpretation have led to various explanations of the Bible's prophetic passages. And Christians who may agree on all the essential doctrines of the faith have been locked in verse-by-verse combat over who is right and who is wrong in the great eschatological debate...You have a right to know why men of God who agree on all the essential fundamentals of the faith differ so widely and battle so tenaciously over prophecy.¹²⁴

Why do theologians differ? Dr. Lightner identifies and explains the following reasons: applying different methods of interpretation, traditionalism, multiple and diverse understanding of nonprophetic truths, current world events such as the birth of Israel, stubbornness or "bullheadedness," prejudice, ignorance, selfishness, spiritual pride, escapist mentality (the desire to escape the pains and sufferings of the great tribulation), martyr complex

(the desire or lack of desire to suffer for Jesus), overstatements and misrepresentations, honest exegetical problems, misinterpreting the views of other scholars, misstating the views of other scholars.¹²⁵

Ponder what Jesus said to the literal-minded Pharisees who objected to His divine interpretation and assertion that *John the Baptist was the return of Elijah*:

And if you are willing to receive it, he [John the Baptist] is Elijah who is [prophesied] to come. He who has ears to hear, let him hear! But to what shall I liken this generation? They are like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling to their companions, and saying: "We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we mourned to you, and you did not lament."
Christ (Matt. 11:14-17)

Do you not see a parallel between Jesus' description of literal-minded Pharisees of yesterday and Dr. Lightner's description of Christian interpreters of today? Do they not act today like children as they did in the days of Jesus? Does not each school of prophecy play and dance to a different tune?

If you were living at the time of Jesus and heard Him say that John the Baptist was the return of Elijah, would you not object? Would you not say, "Elijah must come from heaven," as you say, "Christ must come from heaven"? What evidence did Jesus present to prove His statement that John the Baptist was the second coming of Elijah, except His own divine authority? Once again, the

literal-minded Pharisees could have denied Jesus for this reason alone. For, according to Hebrew Scriptures, Elijah went to heaven. If He went to heaven physically, he must have come down from heaven physically. As you know, that did not happen. Once again, we can see why we are told, “the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.” How can we see the fulfillment of Hebrew Scriptures about the second coming of Elijah before Christ? Through spiritual eyes. For as St. Paul said, *the Word of God must be spiritually discerned*.

Remember the past; human nature does not change. How was St. Paul, the great teacher, treated?

Yet Saul grew more and more powerful and baffled the Jews living in Damascus by proving that Jesus is the Christ...He talked and debated with the Grecian Jews, but they tried to kill him.

Acts 9:22, 29

Observe how history repeats itself. Over 20,000 followers of the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh willingly offered their lives as a testimony to their Lord at the hands of the same kind of people who killed Jesus' disciples.

The list Dr. Lightner offers reminds us of a truth everyone knows and experiences almost every day: Human beings are fallible and subject to every weakness imaginable. Please respond to these questions:

- If biblical interpreters, who have been raised in the same faith, suffer from so many handicaps *in relation to the Bible*, a Book they have read

all their lives, can they claim freedom from those same handicaps when they face God's interpretation of His own Word in a new Book they have never read?

- If biblical interpreters suffer from prejudice, stubbornness, ignorance, and all the other weaknesses in relation to scholars educated in their own faith, can they be free from those same weaknesses when they encounter an interpretation offered by their new Redeemer?

Did not the Pharisees suffer from the same weaknesses? What makes the people of this age different? Should not the realization of this truth make every interpreter of prophecy as humble as a child? This is the kind of humility and innocence we need to become worthy of God and His Kingdom:

Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these. Christ (Matt. 19:14)

Humility is the key to the Kingdom of Heaven; without it, every door remains closed:

Show me your ways, O Lord, teach me your paths; guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Savior, and my hope is in you all day long...*He guides the humble* in what is right and teaches them his way.

Psalms 25:4-5, 9

Deliver me, O Lord, I beseech thee...The Lord preserves the simple-hearted; *I was brought low and he saved me.*

Psalms 116:4, 6

Seek the Lord, all you humble of the land, you who do what he commands. Seek righteousness, *seek humility; perhaps you will be sheltered on the day of the Lord's anger.* Zephaniah 2:3

...the Lord has anointed me *to preach good news to the poor* [the meek]. Isaiah 61:1

See also Luke 4:18

Can you be humble if you start with the assumption that you are right, and that no evidence can convince you to change your position? Only by being humble can we find God:

*Humble thyself before Me, that I may graciously visit thee.*¹²⁶ Bahá'u'lláh

Humility is the wing that lifts hearts to heaven. Without it, we remain wrapped in utter darkness.

Every soul that walketh *humbly* with its God, in this Day, and cleaveth unto Him, shall find itself invested with the honor and glory of all goodly names and stations.¹²⁷ Bahá'u'lláh

O thou dear one! Impoverish thyself, that thou mayest enter the high court of riches; and *humble* thy body, that thou mayest drink from the river of glory...¹²⁸ Bahá'u'lláh

They who are the beloved of God, in whatever place they gather and whomsoever they may meet, must evince, in their attitude towards God, and in the manner of their celebration of His praise and glory, such *humility and submissiveness* that every atom of the dust beneath their feet may attest the depth of their devotion.¹²⁹

Bahá'u'lláh

Humility exalteth man to the heaven of glory and power, whilst pride abaseth him to the depths of wretchedness and degradation.¹³⁰

Bahá'u'lláh

At the dawning of every dispensation, people fail to recognize the divine Teachers, because they refuse to listen to new Knowledge with humility. What would happen if they did not claim the position of infallibility, if they believed in this self-evident truth: “Maybe we are wrong”?

Had they sought with a humble mind from the Manifestations of God in every Dispensation the true meaning of these words revealed in the sacred books...they surely would have been guided to the light of the Sun of Truth, and would have discovered the mysteries of divine knowledge and wisdom.¹³¹

Bahá'u'lláh

There is no haven, no place to hide or rest. We must stand with utter humility before God:

Wert thou to speed through the immensity of space and traverse the expanse of heaven, yet thou wouldst find no rest save in ***submission to Our command and humbleness before Our Face.***¹³²

Bahá'u'lláh

Please remember this promise of Jesus:

People will come from east and west and north and south, and will take their places at the feast in the kingdom of God. Indeed ***there are those who are last who will be first, and first who will be last.***

Luke 13:29-30

See also Mark 10:31; Matthew 19:30; 20:16

Who are the last people who will be first in the Kingdom of God? The humble ones who refrain from making an assumption of infallibility about their knowledge, for they know it is human to err, it is human to misinterpret the Word of God. Who are the first who will be last? The self-assured and closed-hearted ones, who say, "I am confident of my scriptural position. I know my literal interpretation is sound. I will continue to wait and wish to see Jesus Christ on the clouds." In the First Advent, the last in the eyes of people were tax collectors and harlots; the first in the eyes of people were the elite religious leaders. Was not this prophecy fulfilled also in the First Advent of Jesus? This shows the awesome powers of humility and pride. The first leads to the presence of God, the second to His absence.

I invite you with all my heart and soul to read the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh with an open heart, detached from all preconceived notions, empty from all theological theories you have learned. Only then will you be ready to recognize the Spirit of Truth in the Glory of God, Bahá'u'lláh. Only then will you hear the voice of Jesus in every sentence that Bahá'u'lláh utters. I have enclosed a copy of *The Book of Certitude* and a copy of Bahá'u'lláh's *Epistle to Christians* for your investigation. Ponder what Bahá'u'lláh declares in *The Book of Certitude* concerning the requirement of recognizing Him. Please read this statement repeatedly until its truth penetrates and shines in your innermost soul:

No man shall attain the shores of the ocean of true understanding except he be detached from all that is in heaven and on earth. Sanctify your souls, O ye peoples of the world, that haply ye may attain that station which God hath destined for you...

The essence of these words is this: they that tread the path of faith, they that thirst for the wine of certitude, must cleanse themselves of all that is earthly—their ears from idle talk, their minds from vain imaginings, their hearts from worldly affections, their eyes from that which perisheth. They should put their trust in God, and, holding fast unto Him, follow in His way. Then will they be made worthy of the effulgent glories of the sun of divine knowledge and understanding, and become the recipients of a grace that is infinite and unseen, inasmuch as man can never hope to attain unto the knowledge of the All-Glorious, can never quaff from the stream of divine knowledge and wisdom, can never enter the abode of immortality, nor partake of the cup of divine nearness and favor, unless and until he ceases to regard the words and deeds of mortal men as a standard for the true understanding and recognition of God and His Prophets.¹³³

Bahá'u'lláh asks you to detach yourself from everything you have learned. Because if you start with the assumption that your learning is the absolute truth, then you begin searching not for truth but

for “reasons” to justify your beliefs and to discredit Bahá’u’lláh, exactly as the Pharisees did to deny Jesus.

Do not put your eternal destiny in the hands of the theologians from whom you have learned your interpretation of the Word of God, who in turn have learned their interpretation from those before them. Repetition creates tradition, and tradition masquerades as truth. Theologians come and go; they change their views—but the Word of God stands forever. May I ask you to put everything you have learned aside for only a few weeks, and to start reading the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh as if you were born on this day. The information that you have gained in the past interferes with hearing the voice of Bahá’u’lláh just as certain wavelengths interfere with a voice coming from a radio station. Only by shutting out those multiple voices can you truly hear the divine voice in Bahá’u’lláh.

Please read this sentence from the preceding passage once again and ponder its meaning:

...man can never hope to...enter the abode of immortality, nor partake of the cup of divine nearness and favor, unless and until he ceases to regard the words and deeds of mortal men as a standard for the true understanding and recognition of God and His Prophets.

As long as you use as your standard of judgment “the words and deeds” of fallible human beings, you will be unable to recognize Bahá’u’lláh as the promised Savior and Redeemer of our time.

Ponder how precisely Christ's statement to the Pharisees applies today to the masses of Christians:

You have a fine way of setting aside the commands of God in order to observe your own traditions!
Christ (Mark 7:9)

Before reading any further, take a piece of paper and list the commandments that the Pharisees set aside, and the traditions that they followed.

What are the commandments of the Gospel for you?

- Seek and search with all your heart and soul; watch and investigate (Matt. 7:7).
- Do not judge the meaning of prophecies on your own. Do not depend on your private personal interpretation (II Peter 1:20).
- Recognize that the Word of God must be discerned spiritually. The letter kills, but the spirit gives life (II Cor. 3:6).
- Pray fervently (I Thess. 5:17).

Are you practicing these four commandments? If not, why not? Please compare your position with that of the Pharisees:

- They paid no attention to what Jesus said. They either ignored Him or opposed Him without any investigation.
- They judged the meaning of prophecies on their own terms. They depended on their private, personal interpretation.

- They were literal-minded. They did not believe that the Word of God must be discerned spiritually.
- They did not pray for guidance, because they were sure they were right.

On many occasions you have turned to God, prayed, and hoped to be worthy of entering the Kingdom of Heaven. Note the condition Jesus set for attaining that blessed hope:

Not everyone who says to me, “Lord, Lord,” will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father...

Christ (Matt. 7:21)

If you walk in the way of Pharisees by following “the traditions of men,” if you fail to set aside that which tradition has imprinted on your heart, and if you continue to believe what fallible people like you and me have discovered and presented as the truth, have you obeyed God’s Will?

Consider this example of tradition among the people of Israel. Many Old Testament prophecies indicated that the Jewish Messiah would be a king. Not once is the word “spiritual” mentioned in any of them. Why was it not used? I have never seen Christian theologians answer this question. All that the Jews needed was the insertion of the word “spiritual” before the word “king.” Instead of saying that the Messiah would be a king, or a king like David, the prophecies could have simply said, “He will be a spiritual king.” But why didn’t they? Bahá’u’lláh tells us the reason. He states

that *God uses symbolic language to test the sincerity of the believers*. This strategy worked perfectly in the First Advent. That strategy is accomplishing the same purpose in the Second Advent. Many Christians are stumbling on the same test: failing to jump from the literal to the spiritual, from the letter to the Spirit.

Did Jesus in His First Advent fulfill *all* the Hebrew prophecies literally? In *Lord of Lords* I have offered numerous examples to show that He did not. Let me quote one of them here. Chapter 53 of Isaiah is devoted entirely to Jesus, especially to His suffering. Virtually every significant book of prophecy attributes that chapter to the First Advent of Jesus. Here is a verse from that chapter:

Yet it was the Lord's will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the Lord makes his life a guilt offering, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the Lord will prosper in his hand. Isaiah 53:10

The NEB-translation reads "so shall he [the Messiah] enjoy long life and see his children's children." As we know, Jesus neither enjoyed a long life nor had any children. Obviously the prophecy refers to the spiritual life and the spiritual children of Jesus. But why is the word "spiritual" not included in the prophecy? Christian theologians take the word "offspring" symbolically. They believe that it refers to the church. Once again a Jew in search for truth must be humble and open minded, otherwise he or she can readily turn this one prophecy into

a stumbling block and fall. (For further examples, please see *Lord of Lords*.)

Why then use double standards? If Jesus in His first advent did not fulfill all prophecies literally, why should He in His second advent? Who decided that God should or will change His standards? “‘Come now, let us reason together,’ saith the Lord.”

God in His infinite Wisdom endows His great Messengers with the most convincing evidence. But He also leaves room for those who look for excuses to say no to them. He wants to separate the sincere from the insincere, the daring from the fearful. If anyone looks for excuses to deny Bahá'u'lláh, he or she can find many, among them are the thousands of books written by theologians about the meaning of prophecies, the hundreds of friends who warn him or her, and the millions of other Christians with their personal and private beliefs and expectations.

The Jews did not have a definitive statement concerning their right to interpret the Word of God. Perhaps we can excuse them. What about Christians? Are they not clearly commanded to wait for the Lord to come and reveal the mysteries to them? Do they not also have the lesson of the First Advent to learn from?

Still another advantage Christians have over the Jews is the number of prophecies about the Second Advent. According to Christian scholars there are about six times more prophecies about the Second

Advent than about the First. All of them have been fulfilled by the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh, either literally or spiritually. I invite you once again to read *I Shall Come Again*, which took me, along with the other five volumes in the series, over thirty years to write.

How can you ignore, with a clear conscience, the fulfillment of 1,800 prophecies in the advent of the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh? How can you brush aside all these proofs by the power of tradition? How can you feel comfortable disobeying the commandments of the Gospels?

Questions and Comments

Perhaps you have never had the Good News of Jesus Christ adequately explained to you. I will try to do so now, and since you are an investigator of the truth, I hope you will find the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

Jesus came, born of a virgin, when the Holy Spirit overshadowed Mary and she became pregnant. This Jesus is fully God and yet fully human. In theological circles, it is called the incarnation. He lived a blameless life and was without sin. Not only did He teach the truth of God and our relationship with God with words, but He also demonstrated God's presence and power through the many miracles He performed.

Jesus knew what lay ahead of Him regarding His death, for that was why He had come. We are

separated from God by our sin and the only way to bridge the distance between God and humanity is through the atoning and substitutionary death of Jesus on the cross. Jesus became a curse for us by hanging on the cross and somehow taking upon Himself the sins of the world. He could do this because He was sinless and could be the righteous sacrifice to take away our sins and allow us to draw near to God.

His death on the cross cleared the way so that we can receive the forgiveness of our sins by placing our faith in Jesus. It is by faith that we are saved and not works, for our works can never be enough to make us right with God.

Jesus' resurrection, both physically and spiritually, gives us hope for both today and the future, for we will be with Him for eternity to share with Him as co-heirs of our heavenly Father. If there is no physical resurrection, then faith in Jesus is a false hope, for He said He would rise and to not have done so makes Jesus a liar.

If you have any questions about being a disciple of Jesus, please write or call me.

Response

You have invited me to be a disciple of Jesus. I assure you with all my heart and soul that I am as much a disciple of Jesus as that of Bahá'u'lláh. Is it by chance or by divine destiny that, at the time when I am writing this letter, I had a dream

that responds to your invitation? Last night I found myself in a crowd. I spoke with several people on topics I cannot remember. Then I found myself in a meeting sitting next to a Christian who invited me, as you have, to accept Jesus Christ. In response, I made this clear and emphatic statement: "No one in the world loves Jesus Christ more than I do." After saying this, I woke up. That is why I can remember my response so well.

As you know, we believe Bahá'u'lláh is the return of Christ. Then how can a Bahá'í not love Jesus Christ as much as he or she loves Bahá'u'lláh? Recently a Bahá'í friend of mine said that he would freely give his life for Bahá'u'lláh. I asked if he would make the same offer to Jesus. He responded with a firm, "Yes!" He then explained that to be willing to die for one and not the other is hypocrisy. We believe that Christ and Bahá'u'lláh are one, that they differ only in their names and physical forms and features. One received the title of Christ, which means *the Anointed One*, the other Bahá'u'lláh, which means *the Glory of God*. The same Spirit was, is, and always will be present in both of them.

When 'Abdu'l-Bahá was in New York City, someone asked Him, "Are not all Christians Bahá'ís? Is there any difference?" This is how He answered:

When Christians act according to the teachings of Christ, they are called Bahá'ís. For the foundations of Christianity and the religion of Bahá'u'lláh are one. The foundations of all the divine Prophets and Holy Books are one. The

difference among them is one of terminology only. Each springtime is identical with the former springtime. The distinction between them is only one of the calendar—1911, 1912 and so on. The difference between a Christian and a Bahá'í, therefore, is this: There was a former springtime, and there is a springtime now. No other difference exists because the foundations are the same. Whoever acts completely in accordance with the teachings of Christ is a Bahá'í. The purpose is the essential meaning of Christian, not the mere word. The purpose is the sun itself and not the dawning points. For though the sun is one sun, its dawning points are many. We must not adore the dawning points but worship the sun. We must adore the reality of religion and not blindly cling to the appellation Christianity. The Sun of Reality must be worshipped and followed. We must seek the fragrance of the rose from whatever bush it is blooming—whether oriental or western. Be seekers of light, no matter from which lantern it shines forth. Be not lovers of the lantern. At one time the light has shone from a lantern in the East, now in the West. If it comes from North, South, from whatever direction it proceeds, follow the light.¹³⁴

Here 'Abdu'l-Bahá declares that if Christians practiced the teachings of the Gospels, there would be no need for a new Revelation:

If the followers of the Lord Christ had continued to follow out these principles with steadfast

faithfulness, there would have been no need for a renewal of the Christian Message, no necessity for a re-awakening of His people, for a great and glorious civilization would now be ruling the world and the Kingdom of Heaven would have come on earth.¹³⁵

You state that perhaps the Good News of Jesus Christ is not adequately explained to me. Let me assure you once again that I believe that Christ *is* the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Before accepting the Bahá'í Faith my parents were of the Jewish Faith; they did not believe in Jesus. Once they recognized Bahá'u'lláh, they also accepted Jesus as the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Had they not investigated the Bahá'í Faith, the divine station of Jesus Christ would, most likely, still be hidden to me.

I give my parents much credit for giving me the gift of an open heart and mind. Instead of forcing me to accept a set of beliefs, they encouraged me to look at all great religions. Their attitude of impartiality gave me a sense of freedom to think for myself and do my own search. Had they not encouraged this freedom, I might still be denying the divine station of Jesus.

Please respond to this question as fairly as you can: What would have been your chances of being a disciple of Christ if you had been born to an orthodox Jewish family in Israel? Just think about this one question as long as you can. Your answer may open your heart to Bahá'u'lláh.

Bahá'u'lláh has brought the sweetest and most luscious fruits of spirit—peace, love, and joy. He has fulfilled hundreds of literal prophecies. Further, He endured imprisonment and exile for almost forty years to show His sincerity and dedication to the divine. He has told us what is yet to come. What, then, is holding you back from acknowledging Him? The only thing I can think of is your private, personal interpretation of prophecies. Is this not what held the Pharisees back? Should not their example be a lesson for us? If you believe your theology and your interpretation of the Scriptures are correct, please answer these questions:

- Are you infallible?
- Which of the hundreds of interpretations offered by Christian theologians is correct? Which school of interpretation should we follow? And how can we know which one offers the truth?
- Why do you violate the command of the Scriptures that you should leave the explanation of mysteries to the Lord? Is it wise to allow your theological theories or positions to prevent you from acknowledging the greatest gift that God bestows on humankind? If you were asked in the next Kingdom, “Why did you deny Bahá'u'lláh?” what would you say? Would you say, “He did not conform to my theological positions”? Would you say “I depended on scholars who had more knowledge of Hebrew, Greek, and Aramaic”?

Consider the past. Even a law as simple as the law of the Sabbath needed interpretation. The

Jews had developed all kinds of misconceptions about what they could or could not do on the Sabbath. Only Jesus had the wisdom to clarify and interpret that law for them. He taught them to be spiritual-minded rather than literal-minded. He showed them that holier than “serving” the Sabbath is serving a sick person. They suffered from the same disease most people have today: thinking mostly in literal terms.

Interpretation of prophecies is much more difficult than interpretation of doctrines. For prophecies, like dreams, are often couched in metaphors and symbols. You are well aware that Christian theologians have changed, and will continue to change, their position on various doctrines. Consider the following acknowledgment from a denomination:

As regular readers of this magazine know, the Worldwide Church of God, sponsor of *The Plain Truth*, has changed its position on numerous long-held beliefs and practices during the past few years...

Our flawed doctrinal understanding clouded the plain gospel of Jesus Christ and led to a variety of wrong conclusions and unscriptural practices. We have much to repent of and apologize for.

We were judgmental and self-righteous—condemning other Christians, calling them “so-called Christians” and labeling them “deceived” and “instruments of Satan.”¹³⁶

Hundreds of millions of copies of *The Plain Truth* were distributed throughout the world. When the leadership in the denomination changed, so did “the plain truth” into another version of “truth!” To show that such misjudgments are not unique, the magazine published a long list of apologies from many other denominations.

The news media recently reported that the Church of England has changed its position on hell. It no longer believes in physical fire and torture. It finds the traditional concept of hell appalling, for it can damage the impressionable minds of young people. One of the members who produced the report continues to disagree with the report! He still believes in literal fire!

Such changes of position should surprise no one. They document a fact we know too well: *It is human to err and fall short of the glory of God* (Romans 3:23). As you know, Bahá'u'lláh means *the Glory of God*. The point is this: If the theologians—the boards of directors—who run denominations make such critical errors about the doctrines of the church, how can they be so confident of their *interpretation of prophecies*, which are far more difficult to decode than doctrines? Should not this observation alone lead them to a state of absolute humility? Do they not transgress their limits when they insist on the accuracy of their literal thinking?

To transgress the limits of one's own rank and station is, in no wise, permissible. The integrity

of every rank and station must needs be preserved. By this is meant that every created thing should be viewed in the light of the station it hath been ordained to occupy.¹³⁷ Bahá'u'lláh

I am writing this response because of my love for you and for all humankind. To judge you or look down upon you or anyone else is contrary to my fundamental beliefs. I know deep in my heart and soul that if it was not for the spiritual environment my parents provided, I would most likely be standing among the ranks of deniers, among those who have failed to recognize Bahá'u'lláh. I sympathize with you and am well aware of the immense obstacles you face in recognizing the Heavenly Thief in this gloomy night of confusion, complacency, and conformity. As a psychologist, I am well aware of the power of emotions in human life. I am also aware of the social consequences of accepting a new religion. All these obstacles make the recognition of a new Manifestation a most challenging task.

But the difficulties in the path of the search for truth do not take away our supreme responsibilities to God. Recognizing a new Redeemer is a most heroic act. All such acts require courage, detachment, and dedication. The Beauty of God was manifest in Jesus with full splendor. That same Beauty is now manifest in Bahá'u'lláh. God has given to every soul the capacity to recognize His awesome and unmistakable Splendor. In His court of justice, no one can present any reason, any excuses for failing to recognize His supreme glory

and power. Ponder the divine authority with which Bahá'u'lláh speaks:

Tear asunder, in My Name, the veils that have grievously blinded your vision, and, through the power born of your belief in the unity of God, scatter the idols of vain imitation. Enter, then, the holy paradise of the good-pleasure of the All-Merciful. Sanctify your souls from whatsoever is not of God, and taste ye the sweetness of rest within the pale of His vast and mighty Revelation, and beneath the shadow of His supreme and infallible authority. Suffer not yourselves to be wrapt in the dense veils of your selfish desires, inasmuch as I have perfected in every one of you My creation, so that the excellence of My handiwork may be fully revealed unto men. It follows, therefore, that every man hath been, and will continue to be, able of himself to appreciate the Beauty of God, the Glorified. Had he not been endowed with such a capacity, how could he be called to account for his failure? If, in the Day when all the peoples of the earth will be gathered together, any man should, whilst standing in the presence of God, be asked: "Wherefore hast thou disbelieved in My Beauty and turned away from My Self," and if such a man should reply and say: "Inasmuch as all men have erred, and none hath been found willing to turn his face to the Truth, I, too, following their example, have grievously failed to recognize the Beauty of the Eternal," such a plea

will, assuredly, be rejected. For the faith of no man can be conditioned by any one except himself.¹³⁸

Please read the preceding passage again and again. Read it carefully, think about every word, every sentence, and every thought; think about the answer you will give to God, when you are asked, “Why did you deny Bahá’u’lláh?” If possible, write down your answer. Writing will make you more objective.

You have received the knowledge of the new Revelation. With that knowledge comes an awesome accountability before God:

But the one who does not know and does things deserving punishment will be beaten with few blows. From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked. Christ (Luke 12:48)
See also John 15:22

Bahá’u’lláh invites you and all the truth lovers to come to His beautiful garden. He asks you to come to the paradise of His presence, to behold the Beauty of the Beloved, and breathe the fragrance of the everlasting Flower. This is the most awesome, the most glorious, and the most joyous news the human race has ever heard:

He Who is the Best-Beloved is come! He hath crowned Himself with the glory of God’s Revelation, and hath unlocked to the face of men the doors of His ancient Paradise. Let all eyes

rejoice, and let every ear be gladdened, for now is the time to gaze on His beauty, now is the fit time to hearken to His voice. Proclaim unto every longing lover: "Behold, your Well-Beloved hath come among men!" and to the messengers of the Monarch of love impart the tidings: "Lo, the Adored One hath appeared arrayed in the fullness of His glory!" O lovers of His beauty! Turn the anguish of your separation from Him into the joy of an everlasting reunion, and let the sweetness of His presence dissolve the bitterness of your remoteness from His court.

Behold how the manifold grace of God, which is being showered from the clouds of Divine glory, hath, in this day, encompassed the world. For whereas in days past every lover besought and searched after his Beloved, it is the Beloved Himself Who now is calling His lovers and is inviting them to attain His presence. Take heed lest ye forfeit so precious a favor; beware lest ye belittle so remarkable a token of His grace. Abandon not the incorruptible benefits, and be not content with that which perisheth. Lift up the veil that obscureth your vision, and dispel the darkness with which it is enveloped, that ye may gaze on the naked beauty of the Beloved's face, may behold that which no eye hath beheld, and hear that which no ear hath heard.

Hear Me, ye mortal birds! In the Rose Garden of changeless splendor a Flower hath begun to

bloom, compared to which every other flower is but a thorn, and before the brightness of Whose glory the very essence of beauty must pale and wither. Arise, therefore, and, with the whole enthusiasm of your hearts, with all the eagerness of your souls, the full fervor of your will, and the concentrated efforts of your entire being, strive to attain the paradise of His presence, and endeavor to inhale the fragrance of the incorruptible Flower, to breathe the sweet savors of holiness, and to obtain a portion of this perfume of celestial glory. Whoso followeth this counsel will break his chains asunder...will attain unto his heart's desire, and will surrender his soul into the hands of his Beloved. Bursting through his cage, he will, even as the bird of the spirit, wing his flight to his holy and everlasting nest.

Night hath succeeded day, and day hath succeeded night, and the hours and moments of your lives have come and gone, and yet none of you hath, for one instant, consented to detach himself from that which perisheth. Bestir yourselves, that the brief moments that are still yours may not be dissipated and lost. Even as the swiftness of lightning your days shall pass, and your bodies shall be laid to rest beneath a canopy of dust. What can ye then achieve? How can ye atone for your past failure?

The everlasting Candle shineth in its naked glory. Behold how it hath consumed every mortal veil. O ye moth-like lovers of His light!

Brave every danger, and consecrate your souls to its consuming flame. O ye that thirst after Him! Strip yourselves of every earthly affection, and hasten to embrace your Beloved. With a zest that none can equal make haste to attain unto Him. The Flower, thus far hidden from the sight of men, is unveiled to your eyes. In the open radiance of His glory He standeth before you. His voice summoneth all the holy and sanctified beings to come and be united with Him. Happy is he that turneth thereunto; well is it with him that hath attained, and gazed on the light of so wondrous a countenance.¹³⁹

Note the authority with which Bahá'u'lláh speaks. Do you not hear the Voice of God in His Voice?

Say: O concourse of priests! Leave the bells, and come forth, then, from your churches. It behooveth you, in this day, to proclaim aloud the Most Great Name among the nations. Prefer ye to be silent, whilst every stone and every tree shouteth aloud: "The Lord is come in His great glory!"?...He that summoneth men in My name is, verily, of Me, and he will show forth that which is beyond the power of all that are on earth...Let the Breeze of God awaken you. Verily, it hath wafted over the world. Well is it with him that hath discovered the fragrance thereof and been accounted among the well-assured...O concourse of priests! The Day of Reckoning hath appeared, the Day whereon He Who was in heaven hath come. He, verily, is the One Whom ye were promised

in the Books of God, the Holy, the Almighty, the All-Praised. How long will ye wander in the wilderness of heedlessness and superstition? Turn with your hearts in the direction of your Lord, the Forgiving, the Generous.¹⁴⁰

Please recite these verses again and again:

Wake up!...I will come like a thief.

Christ (Rev. 3:2-3)

Behold, I come like a thief! Blessed is he who stays awake...

Christ (Rev. 16:15)

After reciting them, ask yourself: “Why did Christ say, ‘Wake up’? ‘Wake up’ from what?” Once again ask yourself, “Why did Christ say, ‘I will come like a thief’”? A thief comes in disguise! What is the disguise? Could it be His human form, which conceals His divine glory?

‘Abdu’l-Bahá indicates that Jesus, in His First Advent, also came on the clouds. When Jesus said He came from heaven, the Jews objected (John 6:42). Why did they object? Because the clouds of His physical form concealed His true reality:

The capacities of His [Jesus’] human body were limited but the strength of His spirit was vast, infinite, immeasurable...the body of His humanity was a cloud that hid His Divinity. The world only saw His human form, and therefore wondered how He could have “come down from Heaven.”¹⁴¹ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

May the world be for you no obstacle hiding the truth from your sight, as the human body

of Christ hid His Divinity from the people of His day.¹⁴² ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

I hope and pray that this response will awaken you from the popular dream of “being suddenly raptured to heaven” cherished by many Christians. I hope it will awaken you from the dream that there is not much that you can do except keep waiting and wishing. I hope it will help you realize that God will never take our freedom of choice away from us, that He will always allow us to accept or reject His truth. I hope it will move you away from “the clouds” of seeking and finding safety in numbers. I hope it will lift “the veil of the letters” and let you see “the shining light of the spirit.” I hope it will awaken you from the ancient dream of assuming that salvation can be found in only *one* of the names of God, only in Christ (the Anointed One of God), but not in another name of God, Bahá’u’lláh (the Glory of God).

Dear friend, the Heavenly Thief has come! He invites you to search for Him. If you *fail* to look for Him, you will *not* find Him:

...unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time... Hebrews 9:28

In your letter you indicated that you are sure you are following the truth and you need not look beyond the parameter of your present beliefs. Please ponder for a few moments. Put yourself in the place of devout Pharisees at the time of Jesus. They were as sure of the correctness of their theology as you are. What was the consequence?

Their sense of certainty—"I am sure I am right and no one can tell me otherwise"—closed their hearts and minds. They looked at Jesus but did not really see Him. They listened to His Word but did not really hear Him. They had only one interest: to prove Him wrong. "You may hear, and hear, but you will never understand" declared Jesus (Matt. 13:14). They allowed their sense of certainty to deprive them of divine knowledge. You may be sure in your heart that Bahá'u'lláh is not the true Return of Christ. But does your sense of certainty make you right? It does not, for this reason:

Every way of a man is right in his own eyes...
Proverbs 21:2

All the ways of a man are pure in his own eyes...
Proverbs 16:2

Note how the Qur'án confirms the same principle. To those who denied Him, Muhammad said:

They have taken the devils as their masters,
yet they believe they are guided. Qur'án 7:3

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Bahá'u'lláh's Son and authorized Interpreter of His teachings, after His release from prison came to the United States to proclaim the Advent and the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh. In a talk delivered on August 6, 1912, in New York City, He discussed the same point:

When Christ appeared with those marvelous breaths of the Holy Spirit, the children of Israel said, "We are quite independent of him; we can do without him and follow Moses; we have a

book and in it are found the teachings of God; what need, therefore, have we of this man?" Christ said to them, "The book sufficeth you not." Is it possible for a man to hold to a book of medicine and say, "I have no need of a doctor; I will act according to the book; in it every disease is named, all symptoms are explained, the diagnosis of each ailment is completely written out, and a prescription for each malady is furnished; therefore, why do I need a doctor"? This is sheer ignorance. A physician is needed to prescribe. Through his skill the principles of the book are correctly and effectively applied until the patient is restored to health. Christ was a heavenly Physician. He brought spiritual health and healing into the world. Bahá'u'lláh is, likewise, a divine Physician. He has revealed prescriptions for removing disease from the body politic and has remedied human conditions by spiritual power.

Therefore, mere knowledge is not sufficient for complete human attainment. The teachings of the Holy Books need a heavenly power and divine potency to carry them out. A house is not built by mere acquaintance with the plans. Money must be forthcoming; volition is necessary to construct it; a carpenter must be employed in its erection. It is not enough to say, "The plan and purpose of this house are very good; I will live in it." There are no walls of protection, there is no roof of shelter in this mere statement; the house must be actually built before we can live in it.

Briefly, the teachings of the Holy Books need a divine potency to complete their accomplishment in human hearts.¹⁴³

Many Christians who hear about Bahá'u'lláh refuse to investigate His claim, saying, "I am quite comfortable with my beliefs." The implication is this: "I already have the truth. Why should I look elsewhere?" Once again, let us go back to the time of Jesus. As 'Abdu'l-Bahá stated, the Pharisees also felt content with what they had. They believed they were full of truth and wisdom. But what did Jesus tell them?

Woe to you who are well fed now, for you will go hungry. Woe to you who laugh now, for *you will mourn and weep.* Luke 6:25

Bahá'u'lláh offers a similar warning to "infidels," the ones who deny His divine glory:

The souls of the infidels, however, shall—and to this I bear witness—when breathing their last be made aware of the good things that have escaped them, and *shall bemoan their plight*, and shall humble themselves before God.¹⁴⁴

One's sense of contentment is extremely deceptive. No one should use it as an excuse for a failure to investigate God's new Redeemers. Indeed, a prophecy predicts this prevailing sense of ease and contentment among the peoples of the world, and God's anger at their complacency:

I am very angry with nations that feel secure [at ease, NEB]. Zechariah 1:15

In the Book of Revelation, Christ refers to the same sense of contentment and complacency. The following passage is not about material riches, but spiritual:

Because you say, ‘I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing’...I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent. Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me. To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

Revelation 3:17-22

Repent from what? From complacency, from thinking that one is rich, when one is poor. Jesus declares that He knocks on the door of our hearts. He promises to invite us in, exactly as Bahá'u'lláh does. He asks us to hear His voice, exactly as Bahá'u'lláh does. Then He states, “To him who overcomes...” Overcomes what? His sense of complacency, his belief that he is rich. The preceding verse is addressed specifically to those who say, “I feel quite comfortable with my beliefs,” to

those who are spiritually poor yet believe themselves to be rich. Pharisees were rebuked for the same reason:

But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation [comfort or relief].
Christ (Luke 6:24)

A person who feels he has received his consolation will not look beyond his comfort zone. This sense of complacency is dangerous; it is like being drugged. Several prophecies predict that the people of our time will be drunk:

...the inhabitants of the earth were intoxicated.
Christ (Rev. 17:2)

Bahá'u'lláh confirms:

Drunken are the eyes of those men that have openly refused to behold the face of God, the All-Glorious, the All-Praised.¹⁴⁵ Bahá'u'lláh

A drunk person feels comfortable and even exhilarated, and yet he is at risk, because of his lack of awareness. A self-satisfied believer is like a person who dreams of being lifted to heaven, then suddenly wakes up when faced with the humbling reality.

As it is said, the moment we feel we are ripe, we begin to rot. It is our sense of poverty that moves us forward, not our sense of complacency:

The essence of understanding is to testify to one's ***poverty***, and submit to the Will of the Lord, the Sovereign, the Gracious, the All-Powerful.¹⁴⁶ Bahá'u'lláh

Blessed are the ***poor in spirit***, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Christ (Matt. 5:3)

This station is the dying from self and the living in God, the being poor in self and rich in the Desired One. Poverty...signifieth being ***poor in the things of the created world***, rich in the things of God's world.¹⁴⁷ Bahá'u'lláh

This state is that poverty of which it is said, ***"Poverty is My glory."***¹⁴⁸ Bahá'u'lláh

As we noted, Christ said "woe" to the Pharisees who laughed, and felt comfortable and rich, but He blessed those humble souls who mourned, who were not complacent and self-satisfied.

Blessed are they who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Christ (Matt. 5:4)

What a person thinks may have no roots in reality. Were not the Pharisees sure of having eternal life? In the following verse Jesus refers to this illusion:

You diligently study the Scriptures because ***you think*** that by them ***you possess eternal life***. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life. John 5:39-40

They thought that just by reading their Scriptures, and by going to their synagogues and listening to their rabbis they had received the master key to the gate of heaven. They would not even listen to the words of Jesus. The similarities between the way the Pharisees believed and behaved and the way most Christians believe and behave today are astonishing.

What message do these verses convey?

While Jesus was having dinner at Levi's house, many tax collectors and sinners were eating with him and his disciples, for there were many who followed him. When the teachers of the law who were Pharisees saw him eating with the sinners and tax collectors, they asked his disciples: "Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?" On hearing this, Jesus said to them, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."

Mark 2:15-17

Who were "the righteous"? They were the *self-righteous* Pharisees. A righteous person is as much in need of God as a sinner. What happens to the medicine given to a sick person who believes himself to be in perfect health? Is it wise to offer advice to the one who is sick of hearing it? Jesus wanted to help the hearts that thirsted for His living waters, the souls that mourned because of their separation from God, and sought the comfort of His presence; not the ones who felt satiated and self-satisfied, not the ones who were immersed in the surging seas of dreams, illusions, and fantasies.

Building our spiritual lives on our sense of contentment is laying the foundation of our eternal destiny on sand. As you know, Jesus compared the state of the world at His coming to the days of Noah:

As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. For in the

days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.

Matthew 24:37-39

Like most of us today, people in Noah's time were busy and contented with what they had. If not, they would have paid attention to the invitation to come on board.

When excited passengers stepped onto the Titanic, did they know their destiny? Were they not sure they were stepping onto the safest ship in the world? Were they not surrounded by exquisite luxuries? Did they not feel content and comfortable in that gigantic vessel?

To see the uppermost limits of the human potential for deception, consider the example of the Romans who threw the Christians before hungry lions. Were they not content with their state of mind? Did they not think they were enjoying a sport, just having fun getting rid of a few "worthless" Christians? As the helpless believers were torn and devoured, they laughed and shouted in excitement. Surely this example is extreme, yet it dramatizes the grave dangers of complacency and self-satisfaction. It demonstrates the awesome powers of self-deception in human beings.

The zealous and fanatical Muslims who recently hung ten innocent Bahá'í women in Iran were sure

they were doing the will of God. Whatever we do appears right in our eyes. “Every way of a man is right in his own eyes” (Proverbs 21:2). The power behind this possibility—making everything look right to us—is our imagination, which can be controlled, manipulated, shaped, and reshaped in countless ways.

We all feel comfortable in our comfort zone; that is to be expected, otherwise we will look elsewhere. But God wants us to be daring, to step out. That is what the parable of the talent teaches (Matt. 25:14-30). Our Creator wants us to invest our potential, even if it means taking a risk.

Was not Peter comfortable with his beliefs as a Jew? Was it not the biggest risk to follow a poor man named Jesus instead of a prestigious Jewish leader called Annas? Nothing can be more dangerous than feeling comfortable with what we have and refusing to look beyond.

We are all prisoners of our self-imposed limitations and surroundings. The problem is this: Until we have stepped out, we do not know we are prisoners. Unless we are awakened, we do not know we are dreaming.

Perhaps the most deadly and common disease afflicting the church today is complacency. It is especially severe among today’s evangelical Christians. The disease can be recognized by any or all of the following symptoms:

- I am right, and no one can tell me otherwise.

- I am the first.
- I know I am saved, and I do not need to investigate any belief beyond my own.

What happens to those who believe, without investigating any other faith, that they are the favored ones, that they are the first? Fortunately, we have Jesus' own response:

So the last will be first, and the first will be last.

Matthew 20:16

Why would the first become the last for any reason other than by becoming lulled by complacency and self-satisfaction, a feeling that would keep their hearts and minds closed? And why would the last become the first for any reason other than humility—a virtue that would keep their minds and hearts open to the news of the coming of the Master, the Thief who comes from above?

How astonishing it will be for those who have believed themselves to be the first, but suddenly, at the point of death, find themselves to be the last!

Many Christian authors declare that the church is afflicted with complacency, yet those same authors refuse to awaken to the call of Bahá'u'lláh. They manifest the same malady that they attribute to the church! They detect it in the institution but not in themselves!

Consider the following prayer. Ponder how Bahá'u'lláh refers to His own selflessness before God and then asks God to help us, so that we

may feel the same way toward the Manifestation of God, Bahá'u'lláh Himself:

Lauded be Thy name, O my God! I am so carried away by the breezes blowing from Thy presence that I have forgotten my self and all that I possess. This is but a sign of the wonders of Thy grace and bountiful favors vouchsafed unto me. I give praise to Thee, O my God, that Thou hast chosen me out of all Thy creatures, and made me to be the Day-Spring of Thy strength and the Manifestation of Thy might, and empowered me to reveal such of Thy signs and such tokens of Thy majesty and power as none, whether in Thy heaven or on Thy earth, can produce...

Uncover before them, O my Lord, the majesty of Thy Cause, lest they be led to doubt Thy sovereignty and the power of Thy might. I swear by Thy glory, O Thou Who art the Beloved of the worlds! Had they been aware of Thy power they would of a certainty have refused to utter what Thou didst not ordain for them in the heaven of Thy will.

Inspire them, O my Lord, with a sense of their own powerlessness before Him Who is the Manifestation of Thy Self, and teach them to recognize the poverty of their own nature in the face of the manifold tokens of Thy self-sufficiency and riches, that they may gather together round Thy Cause, and cling to the hem of Thy mercy, and cleave to the cord of

the good-pleasure of Thy will. Thou art the Lord of the worlds, and of all those who show mercy, art the Most Merciful.¹⁴⁹

Our sense of contentment is not a reliable compass by which to direct the course of our eternal destiny. What then is the standard by which we can know the truth? That standard is reason; only reason can separate truth from falsehood. There is no other dependable way. That is what St. Paul used in synagogues, when he preached the Message of Jesus to the Jews:

...he himself entered the synagogue and *reasoned* with the Jews. Acts 18:1

Our Creator invites us to use our minds, to apply the power of reasoning He has given us:

“Come now, and let us reason together,” saith the Lord. Isaiah 1:18

What did Jesus mean by this promise?

For I will give you a mouth and wisdom which all your adversaries will not be able to contradict or resist. Luke 21:15

Can utterance have any power without the support of reason? Can “wisdom” be unreasonable? What is it that people cannot refute? It is the power of proof. If I am wrong, show me by evidence how and why I am wrong. This is your divine duty:

Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect... I Peter 3:15

May I invite you to read *I Shall Come Again*? That volume presents 16 time-prophecies from the Bible that point to the time of the Second Advent of Christ. All of them point to the same exact year: 1844, when the Báb declared the dawning of the Day of the Lord. That volume alone will resolve at least 90 percent of your questions about the prophecies of the Second Advent and their fulfillment by the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh. That is only one of several volumes containing biblical prophecies fulfilled by the Bahá'í Faith.

In that work, I have used the laws of chance to prove that fulfillment of hundreds of literal prophecies in the lives of the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh could not have happened by chance. Christian scholars have used the same procedure to prove the divine station of Jesus. If one is true, cannot the other be true? Why accept the prophecies about the First Advent and deny those about the Second? As mentioned in *I Shall Come Again*, the “probability figure” for the fulfillment of literal prophecies about the advent of the Bahá'í Revelation is 4×10^{97} . This figure equals 4×10^{17} times the estimated number of elementary particles in the known universe! What more do you expect?

May I invite you to devote some of your time to the study of Bahá'u'lláh's works? Only by reading His Word can you hear the divine Voice; you will hear it in every sentence He utters. Can anyone recognize the divine station of Jesus without reading and pondering His Word? How then can you recognize Bahá'u'lláh if you fail to listen to His

Voice? Have you ever heard anyone speak with the authority with which Bahá'u'lláh speaks? Please read and ponder these verses by Him:

The Word which the Son concealed is made manifest. It hath been sent down in the form of the human temple in this day. Blessed be the Lord Who is the Father! He, verily, is come unto the nations in His most great majesty. Turn your faces towards Him, O concourse of the righteous...This is the day whereon the Rock (Peter) crieth out and shouteth, and celebrateth the praise of its Lord, the All-Possessing, the Most High, saying: "Lo! The Father is come, and that which ye were promised in the Kingdom is fulfilled!..." My body longeth for the cross, and Mine head waiteth the thrust of the spear, in the path of the All-Merciful, that the world may be purged from its transgressions...¹⁵⁰

Bahá'u'lláh

I am the One Whom the tongue of Isaiah hath extolled, the One with Whose name both the Torah and the Evangel were adorned. The glory of Sinai hath hastened to circle round the Day-Spring of this Revelation, while from the heights of the Kingdom the voice of the Son of God is heard proclaiming: "Bestir yourselves, ye proud ones of the earth, and hasten ye towards Him." Carmel hath in this day hastened in longing adoration to attain His court, whilst from the heart of Zion there cometh the cry: "The promise of all ages is now fulfilled. That which had been announced in the holy writ of

God, the Beloved, the Most High, is made manifest.”...By the one true God, Elijah hath hastened unto My court and hath circumambulated in the day-time and in the night-season My throne of glory. Solomon in all his majesty circles in adoration around Me in this day, uttering this most exalted word: “I have turned my face towards Thy face, O Thou omnipotent Ruler of the world! I am wholly detached from all things pertaining unto me, and yearn for that which Thou dost possess.”¹⁵¹ Bahá'u'lláh

O people, if ye deny these verses, by what proof have ye believed in God? Produce it, O assemblage of false ones. Nay, by the One in Whose hand is my soul, they are not, and never shall be able to do this, even should they combine to assist one another.¹⁵² Bahá'u'lláh

Please listen to Bahá'u'lláh's “Voice” with all your heart and soul to see if you hear the voice of God, the same voice that you hear in Jesus:

My sheep listen to my voice; I know them,
and they follow me. Christ (John 10:27)

How can you remain unmoved by this incredible revelation of divine power? How can you ignore its supreme Author who speaks with such authority?

O My servants! There shineth nothing else in Mine heart except the unfading light of the Morn of Divine guidance, and out of My mouth proceedeth naught but the essence of truth, which the Lord your God hath revealed. Follow not, therefore, your earthly desires, and violate

not the Covenant of God, nor break your pledge to Him. With firm determination, with the whole affection of your heart, and with the full force of your words, turn ye unto Him, and walk not in the ways of the foolish.¹⁵³

Bahá'u'lláh

Seize, O friends, the chance which this Day offereth you, and deprive not yourselves of the liberal effusions of His grace. I beseech God that He may graciously enable every one of you to adorn himself, in this blessed Day, with the ornament of pure and holy deeds. He, verily, doeth whatsoever He willeth.¹⁵⁴

Bahá'u'lláh

In conclusion, I urge you not to take Bahá'u'lláh's invitation lightly. The consequences of saying "yes" or "no" are enormous and everlasting. The following warning applies not only to the First Advent but to the Second as well:

Whoever acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven. But whoever disowns me before men, I will disown him before my Father in heaven.

Christ (Matt. 10:32-33)

God is full of grace, but He is also just:

He Who is the Lord of Lords is come overshadowed with clouds, and the decree hath been fulfilled by God, the Almighty, the Unrestrained...*He, verily, hath again come down from Heaven even as He came down from it the first time.* Beware that thou dispute not with Him even as the Pharisees disputed with

Him (Jesus) without a clear token or proof. *On His right hand flow the living waters of grace, and on His left the choice Wine of justice...*¹⁵⁵

Bahá'u'lláh

The One who was born as a baby declared:

I have come down from heaven...

Christ (John 6:38)

Could He not make that same claim the second time?

*I have come in the shadows of the clouds of glory...*¹⁵⁶

Bahá'u'lláh

This is your Lord—the Glory of God—the Logos, the One whose Word you have preached and glorified, to whom you have prayed day and night. This is the same Word, once made flesh in the name of Jesus, whose Return you and all Christians have been expecting for 2,000 years. How did the people treat Him? They exiled Him, put Him in prison, shut the doors on Him, and began to slaughter His followers! The world was prevented from seeing Him and knowing Him. Note how clearly this is prophesied:

And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever—the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him.

John 14:16-17

Ponder this brief passage from Bahá'u'lláh's *Prayers and Meditations*, written while He was an exile in the Holy Land, in a prison He called the Most Great Prison:

They finally banished Him from the land of His birth, and caused Him to dwell within the most desolate of Thy cities, though all the world had been built up by Thee for His sake. Within this, the Most Great Prison, He hath established His seat. Though sore tried by trials, the like of which the eye of creation hath not seen, He summoneth the people unto Thee, O Thou Who art the Fashioner of the universe!¹⁵⁷

Observe Bahá'u'lláh's supreme patience and love for God and for all human beings:

As these tribulations, however, were sustained in Thy path and for love of Thee, they who were afflicted by them render thanks, under all conditions, unto Thee, and say: "O Thou Who art the Delight of our hearts and the Object of our adoration! Were the clouds of Thy decree to rain down upon us the darts of affliction, we would, in our love for Thee, refuse to be impatient. We would yield Thee praise and thanksgiving, for we have recognized and are persuaded that Thou hast ordained only that which will be best for us. If our bodies be, at times, weighed down by our troubles, yet our souls rejoice with exceeding gladness. We swear by Thy might, O Thou Who art the Desire of our hearts and the Exultation of our souls! Every trouble that toucheth us in our love for Thee is an evidence of Thy tender mercy, every fiery ordeal a sign of the brightness of Thy light, every woeful tribulation a cooling draught, every toil a blissful repose, every anguish a fountain of gladness."

Whosoever, O my Lord, is impatient in the tribulations befalling him in Thy path, hath not drunk of the cup of Thy love nor tasted of the sweetness of Thy remembrance...

The tenderness of Thy mercy, O my Lord, surpasseth the fury of Thy wrath...and Thy grace excelleth Thy justice...

I swear by Thy might, O my God! Wert Thou to regard Thy servants according to their deserts in Thy days, they would assuredly merit naught except Thy chastisement and torment. Thou art, however, the One Who is of great bounteousness, Whose grace is immense. Look not down upon them, O my God, with the glance of Thy justice, but rather with the eyes of Thy tender compassions and mercies. Do, then, with them according to what beseemeth Thy generosity and bountiful favor. Potent art Thou to do whatsoever may please Thee. Incomparable art Thou. No God is there beside Thee, the Lord of the throne on high and of earth below, the Ruler of this world and of the world to come. Thou art the God of Bounty, the Ever-Forgiving, the Great Giver, the Most Generous.¹⁵⁸

Bahá'u'lláh has fulfilled every promise made in the Scriptures. He has come with every conceivable evidence. The only thing He has not done is agree with your interpretation. Is it prudent to deny Him for that reason?

The most burning fire is to question the signs of God, to dispute idly that which He hath

revealed, to deny Him and carry one's self proudly before Him.¹⁵⁹ Bahá'u'lláh

If Bahá'u'lláh is, indeed, the return of Christ and you deny Him, you will deprive yourself of the most abundant grace and the most exalted glory and honor that God may bestow on human beings. Please take your time to read with an open mind at least one of Bahá'u'lláh's works available in English. I will be delighted to send you as many volumes as you are willing to read.

Please read this passage from Bahá'u'lláh every day. Ponder its profound meaning, and consider the love and compassion He expresses for you and for every sincere Christian:

O concourse of Christians! We have, on a previous occasion, revealed Ourselves unto you, and ye recognized Me not. This is yet another occasion vouchsafed unto you. This is the Day of God; turn ye unto Him...The Beloved One loveth not that ye be consumed with the fire of your desires. Were ye to be shut out as by a veil from Him, this would be for no other reason than your own waywardness and ignorance. Ye make mention of Me, and know Me not. Ye call upon Me, and are heedless of My Revelation....O people of the Gospel! They who were not in the Kingdom have now entered it, whilst We behold you, in this day, tarrying at the gate. Rend the veils asunder by the power of your Lord, the Almighty, the All-Bounteous, and enter, then, in My name My

Kingdom. Thus biddeth you He Who desireth for you everlasting life...We behold you, O children of the Kingdom, in darkness. This, verily, beseemeth you not. Are ye, in the face of the Light, fearful because of your deeds? Direct yourselves towards Him...Verily, He (Jesus) said: "Come ye after Me, and I will make you to become fishers of men." In this day, however, We say: "Come ye after Me, that We may make you to become quickeners [life-givers] of mankind."¹⁶⁰

Bahá'u'lláh states that on another occasion He revealed Himself to you. He is referring, of course, to His First Advent as Jesus, the Spirit of God. We know Jesus revealed Himself to Jews, not to Christians. Why, then, does Bahá'u'lláh state that in His First Advent He came to Christians? Because those who live at the dawning of divine Messengers believe and behave the same way. They are the same kind of people with the same attitudes, needs, biases, and weaknesses. Jesus spoke in the same way. When addressing an audience of Jews, He said, "It was because your hearts were hard that Moses wrote you this law" (Mark 10:5), as if the listeners had lived at the time of Moses, some 1,500 years earlier. God has a unique way of expressing Himself, quite distinguished from ours. Failure to recognize this difference is the root cause of much suffering.

Jesus reminded the Pharisees that the people of low status, such as tax collectors and prostitutes, entered the Kingdom of God, while they hesitated

(Matt. 21:31). Bahá'u'lláh presents a similar message. He wants to move Christians out of their composure and comfort zone into the Kingdom of heaven.

Please read the preceding passage again and again and try to remember if you have ever heard or seen anyone speak in that way. Think about almost 15,000 days of Bahá'u'lláh's ministry (1852-1892), during which He endured every adversity imaginable. Read the preceding passage in that context, with a heart pure from personal desires and concerns. If you do this, you will discern in every sentence the power of God and His exalted dominion. In every word, you will discover His limitless love and supreme compassion. In every phrase you will see the face of God glowing with the splendor of the sun. Please continue to read the passage until its power penetrates "the clouds" on which Christ is promised to come, until it opens your heart and soul to this most splendid revelation of God's glory and power.

Let me, with a heart filled with love, appeal to your desire for eternal life with the Lord. Let me ask you once again to continue your investigation of Bahá'u'lláh. Let me encourage you to read one of His books and listen with your heart and soul to see if His Voice sounds familiar. What harm can come from reading? Take ***Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh***. Every night, before going to bed, read only 10 pages until you come to the last page. As you read, follow Christ's admonition that you should ***pray*** in order to become

worthy of standing before Him when He returns (Luke 21:36). Ask God to guide you, to help you know if Bahá'u'lláh is the One you have been waiting for. As you read, also ask yourself, "Could any human being speak like this?" The Voice of God in Bahá'u'lláh's Works is so loud and clear, you will not be able to ignore it. You must completely close your inner hearing to prevent yourself from hearing that Voice.

Every tree, every leaf, every atom declares this message: "Don't cling to the past, a new Day has dawned. Don't cling to the branches, a new rose has sprung. Don't cling to the letter, the Spirit has come." Millions of Jews are still clinging to the past. They stop at Moses and the prophets. What benefit have they gained from waiting and wishing? What benefits can you gain from closing your heart to Bahá'u'lláh?

The spiritual choice we make now will continue into the life beyond and for all eternity. Is it wise to take this choice lightly, without a thorough investigation, without doing everything within our power to see if Bahá'u'lláh is the One He claims to be?

Come, Lord Jesus.

Revelation 22:20

He, verily, is come with His Kingdom, and all the atoms cry aloud: "Lo! The Lord is come in His great majesty!"¹⁶¹

Bahá'u'lláh

In conclusion, let me quote a warning from Bahá'u'lláh. It is addressed to you and to every other resident of this planet:

We have a fixed time for you, O peoples. If ye fail, at the appointed hour, to turn towards God, He, verily, will lay violent hold on you, and will cause grievous afflictions to assail you from every direction. How severe, indeed, is the chastisement with which your Lord will then chastise you!¹⁶²

Every individual should say, “Sooner or later, the appointed Hour will come. Am I willing to ignore this warning as if I never heard it?” Every truth-seeker and lover of God should ask, “Am I willing to face the consequences of my negligence? Am I willing to fail to do my share in preventing the grievous afflictions that await the human race?” These are the most urgent questions everyone must ask. For the consequences of not asking them are enormous, especially for those who have a chance to make a difference, but fail to do so.

Bring thyself to account each day ere thou art summoned to a reckoning; for death, unheralded, shall come upon thee and thou shalt be called to give account for thy deeds.¹⁶³ Bahá'u'lláh

Let me invite you to act by the principles declared in a verse that summarizes the spirit of all the Scriptures:

And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God. Micah 6:8

To act justly requires you to examine, as an impartial judge, the astonishing evidence Bahá'u'lláh presents to prove His divine declaration.

To love mercy requires you to have compassion for your soul and the souls of all Christians who look up to you for spiritual inspiration and guidance.

To walk humbly with your God requires you to acknowledge your utter helplessness in unveiling “that which is hidden in darkness.” It requires you to say, “I am a sinner and a fallible servant of God. How can I be sure that I am right, when I know I have been wrong so many times about so many things, in so many ways? How can I be sure which prophecy is literal, which prophecy is symbolic?” To walk humbly with your God requires you to listen with all your heart and soul to the Voice of the divine as it speaks through Bahá’u’lláh—the long-awaited return of the Son in the glory of His Father. For the evidence He presents to prove His divine station is unparalleled in all history.

In the parable of the talents (Matt. 25:14-30), Jesus compares Himself with a King who goes on a long journey. Upon His return, He discovers that one of His servants, instead of investing his God-given “talents,” has hidden them in the ground. When asked to explain his reason for not investing his talents, he says, “I was afraid.” The King rejects his response, for it shows an absence of faith. The King rebukes him for allowing his eternal destiny to be controlled by unjustified fears.

The following story supplements the message of Jesus’ parable. It shows the resistance many Christians display today to their King, who has now completed His long journey and returned.

A young couple were separated during World War II. While the father was gone, the mother gave birth to a baby girl. The months passed and the mother kept a large picture of her husband on the desk so that the little girl would grow up knowing what her daddy looked like. She learned to say “Daddy” and associated the name with the picture on the desk. Finally the day came when her father returned home from the war. The whole family gathered to watch the little girl when she saw her father for the first time. Imagine their disappointment when she would have nothing whatever to do with him. Instead, she ran to the photograph on the desk, saying, “That’s my daddy.” Day after day the family had to blink back the tears as they saw the young father on his knees trying his best to get acquainted with his little daughter, explaining as simply as he could that he was her daddy. But each time she would shake her head, then run to the picture on the desk and exclaim, “That’s my daddy.” This went on for some time, but one day something happened. The little girl, having gone repeatedly to the picture on the desk, returned to her father and looked carefully into his face. Then she went back to the picture on the desk and studied it. The family held their breath. After several trips the little face lit up as the child exclaimed excitedly, “*They’re both the same daddy!*”¹⁶⁴

How long will Christians continue to look at the drawings of Jesus upon the walls of their homes

and houses of worship before turning their faces to their King who has now returned from His long journey? How long before they will open their hearts and their souls to the glory that awaits them?

Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me. To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. Christ (Rev. 3:20-22)

Open the doors of your hearts...We, in truth, have opened unto you the gates of the Kingdom...He Who is the Desired One is come in His transcendent majesty. Say, Lo! The Father is come, and that which ye were promised in the Kingdom is fulfilled!¹⁶⁵ Bahá'u'lláh

Let your waist be girded and your lamps burning; and you yourselves ***be like men who wait for their master, when he will return from the wedding, that when he comes and knocks they may open to him immediately.*** Blessed are those servants whom the master, when he comes, will find watching. Assuredly, I say to you that he will gird himself and have them sit down to eat, and will come and serve them.

Christ (Luke 12:35-37)

This response is getting too long. What more needs to be said? Let me conclude my comments and thank you once again for reading and responding

to my book. I have the highest admiration for you and for all those who serve God. I offer you my deepest gratitude and warmest greetings for taking time from your busy schedule to study a religion other than your own, a practice quite uncommon among pastors and religious teachers and leaders. I will be honored to hear from you and to continue the correspondence as long as love, hope, reason, and patience endure.

May the world be for you no obstacle hiding the truth from your sight, as the human body of Christ hid His Divinity from the people of His day.¹⁶⁶ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

May your days be filled with jewels of joy and grace, and your life be crowned with service to the Lord.

Faithfully yours,

Hugh Motlagh

Part III

**The Hour of His
Judgment Has Come**

Revelation 14:7

I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what *hour* I will come upon thee.

Christ (Rev. 3:3)

The *Hour* which We had concealed from the knowledge of the peoples of the earth...hath come to pass.¹

Bahá'u'lláh

Bahá'u'lláh's Tablet to Christians

Bahá'u'lláh wrote an Epistle containing His strongest and most urgent appeals to Christians to investigate His claim. This chapter contains most of Bahá'u'lláh's Epistle—called *The Most Holy Tablet*—along with biblical references offered by the present author in the footnotes. You may wish to read the Epistle twice, once without looking at the footnotes and again with the footnotes.

As you read it, see if you can remember anyone who has spoken with the power and authority with which Bahá'u'lláh speaks. Look through any sacred Scripture and see if you can find any epistle like it. It is endowed with an unprecedented power and authority. Only God speaks in this language.

Fear, emotionalism, and attachment to names and numbers cause two short-circuits; one in the heart, the other in the mind. The short-circuit in our hearts prevents us from responding with our “spiritual instinct” to the Word of God. The short-circuit in our minds prevents us from reasoning or thinking in a rational way. Mending these short-circuits are the two challenges every seeker of truth faces.

The Word of God is so supreme, so distinguished, that it shines as brightly as the sun. Can anyone with good eyes fail to see the sun? Bahá'u'lláh testifies to the distinction of divine Word:

Behold, how lofty is the station, and how consummate the virtue, of these verses which He hath declared to be His surest testimony, His infallible proof, the evidence of His all-subduing power, and a revelation of the potency of His will. He, the divine King, hath proclaimed the undisputed supremacy of the verses of His Book over all things that testify to His truth. For compared with all other proofs and tokens, the divinely-revealed verses shine as the sun, whilst all others are as stars. To the peoples of the world they are the abiding testimony, the incontrovertible proof, the shining light of the ideal King. Their excellence is unrivaled, their virtue nothing can surpass. They are the treasury of the divine pearls and the depository of the divine mysteries...Through them floweth the

river of divine knowledge, and gloweth the fire of His ancient and consummate wisdom.²

Bahá'u'lláh did not attend school, yet He wrote the equivalent of a hundred volumes, without hesitation or a change of mind! This is not a secret or private miracle, but one visible for all to see for all time.

Once again, Bahá'u'lláh points to the Word of God as the ultimate evidence:

Therefore, should a person arise and bring forth a myriad verses, discourses, epistles, and prayers, none of which have been acquired through learning, what conceivable excuse could justify those that reject them, and deprive themselves of the potency of their grace? What answer could they give when once their soul hath ascended and departed from its gloomy temple? Could they seek to justify themselves by saying: "We have clung to a certain tradition, and not having beheld the literal fulfillment thereof, we have therefore...kept remote from the law of God?"³

Read the following Epistle from Bahá'u'lláh with your heart and soul. Ponder its meaning. Allow your "spiritual instinct" to respond. Let your soul bask in its beauty, power, and uniqueness. Try to remember if you have ever heard or seen any human being speak in this language.

The Most Holy Tablet❖

In the name of the Lord, the Lord of great glory.

...Say, O followers of the Son!³ Have ye shut out yourselves from Me by reason of My Name? Wherefore ponder ye not in your hearts? Day and night ye have been calling upon your Lord, the Omnipotent, but when He [Bahá'u'lláh] came from the heaven of eternity in His great glory, ye turned aside from him...

Consider those who rejected the Spirit⁴ when He came unto them with manifest dominion. How numerous the Pharisees who had secluded themselves in synagogues in His name, lamenting over their separation from Him, and yet when the portals of reunion were flung open ...they disbelieved in God, the Exalted, the Mighty. They failed to attain His presence, notwithstanding that His advent had been promised them in the Book of Isaiah as well as in the Books of the Prophets and the Messengers. No one from among them turned his face

❖ The footnotes do not belong to the original text. They are added by this author as an aid to those who may wish to study the links between Bahá'u'lláh's Words and the Bible.

3. Perhaps a reference to the passage: "No one knows *the Son* [Jesus] except the Father..." (Matt. 11:27).
4. The Spirit of God, a title bestowed on Christ, in both the Islamic and the Bahá'í Scriptures.

towards the Dayspring of divine bounty except such as were destitute of any power amongst men. And yet, today, every man endowed with power and invested with sovereignty prideth himself on His Name. Moreover, call thou to mind the one who sentenced Jesus to death. He was the most learned of His age in His own country,⁵ whilst he who was only a fisherman⁶ believed in Him. Take good heed and be of them that observe the warning.

...We, verily, have come for your sakes, and have borne the misfortunes of the world for your salvation. Flee ye the One Who hath sacrificed His life that ye may be quickened? Fear God, O followers of the Spirit, and walk not in the footsteps of every divine [religious leader] that hath gone far astray. Do ye imagine that He seeketh His own interests, when He hath, at all times, been threatened by the swords of the enemies; or that He seeketh the vanities

5. Most likely Bahá'u'lláh refers to Annas, who was the most prestigious, influential, and learned religious leader among the Jews at the time of Jesus. He served as the high priest and had several sons who also occupied that position. His son-in-law (Caiaphas) was the presiding high priest at the trial of Jesus. Because of Annas' prestige, Jesus was *first* led to him for a preliminary trial and *then* to Caiaphas. Annas and Caiaphas pronounced the same verdict: death. Caiaphas said: "it is better for you that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish" (John 11:50).

6. Peter.

of the world, after He hath been imprisoned in the most desolate of cities? Be fair in your judgment and follow not the footsteps of the unjust.

...Say: We, in truth, have opened unto you the gates of the Kingdom. Will ye bar the doors of your houses in My face? This indeed is naught but a grievous error. He, verily, hath again come down from heaven, even as He came down from it the first time.⁷ Beware lest ye dispute that which He proclaimeth, even as the people before you disputed His utterances. Thus instructeth you the True One, could ye but perceive it.

...the Burning Bush calleth aloud: "He Who is the Desired One is come in His transcendent majesty." Say, Lo! The Father is come,⁸ and that which ye were promised in the Kingdom is fulfilled! This is the Word which the Son concealed, when to those around Him He said: "Ye cannot bear it now."⁹ And when the appointed time was fulfilled and the Hour had

7. Most likely Bahá'u'lláh refers to these verses:

I [Jesus] have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me...They [the Jews] said, "Surely this is Jesus son of Joseph; we know his father and mother. How can he now say, 'I have come down from heaven?'" (John 6:38,42).

8. "For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father..." (Matthew 16:27).

9. "I [Jesus] have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now" (John 16:12).

struck, the Word shone forth above the horizon of the Will of God. Beware, O followers of the Son, that ye cast it not behind your backs. Take ye fast hold of it. Better is this for you than all that ye possess. Verily He is nigh unto them that do good. The Hour which We had concealed from the knowledge of the peoples of the earth and of the favored angels hath come to pass.¹⁰ Say, verily, He hath testified of Me, and I do testify of Him.¹¹ Indeed, He hath purposed no one other than Me. Unto this beareth witness every fair-minded and understanding soul.

Though beset with countless afflictions, We summon the people unto God, the Lord of names. Say, strive ye to attain that which ye have been promised in the Books of God, and walk not in the way of the ignorant. My body hath endured imprisonment that ye may be released from the bondage of self. Set your faces then towards His countenance and follow

10. "I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee" (Revelation 3:3, Also Mark 13:32).

"No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father" (Matthew 24:36).

11. "But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me" (John 15:26).

not the footsteps of every hostile oppressor. Verily, He hath consented to be sorely abased that ye may attain unto glory, and yet, ye are disporting yourselves in the vale of heedlessness. He, in truth, liveth in the most desolate of abodes for your sakes, whilst ye dwell in your palaces.

...Lo! He is come in the sheltering shadow of Testimony, invested with conclusive proof and evidence, and those who truly believe in Him regard His presence as the embodiment of the Kingdom of God. Blessed is the man who turneth towards Him, and woe betide such as deny or doubt Him.

Announce thou unto the priests: Lo! He Who is the Ruler is come. Step out from behind the veil in the name of thy Lord, He Who layeth low the necks of all men. Proclaim then unto all mankind the glad-tidings of this mighty, this glorious Revelation. Verily, He Who is the Spirit of Truth is come to guide you unto all truth. He speaketh not as prompted by His own self, but as bidden by Him Who is the All-Knowing, the All-Wise.¹²

12. "When he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak..." (John 16:13).

Say, this is the One Who hath glorified the Son¹³ and hath exalted His Cause. Cast away, O peoples of the earth, that which ye have and take fast hold of that which ye are bidden by the All-Powerful, He Who is the Bearer of the Trust of God. Purge ye your ears and set your hearts towards Him that ye may hearken to the most wondrous Call which hath been raised from Sinai...

O concourse of priests! Leave the bells, and come forth, then, from your churches. It becometh you, in this day, to proclaim aloud the Most Great Name among the nations. Prefer ye to be silent, whilst every stone and every tree shouteth aloud: "The Lord¹⁴ is come in His great glory!"? Well is it with the man who hasteneth unto Him. Verily, he is numbered

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13. "...when he, the Spirit of truth, comes...He will bring glory to me [Christ]..." (John 16:13-14).

The deepest wisdom which the sages have uttered, the profoundest learning which any mind hath unfolded, the arts which the ablest hands have produced, the influence exerted by the most potent of rulers, are but manifestations of the quickening power released by His [Jesus'] transcendent, His all-pervasive, and resplendent Spirit.

We testify that when He came into the world, He shed the splendor of His glory upon all created things.

Bahá'u'lláh (*Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 85-86).

14. "Look, your house is left to you desolate. I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord'" (Luke 13:35).

among them whose names will be eternally recorded¹⁵ and who will be mentioned by the Concourse on High. Thus hath it been decreed by the Spirit in this wondrous Tablet. He that summoneth men in My name is, verily, of Me, and he will show forth that which is beyond the power of all that are on earth. Follow ye the Way of the Lord and walk not in the footsteps of them that are sunk in heedlessness. Well is it with the slumberer who is stirred by the Breeze of God and ariseth from amongst the dead, directing his steps towards the Way of the Lord. Verily, such a man is regarded, in the sight of God, the True One, as a jewel amongst men and is reckoned with the blissful.

Say: In the East the light of His Revelation hath broken; in the West have appeared the signs of His dominion.¹⁶ Ponder this in your hearts, O people, and be not of those who have turned a deaf ear to the admonitions of Him Who is the Almighty, the All-Praised. Let the Breeze of God awaken you. Verily, it hath wafted over the world. Well is it with him that hath discovered the fragrance thereof and been accounted among the well-assured.

O concourse of bishops! Ye are the stars of the heaven of My knowledge. My mercy desireth

15. Revelation 2:15; 21:27.

16. "For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man" (Matthew 24:27).

not that ye should fall upon the earth. My justice, however, declareth: “This is that which the Son hath decreed.” And whatsoever hath proceeded out of His blameless, His truth-speaking, trustworthy mouth, can never be altered.¹⁷ The bells, verily, peal out My Name, and lament over Me, but My spirit rejoiceth with evident gladness. The body of the Loved One yearneth for the cross, and His head is eager for the spear in the path of the All-Merciful. The ascendancy of the oppressor can in no wise deter Him from His purpose. We have summoned all created things to attain the presence of thy Lord, the King of all names. Blessed is the man that hath set his face towards God, the Lord of the Day of Reckoning.

O concourse of monks! If ye choose to follow Me, I will make you heirs of My kingdom; and if ye transgress against Me, I will, in My long-suffering, endure it patiently, and I, verily, am the Ever-forgiving, the All-Merciful...

I never passed a tree but Mine heart addressed it saying: “O would that thou wert cut down in My Name, and My body crucified upon thee.”...

17. Most likely Bahá'u'lláh refers to this prophecy: “...and the stars shall fall from heaven...” (Matthew 24:29).

Bahá'u'lláh states that *stars* symbolize religious leaders. They “fall” when they fail to turn to the new Source of Light. For biblical evidence, see *In the Clouds of Glory*.

Say: Blessed the slumberer who is awakened by My Breeze.¹⁸ Blessed the lifeless one who is quickened through My reviving breaths. Blessed the eye that is solaced by gazing at My beauty. Blessed the wayfarer who directeth his steps towards the Tabernacle of My glory and majesty. Blessed the distressed one who seeketh refuge beneath the shadow of My canopy. Blessed the sore athirst who hasteneth to the soft-flowing waters of My loving-kindness. Blessed the insatiate soul who casteth away his selfish desires for love of Me and taketh his place at the banquet table¹⁹ which I have sent down from the

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18. "Be alert, be wakeful. You do not know when the moment comes. It is like a man away from home: he has left his house and put his servants in charge, each with his own work to do, and he has ordered the doorkeeper to stay awake. Keep awake, then, for you do not know when the master of the house is coming. Evening or midnight, cock-crow or early dawn—if he comes suddenly, he must not find you asleep. And what I say to you, I say to everyone: Keep awake" (Mark 13:33-37).
19. "The kingdom of heaven is like a king who prepared a wedding banquet for his son. He sent his servants to those who had been invited to the banquet to tell them to come, but they refused to come. Then he sent some more servants and said, "Tell those who have been invited that I have prepared my dinner: My oxen and fattened cattle have been butchered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding banquet." But they paid no attention and went off—one to his field, another to his business. The rest seized his servants, mistreated them and killed them" (Matthew 22:2-6, see also Matthew 25:1-13).

"Blessed is the man who will sit at the feast in the kingdom of God" (Luke 14:15).

heaven of divine bounty for My chosen ones. Blessed the abased one who layeth fast hold on the cord of My glory; and the needy one who entereth beneath the shadow of the Tabernacle of My wealth. Blessed the ignorant one who seeketh the fountain of My knowledge; and the heedless one who cleaveth to the cord of My remembrance. Blessed the soul that hath been raised to life through My quickening breath and hath gained admittance into My heavenly Kingdom. Blessed the man whom the sweet savors of reunion with Me have stirred and caused to draw nigh unto the Dayspring of My Revelation. Blessed the ear that hath heard and the tongue that hath borne witness and the eye that hath seen and recognized the Lord Himself, in His great glory and majesty, invested with grandeur and dominion...Upon him rest My mercy, My loving-kindness, My bounty and My glory.

Bahá'u'lláh

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159. *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 156.
160. *The Proclamation of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 91.
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***The Hour of His
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1. *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 11.
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Appendices

*Appendix I: Bahá'í Scriptures
Available in English*

*Appendix II: Other Books by the
Same Author*

Appendix I

Bahá'í Scriptures Available in English

Bahá'u'lláh's Works

Seek ye out the book of Jehovah and read...

Isaiah 34:16

Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh

The most complete and comprehensive reference on Bahá'u'lláh's Works available in English. This book, which is a compilation from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, covers a wide spectrum of precepts ranging from the purpose of man's creation, his duty and destiny, to the manifold mysteries of divine Wisdom.

Prayers and Meditations

By Bahá'u'lláh

Bahá'u'lláh has left a rich repository of prayers pertaining to every human hope and aspiration, dream or desire. Thus, in this dispensation, the seekers of serenity, guidance, and inspiration can select and recite prayers and meditations revealed and blessed by the Pen of the Redeemer of the age, the revealer of divine Purpose.

Bahá'u'lláh has also written many prayers expressing His own supplication and servitude before God. Such prayers offer an intimate knowledge of Bahá'u'lláh's own self—His indomitable spirit, His unswerving love for the Creator and for humanity, His steadfastness in His claim, His determination before the onrush of adversities, His absolute trust in God, and His loving counsel to all those athirst for truth.

The Hidden Words of Bahá'u'lláh

No other of Bahá'u'lláh's works so succinctly offers the reader as complete and as representative a sample of the ethical fruits of the new Revelation as *The Hidden Words*. It is a small book filled with gems, a treasure-house of celestial Wisdom, a divine guide to the unfoldment and ennoblement of the human spirit.

All the requirements for attaining purity and self-fulfillment are stated in the most exquisite and lofty language. Everything that the soul must seek

or surrender, everything that a spiritual seeker must know or must do to direct the course of his or her spiritual destiny is concisely and clearly revealed and set forth by the pen of the Supreme Messenger—the Revealer of hidden wisdom and divine mysteries.

The Seven Valleys and the Four Valleys

Perhaps the most mystical of Bahá'u'lláh's works available in English. It unfolds and enumerates the stages of seeker's journey towards God; revealing, in a language at once poetic and perplexing, his potential for attaining perfection and nobility, and his sublime and celestial destiny, if he but turns to the light instead of darkness, seeks the gems of divine wisdom instead of the perishable joys of flesh, and undertakes to tread the long but wondrous and enchanting path of purification and illumination.

Epistle to the Son of the Wolf

Addressed to a cruel and cunning Muslim clergyman who, along with his father, inflicted death, distress, and torment on some of Bahá'u'lláh's most beloved and most distinguished disciples. Though addressed to a symbol of denial, it is a call to humanity as a whole. This weighty volume covers and clarifies many illuminating and inspiring arrays of precepts.

The Summons of the Lord of Hosts

Contains some of Bahá'u'lláh's Epistles or Tablets addressed to the kings and rulers of the world, to its religious leaders, and to humanity in general. These Tablets comprise Bahá'u'lláh's most emphatic words on His claim and on His station as the supreme Savior of humankind, the King of Kings, the Glory of the Lord, the Desire of the Nations, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace, the Lord of the Vineyard, Christ returned in the Glory of the Father, the Inaugurator of the Cycle of Fulfillment, and the Promised One of all ages and religions.

***The Book of Certitude*[✧]**

This book responds to questions raised by a seeker of truth. It unseals "the sealed Wine of mysteries," and unveils the symbolism and the essence of all the scriptures of the past, indicates how the seeker of truth can rise above the prevailing perplexity and confusion, how he or she can move from doubt to certitude, and from unbelief to belief.

It offers proofs of divine Revelation, portrays in a moving language man's refusal to accept and acknowledge, in every age, the gift of divine Guidance, and conveys in a unique tone and style the dramatic story of the unfoldment of the perennial Faith of God, the unveiling of the eternal Truth.

[✧]Also known as *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*.

***Other Bahá'í Writings
Available in English***

By Bahá'u'lláh:

*The Most Holy Book
Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*

By the Báb:

Selections from the Writings of the Báb

By 'Abdu'l-Bahá:

*Some Answered Questions
Foundations of World Unity
The Secret of Divine Civilization
Paris Talks*

*Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá
The Promulgation of Universal Peace
A Traveller's Narrative*

Appendix II

Biblical Prophecies Predicting the Advent of the Bahá'í Faith



I Shall Come Again

522 Pages

Volume I

***That is the day when I come like a thief.
Happy the man who stays awake.***

Christ (Rev. 16:15)

***Do not let Him find you sleeping. What I
say to you, I say to everyone: "Watch!"***

Christ (Mark 13:36)

Did you know that the Bible contains 16 time prophecies concerning the year of the Second Advent? No wonder so many scholars discovered the same date. Did you also know that all those 16 prophecies point to the same year: 1844? ***Bahá'ís believe that the promise of the Second Advent has already been fulfilled, precisely as predicted.*** Christ did return in 1844, ***"like a thief,"*** in a way that ***the News of His coming did not draw much attention.*** And as the Book of Revelation predicts, God gave Him a new name: ***Bahá'u'lláh,*** meaning ***the Glory of God.***

Obviously ***we expect you to be very skeptical,*** but we invite you ***to stay spiritually awake, to***

“watch,” to pay close attention, and to investigate this most glorious News. How can you do this? Start your search by examining the evidence presented in *I Shall Come Again*, the first of a six-volume series on the fulfillment of biblical prophecies by Bahá'u'lláh, the Glory of God.

I Shall Come Again, written after three decades of research, takes you step by step through 16 prophecies that point to 1844, and hundreds of other prophecies, concerning the return of Christ. It proves how these prophecies, without exception, were fulfilled by Bahá'u'lláh (*the Glory of God*) and His martyred Herald, the Báb (*the Gate*), who appeared in 1844. *I Shall Come Again* is one of the most fascinating books of our time. If you have faith in God's promises and a desire to know the truth, you will receive incomparable joy and hope from reading it.

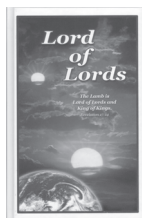
Imagine if the News of the Return of Jesus is true and you choose not to investigate and not to know Him! Imagine also if the News of His Return is true and your investigation leads you to recognize Him!

I shall come again and receive you to myself, so that where I am you may be also.

Christ (John 14:3)

“He, verily, is come with His Kingdom, and all the atoms cry aloud: ‘Lo! The Lord is come in His great majesty!’” “Behold how He hath come down from the heaven of His grace, girded with power and invested with

sovereignty. Is there any doubt concerning His signs?" *Bahá'u'lláh (the Glory of God)*



Lord of Lords

634 Pages

Volume II

This volume presents hundreds of biblical prophecies concerning the Central Figures of the Bahá'í Faith—the Báb, Bahá'u'lláh, 'Abdu'l-Bahá—as well as Shoghi Effendi (the Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith), the Universal House of Justice (the supreme administrative body in the Bahá'í Faith), the Bahá'ís (the followers of Bahá'u'lláh), the Bahá'í teachings, and the Book of Bahá'í Laws (*The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*).

Lord of Lords presents six fulfillments for Daniel's prophecy of 1335, and shows their connection to the Bahá'í Faith. The book also presents **86 similarities between Jesus and the Báb**, who is called "***One like a Son of Man.***"

Christian scholars often apply the statistical laws to the prophecies of Hebrew Scriptures to prove the divine station of Jesus. ***Lord of Lords*** applies the same laws to the prophecies of both Hebrew and Christian Scriptures to prove the divine station of the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh.

Lord of Lords shows that the probability of biblical prophecies coming true in the Bahá'í Faith by

chance alone is about 1 in 10^{80} . The number 10^{80} is equal to the number of atoms in the known universe! What does this evidence indicate? ***It indicates that if anyone could pick a specific atom in the universe by chance, he could then claim that the biblical prophecies fulfilled in the Bahá'í Faith also happened by chance!*** The proof presented in this volume is so compelling it can convince even the most skeptic seeker!

...the desire of all nations shall come...

Haggai 2:7

He who is the Desired One is come in His transcendent majesty...Better is this for you than all ye possess.

Bahá'u'lláh (the Glory of God)

For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father...

Christ (Matthew 16:27)

I have come in the shadows of the clouds of glory, and am invested by God with invincible sovereignty.

Bahá'u'lláh (the Glory of God)



King of Kings

510 Pages

Volume III

This is the third of the six-volume series. This volume also presents hundreds of biblical prophecies concerning the advent of the Bahá'í Faith.

Four of its chapters show that, contrary to what most people—both Christians and Jews—believe, ***the Bible predicts suffering and severe persecution for the Redeemer of our time. King of Kings*** also presents many prophecies, in the course of two chapters, to show that according to both testaments, the title of the Redeemer of our age (known to Christians as the Second Coming of Christ and to the Jews as the Messiah) is “***the Glory of God,***” the English translation of the original title “***Bahá’u’lláh.***”

A chapter discusses the many reasons why people deny and persecute their promised Messenger and Redeemer in every age, and then later claim that if they had lived at the time of His Advent they would not be among the deniers!

Many Christians expect the coming of the Antichrist. ***King of Kings*** presents two chapters to show the fulfillment of this expectation by two deceptive figures who opposed ***Bahá’u’lláh, the Glory of God,*** with all their might, and tried in vain to destroy Him and establish themselves as the Central Figures of the Bahá’í Faith.

I Shall Come Again, Lord of Lords, and King of Kings prove that once again God has spoken to humanity, that He has fulfilled His promises, and has manifested His great glory and power by sending two supreme Messengers and Redeemers—***Bahá’u’lláh, and His martyred Herald, the Báb***—to guide our bewildered world to unity, peace, and justice, and to lead our wandering souls to His

heavenly Mansions. Not investigating this Message of hope and fulfillment is to deprive yourself of the very source of all wisdom and the very purpose of coming to this world.

I have come down from heaven...

Christ (John 6:38)

Say, God is my witness! The Promised One Himself [Bahá'u'lláh] hath come down from heaven...with the hosts of revelation on His right, and the angels of inspiration on His left...

Bahá'u'lláh (the Glory of God)

Behold, I come like a thief! Blessed is he who stays awake...

Christ (Revelation 16:15)

*Blessed the slumberer who is awakened...
Blessed the ear that hath heard, and the eye that hath seen, and the heart that hath turned unto Him...*

Bahá'u'lláh (the Glory of God)

What do others say about:

*I Shall Come Again, Lord of Lords,
King of Kings?*

A scholarly work of meticulous research. Appealing to reason and applying the scientific method to prophetic scripture, it demonstrates that God has once again revealed Himself to humankind and has provided hope for unity and peace on this planet.

John Paul Vader, M.D.

Author of For the Good of Mankind

A book with a message of hope and fulfillment, a message that can transform our planet into a place of peace, into a kingdom that has been the dream and hope of humanity since the dawn of history...a scholarly, comprehensive, and fascinating work that has been long overdue. No wonder it took over three decades to complete it.

Hon. Dorothy W. Nelson
Judge, U. S. Court of Appeals, 9th Circuit

A story with an incredible ending that is made credible by the sheer weight of evidence. It is a must for anyone interested in the proofs of the advent of the Promised One of all ages.

John Huddleston
Former Chief of Budget and Planning
Division, International Monetary Fund,
Author of *The Earth Is But One Country*

...a treasure house of great value for both Bahá'ís and seekers.

Adib Taherzadeh
Author and Scholar

I am in awe at the extent of research you have undertaken!

Waldo Boyd
Writer and Editor

Your work never fails to astound me. The effort and breadth of your knowledge both of the Bible and other literature as well as the depth of your understanding of Bahá'í Scripture is truly amazing. Also, a hallmark of your work is your thoroughness. Anyone who believes in biblical prophecy, and reads these

volumes with an open mind, cannot fail to be convinced.

Dr. Tom Rowe

Professor of Psychology

Your work is the best I've seen on biblical prophecies and proofs of Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation. You offer so much information in relatively few pages. Your many references prove clearly the book's central claim. Your language is simple and exciting. You take the reader through a complete spiritual and prophetic adventure. Your approach is modest, yet dynamic. I pray it will excite all your readers as it has excited me.

Joe Killeen

Bible Scholar, with a Degree in
Eschatology and Soteriology

There are few works by a single author that can rival Dr. Motlagh's in their sheer scope, depth and thoroughness of scholarship. Without doubt, future Bahá'ís will thank Dr. Motlagh for his achievements, that are, in my opinion, not only astonishing—they are heroic.

An important work that will be referenced by future Bahá'í scholars for millennia to come.

Robert F. Riggs

Aerospace and Marine Scientist, Inventor,
Author of *The Apocalypse Unsealed*

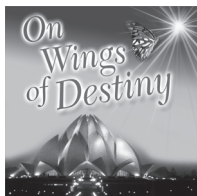
*By writing these volumes Dr. Motlagh has made a momentous contribution to our understanding of biblical prophecy. As a former Baptist minister, I urge all Christians to investigate the news of the return of our Lord as presented in *I Shall Come Again, Lord of**

Lords, and King of Kings. “Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord rises upon you” (Isa. 60:1).

Mel Campbell

Former Baptist Minister

Other Books by the Same Author



On Wings of Destiny

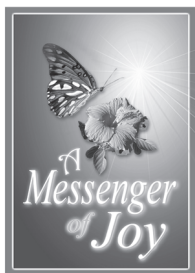
274 Pages

On Wings of Destiny is based on a dialogue between two friends. Reading it is like joining a circle of friends and participating in a “fireside chat.”

The prime purpose of the book is to inspire you—and anyone else who values his soul and spiritual life—to recognize that *in this world you have an awesome responsibility: you must choose your everlasting destiny. That choice has unimaginable consequences that will endure beyond death for all eternity.* Failing to make a choice is also a choice. This book invites you to make every effort to discover God’s plan for you and to follow that plan.

On Wings of Destiny shows that the only way you can attain true joy and happiness in all the

worlds of God is to cultivate your spiritual potential and to draw nearer and nearer to God. If you value your soul and wish to choose your destiny in the light of knowledge and freedom, take the time to listen to this inspiring “fireside chat” to discover how the Bahá'í teachings can help you attain contentment, fulfill your life's purpose, and discover your divine destiny: Heaven's most glorious gift to you.

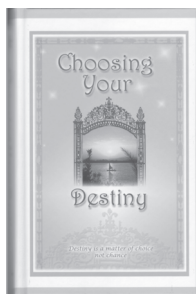


A Messenger of Joy

112 Pages

A Messenger of Joy is the most comforting and positive book ever written on death and the after-life. In consoling and uplifting the souls of the grieving, it sets a standard that is not likely to be surpassed for a long time.

This book portrays death as a message of joy and hope, and not as the news of sorrow and despair. It lifts the veil to show that death is not the end of life, but the beginning of an everlasting and most glorious journey toward God.

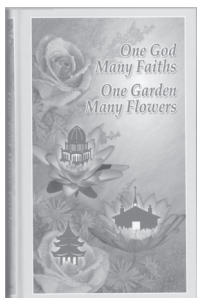


Choosing Your Destiny

375 Pages

Most people leave their destiny to “chance.” Whatever their parents happen to believe, they believe. This book shows that our “destiny” is God’s most precious gift to us. Should we throw this gift to the wind? Should we allow “chance” rather than “choice” determine our destiny?

The Bahá’í Faith has come to give us spiritual insight and to help us choose our destiny in the light of reason and true knowledge, rather than in the darkness of tradition and conformity. The knowledge contained in ***Choosing Your Destiny*** can liberate us from past prejudices and illusions and set our souls free. It can help us become spiritual by developing “the divine image” in our soul.



***One God, Many
Faiths; One Garden,
Many Flowers***

290 Pages

One God, Many Faiths; One Garden, Many Flowers shows that in God's garden there are many fragrant flowers, planted and nourished by the same Gardener. The Bahá'í Faith has come to help us recognize the beauty of the garden, the harmony of the flowers, and the oneness of the Gardener.

When we realize that we are all one people, on one planet, under one God, with one common destiny, the walls of prejudice that divide God's beautiful garden will crumble. Only true knowledge and love can reveal this beauty and bring about this wonder. The Bahá'í Faith is that knowledge and that love. It penetrates the hearts and souls of humankind to dispel all shadows of prejudice and separation. It connects our hearts and reveals the beauty and splendor of our souls in the light of oneness. ***One God, Many Faiths, One Garden, Many Flowers*** offers you the knowledge that can change your destiny.

Forthcoming Books



The Glory of the Son

It is absolutely essential to know why we believe in Jesus. Where can we find the answer? Only in the Words of Jesus Himself. *Glory of the Son* offers a brief summary of all the reasons Jesus—not His followers—gave to substantiate His claim. This is a book that every Christian should read. It will also be of great value to those of the Jewish faith who have a desire to know the evidence for their glorious King and Redeemer: Jesus Christ.



The Glory of the Father

This is the sequel to *Glory of the Son*. It applies the same standards to Bahá'u'lláh that *The Glory of the Son* applies to Jesus Christ.

The book presents 35 standards by which the seeker of truth can compare *the Glory of Jesus* with *the Glory of Bahá*. It also contains a brief summary of some of the prophecies about the advent of the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh as presented in *Lord of Lords*, and *King of Kings*.

True seekers will find this book very convincing, because it shows the absolute oneness of *Jesus Christ, the Anointed One of God; Bábu'lláh, the Gate of God; and Bahá'u'lláh, the Glory of God*. It proves that they are identical Celestial Roses, a Bouquet of beauty and fragrance sent as a gift from heaven to humankind.

***Will Jesus Come from the Sky
or as a Thief?***

Be always on the watch! Luke 21:36

***The day of the Lord will come like a
thief in the night. I Thess. 5:2***

In the mid-19th century many Christian scholars had discovered that, according to numerous biblical prophecies and promises, Christ would return in 1844. Thousands of Christians around the world expected His Return in that year. Why did so many discover the same date? And what piece of “the prophetic puzzle” did they miss? Let us explore this critical question.

Jesus declared that He would return “*like a thief*.” He also repeatedly warned us to “*Watch!*” How

does a thief come? Secretly. A thief does not want to draw attention to himself. This is his foremost concern. How can we catch a thief? By being awake and “*watchful*,” by “*paying attention*” to his coming. Jesus’ warning that He would return “*like a thief*,” and His recommended strategy for recognizing Him by staying *awake* and by “*watching*” for Him, are complementary:

The warning: I shall come like a thief!

The way to recognize me: Watch, pay close attention! Do not be complacent!

What, then, did Jesus mean by warning us repeatedly and emphatically to “*Watch!*”? He meant: “*Pay close attention to the news of My coming!*”

How did Jesus come the first time? Like a thief. He walked among the Jews. He knew every one of them, but with a few exceptions, they did not know Him. Jesus concealed His supreme glory from “the strangers,” from all those who were unworthy of seeing the Spirit of God in Him (John 12:40), from all those who “*may look and look but see nothing*” (Mark 10:12). *Only the spiritually-sighted paid close attention to Him*, only they “watched” with their hearts and souls, and only they saw the glory of God in Him. Jesus did not allow the spiritually blind to witness His divine glory.

By the vivid expression “*like a thief*” Jesus instructs us to expect a repetition of the way He

came the first time. He further confirms this fact by predicting that *people will respond to the News of His coming the same way that they responded to the News of the coming of Noah*. They will be complacent, non-attentive, negligent, and spiritually asleep!

What piece of “the prophetic puzzle” did Christians (who expected the Return of Christ in 1844) miss? The same “piece” that the Jews had missed 18 centuries earlier and are still missing! That piece is the word “*SPIRIT*:”

The “missing piece” for Jews:

He will come as a “king” means: “*His Spirit* will come as a king.”

The “missing piece” for Christians:

He will come from *heaven* means:
“*His Spirit* will come from heaven.”

Jesus Himself decoded the word “sky” or “heaven” several times. Compare the following two verses, one from *Jesus Christ, the Anointed One of God*; the other from *Bahá'u'lláh, the Glory of God*:

I [the Spirit of God, Christ] have come down from heaven. Christ (John 6:38)

He [the Spirit of God, Bahá'u'lláh], verily, hath again come down from heaven, even as He came down from it the first time.

Bahá'u'lláh (the Glory of God)

Sources for Information and Literature

1. Visit these Bahá'í Websites:
 - *www.globalperspective.org*
 - *www.bahai.org*
 - *www.bahai-library.org*
2. To receive information on the Bahá'í Faith, call:
1-800-949-1863 or 1-800-228-6483
3. To communicate with this author, send an
Email to: hugh@globalperspective.org

A Few Bahá'í Centers

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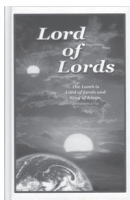
Seek and Ye Shall Find

Please examine pages 269-285 concerning the contents of these three volumes:



***I Shall
Come Again***

522 pages, 5½×8½



Lord of Lords

634 pages, 5½×8½



King of Kings

510 pages, 5½×8½

The three volumes present hundreds of biblical prophecies concerning the Second Advent and show their unmistakable fulfillment in the advent of the Bahá'í Faith. Investigate for yourself and discover how the promise of “*coming like a thief*” was fulfilled by *Bahá'u'lláh* (meaning “*the Glory of God*”) and His martyred Herald, *Bábu'lláh* (meaning “*the Gate of God*”), who appeared in 1844 and proclaimed the dawning of the Day of the Lord.

Be always on the watch. Luke 21:36

I shall come upon you like a thief. Rev. 3:3