

Muhammad

The Spirit Who
Glorified Jesus

*Uniting the Star, the
Cross, and the Crescent*

Hushidar Hugh Motlagh, Ed.D.



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Muhammad: The Spirit Who Glorified Jesus

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Jesus Christ

The Spirit of God

Test the spirits... I John 4:1

This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God.

I John 4:2

The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me...

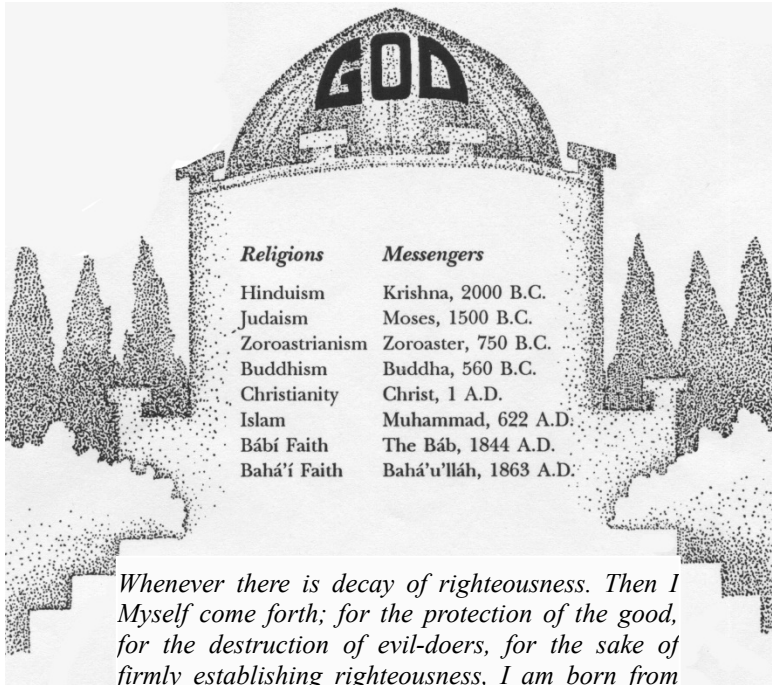
Christ (Luke 4:18 NKJ)

I bear witness that Jesus Son of Mary is the Spirit of God and His Word...

Muhammad

See also Qur'an 21:91

One God Many Messengers



*Whenever there is decay of righteousness. Then I
Myself come forth; for the protection of the good,
for the destruction of evil-doers, for the sake of
firmly establishing righteousness, I am born from
age to age.* *Bhagavad-Gita*

*I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the
Last, the Beginning and the End.* *Jesus Christ*

*All these holy, divine Manifestation are one. They
have served one God, promulgated the same
truth...and reflected the same light...in name and
form They differ; but in reality They agree and are
the same.* *Bahá'i Scriptures*

*And truly this your religion is the one [eternal]
religion; and I am your Lord.* *Qur'an 23:52*

*Verily, they who believe [Muslims], and the Jews,
and the Sabeites, and the Christians—whoever of
them believeth in God and in the last day, and doth
what is right, on them shall come no fear; neither
shall they be put to grief.* *Qur'an 5:69*

And Peter opened his mouth and said: Most certainly and thoroughly I now perceive and understand that God shows no partiality and is no respecter of persons, but in every nation he who venerates and has a reverential fear for God, treating Him with worshipful obedience and living uprightly, is acceptable to Him and sure of being received and welcomed [by Him].

Acts 10:34-35 AB

...one Lord, one faith...one God and Father of all...

Ephesians 4:5-6 NKJ

Say: In whatsoever Books God hath sent down do I [Muhammad] believe...God is your Lord and our Lord... between us [Muslims] and you [those of other faiths] let there be no strife; God will make us all one; and to Him shall we return.

Qur'an 42:15

Have we not all one father? Hath not one God created us?

Malachi 2:10

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

Romans 3:29 NKJ

Say: Will ye dispute with us about God? When He is our Lord and your Lord! We have our works and ye have your works; and we are sincerely His.

Qur'an 2:139

I, I am the Lord, and besides Me there is no Savior. Isaiah 43:11

The essence of all that We have revealed for thee is Justice, is for man to free himself from idle fancy and imitation, discern with the eye of oneness His glorious handiwork, and look into all things with a searching eye.¹

Bahá'u'lláh

And say: "We believe in what has been sent down to us and what has been sent down to you [the people of the book]. Our God and your God is one and to Him we submit. Qur'an 29:46

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Preface

The Light of Knowledge

O my Lord, increase knowledge unto me. Qur'an 20:114

Through knowledge shall the just be delivered.

Proverbs 11:9

How can we dispel the darkness of ignorance and prejudice? By turning on the light of knowledge. By recognizing and appreciating the common threads in the spiritual heritage of humankind. That is the prime purpose of this book. Knowledge is light; ignorance is darkness. Only in the light of knowledge can we know who we are, why we are here, and where we are going. Only in the light of knowledge can we discover our oneness, our common destiny, and our spiritual kinship.

How can we show the identity of four brothers and sisters who have been separated since birth? How can we know that they come from one family? By examining their genes. That is precisely what this book does; it examines the genetic makeup of the Scriptures of four great religions that have guided humankind for 3,500 years, and claim the allegiance of about half the earth's population. It helps their followers to recognize their spiritual kinship. It tears the veils of misconceptions, distrust, and denial—veils that continue to prevent the light of love and true knowledge from reaching the heart of humankind.

No peace among the nations without peace among the religions.¹

Hans Küng, Director of the Institute
for Ecumenical Research

A speaker at a church gathering read several verses and asked the listeners to guess where they came from. Most listeners believed all the verses came from the Bible. At the

end, the listeners were told, as expected, that they were right some of the time. But what was unusual in this experiment? Something the church members could not believe. ***Some of the verses did not come from the Bible;*** they came from the Scriptures of other great religions: Hindu, Buddhist, Islamic, and the Bahá'í Faith. Since the listeners did not know the sources, they listened to all the verses impartially and objectively. And they found them indistinguishable. (See ***Chapter 27*** for a selection of such verses.)

What will happen if the Jews, Christians, and Muslims discover their spiritual kingship? What will happen if their Scriptures are published as a four-volume series, written by a single Author? What will happen if those volumes find their way to every heart and every home? Eventually this will happen, but for now let us rejoice in seeing an image of what is to come:

A Four-Volume Series by God

1. <i>Hebrew Scriptures</i>	Spoken by Moses and the Prophets
2. <i>Gospel</i>	Spoken by Jesus
3. <i>Qur'án</i>	Spoken by Muhammad
4. <i>Bahá'í Scriptures</i>	Spoken by Bahá'u'lláh [✧]

[✧] If you are not familiar with the Bahá'í Faith, see ***Appendix I***.

I, I am the Lord; and besides Me there is no Savior.

Isaiah 43:11

The Revelation of God may be likened to the sun. No matter how innumerable its risings, there is but one sun, and upon it depends the life of all things.²

Bahá'í Scriptures

Muhammad: the Spirit Who Glorified Jesus covers three basic topics. It:

- Offers an impartial view of Islam, the faith that has been clouded by misconceptions and mysteries.
- Demonstrates the divine origin and a remarkable similarity between the Scriptures of four great religions: Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and the Bahá'í Faith. It proves that if one of them is from God, they all are.
- Responds to the common objections raised against Islam, especially by Christian theologians.

Mysteries Unsealed

God speaks in a unique language. Both the Bible and the Qur'án abound with metaphors, symbols, and parables. Such a language allows for a wide range of interpretation. Jews, Christians, and Muslims are divided in the interpretation of their own Scriptures. How can they understand the Scriptures of “other religions”? Who can lift the veil from mysteries? Who can fully understand the Word of God? Only the One who speaks for Him—the One promised in all sacred Scriptures, the One the Hebrew Bible identifies as “the Prince of Peace,” the Christian Bible as “the Return of Christ,” and the Qur'án as “the Great News.”

He (alone) knows the unseen, nor does He make any one acquainted with His mysteries—except a Messenger whom He has chosen...

Qur'án 72:26-27 Y

Surely the Lord God does nothing, unless He reveals His secret to His servants the prophets. *Amos 3:7 NKJ*

Bahá'ís believe that the One who knows the unseen has come, that the promised Redeemer has unveiled His glory, that the Prince of Peace has spoken and resolved all the mysteries of sacred Scriptures:

Through Him hath appeared that which had been hidden from time immemorial and been veiled from the eyes of men.³ *Bahá'u'lláh*

Every hidden thing hath been brought to light by virtue of the Will of the Supreme Ordainer...⁴ *Bahá'u'lláh*

This book could not have been written without the Key provided by the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh—the Key that unlocks the treasures of knowledge hidden in all sacred Scriptures since the dawn of history. The time of wondering and arguing has passed; the age of knowing has come! We can now learn about God and His plan for humankind in plain language:

Though I have been speaking figuratively, a time is coming when I will no longer use this kind of language but will tell you plainly about my Father.

Christ (John 16:25)

The beautiful Bride of mysteries has now lifted her veil. All truth lovers are invited to come with open minds and seeking hearts to behold the wonders of God's greatest and most glorious Revelation of Knowledge:

The mystic and wondrous Bride, hidden ere this beneath the veiling of utterance, hath now, by the grace of God and His divine favor, been made manifest even as the resplendent light shed by the beauty of the Beloved. I bear witness, O friends! that the favor is complete, the argument fulfilled, the proof manifest and the evidence established. Let it now be seen what

*your endeavors in the path of detachment will reveal.*⁵

Bahá'u'lláh

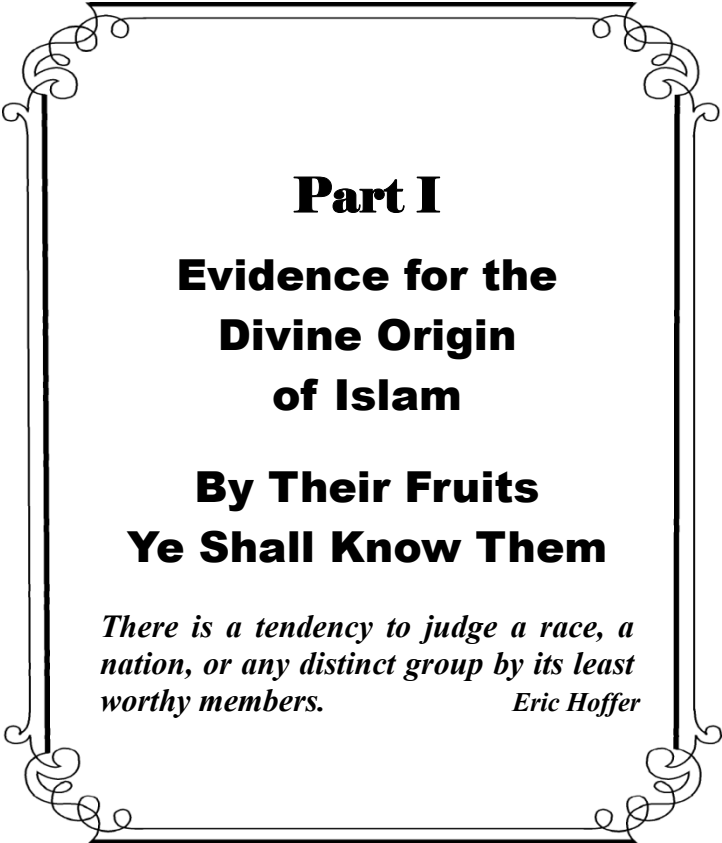
The Qur'án is, for the most part, a “sealed or closed” book—not only to Christians and Jews, but also to Muslims. It is an infinite source of celestial mysteries, a work of exquisite grace, beauty, and majesty, a book that has inspired and guided many millions of believers for centuries. Such a book deserves understanding and appreciation, not criticism.

What Makes This Volume Unique

What makes this volume unique is my Faith. As a Bahá'í, I consider all great religions the progressive revelations of the one ever-living truth from God. If I favor any one of them over another, then I have been untrue to my beliefs.

Even my own upbringing shows the powers of God in human life. My parents were of the Jewish faith. Only later in their lives did they recognize Bahá'u'lláh, and because of Him acknowledged the divine origin of Christianity and Islam. If it were not for the Bahá'í Faith, I would still be a Jew like all my ancestors and all my relatives on my father's side. How amazing, how incredible, that someone with Jewish ancestors writes a book to prove to Christians that Islam is as valid and as wonderful as Christianity! How ironic that I am defending Islam by responding to accusations made by Christians against the Qur'án! What a great honor to know that I am also inviting Jews, Christians, and Muslims to recognize their promised Redeemer, Bahá'u'lláh! Such wonders can only come from God. This is an evidence of His awesome powers over our lives. Through Him, the impossible becomes possible.

I hope and pray that this book will serve its purpose: it will bring all of us together—the estranged, lost, and isolated brothers and sisters divided only by our last names! May we recognize our oneness. May we celebrate our kinship: that we are the children of the one great, great, grandfather named Abraham. May God bring us all together at His heavenly Banquet as His loving and peaceful guests.



Part I
**Evidence for the
Divine Origin
of Islam**
**By Their Fruits
Ye Shall Know Them**

There is a tendency to judge a race, a nation, or any distinct group by its least worthy members. *Eric Hoffer*

I

Islam, the Misunderstood Religion

How is Islam Perceived in the West?

“The days are coming,” declares the Sovereign Lord, “when I will send a famine through the land—not a famine of food or a thirst for water, but a famine of hearing the words of the Lord. Men will stagger from sea to sea and wander from north to east, searching for the word of the Lord, but they will not find it.”

Amos 8:11-12 NIV

What “oppression” is more grievous than that a soul seeking the truth, and wishing to attain unto the knowledge of God, should know not where to go for it and from whom to seek it? For opinions have sorely differed, and the ways unto the attainment of God have multiplied.¹

Bahá'u'lláh

They have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge.

Romans 10:2

Accurate knowledge about Islam has been sadly lacking in the West. To test this idea it seems fitting to examine the works of a distinguished and dedicated Christian author and orator, Mr. George E. Vandeman, about Islam. Mr. Vandeman is both a highly skilled writer and an exceptionally eloquent orator, who has influenced millions of readers and television viewers. His published works include at least 28 volumes on various Christian concerns and issues.

Before we begin, one point must be emphasized: Mr. Vandeman's views *are not different from those of other Christian leaders and scholars of our time*. Indeed, they represent the perception most Christians—laymen and leaders alike—have held of Islam for the past fourteen centuries. Recognizing the awesome power of tradition in shaping belief systems is an essential prerequisite for understanding human values, behavior, and judgment. It would be almost impossible for an orthodox believer of any religion to remain detached from a well-established and centuries-held belief system. With this point in mind, we can gain a deeper understanding of any given critic who simply voices the traditional beliefs of the majority of his people.

Mr. Vandeman begins with words of praise for Islam:

It might come as a surprise to you that religious tolerance for Christians and Jews is a basic principle of Islam. Muhammad, pioneer of the Muslims, defended the rights of Christians and Jews to quietly believe as they wished.²

Then he expresses disapproval:

What do Muslims think of Jesus Christ? They accept Him as a prophet and teacher, but not as the Son of God and Savior from sin.³

Muhammad, the Spirit Who Glorified Jesus

Muhammad bestowed on Jesus the most exalted honor by calling Him *the Spirit of God*. Which title is greater? Since God is Spirit (John 4:24), *the Spirit of God* can mean **God Himself**. Jesus used “the Spirit of Your Father” (Matt. 10:20) to refer to the divine. This prophecy equates *the*

Spirit of the Lord with God Himself, the One who sent Jesus:

The Spirit of the Lord...has anointed me [Jesus]...He [the Spirit of the Lord] has sent me to proclaim...the year of the Lord's favor. Luke 4:18-19 NIV

I saw the Spirit [of God]...resting upon Him.

John 1:32 NEB

Muhammad did not in any way deny or diminish Jesus' glory and greatness, He only reinterpreted the meaning of "the Son." Further, in the Bible, ***all*** lovers of truth are called the sons of God:

You are the sons of the Lord your God. Moses (Deut. 14:1)

They [the Israelites] shall be called Sons of the Living God. Hosea 1:10 NEB

To all who received him...he gave the right to become children of God—children not born of natural descent... but born of God. John 1:12-13

Unlike ***the Son of God, the Spirit of God*** is a unique title; it points to God Himself:

No one knows the thoughts of God except ***the Spirit of God***. I Cor. 2:11 NIV

Ponder the following declaration from an Epistle sent by Muhammad to Negus, the king of Abyssina, who was a Christian:

I bear witness that Jesus Son of Mary ***is the Spirit of God and His Word***, which He cast to Mary the virgin.⁴

The same message is confirmed also in the Qur'án:

Jesus Son of Mary...is His [God's] Word, which He cast upon Mary, and a Spirit from Him [God]. Qur'án 4:171

What is the chance that a man born into a primitive family and culture in Arabia who worshipped idols, would on his

own, acknowledge and confirm the miraculous conception of a poor Jewish man born centuries earlier in the Holy Land? Could anyone come to such a realization on his own? Could anyone acknowledge such an incredible belief without divine inspiration? It seems the following verse was spoken specifically about Muhammad:

No one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit. I Cor. 12:3 NKJ

How amazing! Fifteen centuries ago Muhammad confirmed the miraculous conception of Jesus, yet today many Christians express doubt about this wonder. Consider the following statement published in news media:

London: Virgin Birth Omitted by the Church of Scotland: Direct reference to the Virgin Birth has been omitted from the Church of Scotland's New publication, *A Statement of Faith*, to "avoid potential division among the church's members."

The Rev David Beckett, secretary of the special working party that produced the publication, said the omission would move the Church of Scotland away from traditional Anglo-Catholic theology and towards the more liberal faction of the Church of England championed by the Bishop of Durham, David Jenkins.

The new document was debated by the Church of Scotland's annual General Assembly in Edinburgh. Designed to express the Westminster Confession, written in the 1640s, in a more up-to-date language, the church's Panel on Doctrine also took the opportunity to tailor the text on the Virgin Birth.⁵

If as a Christian you wish to know Muhammad, begin your search by using this standard: what did Muhammad teach about Jesus? Can you think of a title that would glorify Jesus more than: ***The Spirit of God?*** Try to expand your

imagination and think as much as you can to see if you can find a title that can bestow greater glory, honor, and grandeur on Jesus.

Can we expect further evidence of divine distinction from a man raised in a primitive land and instructed all his life to worship and glorify idols? Why, then, do Christians, instead of honoring Muhammad, reject Him? Why, then, do they try to find fault with Him? Why, then, do they fail to honor the One who glorified their Redeemer?

He will bring glory to me... Christ (John 16:14 NIV)

How did Jesus respond to Peter, when he acknowledged the divine glory of Jesus?

Jesus:	Who do you say that I am?
Peter:	You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.
Jesus:	Blessed are you...for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven.
	Matthew 16:15-17 NIV

If Muhammad had lived at the time of Jesus and like Peter had acknowledged His divine origin, would not Jesus have responded in the same way? Would not the dialogue between the two great Spirits have resembled the following?

Jesus:	Who do you say that I am?
Muhammad:	You are the Messiah (the Christ), <i>the Spirit of God</i> .
Jesus:	Blessed are you...for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven.

Could Muhammad glorify Jesus except by the Holy Spirit? No, as we noted:

No one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit. I Cor. 12:3 NKJ

According to sacred Scriptures, no one can believe in God, or any of His great Messengers and Redeemers, without God's permission:

No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him... Christ (John 6:44 NIV)

The one to whom God gives no Light, has no Light at all. Qur'án 24:40

A man can receive only what is given him from heaven. John 3:27 NIV

God is the Light of the heavens and the earth...God guides whoever He will to His Light... Qur'án 24:35

To appreciate Muhammad's accomplishments, consider a person born to an atheistic family in an atheistic culture (such as former Soviet Union or Communist China) who arises all by himself to promote belief in one supreme, invisible Creator—and despite severe opposition from the masses of prejudiced people and all those in positions of power—he succeeds in bringing about such a colossal spiritual revolution!

Rejecting Islam because Muhammad did not refer to Christ as *the Son of God* is like saying that Christ did not believe in the prophets Ezekiel and Nahum because those names are not found in the Gospel. In the Hebrew Scriptures, the prophet Esther does not mention the word *God*. Should we conclude that she did not believe in God?

Similarly, the word Savior (“the letter”) may not have been used in the Qur'án, but *the idea* of Savior (“the Spirit”) is attributed to Christ frequently. The Qur'án refers to Jesus as *the Word of God* and to the Words of Jesus as “*guidance and light*” (Qur'án 5:50). Aside from these, the name Jesus, used frequently in the Qur'án, in itself conveys the idea of

Savior. *The World Book Dictionary* defines the word *Jesus* as *Jehovah is salvation*.

Contrary to what many theologians preach, and Mr. Vandeman implies, salvation did not begin and end with Jesus. God has always sent Messengers or Saviors to save people from sin and to guide them to the gate of truth and knowledge. Could any declaration be more clear than the following:

The Lord has made his salvation known...all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.

Psalms 98:2-3 NIV

Lo! We [God] have ever sent forth Messengers [Saviors].

Qur'án 44:5

Salvation comes from an ever-living and ever-loving God who has always loved and guided His children and will continue to love them and guide them forevermore. As the meaning of the word *Jesus (Jehovah is salvation)* implies, salvation is from the one Creator who has always “taken delight in his people.”

I the Lord am thy Savior and thy Redeemer. Isaiah 60:16

For the Lord takes delight in his people; he crowns the humble with salvation.

Psalms 149:4 NIV

God shall save the God-fearing.

Qur'án 39:61

The Lord is my light and my salvation...

Psalms 27:1 NEB

Salvation for the righteous comes from the Lord...

Psalms 37:39

The heavens will vanish...But my salvation will last forever...

Isaiah 51:6 NIV

Would God limit His grace to one people or one religion? Or would His grace be universal, accessible to all who call on His name?

Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered. Joel 2:32

Whoso setteth his face toward God with self-surrender, and is righteous, hath laid hold on a sure handle... Qur'án 31:22

“Everyone who trusts in him [God] will never be put to shame.” For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call him. Romans 10:10-12 NIV

Verily, they who believe [Muslims], and they who follow the Jewish religion, and the Christians, and the Sabians—whoever of these believe in God and the last day, and doeth that which is right, shall have their reward with their Lord. Fear shall not come upon them, neither shall they be grieved. Qur'án 2:62

Is He the God of the Jews only? Is He not also of the Gentiles? Romans 3:29

And other sheep [believers] I [Jesus] have which are not of this fold [are outside Judeo-Christian belief system]. John 10:16

Mr. Vandeman then states:

Like so many devout but mistaken people around the world, they [Muslims] believe they can save themselves by their good works.⁶

Just as God is the central Figure in the Bible, so is He in the Qur'án. By no means do Muslims believe that they can save themselves by good works alone. As the Qur'án declares, to be acceptable, good works must receive the blessings and the grace of God:

A likeness of those who believe not in their Lord: Their works are like ashes which the wind scattereth on a stormy day. No advantage shall they gain from their works. Qur'án 14:18

Fear God...that God may bless your doings for you...

Qur'án 33:70-71

Vain the works of him who shall renounce the Faith!
And in the next world he shall be of the lost. Qur'án 5:5

O men! Now hath...come to you from your Lord...a
guidance...through the grace of God and His mercy!...
rejoice: better is this than all ye amass. Qur'án 10:57-58

Obey God and the Messenger, and render not your
works vain. Qur'án 47:35

The following few verses from the Qur'án, like hundreds of others, show where God should stand in human life, and how humans should relate to Him.

The gift of God [His guidance, grace, and love] is best
for you... Qur'án 11:86

And commemorate the name of thy Lord, and devote
thyself to Him with entire devotion. Qur'án 73:8

Seek thy Lord with fervor! Qur'án 94:8

And verily, God is my Lord and your Lord; adore Him
then. Qur'án 19:36

To God belong the secret things of the heavens and of
the earth; all things return to Him. Worship Him then
and put thy trust in Him. Thy Lord is not regardless of
your doings. Qur'án 11:123

He is the God of Mercy. In Him do we believe, and in
Him put we our trust... Qur'án 67:29

And make mention of the name of thy Lord...adore Him,
and praise Him... Qur'án 76:25-26

Many Christian leaders declare that only the God of the Bible is warm and personal, that the God of Islam is aloof and impersonal. These verses from the Qur'án should remove this misconception:

Seek pardon of your Lord and be turned unto Him:
verily, my Lord is merciful, loving. Qur'án 11:90

Thy Lord is nigh, ready to answer... Qur'án 11:61

Truly your Lord is full of goodness, and merciful...
 Qur'án 16:7

The gracious One—full of compassion—is thy Lord.
 Qur'án 18:58

Celebrate the praise of thy Lord...that thou haply may
please Him. Qur'án 20:130

Mr. Vandeman continues:

Since Muslims reject Jesus as Messiah, do they have the
right to consider themselves Heaven's chosen people?
Because they have the blood of Abraham, can Muslims
claim him as their spiritual father?⁷

As stated, Muslims use *the Spirit of God* as the chief title
for Christ, but they use both *Jesus* and *Christ* for His name.
The Arabic word for Christ is *Masih*, which is very similar
in spelling to Messiah, and has the same meaning: the
Anointed One. As we noted, the Qur'án uses the very word
Messiah to refer to Jesus.

The angel said...His name shall be *Messiah Jesus*...
 Qur'án 3:45

Contrary to what Mr. Vandeman thinks, the Hebrew Scrip-
tures bless Ishmael and his descendants (Muslims):

I [God] have heard your [Abraham's] prayer for Ishmael.
I have blessed him and will make him fruitful. I will
multiply his descendants; he shall be father of twelve
princes, and I will raise a great nation from him.

Genesis 17:20 NEB

God has heard the boy [Ishmael] crying..."Lift the boy
up and take him by the hand, for I will make him into a
great nation"...God was with the boy as he grew up.

Genesis 21:18, 20 NIV

Mr. Vandeman denies the bestowal of these divine blessings on Muslims. He asks: “Because they have the blood of Abraham, can Muslims claim him as their spiritual leader?” How does he reason? How does he arrive at this conclusion? According to the Hebrew Scriptures, Abraham’s name was initially Abram; it was later changed into Abraham. When God blessed Ishmael and his descendants, Abraham’s name had not yet been changed; it was still Abram. Therefore, God’s blessings, Mr. Vandeman reasons, would not count! This is how he presents his argument:

In the truest sense, Ishmael was not a son of Abraham. You see, he was born, not to Abraham, but to Abram—thirteen years before the patriarch’s name was changed to Abraham on the basis of faith. So Islam, descending from Ishmael, was disqualified from Abraham’s covenant right from the start. And Muslims today, despite their high moral principles, still lack the faith principle necessary to fulfill the covenant.⁸

And again:

All those who reject faith in the Messiah of the covenant [Jesus] disqualify themselves as the spiritual children of Abraham. They are really children of the flesh, children of Abram along with Ishmael. We must share the faith of Abraham—not his blood—to the people of the covenant today.⁹

Abraham (honored with the title *the Friend of God*, II Chr. 20:7) was as much loved when He was called Abram as when He was called Abraham. How do these names differ in meaning? According to *Harper’s Bible Dictionary*, Abram means “exalted father,” Abraham means “a father of a multitude.” Is either of these titles less honorable than the other? God revealed His Word to Abraham far in advance of this name change:

On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram...
Genesis 15:18 NIV

He [God] said...I am giving you a great reward...Abram
put his faith in the Lord. Genesis 15:1, 6 NEB

In thee [Abraham] shall all families of the earth be
blessed. Genesis 12:3
Also Gen. 28:14

Even if we assume that God blessed Abraham *after* His name was changed, still it would make no difference. Because Abraham was and always will be a Spirit from God. His true essence was not and will never be a name—mere letters placed together. What or who received the blessings? The name of Abraham or His Spirit?

This question is in order: who made the promise? God did:

I [God] have blessed him [Abraham]...and I [God] will
raise a great nation from him. Genesis 17:20 NEB

Abraham was only a Mediator, declaring the divine Message. Therefore, the question of Abraham's name is irrelevant. When God made the promise, did He not know that Abram's name would later change? Further, the prophecy is in response to Abraham's prayer, but the response relates to Ishmael, "I [God] will bless him [Ishmael]..."

Finally, Mr. Vandeman concludes:

Although Islam teaches surrender and commitment, it rejects the gospel. The only hope for Muslims to become true children of Abraham is by sharing his faith, faith in the Messiah of the covenant [Jesus].¹⁰

As we shall see, the Qur'án confirms all the sacred Scriptures. It specifically declares the Gospel to be the Word of God:

And We [God] bestowed on Him [Jesus] the Gospel
wherein is guidance and a light. Qur'án 5:46

He [God] had sent down the Law [the Torah], and the Evangel [Gospel]...as man's Guidance... Qur'án 3:3

It is evident that there is a phenomenal gap between what Islam is, and how it is portrayed and promoted by Christian leaders. What does misinformation lead to? It leads to a false perception, which then breeds this attitude: I own the only truth; why should I investigate a religion that undermines my most fundamental beliefs? Such an attitude prevents people from practicing the most essential teaching of every religion: *independent investigation of truth*.

This is how a Christian magazine refers to Muhammad:

We might accept some of the great moral principles given by Muhammad or Buddha, Confucius or Plato, Abraham Lincoln or Albert Schweitzer. That is not God authority, however.¹¹

As we can see, Muhammad, the founder of a major religion—religion that gave rise to one of the greatest civilizations the world has ever known, a religion with over one billion followers, one sixth of the world's population—is compared with such figures as Plato (a philosopher), Lincoln (a president and a politician), and Schweitzer (a humanitarian and doctor). None of these figures ever claimed to speak for God. They did not even try to establish a denomination.

Thousands of figures as great as Schweitzer, Lincoln, and Plato have appeared under Islam, who would have considered it their greatest glory and honor if only their names were uttered by the lips of Muhammad.

Further, the writer of the article disregards hundreds of references the Qur'án makes to God as its source of authority, exactly as the Bible does. Unfortunately, such an attitude about Islam is still quite common among Christian leaders and writers.

The article's chief goal is to prove that 40 prophets and saints who wrote the Bible could not lie 3800 times—that is the number of times that they declare their words came from the Lord. According to the article:

Virtually every writer in the Bible claimed he had communicated in some way with God...Time and again, the individuals who wrote the text of the Hebrew Bible, the Old Testament, claimed they were merely dutiful scribes. They said they were simply recording the words of a personage called the Lord or God. They were all saying en masse: ***God really spoke these words we're writing.***¹²

Does not this same argument hold true with Islam? For Muhammad made the same claim. The word "**Say**" at the beginning of the Quranic verses indicates God's command to Muhammad to say or make the statement that follows the word. It is the equivalent of the biblical phrase "**Thus says the Lord**" and appears over 300 times throughout the Qur'an. Note its use three times in only one verse:

Say: Who is Lord of the heavens and of the Earth? **Say:** God. **Say:** Why then have ye taken beside Him protectors, who even for their own selves have no power for help or harm?
Qur'an 13:16

All through the Qur'an, we see God as the supreme Figure on whom Muhammad depends and for whom He speaks:

This is God, my Lord! In Him do I put my trust, and to Him do I turn in penitence. Qur'an 42:10

God verifies the truth by His words. Qur'an 10:82

The Book...it is the Truth from your Lord. Qur'an 32:2-3

It [the Qur'an] is the truth. Is it not enough for thee that thy Lord is witness of all things? Qur'an 41:54

Instead of saying: “Thus says the Lord,” Jesus simply referred to His heavenly “Father:”

Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father...
Christ (John 6:57 NIV)

I stand with the Father, who sent me. In your own Law it is written that the testimony of two men is valid. I am one who testifies for myself; my other witness is the Father, who sent me.
Christ (John 8:16-18 NIV)

And the Father who sent me has himself testified concerning me.
Christ (John 5:37 NIV)

The same kind of thinking prevented the people of Israel from recognizing Jesus—their Savior and Redeemer. Such an attitude stifles curiosity and obscures the light of knowledge. It breeds apathy and self-satisfaction. It not only separates the followers of the great religions from each other, it also divides each religion into various sects or denominations. The very knowledge that is designed to unify the peoples of the world, separates them. If people practice the principle of *independent investigation of truth*, they will all arrive at one point: *there has always been and there will always be but one religion inspired by one Creator.*

God asks us to seek and follow the path of knowledge. What is knowledge? It is knowing *the truth, the reality, not fantasy or supposition*. How can true knowledge be gained? It can be gained only through an independent investigation of truth, by examining *various* views, not just the *popular* or *orthodox* views, otherwise, we may be:

Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.
II Timothy 3:7

Can you find any man...who seeks the truth?...they took no heed...they refused to learn...
Jeremiah 5:1, 3 NEB

You have rejected knowledge and I will reject you.

Hosea 4:6 NEB

Follow not the path of those who have no knowledge.

Qur'án 10:89

Ask, "where is the way that leads to what is good?"

Then take that way, and you will find rest...

Jeremiah 6:16 NEB

How does one know a way is good without an objective investigation of that way? Unfortunately, most people follow the way of tradition, accept what seems safe, what comes easily—namely preconceived notions:

Most of them have no knowledge.

Qur'án 16:101

Most of them follow nothing but fancy...

Qur'án 10:37

Would Jews lose anything by accepting Jesus? Would Christians lose anything by acknowledging Muhammad? They would not lose, but gain a deeper understanding of divine Wisdom. They would expand their knowledge. They would find and fit new pieces of the grand puzzle of creation:

This Qur'án...is a clearing up of the past Scriptures...

Qur'án 10:38

2

By Their Fruits You Will Recognize Them

Matthew 7:27 NIV

“The Fruits” of Islam and How They are Perceived in the West

Let the wise listen and add to their learning... Proverbs 1:5

The distinction and the creative power of the Word of God is our first guide to truth. How can we best tell if a Messenger is divine? By His Word, the example He sets for His Word, and the consequences of His Word:

Every good tree bears good fruit...Thus by their fruits you will recognize them. Christ (Matt. 7:17, 20 NIV)

Seest thou not to what God likeneth a good word? To a good tree...yielding its fruit... Qur’án 14:24-25

To judge Muhammad’s fruits, let us consider, for the sake of brevity, only two basic facts of His life:

- Historical records as well as the Qur’án indicate that during His ministry Muhammad endured unrelenting and severe—sometimes unbearable—persecution and suffering.
- Muhammad’s most urgent goal and His supreme achievement was to liberate the Arabs from idol worship and to lead them to God.

Would it be fair and seemly to call a man who endured so much suffering to bring people to God, a false prophet, bearing bad fruits?

We [Messengers] will certainly bear with constancy the harm you would do to us. In God let the trustful trust.

Qur'án 14:12

I call you to God...glory be to God! Qur'án 12:108

Muhammad elevated a nomadic people—who at times buried their own daughters alive (Qur'án 81:8)—to such glory and splendor as to become the envy of nations. (See *The Contributions of Islam to Civilization* by Stanwood Cobb.) Could we consider a man of such stature unblessed or unsustained by divine bounties?

Is not God all-sufficient for His servant? Qur'án 39:36

Say: God sufficeth me, in Him let the trusting trust.

Qur'án 39:38

Could a man, with little if any education, from one of the most primitive countries, accomplish such a wonder without divine blessings? Could he bear such wondrous fruits on his own?

The historian, Michael Hart, in his book—*The 100*—introduces the hundred most influential persons in history. He chooses the first position for Muhammad:

My choice of Muhammad to lead the list of the world's most influential persons may surprise some readers and may be questioned by others, but he was the only man in history who was supremely successful on both the religious and secular levels.¹

Since there are roughly twice as many Christians as Muslims in the world, it may initially seem strange that Muhammad has been ranked higher than Jesus. There are two principal reasons for that decision. First, Muhammad

played a far more important role in the development of Islam than Jesus did in the development of Christianity. Although Jesus was responsible for the main ethical and moral precepts of Christianity (insofar as these differed from Judaism), St. Paul was the main developer of Christian theology, its principal proselytizer, and the author of a large portion of the New Testament.

Muhammad, however, was responsible for both the theology of Islam and its main ethical and moral principles. In addition, he played the key role in proselytizing the new faith, and in establishing the religious practices of Islam. Moreover, he is the author of the Muslim Holy Scripture, the Koran...²

As Michael Hart notes, Muhammad had such a profound influence on our world despite a major disadvantage:

The majority of the persons in this book had the advantage of being born and raised in centers of civilization, highly cultured or politically pivotal nations. Muhammad, however, was born in the year 570, in the city of Mecca, in southern Arabia, at that time a backward area of the world, far from the centers of trade, art, and learning.³

Christians who live in Muslim countries soon realize that, in terms of human qualities, they can find no difference between a good Muslim and a good Christian, or between a bad Muslim and a bad Christian. Each group—good, bad, or mediocre—is molded in an identical image. Disregarding cultural differences, what Christ produced on the scale of virtues—such as love, honesty, and charity—is identical with what Muhammad produced. For God is the same unchanging Father who models the same attributes for His children.

We [God] also made them [the Messengers] models who should guide others by Our command, and We inspired them with good deeds...
Qur'án 21:73

I have set an example that you should do as I have done for you.
Christ (John 13:15 NIV)

What would the world be like if Christ had not come?

He [Jesus Christ] it is who purified the world. Blessed is the man who, with a face beaming with light, hath turned towards Him.⁴
Bahá'u'lláh

And again:

The deepest wisdom which the sages have uttered...are but manifestations of the quickening power released by His [Christ's] transcendent, His all-pervasive, and resplendent Spirit.⁵
Bahá'u'lláh

What would the world be like if Muhammad had not come?

[The peoples of Arabia] were the most brutish and benighted of all the peoples of the earth...After the light of the World [Islam] rose over them...this brutish people then attained such a high degree of human perfection and civilization that all their contemporaries marveled at them...The Arabs then excelled all the peoples of the world in science and the arts, in industry and invention, in philosophy, government...In the early stages of Islam the people of Europe acquired the sciences and arts... from Islam...⁶
'Abdu'l-Bahá

For about six centuries (700-1300), the Islamic world was the hub of civilization. Consider this statement from a Christian source:

But as the lights dimmed in the realm of Christendom, they went on in the Arab world. If the early Middle Ages were the Dark Ages in Europe, they became the golden age of Islamic science. The Arab peoples unified in faith

and language continued to develop science. They preserved Greek learning and carefully translated works that might otherwise have been lost.⁷

Consider also this statement from a U.S. president:

While Europe languished in the Middle Ages, the Islamic civilization enjoyed its golden age. The Muslim world made enormous contributions to science, medicine, and philosophy. In his book *The Age of Faith*, Will Durant observed that key advances in virtually all fields were achieved by Muslims in this period. Avicenna was the greatest writer on medicine, al-Razi the greatest physician, al-Biruni the greatest geographer, al-Haitham the greatest optician, Jabir the greatest chemist, and Averroës one of the greatest philosophers. Arab scholars were instrumental in developing the scientific method. As Durant commented, “When Roger Bacon proclaimed that method to Europe, five hundred years after Jabir, he owed his illumination to the Moors of Spain, whose light had come from the Moslem East.” When the great figures of the European Renaissance pushed forward the frontier of knowledge, they saw further because they stood on the shoulders of the giants of the Muslim world.⁸

Muhammad lived up to and even exceeded every standard set in the Bible as the test of a divine Messenger:

- He produced good fruits:

God’s wisdom is proved right by its results [fruits].

Christ (Matt. 11:19 NEB)

If...you do not believe Me, believe the works...

Christ (John 10:38 NKJ)

Also John 14:11

- Wherever we study the Qur’án, we find God as the supreme central Figure, and Muhammad as a humble servant or a Prophet who speaks for Him. According to

the references cited earlier from the Qur'án, Muhammad offered all the glory and honor to God, not to Himself. By so doing He fulfilled this standard:

Anyone whose teaching is merely his own, aims at honor for himself. But if a man aims at the honor of him who sent him he is sincere, and there is nothing false in Him. John 7:14-18 NEB

...both [Jesus and Muhammad] have championed the Cause of God, uttered His praise, and revealed His commandments.⁹ Bahá'u'lláh

- Muhammad acknowledged the advent of Christ and glorified Him as *the Spirit of God*. He fulfilled this prophecy:

Every spirit which acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God... I John 4:2-3 NEB

- Muhammad created a religion that has lasted more than fourteen hundred years with over one billion followers, about one sixth of the world population:

The word which comes from my mouth [shall] prevail; it shall not return to me fruitless... Isaiah 55:9-11 NEB

Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Christ (Matt. 7:19 NKJ)

If it is from God, you will never be able to put them [Christians] down... Acts 5:39 NEB

Sufficient are We [God] unto thee [Muhammad] against those who scoff [at God's Message]. Qur'án 15:95

Muhammad confirmed the promise of the Second Advent, He predicted the return of Christ; not of Himself. If Muhammad's motive was self-interest, why would He not predict His own return? For such a prediction would have

immensely enhanced His stature. It would be an evidence of His ascendancy over the laws of nature.

Some Christians reject the divine origin of Islam because the Qur'án does not support their particular doctrinal positions. Many Christian denominations disagree with one another for the same reason. Would it be fair or seemly if members of those denominations—Protestants, Catholics, etc.—called each other lost souls, damned, or infidels, because of doctrinal differences? Are individuals with only a special set of doctrinal beliefs allowed into heaven? Do **not** Muslims share in the fundamental beliefs of Christians? Do they not worship the same God, believe in the divine Mission of Jesus? Do they not regard the Bible as sacred? Do they not uphold the same ethical values?

Some of the laws of the Gospel are different from those of the Qur'án. Are not some of those laws also different from those in the Torah? For instance: laws regarding marriage, divorce, forbidden foods, “an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth” etc. Were those laws of the Torah invalid for their time? If a mother says to her infant, “You can have only milk.” Is that statement not the truth? If later she says, “Now you need solid food.” Is not that statement also the truth?

I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it. I Cor. 3:2 NIV

What would our world be like if the followers of all religions showed the same tolerance that the Qur'án shows to Jews and Christians:

Verily, they who believe [in Islam], and they who follow the Jewish religion, and the Christian [faith]...whoever of these believeth in God and the last day, and doeth that which is right, shall have their reward with their Lord. Fear shall not come upon them, neither shall they be grieved. Qur'án 2:62

The Voice of God

Aside from the example a Messenger sets and the changes He brings in the lives of individuals, what matters first and foremost is His Message and the spirit and style in which He declares His Message. Jesus referred to these two distinguishing marks as the “voice:”

My own sheep listen to *my voice*...and...follow me.

John 10:27 NEB

Those who knew the Voice of Moses, discerned that same Voice in Jesus; others did not, their doctrinal beliefs distorted the Voice:

If you believed Moses, you would believe me...

John 5:46 NIV

Muhammad also confirms this guiding principle:

They to whom We [God] gave the Scriptures [the Bible] before IT [the Qur’án], do in IT [the Qur’án] believe. And when it is recited to them they say, “We believe in it, for it is the truth from our Lord. We were Muslims even prior to it.”

Qur’án 28:52-53

Let us paraphrase the preceding verses: True Christians and Jews accept the Qur’án as the Word of God. And when they listen to it, they recognize its “voice.” They acknowledge its divine origin and declare: we were already Muslims even before it was revealed to humankind.

Contrary to what most Muslims and Christians assume, no religion is final. Every religion is designed for a specific period in history, for each age requires a new book:

Messengers truly have We already sent before Thee...To each age its Book. What God pleaseth will He abrogate or confirm.

Qur’án 13:38-39

The problem arises when believers try to extend that period. They do not like to change their ways. A new Messenger comes to intoxicate them with a new spirit. In His Wisdom He pours that Spirit in a new container, a new wineskin. But they love the old one—their particular church, synagogue, or mosque. They say: “Give me that old time religion; it’s good enough for me.” But God has another plan. He tells them:

No one puts new wine into old wineskins; or else the new wine will burst the wineskins and be spilled, and the wineskins will be ruined. Christ (Luke 5:37 NKJ)

An “outdated religion” should not be judged either by the conduct of its followers or by its social teachings, just as a beautiful and bountiful orchard should not be judged after it has been ravaged by storms, withered from lack of care, or died from a change of climate.

This has been the pattern throughout history: When the Spring comes, God sends a new Gardener to renew His orchard, but people refuse to submit the orchard to Him:

You are like unto the man who layeth out an orchard and planteth all kinds of fruit trees therein. When the time is at hand for him, the Lord, to come, ye will have taken possession of the orchard in his name, and when he doth come in person, ye will shut him out from it.¹⁰ The Báb

Why does the orchard need renewal? These prophecies from Jewish, Christian, and Islamic Scriptures give us the reason:

The great day of the Lord is near...and people will walk like blind men... Zephaniah 1:14, 17

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

For the time is coming when [people] will not tolerate (endure) sound and wholesome instruction, but having

ears itching [for something pleasing and gratifying], they will gather to themselves one teacher after another to a considerable number, chosen to satisfy their own liking and to foster the errors they hold, and will turn aside from hearing the truth and wander off into myths and man-made fictions. II Timothy 4:3-4 AB

Note how clearly Muhammad predicted the spiritual state of His followers:

O my Lord! My people have taken the Qur'án as a thing to be shunned.* Qur'án 25:30

There will come a time for any people when there will remain nothing of the Qur'án except its outward form and nothing of Islam except its name, and they will call themselves by this name even though they are the people furthest from it. Their mosques will be full of people but they will be empty of right guidance. The religious leaders of that day will be the most evil religious leaders under the heavens; sedition and dissension will go out from them and to them will it return.¹¹

The Voice or Word of God is always a clear proof, but only for those who can hear it without distortions:

This [the Word] is a clear proof from your Lord... Qur'án 7:105

And by his words will God verify the Truth, though the impious be averse to it. Qur'án 10:82

The Word which is uttered by God shineth and flasheth as the sun amidst the books of men.¹² Bahá'u'lláh

The Word of God is always regenerative, but only for those who attune their souls to its powers:

* Another translation: My people [Muslims] have deserted the Qur'án.

The words which I have spoken to you are both spirit and life.
Christ (John 6:63 NEB)

Blessed are those who hear the word of God...
Christ (Luke 11:28)

An absolute distinctiveness links the Voice of all divine Teachers. This link is further strengthened by their words of acknowledgment and appreciation for the Scriptures of those sent before them:

Do not think that I came to destroy the Law...but to fulfill..
Christ (Matt. 5:17 NKJ)

Keep the commandments [of Moses]. Christ (Matt. 19:17)

This [Qur'án] is...a confirmation of previous scriptures...
Qur'án 12:111

The fear of losing one's faith has always overwhelmed people. They need reassurance. A Redeemer never comes to destroy what was given before Him. When love is lost, He comes to restore it:

For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost.
Christ (Luke 19:9)

To see if you can recognize any difference between “the Voice” of Jewish, Christian, Muslim, and Bahá'í Scriptures, take the test offered in the Appendix. You are asked to identify the source of over 200 quotations selected from the sacred Writings of these religions.

Christians are used to seeing the Old and the New Testaments together within one cover. Would they notice any difference in the fundamental teachings of their Scriptures if they add the Qur'án to them? Would they not enrich what they already have? If they worship under the same dome, would the theme of their prayers be different?

President Carter, in his book *The Blood of Abraham*, recalled that Sadat [former President of Egypt] seemed

especially eager for spiritual dialogue. Often the Arab leader mentioned his plans for building a shrine on Mount Sinai so that believers of all three religions could worship together. Sadat expressed delight that Muslims, Jews, and Christians all shared the...blood of Abraham.¹³

The following are the best-known prayers from the Bible and the Qur'án. They can both be rightly called *the Lord's prayer*. Are they not like Words of a single Author?

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors...

Christ (Matt. 6:9-12 NIV)

O our Lord! We have indeed heard the voice of one that called [us to God's new Message of salvation]. He called us to [the new] faith—[He says] 'Believe ye on your Lord'—and [they respond]: we have believed. O our Lord! Forgive us then our sin...and give us what thou has promised us [the Kingdom] by thy Messengers, and put us not to shame on the day of resurrection.

Qur'án 3:193-194

Other brief prayers:

O Lord...Our disloyalties indeed are many; we have sinned against thee. O hope of Israel, their Savior in time of trouble. Thou art in our midst, O Lord, and thou hast named us thine; do not forsake us. Jeremiah 14:7-9 NEB

Our Lord! Thou embracest all things in mercy and knowledge; forgive...those who turn to thee and follow thy path; keep them from the pains of hell. O our Lord! Bring them into the Gardens of Eden, which thou has promised to them...thou art the All-mighty, the All-wise.

Qur'án 40:7-8

My Lord! Bestow on me wisdom...and make me one of the heirs of the garden of delight. And put me not to shame...on the day when neither wealth nor children shall avail—save him who shall come to God with a sound heart...
Qur'án 26:83-89

If God is one, religion must *also* be one:

And truly this your religion is the one religion; and I am your Lord.
Qur'án 21:92

Thus says the Lord...I am the first and I am the last, and there is no God but Me.
Isaiah 44:6 NEB

I am the First and the Last...
Revelation 1:17 NIV

He is the first and the last, the manifest and the hidden...
Qur'án 57:3

Say:...God is your Lord and our Lord...between us [Muslims] and you [followers of other religions] let there be no strife. God will make us all one, and to Him shall we return.
Qur'án 42:15

To you [Jews and Christians] hath He prescribed the faith which He commanded unto Noah, and which We [God] have revealed to thee [Muhammad], and which We commanded unto Abraham and Moses and Jesus, saying, “Observe this faith, and be not divided into sects therein.”
Qur'án 42:13

The following verses from Bhagavad-Gita, the best known Hindu Scripture, expresses much knowledge—oneness of God, oneness of religion, and the purpose of religion—in a few words:

When goodness grows weak, when evil increases, I [the Spirit of God] make myself a body.* In every age I come back to deliver the holy, to destroy the sin of the sinner, and to establish righteousness. Bhagavad-Gita 4:5-6

* The Word became flesh and lived for a while among us. John 1:14

The fundamental messages that God has communicated to humans are identical. They are repeated and reaffirmed in all the sacred Scriptures.

Nothing hath been said to thee [Muhammad] which hath not been said of old to Messengers before thee.

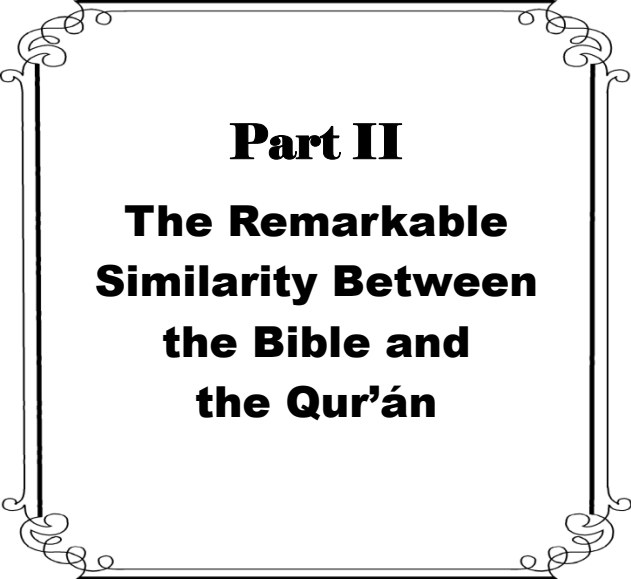
Qur'án 41:43

I am not the first Buddha...nor shall I be the last. In due time another Buddha will arise...He will reveal to you the same eternal truths that I have taught you...He will be known as Maitreya...World Uniter...¹⁴ Buddha

Bahá'u'lláh has summarized these eternal, spiritual truths in a small book called *The Hidden Words*. That small book contains the essence of all knowledge, a knowledge that is life and spirit, one without which no human being can attain true contentment.

HE IS THE GLORY OF GLORIES

This is that which hath descended from the realm of glory, uttered by the tongue of power and might, and revealed unto the Prophets of old. We have taken the inner essence thereof and clothed it in the garment of brevity, as a token of grace unto the righteous, that they may stand faithful unto the Covenant of God, may fulfill in their lives His trust, and in the realm of spirit obtain the gem of Divine virtue.¹⁵ Bahá'u'lláh



Part II
The Remarkable
Similarity Between
the Bible and
the Qur'án

3

The One and Indivisible Religion of God¹

The Báb

Their [the divine Messengers'] unity is absolute. God, the Creator, saith: There is no distinction whatsoever among the Bearers of My Message.² Bahá'u'lláh

Our Cause [religion] is but one. Qur'án 54:50³

Jesus and Muhammad appeared in radically different cultures and they were separated by about six centuries, yet their spiritual teachings are identical. They are also identical in the way they relate themselves to God. This chapter and the next present evidence to show an absolute harmony not only between Jesus and Muhammad, the Gospel and the Qur'án, but also between the Jewish Bible and the Qur'án. They demonstrate that the same God who spoke to Moses and Jesus, also spoke to Muhammad.

It is easier for heaven and earth to come to an end than for one dot or stroke of the Law to lose its force.

Christ (Luke 16:17 NEB)

One Supreme Creator

Listen, my people, and I will speak...I am God, your God... Psalms 50:7 NEB

The Lord our God is one Lord... Mark 12:29

Truly your God is but one, Lord of the Heavens and of the Earth... Qur'án 37:4-5

O men! Bear in mind the favor of God towards you. Is there a Creator other than God, who nourisheth you with the gifts of heaven and earth? There is no God but He! How then are ye turned aside from Him? Qur'án 35:3

Is there any God beside me, or any creator...?

Isaiah 44:8 NEB

Verily there is no God besides me... Qur'án 21:25

I am the Lord, who has made all things... Isaiah 44:24 NIV

Is there any doubt concerning God, maker of the Heavens and the Earth...? Qur'án 14:10

God bears witness that there is no God but He.

Qur'án 3:18

Both the Bible and the Qur'án glorify God by the same attributes. The following are a few examples selected at random. You may wish to cover the right columns to see if you can tell the source of each attribute:

All-Knowing	Ezekiel 11:5 Luke 16:15 I John 3:20
Hearer, Beholder	Qur'án 40:20
The Judge	Genesis 18:25
Strong, Mighty	Qur'án 42:18
Gracious	II Chronicles 30:9 Psalms 86:15
Forgiving	Qur'án 42:23
Merciful	II Chronicles 30:9
Protector, Praiseworthy	Qur'án 42:28

Compassionate	Psalms 86:15
Merciful	Qur'án 10:107
Longsuffering	Psalms 86:15
All-Wise, All-Informed	Qur'án 34:1
Omnipotent	Revelation 19:6
Exalted, Great	Qur'án 34:23
Mighty	Deuteronomy 10:17 Psalms 50:1
The Judge, Knowing	Qur'án 34:26
Loving	I John 5:2
Mighty, Wise	Qur'án 48:7
Holy	Revelation 4:8
Long-Suffering	Qur'án 64:17
Glorious	Numbers 14:21
The Hearer	Qur'án 2:127
Exalted	Psalms 46:10
The Near at Hand	Qur'án 34:50
Righteous	Psalms 97:6
Gracious, Grateful	Qur'án 35:30; 35:34
Great	Psalms 138:5

The Relationship of the Two Messengers With God

- How do Jesus and Muhammad relate themselves to God? Both of them glorify God. They praise **Him** as the supreme sovereign:

Glory to God... Luke 2:14

Glory be to God the Lord of the Worlds. Qur'án 39:75

Great and marvelous are your deeds, Lord God Almighty. Just and true are your ways...Who will not fear you, O Lord, and bring glory to your name?
Rev. 15:3-4 NIV

This is God your Lord. Blessed then be God the Lord of the Worlds! He is the Living One. No God is there but He. Call then upon Him and offer Him a pure worship. Praise be to God the Lord of the Worlds!
Qur'án 40:64-65

Here are a few other examples from the Bible and the Qur'án:

Blessed be the name of the Lord, full of majesty and glory. Qur'án 55:78

Blessed be the name of the Lord from this time forth and for evermore. Psalms 113:2

The heavens declare the glory of God... Psalms 19:1 NIV
All things...declare His glory...yet ye understand not...
Qur'án 17:44 Y

Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.
Matt. 5:16 NKJ

- Both Jesus and Muhammad stand humble before God:

No one is good except God alone. Luke 18:19 NEB

To sit at my [Jesus'] right or left is not for me to grant... Mark 10:40 NEB

Lord God Almighty...you alone are holy... Rev. 15:3-4 NIV

Praise be to my Lord! Am I more than a man, a Messenger? Qur'án 17:93

Praise be to God, who hath sent down the Book [Qur'án] to His servant [Muhammad]... Qur'án 18:1

- Both Jesus and Muhammad declare their absolute dependence on God:

I am not myself the source of the words I speak to you; it is the Father who dwells in me doing his own work. John 14:10 NEB

Only what is revealed to me [from God] do I follow. Qur'án 6:50

God is the source of my being... John 8:42

I call only upon my Lord... Qur'án 72:20

I have no power over what harms me or helps me, except as God willeth. Qur'án 10:49

My sole mission is to speak for God and declare His message... Qur'án 72:23

Verily from the Lord of the Worlds hath this Book come down... Qur'án 26:192

I do nothing on my own authority... John 8:28 NEB

I only follow my Lord's utterances to me. Qur'án 7:203

I have kept my Father's commandments... John 15:10

I am commanded to be a believer. Qur'án 10:104

This is God, my Lord; in Him do I put my trust... Qur'án 42:10

The clear signs have come to me from my Lord, and I am bidden to surrender myself to the Lord of the worlds. Qur'án 40:66

Bahá'u'lláh declares the same message:

Not of Mine own volition have I revealed Myself, but God, of His own choosing, hath manifested me.⁴

- Both Jesus and Muhammad proclaim that they are the way to God:

And thou shalt surely guide into the right way—the way of God... Qur'án 42:52-53

I am the way [to God]... John 14:6 NIV

Follow ye me; this is the right way [to God]... Qur'án 43:61

- Both Jesus and Muhammad declare that they are the source of truth:

I am...the truth... John 14:6 NIV

We have come to you with the truth... Qur'án 43:78

...the Qur'án is the truth from thy Lord. Qur'án 22:54

These are the true words of God. Rev. 19:9 NIV

It [the Qur'án] is sent down from thy Lord with truth. Be not of those then who doubt. And the words of thy Lord are perfect in truth and justice... Qur'án 6:114-115

By my Lord it is the truth... Qur'án 10:53

- Both Jesus and Muhammad claim to be the only spokesman for God:

You have one Teacher, the Christ. Matt. 23:10 NIV

And say [i.e. God directs Muhammad to say]: I am the only plain-spoken Warner. Qur'án 15:89

There is no contradiction between the claims of many Messengers all declaring to be *the Way* and *the Truth*. To each Messenger is given an interval, an age—a dispensation—to be God’s sole spokesman *during that interval*.

Every age hath its own Book. Qur’án 13:38

Jesus said He was the way. Was not that same message declared through Isaiah?

This is the way [to God], walk ye in it. Isaiah 30:21

In every *age* God reveals *a new Name* by which people are saved from unbelief:

There is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved. Acts 4:12 NIV

This is the day whereon nothing amongst all things, nor any name amongst all names, can profit you save through this Name...⁵ Bahá’u’lláh

Our varied perceptions influence our judgment. Otherwise truth has always been and will always be one:

This is the true Path of God, the Almighty...⁶ The Báb

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.⁷ The Báb

- Both Jesus and Muhammad endured much suffering.

Let this cup pass from Me... Christ (Matt. 26:39)

If you [Muhammad] find rejection by the disbelievers hard to bear, then seek a tunnel into the ground or a ladder into the sky... Qur’án 6:35

Bahá’u’lláh explains the previous verse as follows:

The implication of this utterance is that His case had no remedy, that they [His enemies] would not withhold

their hands from Him unless He should hide Himself beneath the depths of the earth, or take His flight unto heaven.⁸

In the following statements, Bahá'u'lláh testifies to the sufferings of both Messengers:

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 the Lord of the visible and invisible, had to face, that He had nowhere to lay His head. He wandered continuously from place to place...⁹

When the Son of Man yielded up His breath to God, the whole creation wept with a great weeping.¹⁰

All created thing wept with a great weeping, as a result of the woes He [Muhammad] suffered at the hands of them who have broken the Covenant of God, violated His Testament, rejected His proofs, and disputed His signs.¹¹

- Both Jesus and Muhammad state or imply that they came from heaven. Christians do not claim that Jesus came from heaven, yet He made that very claim several times:

I [Jesus] have come down from heaven. John 6:38 NEB
See also 3:31; 6:33, 42

Similarly, Muslims do not believe that Muhammad was sent from heaven, yet this verse implies that He was:

Now hath God sent down to you a Remembrance—a Prophet [Muhammad], who reciteth to you the clear signs of God...
Qur'an 65:11

“God sent down a Prophet.” The question is: sent down from where? From heaven. The Arabic word for *sent*

down in this verse is the same one used in relation to such phenomenon as the descent of rain from the sky. The word “heaven” does not appear in the verse, but it is definitely implied. As we noted, Bahá’u’lláh makes the same claim:

God is my witness! The Promised One [Bahá’u’lláh] hath come down from heaven...¹²

Of course the intent of all these passages is to point to the descent of the Spirit from God, not the descent of body from the sky.

Selections from the Bahá’í Scriptures

Lauded be Thy name, O Lord my God! I testify that Thou wast a hidden Treasure wrapped within Thine immemorial Being and an impenetrable Mystery enshrined in Thine own Essence. Wishing to reveal Thyself, Thou didst call into being the Greater and the Lesser Worlds, and didst choose Man [a Messenger] above all Thy creatures, and didst make Him a sign of both of these worlds, O Thou Who art our Lord, the Most Compassionate!

Thou didst raise Him up to occupy Thy throne before all the people of Thy creation. Thou didst enable Him to unravel Thy mysteries, and to shine with the lights of Thine inspiration and Thy Revelation, and to manifest Thy names and Thine attributes.¹³

Bahá’u’lláh

Wherefore, I bear witness with my soul, my spirit, my entire being, that should They Who are the Day-Springs of Thy most holy unity and the Manifestations of Thy transcendent oneness be able to soar so long as Thine own sovereignty endureth and Thine all-compelling authority can last, they will fail in the end to attain unto

even the precincts of the court wherein Thou didst reveal the effulgence of but one of Thy most mighty Names. Glorified, glorified be, therefore, Thy wondrous majesty. Glorified, glorified be Thine unattainable loftiness. Glorified, glorified be the preeminence of Thy kingship and the sublimity of Thine authority and power.¹⁴ Bahá'u'lláh

O Thou the Possessor of all names! The minds of the profoundest thinkers are sore perplexed as they contemplate the ocean of Thy knowledge, and the heaven of Thy wisdom, and the Luminary of Thy grace. How can he who is but a creation of Thy will claim to know what is with Thee, or to conceive Thy nature?

Praise, immeasurable praise be to Thee! I swear by Thy glory! My inner and outer tongue, openly and secretly, testify that Thou hast been exalted above the reach and ken of Thy creatures, above the utterance of Thy servants, above the testimonies of Thy dear ones and Thy chosen ones, and the apprehension of Thy Prophets and of Thy Messengers.¹⁵ Bahá'u'lláh

Let us continue our exploration of the common bonds that unify Christian, Jewish, and Islamic Scriptures in the next chapter.

4

One God, One Religion, One Truth

*You shall love the Lord your God and keep
for all time...the commandments.*

Deut. 11:1 NEB

Man's Relationship With God

- Both the Bible and the Qur'án declare that God made the universe for a purpose:

He [God] created it [the earth] not in vain...

Isaiah 45:18

Not without purpose did We [God] create heaven and earth...

Qur'án 38:27 Y

Do they not reflect in their own minds? Not but for just ends and for a term appointed, did God create the heavens and the earth, and all between them...

Qur'án 30:8 Y

- Both Books speak of God's covenant:

He...redeemed his people; he decreed that his covenant should always endure.

Psalms 111:9 NEB

When God entered into covenant with the prophets...

Qur'án 3:81

Christ is the mediator of a new covenant.

Hebrews 9:15 NIV

- Both Books ask us to be loyal to God's covenant:

Do not forget the covenant I have made with you...

II Kings 17:38 NIV

Be faithful to the covenant of God... Qur'án 16:91

And perform your covenant... Qur'án 17:34

O children of Israel!...be true to your covenant with me; I will be true to my covenant with you. Qur'án 2:40

Say: O my people, act your part as best ye can, I too will act mine; and in the end ye shall know [the consequences of your deeds]... Qur'án 39:39

- Both Books encourage us to put our trust in God:

Trust always in God, my people, pour out your hearts before him. God is our shelter. Psalms 62:8

See also Psalms 40:4

How goodly the reward of those who labor, who patiently endure, and put their trust in their Lord!

Qur'án 29:58-59

Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord and rests his confidence upon him. He shall be like a tree planted by the waterside, that stretches its roots along the stream. When the heat comes it has nothing to fear; its spreading foliage stays green.

Jeremiah 17:7-8 NEB

- Both Books enjoin gratitude:

It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord...

Psalms 92:1

God [is] rich without you...yet if ye be thankful He will be pleased with you. Qur'án 39:9

Eat ye of your Lord's supplies, and give thanks to him. Goodly is the land, and gracious is the Lord!

Qur'án 34:15

Be grateful for the favors of God... Qur'án 16:114

- Both Books teach that God is close to humans:

Just as a girdle is bound close to a man's waist, so I bound all Israel and all Judah to myself...

Jeremiah 13:11 NEB

We [God] are closer to him [man] than his neck-vein.

Qur'án 50:16

Thy Lord is nigh, ready to answer.

Qur'án 11:61

He is the hearer, the near at hand.

Qur'án 34:50

The Lord is at hand.

Philippians 4:5

- Both Books emphasize that salvation depends both on God and good deeds. They also teach that seeking God (knowing Him and loving Him) must come first in our lives. To bear the most luscious fruits, our soul must be rooted in God:

First and last is the affair with God.

Qur'án 30:4

O ye who believe! Let not your wealth and your children delude you into forgetfulness of God. Whoever shall act thus, shall surely suffer loss.

Qur'án 63:9

Seek first the Kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.

Matthew 6:33

The preceding verse contains a world of wisdom. Let us paraphrase it in today's language: Your first and foremost duty is to become a part of God's Kingdom, by embracing God and all His Messengers. You should then crown your faith with God's righteousness, with His virtues as manifested in His great Messengers and Redeemers. If you put these two—faith and good deeds—above every other task, then everything that you worry about will take care of itself. Your needs will be provided.

Those who believe [in God and His Messengers] and do righteous deeds...God has indeed granted for them most excellent provision.

Qur'án 65:11 Y

He who walks [acts] righteously and speaks what is right [acknowledges the truth]...this is the man who will dwell on the heights... Isaiah 33:15-16 NIV

Those who believe and work righteous deeds, for them is a reward that shall never fail. Qur'án 84:25 Y

Neither by your riches nor by your children shall you bring yourselves into nearness with Us [God]; but they who believe and do the thing that is right shall have a double reward for what they have done, and in the pavilions of Paradise shall they dwell secure!

Qur'án 34:37

What then, O Israel, does the Lord your God ask of you? Only to fear the Lord your God, to conform to all his ways, to love him and to serve him with all your heart and soul. Deut. 10:12 NEB

Shall we treat those who believe and do the things that are right like those who propagate evil on earth? Shall we treat the God-fearing like the impious?

Qur'án 38:28

...the saints who obey God's commandments and remain faithful to Jesus. Rev. 14:12 NIV

...faith without deeds is dead. James 2:26

- Both Books consider the fear of God and good deeds complementary and essential for salvation:

Fear God, and keep His commandments; for this is the whole duty of man. Eccl. 12:13

God is with those who fear him and do good deeds.

Qur'án 16:128

Blessed is every one that feareth the Lord; and walketh in His ways. Psalms 128:1

Say: Who supplieth you from the Heaven and the Earth? Who hath power over hearing and sight? And

who bringeth forth the living from the dead, and bringeth forth the dead from the living? And who ruleth all things? They will surely say, "God." Then Say: "What! will ye not therefore fear him?"

Qur'án 10:31

Also 9:13, 18; 35:28

- Both Books discourage fearing people:

Ye shall not be afraid of the face of man; for the judgment is God's. Deut. 1:17

The Lord is my light and salvation, whom shall I fear? Psalms 27:1

Fear them [people] not, but fear Me [God]... Qur'án 2:150 Y

How do "fear of God" and "fear of people" influence a person's response to the divine Message? A person who fears God will say: "What if this is true? I must find out. I cannot hesitate a moment to investigate." A person who fears people will say: "What will people think if they find me investigating a new religion? If this religion were true, most people would have already recognized it."

- Both Books set preconditions for seeing or meeting God:

Whoever expects to meet his Lord, let him work righteousness, and in the worship of his Lord, admit no one as His partner. Qur'án 18:110

Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God. Matt 5:8

- Both Books enjoin prayer:

Men ought always to pray... Luke 18:1

The prayer of the upright is His delight. Proverbs 15:8

Enjoin prayer on thy people, and persevere therein

Qur'án 20:132

And make mention of the name of thy Lord at morn,
at even, and at night. Adore him, and praise him all
nightlong.

Qur'án 76:25-26

Call unto me, and I will answer thee...

Jeremiah 33:3

Call upon Me—I will hearken [pay close attention]
unto you...

Qur'án 40:60

Whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall
receive.

Matt. 21:22

Observe praying, for it restrains you from that which
is unlawful and unworthy. Remembering God is a
great gift and blessing unto you.

Qur'án 29:45¹

Watch ye therefore, and pray always...

Luke 21:36

Prayer is a prescribed duty...

Qur'án 40:103

- Both Books discourage pretentious praying:

When ye pray, use not vain repetition, as the heathen
do, for they think that they shall be heard for their
much speaking.

Matthew 6:7

And their prayers at the house of God is no other than
whistling...and clapping of the hands.

Qur'án 8:35

- Both Books indicate that human beings must be tested
so that:

- Their hidden potentials will bloom.
- They discover and outgrow their weaknesses.
- “Sameness” is transformed into “distinction and
uniqueness.”

Consider these verses among many others:

I, the Lord, search the mind and test the heart...

Jeremiah 17:10 NEB

God will test you...

Qur'án 16:92 Y

I am their refiner and will assay them. Jeremiah 9:7 NEB

And we [God] test you by means of each other.

Qur'án 25:20

O Lord of Hosts, thou dost test the righteous and search the depths of the heart... Jeremiah 20:12 NEB

Ye shall certainly be tried and tested by your possessions, and personal selves... Qur'án 3:186

The hour of trial [this age] that is going to come upon the whole world to test those who live on the earth.

Rev. 3:10 NIV

Know ye that your possessions...are only a test...

Qur'án 8:28

And He it is who hath made the heavens and the earth...that He might test you to show who would excel in works. Qur'án 11:7

There is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known. Matt. 10:26 NIV

[When He comes] the Lord...will expose the motives of men's hearts. I Cor. 4:5 NIV

A person in tune with God, uses tests and trials to refine and purify his soul:

He [the Lord] is like a refiner's fire, like fuller's soap...refining and purifying... Malachi 3:2-3

- Both Books declare that God does not “burden a soul beyond its power”:

My yoke is easy and my burden light. Matt. 11:30

We [God] will not burden a soul beyond its power...

Qur'án 23:62

- Both Books teach that God favors and saves the righteous:

God loveth the righteous.

Psalms 146:8

Deliverance for the righteous comes from the Lord...

Qur'án 39:61

...the Lord...crowns the humble with salvation.

Psalms 149:4 NIV

- Both Books declare that God reveals knowledge and truth progressively according to human capacity:

Naught is there, but its treasures are with Us, and We send it down only in a known measure. Qur'án 15:21

I [Christ] 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.

John 16:12-13 NIV

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 declares:

Verily, He Who is the Spirit of Truth is come to guide you unto all truth.²

The Prophetic Cycle [the giving of “good news” for the future] hath, verily ended. The Eternal Truth is now come.³

The mystic and wondrous Bride [the divine truths] hidden ere this beneath the veiling of utterance, hath now, by the grace of God...been made manifest...⁴

Ethical Values

- Both Books seek to raise our ethical standards to the most sublime level: treating kindly those who dislike us or mistreat us. This is the highest and hardest ethical goal a human being can ever attain:

Do good to them that hate you. Christ (Matt. 5:44)

If you love only those who love you, what reward can you expect? Christ (Matt. 5:46 NEB)

Turn away evil by what is better, and lo! he between whom and thyself was enmity, shall be as though he were a warm friend. But none attain to this [high standard] save those steadfast in patience, and none attain to it except the most highly favored.

Qur'án 41:34-35

This verse from Micah embraces all the ethical guides humans need:

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 NIV

- Both Books enjoin respect and kindness for one's parents:

Honor your father and your mother... Exodus 20:12 NIV

Honor your father and mother...that it may go well with you... Eph. 6:1 NIV

Thy Lord hath ordained...kindness to your parents... speak to them both with respectful speech; and treat them tenderly and humbly; and say, "Lord, have compassion on them both."

Qur'án 17:23-24

- Both Books encourage the gaining of spiritual—rather than earthly—riches:

Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal.

Matt. 6:19-20 NEB

All that hath been bestowed on you is merely for enjoyment and pomp of this life, but that which is with God is better and more lasting. Will ye not then be wise?

Qur'án 28:60

Like a partridge that gathers into its nest eggs that it has laid, so is the man who amasses wealth unjustly. Before his days are half done he must leave it, and prove but a fool at the last.

Jeremiah 17:11 NEB

The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives [close to God] forever.

I John 2:17 NIV

See also Luke 12:22-26

Tell them, too, what the life of this world is like: We send water down from the skies and the earth's vegetation absorbs it, but soon the plants turn to dry stubble scattered about by the wind. God has power over everything. Wealth and children are the attractions of this worldly life, but good works have a better reward with your Lord and give better grounds for hope.

Qur'án 18:45-46

Bahá'u'lláh repeatedly reminds us of our swiftly passing days and our brief chance in this life to gain spiritual virtues:

Your days shall pass away as have the days of them who were before you. To dust shall ye return, even as your fathers of old did return.⁵

Ye, and all ye possess, shall pass away. Ye shall, most certainly, return to God, and shall be called to account

for your doings in the presence of Him Who shall gather together the entire creation.⁶

- Both Books aim some of their harshest words at hypocrisy and pretension in the guise of religion:

Loyalty is my desire, not [the ceremony of] sacrifice, not whole-offerings but the knowledge of God.

Hosea 6:6 NEB

Alas for you...you pay tithes...but have overlooked... justice, mercy, and good faith...outside you look like honest men, but inside you are brim-full of hypocrisy and crime.

Matt. 23:23, 28 NEB

Woe to those who... make a show of devotion, but refuse to help the needy.

Qur'án 107:4-7

Will you enjoin what is right on others, and forget yourselves?

Qur'án 2:44

- Both Books extol forgiveness:

For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. Matt. 6:14 NIV

He who forgiveth...shall be rewarded by God himself..

Qur'án 42:40

- Both Books speak against pride:

Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth [of understanding].

Matt. 5:5 NIV

God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.

I Peter 5:5

Nor walk loftily on earth; for God loveth not the arrogant and the proud.

Qur'án 31:18

Though you soar like the eagle and make your nest among the stars, from there I will bring you down.

Obadiah 1:4 NIV

He [God] truly loveth not the men of pride.

Qur'án 16:23

- Both Books encourage and enjoin chastity:

You have heard that it was said, “Do not commit adultery.” But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

Matt. 5:27-28 NIV

Say to the believing men that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty.

Qur'án 24:30 Y

Let those who do not find the means for marriage, keep themselves chaste, until God gives them the means out of His grace.

Qur'án 24:33

And among His signs is this, that He created for you mates from among yourselves, that ye may dwell in tranquility with them, and He has put love and mercy between your (hearts); verily in that are signs for those who reflect.

Qur'án 30:21 Y

Human Nature

- Both Books point to the excellence and high distinction of human potential:

For thou has...crowned him [man] with glory and honor...

Psalms 8:5

Of goodliest fabric We created man...

Qur'án 95:4

...behold, the kingdom of God is within you.

Luke 17:21

Come unto Us [God] as [pure and perfect as] We created you at first...

Qur'án 18:48

His [God's] work is perfect...

Deuteronomy 32:4

He Who hath made everything...most good...

Qur'án 32:7 Y

- Both Books declare that humans have a potential for concealing the truth behind fantasy, and escaping from reality. (This potential is a pillar that sustains **freedom of choice**.)

When I want to do good, evil is right there with me.

Romans 7:21 NIV

The heart is the most deceitful of all things...who can fathom it?

Jeremiah 17:9 NEB

The heart is prone to evil.

Qur'án 12:53

There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end leads to [spiritual] death.

Proverbs 14:12; 16:25

Bahá'u'lláh confirms:

They hasten forward to Hell Fire, and mistake it for light.⁷

Bahá'u'lláh

The Next Life

- Both Books speak of God's mansions in heaven:

In my Father's house are many mansions... John 14:2

The mansions of the next life shall be better for those who fear God.

Qur'án 12:109

This present life is only a passing joy, but the life to come is the mansion that endures.

Qur'án 40:39

And they shall say, "Praise be to God who hath dispelled our sorrows. Verily our Lord is Gracious, Grateful, who of His bounty hath placed us in a mansion that shall endure for ever. Therein no toil shall reach us, and therein no weariness shall touch us."

Qur'án 35:34-35

But seek, by means of what God hath given thee, to attain the future Mansion; and neglect not thy part in this world but be bounteous to others as God hath been bounteous to thee...
Qur'án 28:77

Remember him before the silver cord is snapped and the golden bowl is broken...before the dust returns to the earth as it began and the spirit returns to God who gave it.
Ecc. 12:6-8 NEB

No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him.
I Cor. 2:9 NIV

No soul knoweth what joy of the eyes is reserved for the good...
Qur'án 32:17

- Both Books describe hell as a “pit” or “bottomless pit,” words that imply the low states of those souls who have not been elevated by the power of knowing and loving God, or by the strength of noble deeds:

To you I call, O Lord my Rock; do not turn a deaf ear to me. For if you remain silent, I will be like those who have gone down to the pit.
Psalms 28:1 NIV

And as to him whose balances [of good deeds] are light—his dwelling-place shall be the pit.
Qur'án 101:8-9

Those who go down to the pit.
Ezekiel 32:18 NIV

The bottomless pit...
Rev. 20:1

Verily the hypocrites shall be in the lowest abyss [the bottomless pit] of the fire...
Qur'án 4:145

- Both Books describe hell as a separation between the lover and the Beloved:

And a gulf shall be between them and that which they shall desire...
Qur'án 34:54

There is a great chasm fixed between us...

Luke 16:26 NEB

A barrier that cannot be passed!

Qur'án 25:22

- Both Books refer to hell as “the fire” or “the eternal fire” designated for “the people of the left:”

Then he [the Promised One] will say to those on his left hand...go from my sight to the eternal fire...

Matt. 25:41 NEB

They who disbelieved our signs, shall be the people of the left. Around them the fire shall close.

Qur'án 90:19-20

Woe that Day to those who practice falsehood, who amuse themselves with their idle fancies [illusions]. The day will come when they will be thrust upon the hell-fire.

Qur'án 52:11-13⁸

Hell, where the fire never goes out.

Mark 9:44 NIV

In the fire shall they abide for ever.

Qur'án 9:17

- Both Books speak of the garden of Eden:

You were in Eden, the garden of God...

Ezekiel 28:13 NIV

They will say, “This land [the Holy Land] that was laid waste has become like the garden of Eden...

Ezekiel 36:35 NIV

See also Genesis 2:15

Into the garden of Eden shall they enter... Qur'án 35:33

- Both Books speak of angels, or spiritual beings, with many functions, among them protecting people:

For he will command his angels...to guard you in all your ways; they will lift you in their hands...

Psalms 91:11-12 NIV

Verily over you (are appointed angels) to protect you—kind and honorable, recording (your deeds). They know (and understand) all that ye do.

Qur'án 82:10-12 Y

The angels of the Lord encompass around those who fear him.

Psalms 34:7 NIV

Praise be to God, Maker of the Heavens and of the Earth! Who employeth the Angels as envoys...

Qur'án 35:1

- Both Books declare that at death the spirit returns to God:

The spirit shall return to God who gave it. Eccl. 12:7

To us [God] shall all return. Qur'án 50:43

In God's hand are the souls of all that live, the spirits of all human kind.

Job 12:10 NEB

- Both Books declare that people carry with them “the record of their deeds:”

They take with them the record of their deeds.

Revelation 14:13 NEB

And everything they do is in the Books; each action, both small and great, is written down. Qur'án 54:52-53

And each shall have his book put into his hands...they shall find all that they have done, and thy Lord will not deal unjustly with anyone.

Qur'án 18:49

[Their sins are] recorded...engraved on the tablets of their heart [soul]...

Jeremiah 17:1 NEB

Each soul shall recognize its earliest and latest actions.

Qur'án 82:5

Whatever good works ye send on before [death]...ye shall find with God.

Qur'án 73:20

- Both Books declare accountability for one's words and deeds:

Set thine house in order, for thou shalt die...

II Kings 20:1; Isaiah 38:1

I will call you to account for your doings.

Ezekiel 6:3 NEB

By God ye shall be called to account for your false accusations!

Qur'án 16:56

We shall all stand before God's tribunal...each of us will have to answer for himself.

Romans 14:10, 12 NEB

On a certain day shall every soul come to plead for itself, and every soul shall be repaid according to its deeds...

Qur'án 16:111

God brings everything we do to judgment, and every secret, whether good or bad.

Ecc. 12:14 NEB

One day we will summon all men with their leaders; they...shall read their book [the record of their deeds], and not be wronged a thread...

Qur'án 17:71

Shame shall cover them; because while yet in safety [in the physical world], they were invited to worship [God], but would not obey.

Qur'án 68:43

The Language of Revelation

- Not only are the teachings of the Bible and the Qur'án similar, but their language as well. Both abound in symbols and parables:

I spoke through the prophets in parables.

Hosea 12:10 NEB

Verily we have expressed for men, in the Qur'án, every kind of parable.

Qur'án 30:58 Y

Jesus spoke all these things to the crowd in parables, and he did not say anything to them without using a parable. Matt. 13:34 NIV

- Both Books attribute, quite frequently, their verses to God. The revelations of biblical Prophets often begin or end with these words: “Thus sayeth the Lord.” Qur’anic verses often begin with “Say.” The word *say* indicates that the Speaker is not Muhammad, but God Himself, who is asking His Messenger to speak for Him:

In those days...*says the Lord*, the people of Israel... shall...go in tears to seek the Lord their God...and they shall join themselves to the Lord in an everlasting covenant... Jeremiah 50:4 NEB

Say: I [Muhammad] call upon my Lord, and join no being with Him. Qur’án 72:20

Similarly, in both Books, sometimes God speaks directly as “I,” but more often as “We” in the Qur’án:

We [God] have sent thee [Muhammad]... Qur’án 4:79

Bahá’u’lláh also uses the word *say* (an expression of His submission to God) frequently. And to show the greatness of our age and His divine station, He often speaks as We:

Say: The heavens have been folded together, and the earth is held within His grasp...⁹

We render thanks unto God, the Lord of the worlds.¹⁰

We, verily, have come to unite and weld together all that dwell on earth.¹¹

Hundreds of other verses could be cited to show a close and unbreakable bond between Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. The examples provided clearly point to a single Author for three of the most influential texts in the history of the world: the Jewish, Christian, and Islamic Scriptures.

If for any reason you find yourself thinking “perhaps Muhammad copied His ideas from the Bible,” then say to yourself “Jesus too may have copied His ideas from the Hebrew Scriptures.” In fact, Jesus has been accused of having done this. The same question can also be raised concerning David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Zechariah, and over 20 other Hebrew prophets. For *their* words are also similar. *The same standards* applied to Jeremiah and Joshua, or to Jesus, must also be applied to Muhammad.

Further, writers can borrow ideas from each other, but can they become great simply by copying? Can someone become another Shakespeare simply by copying Shakespeare? If Muhammad had copied His ideas from the Bible, then how did He manage to create the language of the Qur’án? For the Qur’án, aside from its noble teachings, is without question the grandest masterpiece of the Arabic language. Some scholars believe that no book in any language can match it in literary quality.

If anyone could truly picture in his mind the beauty of the Arabic Qur’án, he would make the learning of Arabic one of his first educational projects, for the sheer pleasure of beholding its awesome beauty. But unless you are gifted in learning foreign languages and have a talent for recognizing and appreciating literary works, you are not advised to contemplate this project. For mastering Arabic on the level of the Qur’án is a monumental task.

The novelty and supreme beauty of the Qur’án gains special significance when we recognize that Muhammad, like Jesus, was not a member of any educated class. Jesus was a craftsman, Muhammad a merchant with little if any education.

The following verses from the Gospel apply not only to Jesus but to Muhammad as well:

No man ever spoke as this man speaks.

John 7:46 NEB

‘How is it,’ they said, ‘that this untrained man has such learning?’
John 7:15-16 NEB

As we noted, the Qur’án itself acknowledges its similarity with other Scriptures (Qur’án 41:43), and this is what we should expect. For the Creator is not a capricious Being. If the fundamentals differed in each religion, would not that be sufficient evidence against the oneness of God and His unchanging Order, Essence, and Attributes?

Such is God’s method carried into effect of old; no change canst thou find in God’s mode of dealing.
Qur’án 48:23

I have made known my purpose; I will not relent or change my mind.
Jeremiah 4:28 NEB

No change is there in the creation of God. Qur’án 30:29

Thou shalt not find any change in the way of God.
Qur’án 35:43

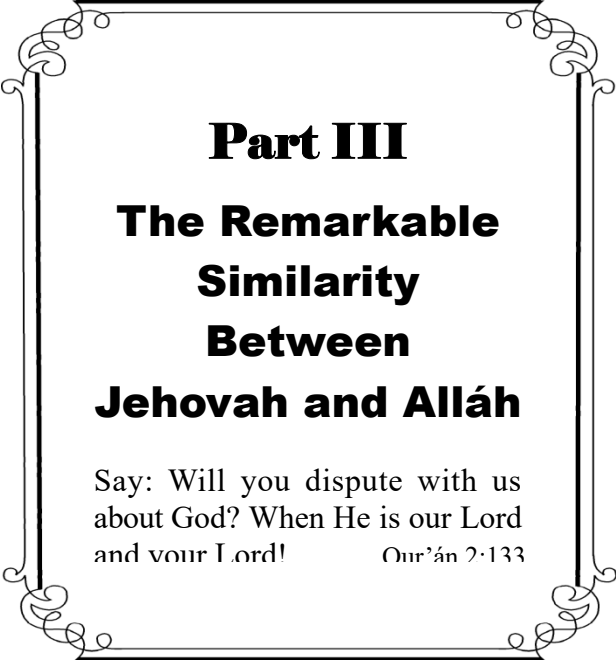
The unchanging nature of his purpose... Hebrews 6:17 NIV

The counsel [the spiritual Message] of the Lord standeth for ever.
Psalms 33:11

His truth endures to all generations. Psalms 100:5

And that which we have revealed...is the very truth...
Qur’án 35:31

These are the true words of God. Revelation 19:9 NIV



Part III
The Remarkable
Similarity
Between
Jehovah and Alláh

Say: Will you dispute with us
about God? When He is our Lord
and your Lord! Qur'án 2:133

5

How Do Religious Leaders Distort the Truth?

They distort the Scriptures...

Qur'án 16:5

They are zealous for God, but their zeal is not based on knowledge.

Romans 10:2 NIV

People see their religion on its death-bed. But they are so attached to its body, they try to keep it alive by desperate means. They become so busy keeping alive “the dying patient” that they lose sight of the birth of “the infant”—the new Revelation from God. Instead of welcoming the new, they continue to cling to the old:

No one puts a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; for the patch pulls away from the garment, and the tear is made worse. Nor do they put new wine into old wineskins, or else the wineskins break, the wine is spilled, and the wineskins are ruined. But they put new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved.

Christ (Matt. 9:16-17 NKJ)

Some of those in love with the old, feel so threatened by the new Revelation, they resort to physical force and violence. They do everything within their power to suffocate the growing infant. This is how people have responded to God's gift of grace throughout all ages.

You always resist the Holy Spirit! Was there ever a prophet your fathers did not persecute? They even killed those who predicted the coming of the Righteous One.

Acts 7:51-52 NIV

The events of September 11, 2001 gave rise to a new wave of interest in Islam. Some Christian theologians took advantage of this wave and began writing new books to undermine Islam.

Writing books that condemn Judaism, Christianity, Islam, or the Bahá'í Faith should not be taken lightly. Since these religions are from God, those who write such books, without knowing, are attacking their own Creator and accusing Him of falsehood, of deceiving and misleading humankind. Anyone undertaking such a task should ponder the awful consequence he must face for his bias: everlasting separation from God. The following statement from Jesus is universal. It declares the consequence of denying any Messenger or Redeemer who comes from God:

But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven. Matthew 10:33 NKJ

The Qur'án issues the following threat to those who distort the truth:

Who then is more wicked than he who, in his ignorance, devises a lie against God, to mislead men? In truth, God does not guide the wicked. Qur'án 6:144

Writing books to undermine “other religions” is a popular game. It is considered an act of devotion and loyalty to one's faith. Muslims and Christians write books to discredit the Bahá'í Faith. Jews write books to discredit Christianity. And Christians write books to discredit Islam.

What weapons do the divisive forces use? And how do they succeed? They use the weapons of distortion to make the new Faith look bad in the eyes of the uninformed. And they succeed by pretending to be impartial, to be the sincere and devoted defenders of truth. To know the evils that lying can generate, see *Chapter 32, “Lying: the Foundation of all Evil.”*

Consider this analogy to see the magical powers of distorting the facts. Suppose you have a tie that fits you well. What would happen if you make it a little longer? It will look a little odd. What if you make it a lot longer? It will look ridiculous. As we shall see later, this is precisely what the divisive forces do. This is the common thread found in all the books written to discredit “foreign religions.” Their authors want the reader to conclude: “How lucky I am to belong to my faith. How could anyone believe what *they* believe?”

There are still other reasons why these books succeed, why they reach and touch the hearts and minds of millions of believers:

- Their authors appear to be well-informed, authoritative, sincere, and well-intentioned. An uninformed reader would find no reason to question the authors’ sincerity.
- The books are skillfully written, in such a way as to appear fully credible. For instance, the authors show much sympathy for “the misguided” and “the deceived”! They express their love and concern for “the unsaved.”
- The authors—religious leaders and scholars—wear the mantle of trust. How could the believers doubt the words of the ones who teach them every week how to find God, be saved, and go to heaven?
- Those who read these books are susceptible to their message. They want to believe them. Subconsciously, or even consciously, they would like to think that their position is secure, that they don’t need to change their beliefs, that their religion is the best, that they already have the best chance of being saved, and that they will be the first to know the news of the Advent of their Lord. The idea of making an independent investigation of truth threatens their security, is contrary to their self-interests and their loyalty to their parents and ancestors.

This explains why the followers of the world's great religions have lived as isolated islands, and why their residents have continued to look down on each other for thousands of years, without suspecting that they may not have been told the whole truth: that the residents of other islands have the same mind set as they do, and therefore they should invite them to their territory for a friendly exchange of beliefs!

What specific strategies do Christian theologians employ to discredit Islam? The following are their favorites:

- They distort the facts, such as claiming that the God of the Qur'án is not loving, that He has little if any grace!
- They resort to unproven Christian doctrines to judge the teachings of the Qur'án. A good example is the trinity—a doctrine that has caused dispute and disagreement among Christians for centuries.
- They take the metaphoric language in the Qur'án literally. Their favorite choice is the metaphoric reference in the Qur'án to the crucifixion of Jesus.
- They resort to personal and flawed beliefs of Muslim theologians to discredit Muhammad.
- They introduce agnostic authors from the Middle Eastern countries as “Muslim scholars,” and then use their authority to describe and discredit the Islamic teachings.
- They draw attention to the faults and unsavory acts of Muslims, but say little or nothing about the contributions of Islam to civilization.
- They exaggerate theological or historical differences between the Bible and the Qur'án, but say little or nothing about the common threads that bind those Scriptures, such as their emphasis on moral values, and on God's justice and mercy for all human beings.

- They ignore the many positive references of the Qur'án to biblical figures. They take lightly the supreme honor Muhammad bestowed on Jesus by calling Him the Spirit of God, and referring to His mother Mary as the woman chosen by God above all other women.
- They say nothing about verses in their own Scriptures that may give credibility to other great religions, such as this one:

And Peter opened his mouth and said: Most certainly and thoroughly I now perceive and understand that God shows no partiality and is no respecter of persons, but in every nation he who venerates and has a reverential fear for God, treating Him with worshipful obedience and living uprightly, is acceptable to Him and sure of being received and welcomed [by Him].

Acts 10:34-35 AB

Sometimes they present their objections without quoting the relevant verses. One may read an entire book written to discredit Islam without seeing a single verse quoted from the Qur'án. For instance, *The Islamic Invasion* presents 187 pages about Islam in general and the Qur'án in particular, without quoting a single verse from the Qur'án. Are such authors afraid that if Christians read the Quranic verses they will recognize them as the Word of God? An impartial author may point out discrepancies in an argument, but then allows readers to see the disputed verses for themselves so that they can come to their own conclusion. This is the method followed in this book.

Attacks against religion come from two groups: avowed atheists, and zealous and literal-minded believers. Consider the following advertisement for a book written by an atheist to discredit the Bible:

Deceptions and Myths of the Bible. By: L. M. Graham. Controversial and fascinating look at how holy the Holy Bible really is, ***featuring striking similarities between the Bible and pagan sources...***

The author claims that some of the biblical concepts such as Eden, Adam and Eve, and Mosaic laws were adopted from pagan sources. Compare the preceding claims with the following statement written by a prominent Christian leader and author in a book to discredit Islam:

The historical evidence is crystal clear that Muhammad adopted the pagan religious rite of a pilgrimage to Mecca to worship at the Kabah in order to appease the Meccan merchants who made a tremendous amount of money out of these pilgrimages.¹

The cult of the moon god which worshiped Allah was transformed by Muhammad into a monotheistic faith. ***Because Muhammad started with a pagan god [Allah], it comes as no surprise that he ended up with a pagan god.*** [Emphasis added.]²

As the preceding author implies, some English-speaking Christians who write about Islam often try to create a distance between the words “**Allah**” and “**God**.” When they describe Islamic beliefs, some of them use the word Allah exclusively to imply that He is a separate deity. They do not know that:

Long before Muhammad was born, Arabic Christians already were referring to God as Allah—and millions continue to do so today.³

After making the preceding statement, the Christian author concludes:

The Allah of Islam, however, is definitely not the God of the Bible.⁴

This war of words, this theological battle, has been going on for thousands of years. What has been its bitter fruits? Prejudice, distrust, violence, terrorism, and war. Has not the time come to change course, to turn from argument to understanding, from hatred to harmony? Has not the time come to focus on what unites us rather than what divides us? This is the only path that can lead to peace and prosperity for all nations.

Let us now review some of the objections Christian theologians have raised against Islam. Let us see if they are rooted in fact or fantasy. I have reviewed quite a few books on this topic. They are written with one purpose in mind: to discredit another religion. They differ only in degree; some of them are gentle, others are harsh. Some of them start and end with big lies; others offer only little lies. Among the books I reviewed, I found the one with the biggest lies to be the work of a Muslim who had converted to Christianity. He pretended to have “inside information” about his previous faith, which he wanted to disclose to Christians. That book has been reprinted many times!

I have selected and responded to the most common and the most significant objections. I hope and pray that I have been fair in my treatment of the topics.

Since lying is the prime poison that is injected into all books written to discredit other great world religions, I have included a chapter on lying at the end of this book just to show its awesome powers in holding humankind in its grasp (see Chapter 32).

Sacred Scriptures are oceans of mysteries. Every reader can find in every page, even every verse, special meanings. Why do we have over 20,000 Christian denominations? Who made them? Mostly sincere believers in Jesus Christ and the Bible. What should we expect when non-believers try to judge a book that they already believe to be the work of a deceiver?

Can Muslims successfully defend their faith against Christian theologians? Unfortunately not. To defend Islam, a Muslim must be able to understand both the Bible and the Qur'án. If all Muslim and Christian scholars combined their knowledge, it will be like a drop compared to the knowledge that the Báb, Bahá'u'lláh, and 'Abdu'l-Bahá have disclosed to us. Compare the Bible and the Qur'án to a locked treasure chest. Without the key, no one can look inside the box. Only God has the key. We now have the honor of receiving the key to both of these Scriptures from the twin Redeemers of our time—the Gate of God, and the Glory of God. Without that key, this book could not have been written.

*Through Him the oceans have surged, the mysteries
have been divulged...⁵*

Bahá'u'lláh

6

The God of the Bible and the God of the Qur'án

*Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord...
Psalms 33:12 NKJ, Also Psa. 144:15*

*Let us pursue the knowledge of the Lord.
Hosea 6:3 NKJ*

Knowing God

What is our prime purpose in life? To know, to love, and to glorify God. This is the reason we have received “the gift of understanding:”

Know thou that, according to what thy Lord, the Lord of all men, hath decreed in His Book, the favors vouchsafed by Him unto mankind have been, and will ever remain, limitless in their range. First and foremost among these favors, which the Almighty hath conferred upon man, is the gift of understanding. His purpose in conferring such a gift is none other except to enable His creature to know and recognize the one true God—exalted be His glory.^{1✧}

Bahá'u'lláh

✧ I have written four books concerning the knowledge of God, two books in English and two books in Persian:

1. *The Knowledge of God.*
2. *The Spiritual Design of Creation*
3. چرا به این جهان آمده ایم؟
4. زندگی با خدا و بی خدا، تفاوت آنها چیست؟

The “knowledge of God” means not only acknowledging the oneness and supremacy of God but also knowing His purpose in creating us, the sublime destiny He has ordained for us, and the means of attaining that destiny. Knowing God indicates seeing everything through His eyes; it means discovering *the Spiritual Design of Creation*.

How can the “knowledge of God” be acquired or be disclosed to humans? Only through those who know Him the best, His Manifestations or Messengers, who are the “Object of all knowledge”:

The source of all learning is the knowledge of God, exalted be His Glory, and this cannot be attained save through the knowledge of His Divine Manifestation.²

Bahá'u'lláh

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...³

Bahá'u'lláh

Unfortunately the true knowledge of God has, in our time, reached its lowest ebb. “Knowing God” is not synonymous with “believing in God.” Knowing God means knowing Him as He is, not as He is imagined by faulty or prejudiced minds. Religious leaders have distorted the divine image. The prevailing distortions have concealed the glory of God.

Christ predicted that the people of this age will suffer from “great *tribulation*” or “*oppression*.” In the *Book of Certitude*, Bahá'u'lláh interprets the meaning of Christ's prediction:

What “oppression” is more grievous than that a soul seeking the truth, and wishing to attain unto the knowledge of God, should know not where to go for it and from whom to seek it? For opinions have sorely differed, and the ways unto the attainment of God have multiplied.⁴

Bahá'u'lláh

Never before has the human race enjoyed the blessings and comforts of science and technology, and yet never before has it experienced so much tribulation and oppression. Why is there such a sharp disparity? Could the root cause be the remoteness of humankind from God? And could the cause of the remoteness be a failure to know God as He is, and not as He is portrayed in the prevailing clouds of illusions and misconceptions? The following verse confirms this fact. It testifies that people believe in God, but they do not know Him:

And if you ask them: “Who created the heavens and the earth?” they will certainly say: “God!” Say: “praise be to God.” ***But most of them have no knowledge*** [of God].

Qur'án 31:25

What is our greatest honor?

For the highest and most excelling grace bestowed upon men is the grace of "attaining unto the Presence of God" and of His recognition, which has been promised unto all people. This is the utmost degree of grace vouchsafed unto man by the All-Bountiful, the Ancient of Days, and the fullness of His absolute bounty upon His creatures.⁵

Bahá'u'lláh

How should we seek the knowledge of God?

My son, if you accept my words and store up my commands within you, turning your ear to wisdom and applying your heart to understanding, and if you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding, and if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure, then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God. Proverbs 2:1-5 NIV

We are on an ever-advancing journey toward God. Our journey toward God begins with “getting to know Him.” How can we do this? By learning what God says about Himself, how He introduces Himself to us. Each of the

sacred Scriptures adds a chapter to our knowledge. As we advance forward in time—from the Bible to the Qur’án, and then to the Bahá’í Scriptures—we learn more and more about our Creator.

The topic we are pursuing is of paramount significance, for at least two reasons:

- Studying and comparing various Scriptures enhances our knowledge of God.
- Showing the common origin of Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and the Bahá’í Faith is a first essential step toward harmonizing half of the earth’s population.

Objections Raised Against Allah

Does the Qur’án predict the objections that people are raising against God in this age?

Say: Will ye dispute with us about God? When He is our Lord and your Lord! We have our works and ye have your works; and we are sincerely His. Qur’án 2:139

Who doth greater wrong than one who invents a falsehood against God, even as he is being invited to Islam? Qur’án 61:7

The objections that Christian theologians raise against Islam can be compared to a gigantic tree rooted in this concept: Alláh, as described in the Qur’án, does not resemble ‘the true God.’ He is someone else, perhaps a fictitious being, who masquerades himself as God. Christian theologians show intense interest in proving that ‘the two Gods’ are not the same. They know that without roots, the tree cannot stand.

If God is the root of the tree, then its trunk is the One who arises to speak for Him. If Jesus and Muhammad do not

draw nourishment from the same source, These two Figures also, like their “Gods,” have nothing in common. To prove their point, theologians present verses from the Bible to show that Jesus is God in the flesh, and verses from the Qur'án to show that Muslims consider Jesus is merely a Prophet like Muhammad.

They also look for differences in the branches and leaves of the tree. They use these differences as further evidence that the two faiths are not rooted in the same God. What evidences do they use? The following are quite popular:

- The character of Muhammad
- The laws of the Qur'án
- Conflicts between the contents of the Bible and the Qur'án
- The behavior of Muslims as a true image of Islam.

Now that we have taken a look at the whole tree, let us start with the root of all questions: God. Let us see if the lines Christian theologians draw between Alláh of the Qur'án and the Lord of the Bible are real, or if they are simply shadows of ignorance, intolerance, and flawed thinking.

As an example of books written by Christian theologians to introduce Islam to Christians, let us choose the work of a highly respected author and scholar, Dr. Robert Morey, the Executive Director of a Foundation for the promotion of Christianity. In his introduction to Islam—*The Islamic Invasion*—Dr. Morey tries to show nine critical differences between the God of the Qur'án and the God of the Bible. We should note that Dr. Morey's book is not unique; it typifies the works of other Christian theologians who try to introduce Islam to their followers:

Many Westerners assume that Allah is just another name for God. This is due to their ignorance of the differences

between the Allah of the Quran and the God of the Bible and also due to the propaganda of Muslim evangelists who use the idea that Allah is just another name for God as an opportunity to convert Westerners to Islam.⁶

Let us now examine his objections in his own words and test each one of them in this and the succeeding chapters.



Objection

Knowable Versus Unknowable

According to the Bible, God is knowable. Jesus Christ came into this world that we might know God (John 17:3) But in Islam, Allah is unknowable. He is so transcendent, so exalted, that no man can ever personally know Allah. While according to the Bible, man can come into a personal relationship with God, the Allah of the Quran is so distant, so far off, so abstract, that no one can know him.⁷

Response

In the preceding statement, Dr. Morey raises two questions:

- The God of Islam is unknowable
- The God of Islam is distant, impersonal, and abstract

In this chapter, let us cover the first part of his objection, in succeeding chapters, the second part.

The Sacred Scriptures declare that the promised Redeemer of our time will clarify complexities and settle longstanding disputes:

Now thy Lord! He will decide between them [those with conflicting views] on the day of resurrection [our day] as to the subject of their disputes. Qur'án 32:25

The Bible confirms the promise of the Qur'án. It also declares that the Lord will “bring to light” what has been hidden in the darkness of misunderstanding and ignorance:

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 Cor. 4:5 NIV

The preceding verse contains one of the most far-reaching and significant pronouncements in the Bible, yet never have I seen it quoted by Christian interpreters of the Bible. It is clear that the passage prohibits Christians from taking a firm stand on biblical issues. It asks them to postpone their judgment until the Lord comes. It teaches its readers to be open minded. It tells them not to consider the orthodox interpretations as the standard of truth. And yet its mandate is ignored and its verdict is violated on a wide scale. It is hard to find any Christian theologian who obeys, or even pays any attention to, its message. If the verdict of I Cor. 4:5 were heeded, Christianity would not have been divided into thousands of denominations.

The good news is that no longer do we need to postpone judgment. God has fulfilled His promise. He has sent Bahá'u'lláh to clarify all complex questions and mysteries for us:

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.⁸

Bahá'u'lláh

The age of prophesying has passed. The day of fulfillment has dawned. The Lord has come to settle disputes that have divided the world for thousands of years. He has also come to advance our knowledge of God. He has fulfilled this prophecy and promise:

These things I have spoken to you in figurative language; but the time is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figurative language, but I will tell you plainly about the Father.

Christ (John 16:25 NKJ)

The Meaning of “Knowing God”

Based on the Bahá'í teachings, we can readily resolve Dr. Morey's objection. Let us first see what Bahá'u'lláh teaches about our prime purpose in life:

The purpose of God in creating man hath been, and will ever be, to enable him to know his Creator and to attain His Presence.⁹

A critical word is “knowing.” What does it mean? Does it have any limits? The following statement from Bahá'u'lláh responds to this question:

So perfect and comprehensive is His creation that no mind nor heart, however keen or pure, can ever grasp the nature of the most insignificant of His creatures; much less fathom the mystery of Him Who is the Day Star of Truth, Who is the invisible and unknowable Essence [God]. The conceptions of the devoutest of mystics, the attainments of the most accomplished amongst men, the highest praise which human tongue or pen can render are all the product of man's finite mind and are conditioned by its limitations. Ten thousand Prophets, each a Moses, are thunderstruck upon the Sinai of their search at His forbidding voice, "Thou shalt never behold Me!"; whilst a myriad Messengers, each as great as Jesus, stand dismayed upon their heavenly thrones by the interdiction, "Mine Essence thou shalt never apprehend!" From time immemorial He hath been veiled in the ineffable sanctity of His exalted Self, and

will everlastingly continue to be wrapt in the impenetrable mystery of His unknowable Essence. Every attempt to attain to an understanding of His inaccessible Reality hath ended in complete bewilderment, and every effort to approach His exalted Self and envisage His Essence hath resulted in hopelessness and failure.¹⁰ Bahá'u'lláh

How then can we “know” an “unknowable” God? How can we reconcile the two seemingly opposite teachings? We can reconcile them by recognizing that “knowing God” means knowing His attributes or “signs” not as they exist in His Self, but as they are manifested:

- In His Messengers and Redeemers who, like a pure and perfect mirror, reflect His glory and greatness.
- In His Word, which manifests His thoughts.
- In our own spirit, which has been made in His image.
- And in nature and the universe as a whole.

The Qur'an refers to some of the preceding signs:

On earth are signs for men of firm belief, and also in your own selves [souls]. Will ye not then behold them?

Qur'an 51:20-21

Assuredly in the heavens and the earth are signs for those who believe. And in your own creation, and in the beasts that are scattered abroad are signs to the firm in faith. And in the succession of night and day, and in the supply that God sendeth down from the heaven whereby He giveth life to the earth when dead, and in the change of the winds, are signs for a people of discernment.

Qur'an 45:3-5

Everything declares the grandeur and glory of God:

The heavens declare the glory of God... Psalms 19:1 NIV

Yes, we can best know God's *attributes* in the mirror of His Messengers, but we can never know His exalted *Essence*

and Identity. That knowledge is completely beyond our reach. This fact is also confirmed in previous Scriptures:

Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! Who has known the mind of the Lord?
Romans 11:33-34 NIV

Glory to God! Far is He from that which they attribute to Him.
Qur'án 23:91

When we refer to God's attributes—love, justice, or mercy—we speak in human terms, and so does God, when He speaks to us. He wants us to better understand Him. But we are so limited that we cannot understand or appreciate even the essence or the depth of love, grace, and mercy expressed by God's great Messengers and Redeemers. Bahá'u'lláh repeatedly reminds us of our limitations:

Exalted, immeasurably exalted, art Thou above the strivings of mortal man to unravel Thy mystery, to describe Thy glory, or even to hint at the nature of Thine Essence. For whatever such strivings may accomplish, they never can hope to transcend the limitations imposed upon Thy creatures...¹¹

One way to simplify an idea is through analogies—by comparing the abstract with the concrete. Perhaps the best analogy for God is light. In virtually all sacred Scriptures, light is used as a way of helping us cultivate or form a visible picture of God:

God is the Light of the heavens and the earth.
Qur'án 24:35

God is light; in him there is no darkness at all.
I John 1:5 NIV

The Lord is my light and my salvation... Psalms 27:1 NIV

The sun will no more be your light by day, nor will the brightness of the moon shine on you, for the Lord will

be your everlasting light, and your God will be your glory. Your sun will never set again, and your moon will wane no more; the Lord will be your everlasting light, and your days of sorrow will end. Isaiah 60:19-20 NIV

There has come to you from God a light. Qur'án 5:15

Know Him as the radiant light of lights.

Hinduism (Mundaka Upanishad 2.2.10-11)

Earlier we compared God to the root of a tree and Jesus to a trunk grown out of the root. But many Christians believe that Jesus is both the root and the trunk. He appeared to us as a trunk (God in flesh), but He is really the root (God). This question is extremely critical. It has divided Christians for centuries. Because of its prime significance, it is explored in a separate chapter titled: “Trinity: an Obstacle to Unity.”

To conclude: God is both knowable and unknowable. We can speak about God's grace and forgiveness as manifested in His great Messengers, but we cannot speak about His nature, essence, or identity. We can learn about His loving acts as manifested in His works, but we cannot conceive or comprehend His infinite Love. We can get a glimpse of His glory as revealed in His great Messengers and Redeemers, but we cannot truly comprehend His all-encompassing Glory.

In the next chapter, let us examine the next objection Dr. Morey raises against the God of the Qur'án.

7

Is the God of the Qur'án Active or Passive?

Let us examine Dr. Morey's other objections:

Objection

Active in History Versus Passive

Allah does not personally enter into human history and act as a historical agent. He always deals with the world through his word, prophets, and angels. He does not personally come down to deal with man. How different is the biblical idea of the incarnation, in which God himself enters history and acts to bring about man's salvation.¹

Response

This claim, like the others, has no basis. As the following verses declare, God has ever been, and will ever be, present in human history:

The future and the present are in the hand of God...
Qur'án 53:25

No Messenger have We sent before thee to whom We did not reveal that "Verily there is no God beside Me, therefore worship Me."
Qur'án 21:25

All through the Qur'án, we read the stories of past Prophets such as Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Jesus who came to bring God's message of salvation to humankind. As we

noted, the Qur’án predicts that the coming of the Messengers will continue.

Once again Dr. Morey assumes that the popular belief among Christians concerning the uniqueness of Jesus is valid. Yet the Bible does not state that Jesus was the “incarnation of God.” In the Gospel of John, it was the “Word” that was “made flesh” i.e. incarnated.

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. John 1:14 NKJ

Christians believe that Jesus is “God incarnate” *unlike* Moses who was *only* a Prophet. And yet as we shall see later, Jesus is called a Prophet *like* Moses (Deut. 18:18; John 5:46).

According to Bahá’í teachings, Christ was not “the incarnation of God,” but a Manifestation of God who, like a mirror, reflected the heavenly Light to humankind. For light is one, whether it comes from the sun or from the mirror. Jesus often declared His humility before God:

I can of Myself do nothing. As I hear, I judge... John 5:30 NKJ

Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. Matthew 19:17 NKJ

The statement that “In the beginning was the Word...and the Word was God” (John 1:1) indicates that Jesus (the light in the mirror) was the light in the sun. Since the light came from the sun, it was the sun. This analogy applies to all great Messengers and Redeemers. They all manifest God’s glory and greatness. They all equally carry out His plan of salvation (see Chapter 24).

Objection

Attributes Versus No Attributes

The Quran never tells us in a positive sense what God is like in terms of his nature or essence. The so called 99 attributes of Allah are all negative in form, signifying what Allah is not, but never telling us what he is. The Bible gives us both positive and negative attributes of God.²

Response

This claim is also unfounded. Everywhere in the Qur'án, God's attributes shine like jewels with dazzling brightness. In the Qur'án, God is portrayed as the heart and soul of all of creation. Without Him nothing can exist, nothing makes sense. He is the centerpiece and the driving force of the universe. Everything good comes from God; and everything evil comes from His absence. The best way to respond to the preceding objection is to let the Qur'án speak for itself. Our purpose in coming to this world is to know God. These verses help us attain that purpose:

He is God beside whom there is no god. He ***knoweth*** things visible and invisible: He is the ***Compassionate***, the ***Merciful***. He is God beside whom there is no god. He is the ***King***, the ***Holy***, the ***Peaceful***, the ***Faithful***, the ***Guardian***, the ***Mighty***, the ***Strong***, the ***Most High!***...He is God, the ***Producer***, the ***Maker***, the ***Fashioner!*** To Him are ascribed excellent titles. Whatever is in the Heavens and in the Earth praiseth Him. He is the ***Mighty***, the ***Wise!***

Qur'án 59:22-24

The East and the West is God's. Therefore, whichever way ye turn, there is the face of God. Truly God is ***Great*** and ***All-Knowing***.

Qur'án 2:115

If God touch thee with trouble, none can take it off but He. And if He visit thee with good—it is He whose power is over all things. And He is the **Supreme** over his servants; and He is the **Wise**, the **Cognizant!**

Qur'án 6:17-18

Say: O my servants...despair not of God's mercy, for all sins doth God forgive. **Gracious, Merciful** is He!

Qur'án 39:53

If all the trees that are upon the earth were to become pens, and if God should swell the sea into seven seas of ink, His words would not be exhausted, for God is **Mighty, Wise**.

Qur'án 31:27

The armies of the Heavens and of the Earth are God's, and God is **Mighty, Wise!**

Qur'án 48:7

And God's is the kingdom of the Heavens and of the Earth. Whom He will He forgiveth, and whom He will He punisheth. And God is **Gracious, Merciful!**

Qur'án 48:14

Seest thou not that God sendeth down water from Heaven, and that on the morrow the earth is clad with verdure? For God is **kind, cognizant** of all. His, all in the Heavens and all on Earth, and verily, God! He assuredly is the **Rich, the Praiseworthy!**

Qur'án 22:63-64

Why should God inflict a chastisement upon you, if ye are grateful, and believe? God is **Grateful, Wise!**

Qur'án 4:147

He it is who accepteth repentance from his servants, and **forgiveth** their sins and **knoweth** your actions.

Qur'án 42:25

Verily, my Lord is God, who hath sent down "the Book;" and He is the **protector** of the righteous. But they, whom ye call on beside Him, can lend you no help, nor can they help themselves.

Qur'án 7:196-197

O ye who believe! If ye fear God he will make good your deliverance, and will put away your sins from you, and will forgive you. God is of great **bounteousness!**

Qur'an 8:29

God shall turn only towards those who do evil in ignorance, then shortly repent; God will return towards those; God is **All-knowing, All-wise.**

Qur'an 4:17 A

...for God is **Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.**

Qur'an 2:182 Y

Surely God is **the best of providers.**

Qur'an 22:58 A

The God of **Mercy** sitteth on his throne...Thou needest not raise thy voice, for He **knoweth** the secret whisper, and the yet more hidden. God! There is no God but He! **Most excellent His titles!**

Qur'an 20:5-8

God would know who will assist Him and his Messenger in secret. Verily, God is **Powerful, Strong.**

Qur'an 57:25

It is God who hath created you in weakness, then after weakness hath given you strength, then after strength, weakness and grey hairs. He createth what He will; and He is the **Wise, the Powerful.**

Qur'an 30:54

For truth hath he created the Heavens and the Earth. It is of Him that the night returneth upon the day and that the day returneth upon the night. And He controlleth the sun and the moon so that each speedeth to an appointed goal. Is He not the **Mighty, the Gracious?**

Qur'an 39:5

Whatever is in the Heavens and the Earth is God's! He forgiveth whom He will, and whom He will, chastiseth, for God is **Forgiving, Merciful.**

Qur'an 3:129

God! Nothing in Earth or in Heaven is hidden unto Him. He it is who formeth you in your mothers' wombs. There is no God but He; the **Mighty, the Wise.**

Qur'an 3:5-6

God! There is no God but He, the **Living**, the **Eternal**.
 No slumber seizeth Him, nor sleep; His, whatsoever is
 in the heavens and whatsoever is in the earth! Who is he
 that can intercede with Him but by His own permission?...
 He is the **High**, the **Great!** Qur'an 2:255

Every chapter in the Qur'an, except one, begins by attributing compassion and mercy to God. Consider the following examples:

In the Name of God, the **Compassionate**, the **Merciful**
 All that is in the heavens and in the earth praiseth God,
 and He is the **Mighty**, the **Wise!** His the Kingdom of the
 heavens and of the earth; He maketh alive and killeth;
 and He hath power over all things! He is **the First** and
the Last; the Seen and **the Hidden**; and He **knoweth** all
 things! Qur'an 57:1-3



In the Name of God, the **Compassionate**, the **Merciful**
 All that is in the Heavens and all that is on the Earth
 praiseth God! He, the **Mighty**, the **Wise!** Qur'an 59:1



In the Name of God, the **Compassionate**, the **Merciful**
 All that is in the Heavens, and all that is on the Earth,
 uttered the Praise of God, **the King! the Holy! the**
Mighty! the Wise! Qur'an 62:1



In the Name of God, the **Compassionate**, the **Merciful**...
 God! there is no god but He, **the Living, the Merciful!**
Qur'an 3: 2



In the Name of God, the **Compassionate**, the **Merciful**
 All that is in the Heavens and all that is on the Earth
 praiseth God. He is the **Mighty**, the **Wise!** Qur'an 61:1



In the Name of God, the *Compassionate*, the *Merciful*.
Praise be to God!...the *All-wise*, the *All-informed*!...He
is the *Merciful*, the *Forgiving*! Qur'an 34:1-2



In the Name of God, the *Compassionate*, the *Merciful*
All that is in the Heavens, and all that is in the Earth,
praiseth God: His the Kingdom and His the Glory! And
He hath *power* over all things! Qur'an 64:1

Now read Dr. Morey's objection once again and decide if he is justified:

Attributes Versus No Attributes

The Quran never tells us in a positive sense what God is like in terms of his nature or essence. The so called 99 attributes of Allah are all negative in form, signifying what Allah is not, but never telling us what he is. The Bible gives us both positive and negative attributes of God.³

8

Is the God of the Qur'án Arbitrary and Capricious?

Objections

Limited Versus Unlimited

The biblical God is limited by His own immutable and unalterable nature. Thus God cannot do anything and everything. In Titus 1:2, we are told, "God cannot lie." We are also told this in Heb. 6:18. God can never act in a way that would contradict His divine nature (2 Tim. 2:13). But when you turn to the Quran, you discover that Allah is not limited by anything. He is not even limited by his own nature. Allah can do anything, anytime, anyplace, anywhere with no limitations.¹

Trustworthy Versus Capricious

Because the God of the Bible is limited by His own righteous nature and there are certain things He cannot do, he is completely consistent and trustworthy. But when we turn to study the actions of Allah in the Quran, we discover that he is totally capricious and untrustworthy. He is not bound by his nature or his word.²

Response

Contrary to what Dr. Morey and many other theologians assert, the Qur'án declares that Alláh is consistent in His ways, that His relationship with humans will never change.

The Qur'án expresses this concept with even greater clarity than the Bible:

No change wilt thou find in God's way. Qur'án 35:43

This was Our way with the Messengers We sent before thee [Muhammad]. Thou wilt find no change in Our ways. Qur'án 17:77

Further, the Qur'án repeatedly teaches that we should trust God. The One who is trustworthy cannot be capricious:

And put thou thy trust in God, for a sufficient guardian is God. Qur'án 33:3

In God therefore let the faithful trust. Qur'án 14:12

We know that God is consistent in rendering justice, because justice is governed by laws. What about grace? Is grace governed also by laws? Yes, according to the Qur'án. Consider the following references. The first one declares that God has “laid down for Himself a law of mercy.” The second one declares that God has imposed this law on Himself:

And when they who believe in our signs come to thee, say: Peace be upon you! *Your Lord hath laid down for Himself a law of mercy*; so that if any one of you commit a fault through ignorance, and afterwards turn and amend, He surely will be Gracious, Merciful.

Qur'án 6:54

Say: Whose is all that is in the heavens and the earth?
Say: God's. *He has imposed mercy on Himself as a law.*

Qur'án 6:12

The preceding verses indicate that, according to the Qur'án, our Creator is so consistent and so trustworthy that first of all He links the word “law” with mercy or grace, and then by using the word “impose” He shows that He is bound by His own law. Is there such a firm reference to the grace of God anywhere in the Bible?

How then do Dr. Morey and other theologians come to the conclusion that the God of the Qur'án is capricious and untrustworthy? By depending on, and judging by a fractional rather than a global perspective, by focusing only on certain verses of the Qur'án and ignoring the others. As we shall see, sacred Scriptures contain references that might *seem* to imply that God is arbitrary or capricious. They may create such an impression, but that is not their intention. Let us begin with the Gospel. What would you think if you read this statement from Jesus?

...with God nothing shall be impossible. *Luke 1:37*

Could you not assume that God may indeed be arbitrary, inconsistent, or capricious? The objection Dr. Morey raises is part of a broad topic called freedom of choice, debated by philosophers since the dawn of history.

Sacred Scriptures contain *seemingly* contradictory teachings concerning human freedom. Some verses declare that our destiny is in our hand, others indicate that it is in God's hand, that He "doeth what He willeth" and that He decides who should see the light and who should stay in darkness. Consider these verses from the Qur'án:

Say: "Nothing will happen to us except what God has decreed for us. He is our Protector." And on God let the believers put their trust. Qur'án 9:51 Y

Know they not that God giveth gifts with open hand, and that He is sparing to whom He will? Of a truth herein are signs to those who believe. Qur'án 39:52

Say: Plenteous gifts are in the hands of God. He imparteth them unto whom He will, and God is Bounteous [Gracious], Wise. He will vouchsafe His mercy to whom He will, for God is of great bounteousness. Qur'án 3:73-74

Say: Of a truth my Lord will be liberal in giving gifts to whom he pleaseth of his servants, or will be sparing to

But will it, ye shall not, unless as God willeth it—the Lord of the worlds. Qur'an 81:29

We find similar verses in the Bahá'í Scriptures:

He is established upon the throne of “He doeth whatsoever He willeth,” and abideth upon the seat of “He ordaineth whatsoever He pleaseth.”³ Bahá'u'lláh

Every time God the True One—exalted be His glory—revealed Himself in the person of His Manifestation, He came unto men with the standard of “He doeth what He willeth, and ordaineth what He pleaseth.” None hath the right to ask why or wherefore, and he that doth so, hath indeed turned aside from God, the Lord of Lords.⁴ Bahá'u'lláh

He bestoweth His favor on whom He willeth, and from whom He willeth He taketh it away. He doth whatsoever He chooseth.⁵ Bahá'u'lláh

Thy Lord is, in truth, potent over all things. He giveth what He willeth to whomsoever He willeth, and withholdeth what He pleaseth from whomsoever He willeth. He, verily, is the All-Powerful, the Almighty.⁶ Bahá'u'lláh

Does the Bible contain similar verses? Consider the following:

I make peace, and create evil. I the Lord do all these things. Isaiah 45:7

Our God is in heaven; he does whatever pleases him. Psalms 115:3 NIV

Come, let us return to the Lord. He has torn us to pieces but he will heal us; he has injured us but he will bind up our wounds. Hosea 6:1 NIV

Blessed is the man whom God corrects; so do not despise the discipline of the Almighty. For he wounds, but he also binds up; he injures, but his hands also heal. Job 5:17-18 NIV

This is what the Lord says: As I have brought all this great calamity on this people, so I will give them all the prosperity I have promised them. Jeremiah 32:42 NIV

The Lord brings death and makes alive; he brings down to the grave and raises up. The Lord sends poverty and wealth; he humbles and he exalts. I Samuel 2:6-7 NIV

The Lord said to him, “Who gave man his mouth? Who makes him deaf or mute? Who gives him sight or makes him blind? Is it not I, the Lord?” Exodus 4:11 NIV

I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and revealed them to babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight. Christ (Luke 10:21 NKJ)

For the Lord has poured out on you the spirit of deep sleep, and has closed your eyes, namely, the prophets; and He has covered your heads, namely, the seers. Isaiah 29:10 NKJ

To you it has been given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but to the rest it is given in parables, that “seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand.” Christ (Luke 8:10 NKJ)

For it was of the Lord to harden their hearts, that they should come against Israel in battle, that He might utterly destroy them, and that they might receive no mercy, but that He might destroy them, as the Lord had commanded Moses. Joshua 11:20 NKJ

...the Son gives life to whom he is pleased to give it. Christ (John 5:21 NIV)

No one knows who the Son is except the Father, and no one knows who the Father is except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

Christ (Luke 10:22 NIV)
Also Matt. 11:27

For he [God] says to Moses, “I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.”
Romans 9:15 NIV

God has mercy on whom he wants to have mercy, and he hardens [the heart of] whom he wants to harden.
Romans 9:18 NIV

The preceding verses have these implications:

- God is involved in our destiny.
- Often His standards are opposite to our standards. That is the reason He declares that He does what He will. There are always surprises in what He does and how He does them.

Consider the worth of wealth. When Jesus' disciples heard that it was hard for rich people to enter the Kingdom of heaven (Matt 19:16-27), they were astonished. They said “Who then can be saved” (Matt 19:25). Jesus responded:

With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible.
Matthew 19:26

...with God nothing shall be impossible. Luke 1:37

What did Jesus mean? That God's standards differ vastly from our standards. He does things contrary to our expectations. In other words: “He does what He will.” In His Wisdom, He can and will prevent the rich—who love their riches—from entering the heavenly Kingdom.

From God's perspective, it is dangerous to be wealthy, and yet so many spend their precious lives searching for and immersing themselves in this danger:

Earthly treasures We have not bequeathed, nor have We added such cares as they entail. By God! In earthly riches fear is hidden and peril is concealed. Consider ye and call to mind that which the All-Merciful hath revealed in the Qur'an: “Woe betide every slanderer and

defamer, him that layeth up riches and counteth them.”
 Fleeting are the riches of the world; all that perisheth
 and changeth is not, and hath never been, worthy of
 attention, except to a recognized measure.⁷ Bahá'u'lláh

Every thoughtful believer wonders about the events of his life and wants to know his degree of freedom in determining his destiny. This question may never be fully resolved, but we should not give up trying. It is true that our destiny is in God's hand, but this statement does not imply that He controls our deeds. God's control lies in the laws He has created. We are subject to those laws, and yet we can choose to “break” them. Our health is controlled by laws, but we have the freedom to ignore those laws by abusing our bodies. Thus God “takes away” or “gives”; He “abases” or “exalts,” but always according to His infinite wisdom and immutable laws.

Sacred Scriptures declare that our *spiritual* destiny is also in God's hand, that we cannot gain the gift of faith without God's permission. Many verses confirm this fact:

No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me
 draws him... Christ (John 6:44 NIV)

...no one can come to me unless the Father has enabled
 him. Christ (John 6:65 NIV)

Blessed are those you [God] choose and bring near to
 live in your courts! Psalms 65:4 NIV

Similar statements are found in the Bahá'í Writings:

Verily He directeth whom He willeth to the straight Path.⁸
 Bahá'u'lláh

Bahá'u'lláh quotes this statement from Islamic traditions:

Knowledge is a light which God casteth into the heart of
 whomsoever He willeth.⁹

The Qur'án repeatedly confirms the words of the Bible:

As He created you, to Him shall ye return. Some hath He guided, and some hath He justly left in error...

Qur'án 7:29-30

He guided whom He will into the right path. Qur'án 24:46

If we had so willed, we would have guided every soul...

Qur'án 32:13

If any one desireth greatness, all greatness is in God [in God's hand].

Qur'án 35:10

...they comprehend nothing of His knowledge, except what He may wish [what He allows them to know].

Qur'án 2:255

And He whom God shall guide will be guided indeed; and whom he shall mislead [leaves to stray] thou shalt find none to assist, but Him.

Qur'án 17:97

In sacred Scriptures, the term “mislead” should not be taken literally. The preceding verse of the Qur'án echoes the words of Jesus in the Lord's Prayer:

And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.

Luke 11:4 NKJ

How does God “mislead” anyone? By leaving him in darkness, by hiding the truth from him, by not allowing him to see the Glory of God:

I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for this was your good pleasure.

Christ (Matt. 11:25-26 NIV)

Why would God hide the truth from anyone? Because some people are not worthy of the “pearls of truth:”

Do not give what is holy to the dogs; nor cast your pearls before swine...

Christ (Matt. 7:6 NKJ)

The unjustly proud ones of the earth will I turn aside from my signs, for even if they see every sign they will

not believe them; and if they see the path of uprightness, they will not take it for their path, but if they see the path of error...will they take it. Qur'án 7:146

Vegetation comes out of a good land in abundance, by the will of its Lord, but out of bad land only scantily...

Qur'án 7:58 AH

The following verses predict the glorious destiny of the people of Israel. It also gives the reason for the punishment they have received. It explains why God hid His Face from them:

“I will display my glory [Glory of God] among the nations, and all the nations will see the punishment I inflict and the hand I lay upon them. From that day forward the house of Israel will know that I am the Lord their God. And the nations will know that the people of Israel went into exile for their sin, because they were unfaithful to me. ***So I hid my face from them*** and handed them over to their enemies, and they all fell by the sword. I dealt with them according to their uncleanness and their offenses, ***and I hid my face from them.***”

Therefore this is what the Sovereign Lord says: “I will now bring Jacob back from captivity and will have compassion on all the people of Israel, and I will be zealous for my holy name. They will forget their shame and all the unfaithfulness they showed toward me when they lived in safety in their land with no one to make them afraid. When I have brought them back from the nations and have gathered them from the countries of their enemies, ***I will show myself holy through them in the sight of many nations.*** Then they will know that I am the Lord their God, for though I sent them into exile among the nations, I will gather them to their own land, not leaving any behind. ***I will no longer hide my face from them,*** for I will pour out my Spirit on the house of Israel, declares the Sovereign Lord.” Ezekiel 39:21-29 NIV

Only God knows who is worthy; only He decides who should see the light. In His estimation, sometimes “the first are last, the last are first:”

And He is God in the Heavens and on the Earth! He knoweth your secrets and your disclosures! and He knoweth what ye deserve. Qur'án 6:3

Physical blindness is by chance; spiritual blindness is by choice. No one is born closed-minded or prejudiced. Those who fail to see the truth, have chosen spiritual blindness as a means of relating to life. They are not deserving of the honor of receiving the precious pearls of truth. Consider this analogy. Would you assist a violent man to come to your wedding banquet? Why, then, should God help a deceptive, selfish hypocrite to enter His heavenly Kingdom, whether in this world or the next?

God, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise, “doeth what He willeth” according to His All-Encompassing justice. His judgment is perfect, and we have no right to question Him. Our Creator would never treat a soul unjustly:

God shall not wrong so much as the weight of an ant. Qur'án 53:40 A

God desires not any injustice to living beings. Qur'án 3:108 A

It is unthinkable that God...the Almighty would prevent justice. Job 34:12 NIV

Whatever good happens to you is from God. And whatever evil happens to you is from your own self. Qur'án 4:79

Ponder the following principles:

- Every human being is entitled to God's justice.
- Every human being is entitled to God's grace.
- No human being is entitled to God's grace *after he has proved to be unworthy of His grace.*

But God, by His grace and compassion, does not close the door to anyone, even to the unworthy. He teaches them to pray to Him and to ask for His help. If they do so sincerely, then He will give them the capacity to know Him and to draw near to Him. God enhances the capacity of those who pray to Him, but He would never diminish the capacity of anyone who turns away from Him or even against Him.

The sacred Scriptures also contain statements that point to our freedom to choose our destiny. Consider this verse from the Qur'án:

...God changeth not the favor with which he favoreth a people, so long as they change not what is in their hearts...
Qur'án 8:53

Another translation of the same verse:

God would never change His favor that He conferred on a people until they changed what was within themselves...
Qur'án 8:53 A

What does the preceding verse indicate? That everything that God does to us or for us (everything He does is a favor) depends on what is happening in our soul. The verse clearly shows that we play an essential role in our destiny.

These verses also point to mutual choices:

...be true to your covenant with me; I will be true to my covenant with you...
Qur'án 2:40

With the merciful thou wilt show thyself merciful, and with the upright man thou wilt show thyself upright.

II Samuel 22:26
See also Psa. 18:25

He who dealeth faithlessly with God shall in justice meet with faithlessness himself...¹⁰
Bahá'u'lláh

Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you.

James 4:8

As we noted, Jesus declares that He chooses the believers, He also teaches us this message:

...behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it...
Revelation 3:8

Hebrew Scriptures also confirm the human freedom:

This day I call heaven and earth as witnesses...that I have set before you life and death...Now choose life...the Lord is your life...
Deuteronomy 30:19-20 NIV

Consider also this verse from the Qur'án:

Verily the Hour [of the Advent] is coming, My plan is to keep it secret, so that every soul would receive its reward by the measure of its endeavor. Qur'án 20:15-16¹¹

The preceding verse clearly shows that we can play an essential role in choosing our destiny, that we are rewarded according to our endeavors.

To Summarize:

It is easy to look for a verse in sacred Scriptures—whether it is the Bible or the Qur'án—and to find special meanings to support one's personal desires. Once again consider the following statements from Jesus:

Father, all things are possible unto thee... Mark 14:36
Also Luke 1:37

And lead us not into temptation... Matt. 6:13 NIV

A non-believer could use the preceding verses to show that the God of the Bible is capricious. If everything is possible for Him, then He can tempt us to choose evil instead of good, he can lead us into temptation!

The words spoken by Jesus and the other great Messengers refer to God's absolute and supreme authority and transcendence. They do not imply that He is undependable,

and that He changes His ways of treating His creatures. Ponder the following verses:

He will pardon whom he pleaseth, and chastise whom he pleaseth. And with God is the sovereignty of the Heavens and of the Earth, and of all that is between them. And unto Him shall all things return. Qur'án 5:18

His, the keys of the Heavens and of the Earth! He giveth with open hand, or sparingly, to whom He will. He knoweth all things. Qur'án 42:12

Say: O God, possessor of all power! Thou givest power to whom thou wilt, and whom thou wilt thou dost abase! In thy hand is good; for thou art over all things potent. Qur'án 3:26

The preceding quotations do not imply that our Creator acts contrary to His nature. He bestows His gifts on anyone He wishes. But this does not mean that He bestows them at random. He knows the reasons. Yes, God is all-powerful and transcendent, but these attributes do not imply that He is also capricious.

God in His wisdom places obstacles in our way. He also teaches us how to jump over them. He allows us to choose and wear spiritual blinders, but He also offers us the remedy.

I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see. Rev. 3:18 NIV

God in His Wisdom “seals” the hearts, the hearing, and the sights of some people:

Those are the people whose hearts, hearing and sight God has sealed up. They are unaware. Qur'án 16:108

But God also teaches the closed hearted people how they can remove the seal from their hearts to gain the supreme honor of attaining His presence:

Take ye heed, watch [investigate] and pray...

Mark 13:33 NKJ

Watch ye therefore, and pray always...

Luke 21:36

...whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.

Matt. 21:22

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

Matt. 7:7 NKJ

And those who strive in Our (Cause), We will certainly guide them to Our Paths. Verily God is with those who do right.

Qur'án 29:69 Y

According to the natural laws that God has created, our bodies become dirty. But do we have to leave them dirty? No, God also created water in abundance to help us remove the dirt. Why should the spiritual laws be different? Should we not then strive to purify our hearts and then turn to God for help?

The following verse expresses both God's role—His spiritual design of creation—and our role in shaping our destiny:

Woe to the world because of the things that cause people to sin! Such things must come, but woe to the man through whom they come!

Matthew 18:7 NIV

9

Is the God of the Qur’án Loving?

Objection

Love of God Versus No Love of God

The love of God is the chief attribute of the biblical God as revealed in such places as John 3:16.* God has feelings for His creatures, especially man. But when we turn to the Qur’an, we do not find love presented as the chief attribute of Allah. Instead, the transcendence of Allah is his chief attribute. Neither does Allah “have feelings” toward man. That concept is foreign to Islamic teaching. That [having feelings] would reduce Allah to being a mere man—which again is blasphemous to a Muslim.¹

Response

Before responding to the preceding objection against the God of the Qur’an, let us first review the basics of our relationship with our Creator, and then later respond to the objection. We are bound to God by these rules and conditions:

- The motive behind all creation is love:

O Son of Man! I loved thy creation, hence I created thee.²

Bahá’u’lláh

*“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”

- An evidence of God's supreme love for us is that He gave us the best: His own image.

I...have engraved on thee Mine image and revealed to thee My beauty.³ Bahá'u'lláh

- Since God's image is hidden in our soul, He sends Messengers and Redeemers to cultivate that potential. This is also an expression of His supreme love.
- Among the potentials God gave us is our ability to exercise spiritual freedom. The soul is not a slave. We are not born with a cord bound to what our parents believe or do not believe:

I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life... Deuteronomy 30:19

What does God expect from us in return for all the blessings He has bestowed on us? He expects that we take charge of our spiritual destiny, that we fulfill the purpose for which we were created: advancing our knowledge of Him. How can we do this? The first step is to acknowledge His great Teachers and Messengers and to study the Scriptures He has sent through them. This is the least we can do as an expression of our gratitude and love for our Creator.

The price of enjoying freedom is responsibility. Our failure to cultivate our potential, our refusal to follow what God has planned for us, leads to grave consequences. To have lived without loving, and being loved by God, is a life cast to the winds. It is a tragedy that surpasses any other. It is a loss of unimagined proportions. Its consequence is everlasting separation from the love of God:

O Son of Being! Love Me, that I may love thee. If thou lovest Me not, My love can in no wise reach thee. Know this, O servant.⁴ Bahá'u'lláh

Verily, they who hope not to meet Us, and find their satisfaction in this world's life, and rest on it, and who of our signs are heedless;—These! their abode the fire, in recompense of their deeds! Qur'án 10:7-8

The Qur'án declares that God loves:

the God-fearing 3:76

the patient 3:146 (140)

those who put their trust in Him 3:159

the just 5:42

those who cleanse themselves 9:108

those who live a noble life 29:69

Loving God begins with loving the ones He sends to speak for Him:

The Father himself loves you because you have loved me... Christ (John 16:27 NIV)

If ye love God, then follow me. God will love you, and forgive your sins, for God is Forgiving, Merciful. Say: Obey God and the Messenger; but if ye turn away, then verily, God loveth not the unbelievers. Qur'án 3:31-32

God treats us the way we treat Him. This is justice. The following statement from Jesus holds true for all the great Messengers and Redeemers. Every one of them can declare:

But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven. Matthew 10:33 NKJ

We are given so much freedom, we can even choose to become God's enemy and wage war against Him. This also has its consequence:

He reserveth wrath for his enemies. Nahum 1:2

The rules that govern our spiritual destiny never change:

For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you.

Christ (Luke 6:38 NKJ)

See also Psa. 18:25

Let us now hear from our Creator. Let us see how He introduces Himself to us through various Scriptures. The better we know Him, the closer we will get to the prime purpose of our coming to this world: Knowing and loving Him.

What Did Jesus Teach About God's Love?

The Gospel presents two statements from Jesus about God's love. One of them refers to His universal love for all people, the other points to His special love for Christians.

First, the statement concerning God's universal, absolute, and unconditional love for all His creatures:

He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.

Matthew 5:45 NIV

We find a similar statement in the Qur'ân:

God is the LIGHT of the heavens and of the earth.

Qur'ân 24:35

The preceding statement from Jesus offers a perfect description of the Creator's love for human beings. No metaphor could describe God's love—the source of our spiritual life—as perfectly as does the sun, the sustainer of our physical life. And yet Christian theologians seldom refer to it. Why? Do they fear that it may, even remotely, confirm the truth of all great religions? Because if God's love is like sunlight, that light must have certainly reached all continents—Australia, Africa, America, Asia, and

Europe—throughout all ages. Would the sun favor some nations and exclude others? Would it exclude the Chinese, Indians, or Iranians?

Let us now examine the other statement about God's love for Christians. Unlike the previous statement about God's universal love, the following qualifies as one of the most widely cited quotations from the Bible. It may even rank as number one:

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. John 3:16-17 NKJ[✧]

Christian theologians use the preceding verse to prove God's "exclusive love" for Christians. Are they justified in their interpretation?

Since the oneness of God's Messengers is discussed elsewhere in this book, let us examine this topic here very briefly. Once again we should ask: who was the real Jesus? The Spirit of God or merely a name or a collection of the letters "S," "O," and "N"?

This discussion—"the Spirit versus the letters"—is a perfect demonstration of the principle expressed in this most enlightening verse:

[✧] John 3:16-17 is often attributed to Jesus, but some scholars believe that it is from John. Because Jesus virtually always referred to Himself as "the Son of Man," a few times as "the Son" and "the Son of God," but never as "*the only begotten Son*." Further, if Jesus had spoken the verse, quite likely He would have used the personal pronoun, such as "whoever believes in me..." rather than "whoever believes in him." In his own letter, John uses this unique expression: "His only begotten son" to refer to Jesus:

In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that *God has sent His only begotten Son* into the world, that we might live through Him. I John 4:9 NKJ

...the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. II Cor. 3:6 NKJ

Jesus was the most glorious Gift of God to every human being. He stood at the summit of majesty and grandeur. How did He attain that honor? By the Spirit of God that became manifest in Him or by His title, the Son? What is a title without a Spirit? Is it more than a few letters of the alphabet?

What was the Spirit that dwelled in “the one and only Son”? This question remained a great mystery until the advent of Bahá’u’lláh. Why is this mystery so great? Because its resolution is the first and foremost step toward the unity of humankind, because its resolution will lead us to this conclusion: throughout all ages, God has been sending the same Teacher—the same great Spirit—to humankind, but with different names and titles. The recognition of this truth will erase every trace of superiority and exclusiveness from the heart of humankind. The Jews, Christians, and Muslims will realize that Moses, Jesus, or Muhammad was, is, and will be the same Spirit, who in each age adopted new names and titles, that this pattern will repeat itself for all eternity, as long as the human race endures. Gradually the followers of all religions—including Hindus, Zoroastrians, and Buddhists—will also discover and recognize this mystery. The Bahá’ís believe that the one and only Spirit known to Christians as Christ has once again appeared in this age with new names and titles.

Consider the following statements from various Scriptures:

I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty. Christ (Rev. 1:8 NKJ)

Whenever there is decay of righteousness...then I Myself come forth...for the sake of firmly establishing righteousness. I am born from age to age. Krishna

I am not the first Buddha who came upon the earth, nor shall I be the last. In due time another Buddha will arise...He shall reveal to you the same eternal truths which I have taught you. 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.⁵ The Báb

This is the Way of God unto all who are in the heavens and all who are on the earth.⁶ Bahá'u'lláh

All these holy, divine Manifestations are one. They have served one God, promulgated the same truth...and reflected the same light...In name and form they differ, but in reality They agree and are the same.⁷ 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Revelation of God may be likened to the sun. No matter how innumerable its risings, there is but one sun, and upon it depends the life of all things.⁸ The Báb



One God

I am the first and I am the last;
apart from me there is no God. Isaiah 44:6 NIV

One Savior

I...I, am the Lord, and besides Me
there is no Savior. Isaiah 43:11 NKJ

Since it is *the Spirit* that saves us, not a name, the widely-quoted statement attributed to Jesus (John 3:16-17) can be rephrased this way:

One Great Spirit

For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Great Spirit—known as the Son—that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send His Spirit into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.



Since God teaches us that He is the only Savior (Isa. 43:11), and since Jesus Himself declares that God's love can never be exclusive (Matt. 5:45), then the widely-quoted statement in John 3:16-17 can be reworded in all the following ways:

Moses

For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Great Spirit—Moses—that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send His Spirit into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him.

Muhammad

For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Great Spirit—Muhammad—that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send His Spirit into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him.

Bahá'u'lláh

For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Great Spirit—Bahá'u'lláh—that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send His

Spirit into the world to condemn the world, but
to save the world through Him.



We could rephrase the preceding statement thousands of times. To get a glimpse of the “big picture,” consider the sun—the metaphor Jesus used to show God’s universal love for all His creatures. The Advent of each Messenger is like a new sunrise. Each day starts with a new sunrise, but we see the same sun.

Christian theologians declare that there are certain things that God cannot do. For instance, “God cannot lie” (Titus 1:2). They are absolutely right. If God cannot lie, can He be unjust, can He have “exclusive love” just for Christians? Can He withdraw His love even from an ant or antelope, much less humans? Why then would He decline to send many Saviors and Redeemers as great as Jesus to every nation as far back as there were humans on earth and as far in the future as there will be?

***Is the God of the Bible
More Loving than the
God of the Qur'án?***

When they talk about the God of the Bible—especially the God of the Gospel—Christian theologians express a great deal of pride. For they believe that “God’s love” is their own exclusive possession!

Why would anyone want to believe in a God who is not capable of loving His children? Would you wish to adopt a father or mother who could or would not love you? This accusation alone—if it were true—would convince any thoughtful person to deny Islam and consider Muhammad a false prophet.

Let us now examine some references. Both the Bible and the Qur'án declare that God is loving and merciful:

Surely it is you [God] who love the people; all the holy ones are in your hand. Deuteronomy 33:3 NIV

Gracious is the Lord, and righteous; Yes, our God is merciful. The Lord preserves the simple; I was brought low, and He saved me. Psalms 116:5-6 NKJ

Benign [kind and gentle] is God towards his servants. For whom He will, doth He provide, and He is the Strong, the Mighty. Qur'án 42:19

...the Lord thy God is a merciful God... Deuteronomy 4:31

...then put thou thy trust in God, for God loveth those who trust in Him. If God help you, none shall overcome you; but if He abandon you, who is he that shall help you when He is gone? In God, then, let the faithful trust. Qur'án 3:159-160

The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth. Psalms 145:18

Yet there are men who take idols along with God, and love them with the love of God. But stronger in the faithful is the love of God. Qur'án 2:165

One of the attributes of God, mentioned in the Qur'án, is "ra'úf." Translators choose various English equivalents for it. It conveys gentle love, such as mother's love. Perhaps the best equivalent for "ra'úf" in English is "affectionate:"

Here are a few other references from the Qur'án describing God's affection:

2:143 Truly, God is affectionate with the people

2:207 God is affectionate with His servants

3:30 God is affectionate with His servants

22:65 Surely God is affectionate to me, All-compassionate

24:20 God is affectionate, All compassionate

57:9 Surely God is to you affectionate, All-compassionate

All sacred Scriptures teach us that God is not only kind, loving, and tender, but also just. Some Christians have a fractional perspective of God. To describe God, they remember only this verse:

God is love...

I John 4:8

Love is only one attribute of God. God is as much love as He is wisdom, knowledge, glory, grace, and greatness. Further, God is not only loving but also just. He is not only light, but also fire:

For the Lord thy God is a consuming ***fire***...

Deuteronomy 4:24

...the Lord will be your everlasting ***light***... Isaiah 60:19

Announce to my servants that I am the Gracious, the Merciful; and that my chastisement is grievous.

Qur'an 15:49-50

God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.

James 4:6 NIV

Also Prov. 3:34

Know therefore that the Lord your God is God; he is the faithful God, keeping his covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love him and keep his commands. But those who hate him he will repay...

Deuteronomy 7:9-10 NIV

For the Kingdom of the Heavens and the Earth is God's, and God hath power over all things.

Qur'an 3:189

His power and His wrath are against all those who forsake Him.

Ezra 8:22 NKJ

Know that God is severe in punishing, and that God is Forgiving, Merciful. Qur'án 5:98

If you forsake the Lord and serve foreign gods, he will turn and bring disaster on you and make an end of you, after he has been good to you. Joshua 24:20

Cast your cares on the Lord and he will sustain you; he will never let the righteous fall. But you, O God, will bring down the wicked into the pit of corruption... Psalms 55:22-23 NIV

As a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him... Psalms 103:13 NIV

The Lord will judge his people and have compassion on his servants... There is no god besides me. I put to death and I bring to life, I have wounded and I will heal, and no one can deliver out of my hand. Deuteronomy 32:36, 39 NIV

Truly full of mercy is thy Lord unto men, despite their sins; but verily, thy Lord is [also] vehement to punish. Qur'án 13:6

Our Creator teaches us that He would rather be loved than feared.

O SON OF BEING!

Walk in My statutes for love of Me and deny thyself that which thou desirest if thou seekest My pleasure.⁹

Bahá'u'lláh

But He also knows that many of His creatures—the spiritually immature—can survive only on rations of fear: reverence for His awesome powers. In His wisdom, He allows them to do so.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom...

Proverbs 9:10 NIV
See also Psa. 111:10

...as for the impious among them, fear them not; but fear Me, that I may perfect my favors on you, and that ye may be guided aright. Qur'án 2:150

Further, each of those motives—love and fear—has its own unique power and independent territory. Fear prevents us from doing wrong, from living in darkness; love motivates us to do what is right, to live in the light.

...by the fear of the Lord men depart from evil. Proverbs 16:6

As long as we make every effort to obey and please God, we have no reason to fear Him.

The God of the Gospel is most loving and gracious, but He is also strict; so strict and just that He sends not only chronic liars to hell but also “the cowardly”—namely those who do not have the courage to stand up for the truth, when it is unpopular:

He who overcomes [the obstacles that separate man from God] will inherit all this, and I will be his God and he will be my son. But the cowardly...and all liars—their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. Revelation 21:7-8 NIV

To know more intimately the God of the Gospel, consider the following prophecy from St. Paul:

...the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of Jesus Christ. II Thessalonians 1:7-8 NIV
See also Matt. 13:41-42

Almost all Christians interpret the preceding prophecy literally. What does the prophecy literally predict? It predicts that all non-Christians will be burned, because they fail to obey the Gospel of Jesus Christ. What about Christians? What percentage of them obey the Gospel? One percent,

ten percent? What about church leaders—bishops, priests, pastors, Bible teachers, and respected scholars? Do they live by higher moral standards than the ones they try to lead to Christ? Statistics show us a gloomy picture. They indicate that these leaders stumble and fall as often as the ones they try to lead. By St. Paul’s verdict, how many of them deserve the fire? Biblical prophecies repeatedly confirm the decline of faith and moral values in our time:

...when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?
Luke 18:8 NIV

If people lack faith, can they be faithful to the commands of their Lord?

Contrary to what Christian theologians believe, St. Paul does not point to a literal fire. “Blazing fire” is the soul’s burning desire to attain the presence of God—the source and the essence of all joys and pleasures. Reference to this fire is found in all sacred Scriptures. Christian hell-fire has the same temperature as Jewish and Muslim hell-fire:

The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God.
Psalms 9:17

The wicked see the fire, and realize that they shall be flung into it, with no chance to escape from it.
Qur’án 18:53¹⁰

...the fire that never shall be quenched... Mark 9:43 NIV

Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire?
Isaiah 33:14

Contrary to what many Christian theologians claim, the God of the Qur’án is as loving, as peaceful, and merciful as the God of the Bible. Since this book is about great Messengers and Redeemers, not about their apostles, I looked at several references to find out how Jesus Himself described God. To my utter amazement, I found no statement except the ones quoted earlier about God’s

universal love for all His creatures and His special love for Christians. Of course, those statements are sufficient, they are all-encompassing, and yet to respond to the critics of Muhammad, we should try to see “the big picture,” we should compare the words of those two great Messengers.

It is ironic that Christian theologians who claim that the God of the Gospel is more loving, often ignore the only statement Jesus uttered about God's absolute and all-encompassing love! Surprisingly, the Gospel contains almost nothing from Jesus that *directly* describes God's attributes. After much searching, I found the following two references that speak not about God's attributes, but about His love for human beings:

Father loves you...

John 16:27

...you [God]...have loved them as you have loved Me.

John 17:23

What about Muhammad? What does He say about God's love? Most Christians do not take time to read the Qur'án. If they did, they would be amazed. They would find few pages without some reference to God's attributes, such as wisdom, might, majesty, mercy, love, grace, and justice. God is the central theme of the Qur'án. According to one authority, the Qur'án speaks about 2,500 times about God.

The essence of Bahá'u'lláh's teachings can be found in Muhammad's teachings. The essence of Muhammad's teachings can be found in Jesus' teachings, and the essence of Jesus' teachings can be found in Moses' teachings. How then do they differ? As we move forward in time, we discover that the degree of knowledge they reveal to humankind increases. When we reach the Bahá'í Faith, we encounter an explosion of new knowledge. We face a new set of Scriptures equal to one hundred volumes!

A sign of true love is mercy and forgiveness. As stated, the Qur'án repeatedly refers to these attributes:

And your God is one God...Most Gracious, Most Merciful. Qur'án 2:163 Y

Know they not that when his servants turn to Him with repentance, God accepteth it, and that He accepteth alms, and that God is the Oft-Returning, the Merciful? Qur'án 9:104

To gain a global picture of the Qur'án, consider one more fact. The Qur'án has 114 chapters. As stated, each of them, except chapter 9, starts by referring to God's compassion and mercy:

In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful. Qur'án 1:1

Allah does not include even “justice” in any of these verses, and yet He is accused of not being loving and compassionate! Imagine if the reverse were true! Imagine if instead of the Qur'án, each chapter of the Bible was crowned with those attributes. What would Christian theologians say then?

That true love and intimacy can be found between married couples—who may have been born continents apart—is one of the marvels of creation. Two strangers choose to become one! Only God can design such a wonder. Only He has the power to place such a potential for love in human beings.

Consider also the moral implications of believing in Satan. Many Christians believe that there is a being named Satan, who is a powerful and active agent in search of victims. They seldom ponder the implications of such a belief. They do not ask this critical question: Why would a loving God create a being to deceive His loved ones? How would you respond if you saw someone was trying to deceive a child? Would you love and trust such a person? Belief in Satan as an evil being, perhaps more than any other, testifies to the truth of this verse:

...the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. II Cor. 3:6 NKJ

The theologians, who think that the God of Islam has no love, fail to realize that belief in Satan as a special being distorts and demeans the image of God. It characterizes Him as a capricious Creator who practices hypocrisy: He teaches us to love one another and never tempt anyone into sin, and then He goes on to create and let loose a being who does exactly that. How can we genuinely trust a Lord who sends a Savior to save us from sin, and also Satan to do just the opposite: to lead us into sin!

The concept of Satan was a mystery until the advent of the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh. Only now can we know with absolute certainty that Satan is only a metaphor. It symbolizes the evil forces that the human heart can generate. It also symbolizes an evil person such as Hitler, Stalin, and countless others. God does not create Satan; we do. We all have the freedom to side with the positive forces or the negative, to generate love and harmony or breed hatred and prejudice. The concept of the Satan is quite similar to that of the Antichrist.

Let us conclude this chapter with this beautiful verse from the Qur'án. It is a prescription for living a noble life:

And your God is the one God. To Him, therefore, surrender yourselves. And bear thou good tidings to those who humble themselves—whose hearts, when mention is made of God, thrill with awe; and to those who remain steadfast under all that befalleth them, and observe prayer, and give alms of that with which We have bestowed on them. Qur'án 22:34-35

10

Is the God of the Qur'án Personal?

Objections

Personal Versus Non-personal

The God of the Bible is spoken of as a personal being with intellect, emotion, and will. This is in contrast to Allah, who is not to be understood as a person. This would lower him to the level of man.¹

Spiritual Versus Non-spiritual

To the Muslim, the idea that Allah is a person or a spirit, is blasphemous because this would demean the exalted One. But the concept that “God is a spirit” is one of the cornerstones of the biblical nature of God as taught by Jesus Christ himself in John 4:24.²

Response

The God of the Qur'án is as spiritual, as personal, and as close to us as the God of the Bible. Since this topic is emphasized in virtually all Christian publications written about Islam, let us examine it by asking 19 interrelated questions, and then let the Qur'án respond to each of them.

1. Is the God who knows each of us intimately, impersonal?

Your Lord well knoweth you... Qur'án 17:54

Whether ye bring a matter to the light or hide it, God truly hath knowledge of all things. Qur'án 33:54

2. Is the One who is closer to us than our own life-vein, aloof or indifferent?

We created man, and we know what his soul whispereth to him, and we are closer to him than his life-vein.

Qur'án 50:16

3. Is the God who asks us to call on Him, to speak to Him every day in the morning and in the evening, to remember Him frequently, to meditate on Him when we arise and when we sleep, and to praise and glorify His gifts and wonders—is such a God aloof, uncaring, or impersonal?

O Believers! Remember God with frequent remembrance, and praise Him morning and evening.

Qur'án 33:41-42

Glorify God therefore when ye reach the evening, and when ye rise at morn. And to Him be praise in the Heavens and on the Earth; and at twilight, and when ye rest at noon.

Qur'án 30:17-18

And think within thine own self on God, with lowliness and with fear and without loud spoken words, at even and at morn; and be not one of the heedless.

Qur'án 7:205

Call then on God, offering him a pure worship...

Qur'án 40:14

4. Is the One who assigns a “guardian” to every person impersonal?

Over every soul is set a guardian.

Qur'án 86:4

5. Is the God who says “I am all-sufficient for you” uncaring or indifferent?

Is not God all-sufficient for his servant?

Qur'án 39:36

Say: God sufficeth me: in Him let the trusting trust.

Qur'án 39:38

6. Is the One who gives us more than we deserve, who doubles our rewards, uncaring or impersonal?

Surely God shall not wrong so much as the weight of an ant; and if it be a good deed He will double it, and give from Himself a mighty reward. Qur'an 4:44 A

7. Is the God who desires to turn to us, distant or indifferent?

God desires to turn towards you... Qur'an 4:32 A

8. Is the One who asks us to trust Him aloof or uncaring?

And whoso resigneth himself to God pursueth the way of truth... Qur'an 72:14

How goodly the reward of those who labor, who patiently endure, and put their trust in their Lord!

Qur'an 29:58-59

Put thou then thy trust in God, for thou hast clear truth on thy side. Qur'an 27:79

God! there is no God but He! On God, then, let the faithful trust. Qur'an 64:13

9. Is the One who forgives our sins indifferent or uncaring?

This is God's command which He hath sent down to you: Whoso feareth God, his evil deeds will He cancel and will increase his reward. Qur'an 65:5

They who, after they have done a base deed or committed a wrong against their own selves, remember God and implore forgiveness of their sins—and who will forgive sins but God only?—persevere not in what they have wittingly done amiss. As for these! Pardon from their Lord shall be their recompense, and gardens beneath which the rivers flow; for ever shall they abide therein. And goodly the reward of those who labor! Qur'an 3:125-136

10. Is the God who likes to join us, to have union with us, and wants us to enjoy life and to be happy, cold and uncaring?

O ye who believe! Fear God, desire union with Him. Struggle earnestly on his path, that you may attain to happiness. Qur'án 5:35

11. Is the One who has created the night for resting, and the day for seeking His blessings and bounties, impersonal or unloving?

Of His mercy he hath made for you the night that ye may take your rest in it; and the day that ye may seek what ye need out of his bounteous gifts, and that ye may give thanks. Qur'án 28:73

See they not that we have ordained the night that they may rest in it, and the day with its gift of light? Of a truth herein are signs to people who believe. Qur'án 27:86

12. Is the One who hears our distress calls and relieves our suffering, unkind and uncaring?

...who listens to the (soul) distressed when it calls on Him, and who relieves its suffering, and makes you (mankind) inheritors of the earth? Qur'án 27:62 Y

And your Lord saith, "Call on Me, I will answer you..." Qur'án 40:60

My Lord is near, ready to answer. Qur'án 11:61

And when My servants ask thee concerning Me, then will I be nigh unto them. I will answer the cry of him that crieth, when he crieth unto Me... Qur'án 2:186

13. Is the God who invites us to seek peace of mind and repose by thinking about Him, impersonal or uncaring?

Those who believe, and whose hearts rest securely on the thought of God. What! Shall not men's hearts repose in the thought of God? Qur'án 13:28

14. Is the One who rewards the true believers with everlasting presence in paradise, unkind and uncaring?

But they who believe and do the things that are right—these of all creatures are the best! Their recompense with their Lord shall be gardens of Eden beneath which the rivers flow, in which they shall abide for evermore. God is well pleased with them and they with Him! Qur'án 98:7-8

15. Is the One who provides for His children unconcerned and unloving?

Surely God is the All-provider. Qur'án 51:58

16. Is the God who does not burden our soul beyond our capacity, uncaring or unloving?

God will not burden any soul beyond its power. Qur'án 2:286

God charges no soul save with what He has given him. Qur'án 65:7 A

God desires to lighten things for you. Qur'án 4:33 A

17. Is the One who always watches over us and is ever-present in our lives, aloof or impersonal?

Verily God is watching over you. Qur'án 4:1

Wherever ye turn, there is the Presence of God. Qur'án 2:115 Y

18. Is the God who teaches us to have hope in His mercy, distant or uncaring?

...and despair not of God's mercy... Qur'án 12:87

19. Is the One who returns our love with love, indifferent?

If ye do love God, follow me, God will love you, and forgive you your sins, for God is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.
 Qur'án 3:31 Y

Consider also this statement from Muhammad quoted in the Bahá'í Scriptures:

Earth and heaven cannot contain Me; what can alone contain Me is the heart of him that believeth in Me, and is faithful to My Cause.³
 Muhammad

Such is the profile of God as portrayed by Muhammad. And yet the books written by theologians to introduce Islam to Christians are unanimous in declaring this message: The God of the Bible is personal, intimate, and affectionate; the God of Islam is distant, cold, and uncaring.

The God that Christian theologians have created in their own image is an exclusive God—a God who expressed His love at a specific date in history, around 27 A.D., at a specific place, and for a specific group of people.

Say: Will ye dispute with us about God, the One who is our Lord and your Lord?
 Qur'án 2:139

Dr. Morey also states that Muslims do not consider God a Spirit. He offers no evidence, no clue to support his unfounded claim. As we noted, Muhammad bestowed the title “the Spirit of God” on Jesus. Further, the Qur'án declares that Jesus was conceived by the Spirit.

Wherever we look in the Qur'án, we find a Creator who consistently reminds us of His love and His blessings for us:

Nor are the two seas alike. The one fresh, sweet, pleasant for drink, and the other salty, bitter; yet from both ye eat fresh fish, and take forth ornaments to wear, and thou seest the ships cleaving their waters that ye

may go in quest of his bounties, and that ye may be thankful. Qur'ân 35:12

And one of His signs is that He sendeth the winds with glad tidings of rain, to give you a taste of His mercy, and that ships may sail at His command, that out of His bounties ye may seek wealth, and render thanks.

Qur'ân 30:46

He it is who after you have despaired of it, sendeth down the rain, and spreadeth abroad his mercy. He is the Protector, the Praiseworthy. Qur'ân 42:28

II

Is the God of the Qur'án Gracious?

Objection

Lastly, the Bible speaks much of the grace of God in providing a free salvation for man through a Savior who acts as an intercessor between God and man (I Timothy 2:5). Yet in the Qur'án there is no concept of the grace of Allah.¹

A common misconception among Christian theologians is that Jesus inaugurated an age of grace. Note the word “after” in the following statement from a popular Bible Dictionary:

Grace is what God may be free to do for the lost, after Christ has died on behalf of them.²

Consider also these statements:

Grace, therefore, is that unmerited favor of God towards fallen man, whereby, for the sake of Christ...He has provided for man's redemption.³

In the Christian sense, grace is God's spontaneous, though unmerited, love for sinful man, supremely revealed in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.⁴

Like the doctrine of “being saved by grace alone,” this idea results from focusing on a few verses at the expense of those that portray a global picture of God's plan for humankind. This belief has survived, and has been dearly

cherished, because it gives the believers one more reason to think that they are *the only ones* who can be “saved,” that their faith is unique and superior to all other faiths. But as sure as most Christians are of the validity of this belief, it is both unbiblical and unreasonable. It violates the principle of justice, for it suggests that God’s character is changeable. It indicates that our Creator was not as kind as He could be, but then He suddenly altered His relationship with human beings by becoming gracious around 27 A.D. when Jesus proclaimed His Mission.

Is our Creator a capriciously changeable God? Is the God that the Jews worship not gracious or less gracious than the One Christians worship?

The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in mercy. Psalms 103:8 NKJ

All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth, to such as keep His covenant and His testimonies. Psalms 25:10 NIV

For thy mercy is great unto the heavens, and thy truth unto the clouds. Psalms 57:10

...he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness...

Joel 2:13

Also Jonah 4:2

Why were the Jews called the chosen people? Did they receive that honor by works or by grace? Mostly by grace. God’s grace or mercy surpasses His justice:

The greatness of His mercy surpasseth the fury of His wrath, and His grace encompasseth all who have been called into being...⁵ Bahá’u’lláh

As the Hebrew Scriptures testify, the Jews can argue that they were already under the grace of God, that they were already favored. They can also claim that only *they* are the chosen children of God. Peoples of other faiths have not received this gracious honor.

Why are these issues critical? Because, if they are not resolved, they will continue to serve as the breeding ground for prejudice. And where does prejudice come from? From a sense of superiority. The followers of every religion can find a verse that bestows a special honor on them; they can then magnify and glorify that verse. As the history of religion shows, they can find enough material in one word to build the most majestic towers of pride, uniqueness, and superiority.

A literal mind is a fertile ground for religious abuse and violence. A believer with a literal mind looks for evidence of distinction. A believer with a spiritual mind perceives only evidences of oneness. When we look with a spiritual perspective, the special signs and clues of distinction disappear, like little shadows, touched by the light of oneness—a light that circles all great Messengers and their Scriptures.

...the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. II Cor. 3:6

A literal mind in the brain of a believer is a most dangerous weapon indeed. It has the power to convince an “intelligent” human being to kill the innocent in the name of God. Sometimes, as the followers of the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh walked through the streets, people threw stones at them. They believed that in the future the stones would turn into a paved way that would lead them to heaven. A spiritual mind cannot do this, because it can see “the big picture,” the one concealed behind words and letters. That picture always guides us to understanding, love, forgiveness, tolerance, and humility.

Is the God who spoke through Muhammad less gracious than the One who spoke through Moses and Jesus?

But verily thy Lord is full of grace to mankind, yet most of them are ungrateful. Qur'án 27:73 Y

Truly God is full of bounties [grace] to man; but most of them give not thanks.

Qur'án 10:60

Also 2:251

Say, O My servants who have transgressed against their souls! Despair not of the mercy of God. For God forgives all sins. He is oft-forgiving, Most Merciful.

Qur'án 39:53

It is God who hath created the Heavens and the Earth, and sendeth down water from the Heaven, and so bringeth forth the fruits for your food. And He hath subjected to you the ships, so that by His command, they pass through the sea; and He hath subjected the rivers to you. And He hath subjected to you the sun and the moon in their constant courses, and He hath subjected the day and the night to you. Of everything which ye ask Him, giveth He to you; and if ye would reckon up the favors [acts of grace or blessings] of God, ye cannot count them! Surely man is unjust, ungrateful! Qur'án 14:32-34

Say: It is He who hath brought you forth, and gifted you with hearing and sight and heart, yet how few are grateful! Say: It is He who hath sown you in the earth, and to Him shall ye be gathered. Qur'án 67: 23-24

The following verse relates to the present topic. It first declares the grace of God and then refers to those who, without true knowledge, dispute this fact:

See ye not how God hath put under you all that is in the heavens and all that is on the earth, and hath been gracious to you of his favors [grace], both for soul and body. But some are there who dispute about God without knowledge, and have no guidance and no illuminating Book. Qur'án 31:20

Some theologians in their search for differences between the God of the Bible and the God of the Qur'án cling to any straw they can find. Some of them say that the God of the

Qur'án may have mercy, but not grace! They play with words. Let us now look at the Qur'án and see if the God who spoke through Muhammad is as gracious as the God who spoke through Jesus.

Arabic is known to be the richest of all languages. It has at least ten equivalents for the word “grace.” English has only a few. The best two candidates are: favor and bounty. Mercy and compassion come close. What do these words have in common? They all express the attribute of kindness. They imply giving a person more than he deserves. Note the word “favor” in the following verse. It conveys the same meaning as “grace:”

Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God.

Luke 1:30 NIV

Perhaps the best equivalent for “grace” in Arabic is “faḍl” a word found throughout the Qur'án. Those who translate the Qur'án, sometimes choose “bounty” or “favor” in place of “grace.” Let us focus on that word alone. This is how the dictionary defines “faḍl:”

Receiving without deserving, giving beyond what the recipient deserves; an attribute of God.⁶

Let us now compare the preceding definition with that of “grace” as given in *The Zondervan Bible Dictionary*:

- Good will, loving-kindness, mercy
- God's gracious favor
- Kindness bestowed upon someone undeserving thereof
- That unmerited favor of God toward fallen man.⁷

As we can see, the definitions of “faḍl” and “grace” are virtually identical. The preceding Bible Dictionary uses the words “loving-kindness, mercy, and favor” to describe “grace.” Let us now test the accusation that “the God of Islam is not gracious.” Let us make a simple comparison

between the words of the two great Messengers: Jesus and Muhammad. The purpose of the comparison is not to imply in any way that one Scripture has any advantage over the other, for they come from the same Source. The purpose is to respond to the objection. And the purpose of responding to the objection is to remove the clouds of illusions and misconceptions that have prevented Christians and Muslims from seeing each other, and each other's Scriptures, as they really are. The comparison is based only on the words of the two great Messengers, who inaugurated a new religion from God, and not the words of their apostles. For Muhammad like Jesus also inspired Apostles, who left volumes of Scriptures.

Did Jesus say anything about the grace of God? And if He did, what did He say? Most Christians will be astonished to know that the four Gospels do not contain even a single reference from Jesus to the word grace or any of its derivatives, such as gracious. Only in the *Book of Revelation* does He use the word grace, without linking it in any way to the idea of "being saved." According to *the Bible Concordance* the following are the only times Jesus used the word grace:

Grace and peace to you...

Revelation 1:4

The grace of the Lord Jesus be with God's people.

Revelation 22:21

As a defense of the Gospel we should remember that only a small portion of what Jesus taught was remembered, recorded, and preserved. It is reasonable to assume that Jesus referred to "grace" many times, but His apostles failed to record His words.

Further, we should note that *the idea* of grace is of course implied in Jesus' teachings. For the essence of grace is kindness, an attribute as manifest in Jesus as the light of the sun. Here we are studying "grace" as a foundational

doctrine promoted by Christian theologians to be an exclusive asset of Christianity.

Let us now look at the Qur'án. Did Muhammad use the word grace in His teachings? Once again Christians will be astonished to know that Muhammad used the word grace hundreds of times. The Qur'án contains more than 700 references to the word “faḍl” which is only one of several equivalents of “grace.” It is amazing how anyone can ignore such an abundance of references to a gracious God in a Scripture so widely distributed. In the Qur'án, God repeatedly declares, “I am gracious!” Christian theologians respond: “You are not! You are a foreign God. We do not believe you are the One we know and worship!”

To get only a glimpse of the emphasis the Qur'án places on God's grace, let us just consider ten references out of the hundreds that it contains. The following are examples of references to the word “faḍl” (an equivalent of grace):

- 2:105 God is of grace abounding.
- 2:243 Truly God is gracious to the people.
- 2:251 But God is gracious unto all beings.
- 2:268 God promises you His pardon and His grace.
- 3:73 Surely grace is in the hand of God.
- 3:74 God is of grace abounding.
- 3:152 God is gracious to the believers.
- 3:170 Rejoicing in the grace that God has given.
- 3:171 Joyful in blessing and grace from God.
- 9:28 God shall surely enrich you of His grace.⁸

The Qur'án asks the believers to manifest the same virtue towards one another:

Forget not to be gracious one towards another.

Qur'án 2:237

The use of the word grace, its derivatives, and equivalents in the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh far surpasses that of all past Scriptures. A concordance to His Writings in English, which covers only a small portion of His works, lists the following number of references to the words grace, favor, bounty, and their derivatives:

- Grace: over 750
- Bounty: over 470
- Favor: over 300

Another word used in the Qur'án to convey the idea of grace is: manna. Here are a few Qur'ánic references to that word: 14:11; 4:94; 6:53; 12:90; 28:82; 49:17.

There is no doubt that if we examine all of Bahá'u'lláh's Writings, we will find many thousands of references to the bounties, the favors, and the grace of God. In each age God bestows special favors on His creatures, but His favors are guided by justice. God knows the reasons why He bestows them. This pertains to the uniqueness of the age. Loving parents, as a sign of kindness, give gifts to their children, but different gifts at each age. That is how God bestows His gifts. To say that there was a time when He was not gracious, is blasphemy.

The advent of God's great Messengers accompanies an outpouring of God's grace. That is a time when the new faith enjoys little honor among people. Those who have the courage to acknowledge the new Redeemer at that time, receive special blessings from God. God does not change; it is simply that the first believers are more deserving.

Reflect, O people, on the **grace** and blessings of your Lord, and yield Him thanks at eventide and dawn.⁹

Bahá'u'lláh

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

Bahá'u'lláh

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

Bahá'u'lláh

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

Bahá'u'lláh

As we noted, the God of the Qur'án is extremely gracious. Is He also merciful and forgiving? Let us compare the two great Scriptures. Once again our purpose is not to show even the slightest difference between those Scriptures, for they have a single author. Our only purpose is to respond to unjustified objections.

How many times did Jesus use the word “merciful”? Twice:

Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

Matthew 5:7 NIV

Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful. Luke 6:36 NIV

Even Jesus' Apostles did not link the word merciful with God. What about the Qur'án? One concordance lists 350 references to merciful as an attribute of God. The two

Arabic words for mercy are: “rahím” and “rahmán.” Translators, use either “merciful” or “compassionate” as their English equals. Here are just a few examples:

- 1:1 In the Name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate.
 19:18 I take refuge in the All-merciful.
 19:61 Gardens of Eden that the All-merciful promised His servants.
 19:96 Unto them the All-merciful shall assign love.
 20:90 Surely your Lord is the All-merciful.

To make sure no one doubts God’s mercy, the Qur’án speaks of mercy as if it is a law:

Your Lord hath laid down [prescribed Y] for Himself a law of mercy; so that if any one of you commit a fault through ignorance, and afterwards turn and amend, He surely will be Gracious, Merciful. Qur’án 6:54

Consider also this verse:

Say: He is the God of Mercy: in Him do we believe, and in Him put we our trust; and ye shall know hereafter who is in a manifest error. Qur’án 67:29

Who is in manifest error? Those who deny that the One who spoke through Muhammad may not have mercy or compassion. Who are they?

...they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. Romans 10:2 NIV

What about forgiveness as an attribute of God? The following are the only passages in which Jesus directly refers to God’s forgiveness:

Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do. Luke 23:34 NKJ

And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses. Mark 11:25

What about the Qur'án? The concordance offers over 250 references to the word forgiveness and its derivatives. The following are three references from just one chapter of the Qur'án:

2:128 God is All-forgiving, All-compassionate

2:129 Surely God is All-forgiving, All-compassionate

2:225 God is All-forgiving, All-clement

What do these comparisons teach us? They teach us that the revelation of knowledge from God is progressive. Each of the great Scriptures should be viewed as only one volume of a set of volumes, composed by a single Author. When we exclude any one of them, we limit our knowledge of God. What harm can come to Jews and Christians if they add the Qur'án to the list of their readings? If they study the Qur'án—that glorious book from God—with an open mind and a seeking and pure heart, they will hear in every verse the Voice of the same Creator that they have heard before. The Qur'án will enrich their soul and expand their knowledge of God. It will show them more clearly their divine destiny. Is this not the reason we came into this world?

12

The Roots of Religious Prejudice Part I

A True Seeker What is He Like?

The attitude displayed by Dr. Morey and countless other religious leaders and theologians of all religions have been the cause of enmity and war throughout all ages. Religious leaders do not recognize their awesome responsibility before God. Ponder God's standards of judgment—His expectations that we should be perfectly honest and accurate regarding every word we utter:

I tell you, on the day of judgment you will have to give an account for *every careless word* you utter; for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned. Christ (Matt. 12:36 NIV)

These are they whose hearts and ears and eyes God hath sealed up; *these are the careless ones.* Qur'an 16:108
See also 18:55; 14:4

Do not follow blindly what you do not know to be true. For ears, eyes, and the heart are all accountable. Qur'an 17:36

If we are accountable for one careless word, what then is our accountability for distorting the teachings of a great religion from God? When we deny another true religion, without knowing, we also deny our own. An example may clarify this point. Consider a mother who says to her son:

“You are my beloved son. I adore you, and am willing to die for you.” And then the next day she tells him: “You are not my son. You are an imposter! You are a liar! You are trying to deceive me and take advantage of me!” When people deny God’s new Messenger, this is precisely what they do. Jesus said “I am the first and the last” (Rev. 1:17). Muhammad said, “I am all the Prophets...I am the first Adam, Noah, Moses, and Jesus.”¹ We cannot divide the Spirit of God. The Spirit that declared “I am the Beloved Son” also declared “I am the Praised One,” that is what “Muhammad” means. Truth is one and it comes from one source: God. We cannot choose one truth and reject another. We cannot divide it. If we do, we lack true faith.

Sometimes what we say has little if any consequence. What about the negative picture the religious leaders draw of “other religions”? Imagine the number of people persecuted and killed throughout history because of religious prejudice. No one can imagine the positive consequences of love and friendship, and the negative consequences of prejudice between the followers of the world’s great religions.

Unfortunately, the religious leaders of all faiths have a proven record of spreading misunderstanding about each other’s faiths. Some of them have tried to live by their words. Instead of simply attacking the beliefs of “other faiths,” they have attacked the believers!

All religions teach that we are responsible for our destiny, and we must search for truth. And yet most believers disobey this fundamental principle. If a devout Christian wants to learn about Islam, where does he look? In books written by other Christians. If a devout Muslim wants to learn about the Bahá’í Faith, where does he look? In books written by other Muslims. Up to now this has been the pattern. Let us hope that we can change it. Let us hope that the believers will investigate the truth in the same way that

an impartial judge looks for all the facts before making a judgment—a judge does not listen to just one attorney from one side of a dispute.

Jesus predicted that He will return like a thief. Who can best find a thief? A detective. What kind of a mind must a detective have?

- Open. He must not hesitate to examine every clue, every evidence.
- Impartial. He must not start with preconceived expectations or beliefs.
- Critical. He must be an intelligent and deep thinker. He must be able to observe, evaluate, analyze, and synchronize the facts. He must be a keen and critical observer.

Only a true seeker can discover the truth, can receive the blessings and gifts of God. Who is a true seeker? In *The Book of Certitude*, Bahá'u'lláh presents a full profile of such a seeker. Here are a few of the many qualities and attributes he must cultivate and the actions he must take:

...when a true seeker determineth to take the step of search in the path leading to the knowledge of the Ancient of Days, he must, before all else, cleanse and purify his heart, which is the seat of the revelation of the inner mysteries of God, from the obscuring dust of all acquired knowledge, and the allusions of the embodiments of satanic fancy...He must so cleanse his heart that no remnant of either love or hate may linger therein, lest that love blindly incline him to error, or that hate repel him away from the truth...At the dawn of every day he should commune with God, and with all his soul persevere in the quest of his Beloved. He should consume every wayward thought with the flame of His loving mention, and, with the swiftness of lightning,

pass by all else save Him...Only when the lamp of search, of earnest striving, of longing desire, of passionate devotion, of fervid love, of rapture, and ecstasy, is kindled within the seeker's heart, and the breeze of His loving-kindness is wafted upon his soul, will the darkness of error be dispelled, the mists of doubts and misgivings be dissipated, and the lights of knowledge and certitude envelop his being.²

Bahá'u'lláh describes the discernment, the wisdom, and the spiritual powers of a true seeker:

Then will the manifold favors and outpouring grace of the holy and everlasting Spirit confer such new life upon the seeker that he will find himself endowed with a new eye, a new ear, a new heart, and a new mind. He will contemplate the manifest signs of the universe, and will penetrate the hidden mysteries of the soul. Gazing with the eye of God, he will perceive within every atom a door that leadeth him to the stations of absolute certitude. He will discover in all things the mysteries of divine Revelation and the evidences of an everlasting manifestation.

...Each and every thing, however small, would be to him a revelation, leading him to his Beloved, the Object of his quest. So great shall be the discernment of this seeker that he will discriminate between truth and falsehood even as he doth distinguish the sun from shadow.³

Do Christian theologians who introduce Islam to Christians, or Jewish theologians who introduce Christianity to the Jews, or Muslim theologians who introduce the Bahá'í Faith to Muslims, satisfy the requirements for being true seekers? Until they do, the divisive forces will continue to thrive and dominate the conscience of the masses of humanity.

Literal Mind, the Most Dangerous Mind

Both the Bible and the Qur’án declare that God uses the same **method** of concealment. He conceals certain truths in metaphors and parables, and then asks us to try to find them. What do we need in order to understand the metaphoric language? Wisdom. Jesus uttered a parable to prepare Christians for His return and to teach them the meaning of wisdom: the parable of the wise and foolish maidens (Matt. 25:1-13). That parable was discussed in *I Shall Come Again*. Only wise believers can appreciate and understand the meaning of that parable. One must have wisdom to understand the meaning and significance of wisdom! Consider the following passage from the Qur’án and then the one from the Bible:

These parables do We [God] set forth to men. And **none understand them except the wise.** Qur’án 29:43

Who understands the Word of God, especially the meaning of prophecies that predict the Advent of the promised Redeemer of our time?

And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt. Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament...the wicked shall do wickedly; and none of the wicked shall understand, but **the wise shall understand.** Daniel 12:2-10 NKJ

Do the very people, who need wisdom to know their Redeemer, cherish and preserve their wisdom?

The wisdom of the wise will perish, the intelligence of the intelligent will vanish. Isaiah 29:14 NIV

Wisdom requires critical thinking. It can find a home only in a broad mind. “The spirit” is infinitely bigger than “the

letter.” A spiritual mind is the home of wisdom; a literal mind the home of confusion. In the celestial realm, the literal mind is a severe handicap. A literal mind trying to understand the Word of God is like a near-sighted eye trying to read with glasses designed for the far-sighted! It is an impossible task. People who deny God’s Messengers are extremely literal-minded. They love and worship the box, not the treasures concealed within. They enjoy seeing the veil, not the beauty of the Bride.

Why does a literal mind get completely lost in the vast ocean of divine knowledge? Because it lacks the spiritual compass. Understanding metaphoric language requires deep and global thinking. The literal mind lacks these capacities. It can neither go deep enough nor see far enough to obtain a view of the big picture.

The spiritual history of the world clearly shows that a literal mind has the potential, the power, and the zeal to become the most violent, the most determined, and the most dangerous enemy of religion and of humankind. No wonder we are told:

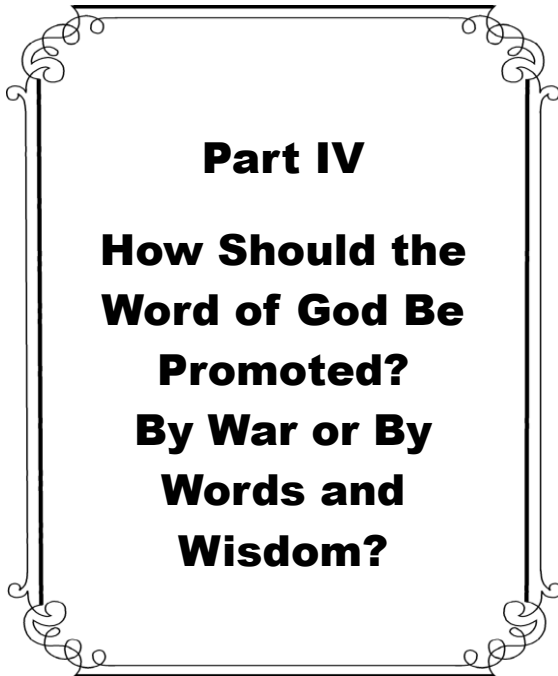
...the letter kills [the spirit of understanding], but the Spirit gives [spiritual] life. II Cor. 3:6 NKJ

Take a strictly literal mind, and inject a little religious zeal into it, and you will acquire a weapon of mass destruction! The brain of such a believer turns into a ticking bomb—a suicide bomber.

They are zealous for God, but their zeal is not based on understanding. Romans 10:2 NIV

Compare the Word of God to a seed and the human mind to the soil. What happens if the seed falls on a hard surface? Can it grow? What happens to the Seed of divine knowledge when it falls on a literal mind? It encounters an inhospitable and hostile environment.

In the following chapters, let us examine a few other doctrines that have caused a rift between Christian and Muslim theologians.



Part IV

**How Should the
Word of God Be
Promoted?
By War or By
Words and
Wisdom?**

13

How Should the Word of God Be Promoted?

Because of its paramount significance, this topic—How should the Word of God be promoted?—occupies a large portion of sacred Scriptures. Yet many believers—especially among Christians and Muslims—have violated the divine teachings as described in their sacred Scriptures.*

The Quranic verses on war should be viewed not only as a whole in relation to each other, but also in the light of the verses that teach the believers how they should promote their faith.

This chapter covers two topics:

- It presents the Quranic verses on how Islam should be promoted.
- It further shows a remarkable harmony between the Biblical and the Quranic teachings on this topic.

Man's Responsibility in Finding the Truth

- Both Books—the Bible and the Qur'án—emphasize freedom of choice:

Come, all you who are thirsty...

Isaiah 55:1

* I have compiled and presented the most significant references from the Bible, the Qur'án, and the Bahá'í Writings concerning this topic in *The Magnet of Divine Blessings*, 419 pages.

Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift... Revelation 22:17 NIV

Let him then who will, take the way to his Lord.

Qur'án 73:19

- Both Books encourage search for truth and promise that the true seekers will be guided:

Thou shall find Him, if thou seek Him with all thy heart and all thy soul. Deuteronomy 4:29

Seek, and ye shall find... Matthew 7:7

If you search with all your heart, I will let you find me... Jeremiah 29:13-14 NEB

Those who strive for Our sake [God's sake], We shall certainly guide them. Qur'án 29:69

Those that seek me shall find me. Psalms 8:17

...if you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding...then you will...find the knowledge of God. Proverbs 2:3-5 NIV

If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. John 8:31-32 NKJ

To him who hopeth to meet God [the advent of the Lord], the set time of God will surely come. The hearer, the knower, is He! He who strives, he does it for his own good only. Verily God is rich enough to dispense with all creatures. Qur'án 29:5-6

The Lord looks down from heaven on the sons of men to see if there are any who understand, any who seek God. Psalms 14:2 NIV

Be always on the watch...that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man. Luke 21:36 NIV

- Both Books encourage independent investigation of truth; judgment based on facts, not popularity or supposition:

Does our law...permit us to pass judgment on a man unless we have...learned the facts? John 7:51 NEB

But I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken. Matthew 12:36 NIV

And follow not that of which thou hast no knowledge; because the hearing and the sight and the heart, each of these shall be questioned. Qur'án 17:36

- Both Books refer to traditions and attitudes handed down by previous generations as obstacles in the way of truth:

How will you [deniers of truth] set aside the commandment of God in order to maintain your tradition! Mark 7:9 NEB

And no one after drinking old wine wants the new, for he says, "The old is better." Luke 5:39 NKJ

Yet you are ready to kill me...you do what you have heard from your father. John 8:37-38 NIV

You are doing the things your own father does. John 8:41

Why is my language not clear to you? Because you are unable to hear what I say. You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire. John 8:43-44 NIV

They [deniers of truth] said: "Have you come to us to pervert us from the faith in which we found our fathers...?" Qur'án 10:78

Nay! they say: “We found Our fathers following a certain religion, and we do guide ourselves by their footsteps.”
Qur’án 43:22

When it is said to them: “Come to what God hath revealed; come to the Messenger,” they say: “Enough for us are the ways we found our fathers following.” What! even though their fathers were void of knowledge and guidance?
Qur’án 5:104

Do not be stubborn as your forefathers were; submit yourselves to the Lord and enter his sanctuary...

II Chronicles 30:8 NEB

Paul states that he was first hampered by this same handicap:

I...was extremely zealous for the tradition of my ancestors.
Galatians 1:14 NIV

- Both Books discourage dependency on others—such as on religious leaders, parents, or the masses of people—for spiritual guidance:

Every man shall bear his own burden... Galatians 6:5

No bearer of burdens can bear the burden of another.
Qur’án 39:7

- Both Books imply or indicate that some people will turn away from the truth, but God will find others who will take their place.

If you turn back (from the Path), He will substitute in your stead another people...
Qur’án 47:38

Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit.
Matt. 21:43 NIV

- Both Books declare that the degree of one’s accountability depends on one’s knowledge and potential:

God asks nothing of any soul save that which He has given it. Qur'án 65:7

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. Luke 12:48 NIV

Say: Shall they who have knowledge and they who have it not, be treated alike? Qur'án 39:9

- Both Books encourage the believers to proclaim God's message:

...proclaim the message... Matthew 10:7 NEB

To proclaim a clear message is our only duty. Qur'án 36:17

Nobody lights a lamp and covers it with a basin... Luke 8:16 NEB

Ye shall surely make it known to mankind and not hide it... Qur'án 3:187

- Both Books “warn” the believers to arise to service, and to speak up:

Unless ye march forth...He will place another people in your stead... Qur'án 9:39

I [Christ] tell you...if you keep quiet, the stones will cry out. Luke 19:40 NIV

- Both Books bestow responsibility on the individual for accepting God's Messengers:

If anyone does not listen to my [God's] words that the prophet speaks in my name, I myself will call him to account. Deuteronomy 18:19 NIV

If I [Christ] had not come and spoken to them, they would not be guilty of sin; but now they have no excuse... John 15:22 NEB

Surely, therefore, will we call those to account, to whom a Messenger hath been sent... Qur'án 7:6

Ways of Finding Truth

- Both the Bible and the Qur'án declare that recognition of truth depends on the presence of special virtues. The seeker of truth must either have them or acquire them before he can succeed. Many qualities are mentioned; these are a few:

He [God] maketh his signs [proofs] clear to *those who* [have a desire to] *understand*. Qur'án 10:5

[The Qur'án is:] A guidance and a mercy to *the righteous* [the sincere]... Qur'án 31:3

At the end of time...*the righteous* will shine as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.

Matthew 13:41-43 NEB

Seek the Lord, all you *humble* of the land...Seek *righteousness* and *humility*, perhaps you will be sheltered on the day of the Lord's anger.

Zephaniah 2:3 NIV

God guideth all *who seek His good pleasure* to ways of peace and safety. Qur'án 5:16

For the Lord takes delight in his people; he crowns *the humble* with salvation. Psalms 149:4 NIV

This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God.

John 3:19-21

Many people excuse themselves from making that “decision” (Joel 3:13-14) because of a lack of knowledge of their own Scriptures. But far more essential for making that decision is justice. Knowledge without justice is of no value; by itself, it can be a negative force, leading to pride:

Through knowledge shall the just [not the unjust] be delivered. Proverbs 11:9

It would certainly be unjust if **only** the religious leaders and scholars could distinguish truth from falsehood. If scholarship or academic learning were the main prerequisite for an accurate judgment, then how could the laymen be held accountable? Countless references are made in both the Bible and the Qur’án to the heart and the soul as the true assayers of truth. Not once is such an honor bestowed on intelligence, scholarship, knowledge of ancient languages, or academic learning. Not once are we told that “at the time of the end the scholars will shine in the kingdom of their Father” or that “God crowns the leaders with salvation.” Yet most people continue to disqualify themselves as assessors of truth. They continue to disregard all scriptural references and to create and follow their own standards, sprung out of their own fantasy. The purpose here is not to degrade academic learning, but rather to emphasize that devoid of justice and wisdom, sheer learning may itself become an obstacle between the heart and heaven.

- Both Books speak against engaging in disputes or arguments:

Don’t have anything to do with...arguments.

II Timothy 2:23 NIV

...arguments that result in...quarreling...and constant friction between men of corrupt mind...

I Timothy 6:3-5 NIV

And ask of the sinners: “What led you into Hell-Fire?” They will say: “We were...[of those who] used to talk vanities...and...deny the Day of Judgment [our Day].”
 Qur’án 74:41-46 Y

And woe, on that day [our day] to those...who plunge into vain disputes...
 Qur’án 52:11-12

Happy...the believers, who...keep aloof from vain words.
 Qur’án 23:1-2
 Also 4:106

Both the Bible and the Qur’án warn against the use of careless or vain words (Matt. 12:36; Qur’án 106:109). Let us see an example of careless words. A Christian asks his Jewish friend: “Would you like to learn about Jesus?” His friend says: “No! Thank you.” That is all he says or does in response to this invitation. His words are careless because they are not based on a thorough investigation of the evidence. That one word—No!—uttered carelessly, can change his destiny for all eternity!

In all the ages, countless people have deprived their souls of divine blessings by engaging in idle disputes or arguments:

Each nation [body of believers] schemed against their Messenger...and disputed with vain words to refute the truth.
 Qur’án 40:5

Many people thrive on arguing. For them it is an amusement, a pastime, a game:

If thou question them [hypocrites], they declare: “We were only talking idly and in play.”
 Qur’án 9:65

So leave them to babble and play until they meet that Day...
 Qur’án 43:83

Many people perceive the person with whom they disagree as an opponent or adversary. These are some of

the negative feelings that stir their souls when they encounter someone with a different belief system or point of view:

- You want to show that I am wrong. What a fantasy you have! I will soon teach you a lesson!
- You want to rob me of my precious faith. No way!
- You think you can prove that your way is better. How wrong you are!

The negative attitude caused by these feelings captures and closes the mind; it prevents anything new from entering.

Sometimes arguing gives people satisfaction. From it they gain a sense of power over their opponent. In schools they call this debate. The main goal of the debater is *not* to find the truth, but to win points. This may be fun in school, but it can be disastrous in religion.

Getting into arguments seems to be part of human nature and is commonly practiced among many groups from children and their parents to academicians and politicians:

Man is the most disputatious of beings. Qur'an 18:50 A

The spiritual history of the world demonstrates that religion has always provided fertile ground for disputes or arguments. The multiplication of denominations is a living proof of this. The rejection of every divine Messenger by the masses of the people to whom He came is another proof. Because of their deep roots, unresolved disagreements in religion divide people—sometimes hundreds of millions of them—and keep them divided for ages. Millions have died in the name of religion—a heavenly gift whose main mission is love.

Some questions to ponder: why can't the firm and faithful believers with the most brilliant minds agree on the fundamental doctrines of their faith? Why can't those who have spent their whole lives studying the Bible or the Qur'án reconcile the differences *within* their own faiths? Do they not all love their Redeemer? Why, then, can't they come together in agreement? If resolving doctrinal differences in one's own faith has been so difficult—indeed impossible—how much more difficult must it be to gain an objective perception of the differences that *a new* religion presents? If people cannot agree on their own Book, one they believe in, how can they agree on the differences they find in a new Book, one they do not believe in? Yet, all the differences can be resolved if the argumentative attitude (I want to win) is replaced by an open attitude (I want to find the truth). No wonder Bahá'u'lláh's condemnation of idle disputes is so strong:

Of all men the most negligent is he that disputeth idly and seeketh to advance himself over his brother. Say, O brethren! Let deeds, not words, be your adorning.¹

The following words of Jesus show how serious it is to be careless in one's speech. Idle talk and dispute certainly qualify as examples of such a speech:

But I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every *careless word* they have spoken. For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned.

Matthew 12:36-37 NIV

These are they whose hearts and ears and eyes God hath sealed up; these are *the careless ones*.

Qur'án 16:108

Arguments engage the mind; they do not touch the heart. Only when we speak gently and kindly can we awaken

the sleeping souls, can we encourage reflection and awareness of God's awesome authority:

But speak to him [Pharaoh] with gentle speech; haply he will reflect and fear. Qur'án 20:44

- Both Books declare that those who remain faithful to God's covenant, who follow His instructions, such as investigating His message, will receive more guidance and grace:

Everyone who has [faith in God's words] will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him. Matt. 25:29 NIV

God will increase the guidance of the already guided. Qur'án 19:76

[The Qur'án] is a healing and a mercy to the faithful. But it shall only add to the ruin of the wicked. Qur'án 17:82

- Both Books glorify wisdom:

My Lord! Bestow on me wisdom... Qur'án 26:83

Give me now wisdom... II Chronicles 1:10

She [wisdom] shall bring thee to honor, when thou dost embrace her. Proverbs 4:8

Be ye wise as serpents, and harmless [pure NIV] as doves. Matthew 10:16

He to whom wisdom is given hath much good given him... Qur'án 2:269

Bahá'u'lláh lifts wisdom above every other virtue:

Wisdom proclaimeth: He that hath Me not is bereft of all things: Turn ye away from all that is on earth and seek none else but Me.² Bahá'u'lláh

Above all else, the greatest gift and the most wondrous blessing hath ever been and will continue to be Wisdom. It is man's unfailing Protector.³ Bahá'u'lláh

- Both Books regard wisdom as the key to the understanding of the prophecies and the recognition of the Promised One:

The wise shall understand. Daniel 12:10

Only the wise leaders shall understand.
Daniel 12:10 NEB

Ask now of the Wise concerning Him [the promised Redeemer].
Qur'án 25:59

Jesus also spoke a specific parable to show that when He returns only the wise Christians will recognize Him (See Matt. 25:1-13).

- Both Books encourage reasoning and rational thinking:

Prove all things... Thessalonians 5:21

“Let us reason together,” says the Lord. Isaiah 1:18 NIV

Bring forth your proofs... Qur'án 21:24

This is my way, resting on a clear proof...
Qur'án 12:108

Call people unto the path of your Lord with sound reasoning and wise exhortation. Qur'án 16:125

- Both Books enjoin reflection and meditation:

Meditate on it day and night... Joshua 1:8 NIV

A blessed Book have We sent down to thee, that men may meditate its verses... Qur'án 38:29

- Both Books bless those who have a pure heart:

Who may ascend to the hill of the Lord?...He who hath...a pure heart. Psalms 24:3-4 NIV

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

Matthew 5:8

Blessed is he who hath kept it [his soul] pure...

Qur'án 91:9

Only the pure can grasp the Lord's revelation.

Qur'án 56:79

I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

Matthew 18:3 NIV

Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord.

Hebrews 12:14 NIV

- Both Books use the symbolism of clothing to teach us the necessity of spiritual purity as a key to heavenly blessings:

Blessed are those who wash their robes...that they may go through the gates into the city [of God, or divine Revelation].

Revelation 22:14 NIV

Behold, I come like a thief! Blessed is he who stays awake and keeps his clothes [spiritual assets, virtues, character] with him so that he may not go naked...

Revelation 16:15 NIV

O children of Adam! now have we sent down to you a garment to hide your nakedness...but the garment of piety—this is the best.

Qur'án 7:26

Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints.

Revelation 19:8 NIV

The next verse is also a prophecy. Just like the Biblical verses, it points to the necessity of purity for recognizing the Lord of our time:

Thy Lord—magnify Him! Thy garment—purify it!

Qur'án 74:3-4

Consider also this verse from Bahá'u'lláh:

O SON OF SPIRIT!

My first counsel is this: Possess a pure, kindly and radiant heart, that thine may be a sovereignty ancient, imperishable and everlasting.⁴

- Both Books use the same analogy to portray various degrees of receptivity to the Word of God:

The seed is the word of God...The seed that fell among thorns stands for those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by life's worries, riches and pleasures, and they do not mature. But the seed on good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart, who hear the word, retain it, and by preserving produce a crop. Luke 8:11, 14-15 NIV

A rich soil [heart], produces vegetation abundantly by the will of its Lord, but a poor soil brings forth a little vegetation. Thus do We make plain our signs for those who are thankful. Qur'án 7:58

- Both Books describe closed-mindedness in the same way:

They may look and look, but see nothing; they may hear and hear, but understand nothing...

Mark 4:10-12 NEB

Hearts have they with which they understand not, and eyes have they with which they see not, and ears have they with which they hearken not. They are like the brutes. Yea, they go more astray, these are the heedless.

Qur'án 7:179

Those who have eyes but are blind, who have ears but are deaf.

Isaiah 43:8 NIV

They know nothing, they understand nothing; their eyes are plastered over so they cannot see, and their minds closed so they cannot understand.

Isaiah 44:18 NIV

- Both Books regard the desire for truth and open-mindedness an element of wisdom:

A wise man will hear, and will increase learning...

Proverbs 1:5

Give then the good tidings to those who hear an utterance and follow the best [they find] therein. These are they whom God guideth and are endowed with wisdom.

Qur'án 39:17-18⁵

The true beginning of wisdom is a desire to learn.

Wisdom of Solomon 6:17 NEB

The worst creatures in God's sight are those whose minds are utterly closed.

Qur'án 8:21-22

- Both Books teach that God does not allow the undeserving to recognize His glory:

He [God] has blinded their eyes and dulled their minds, lest they should see with their eyes, and perceive with their minds, and turn to me to heal them.

John 12:40 NEB

Verily We have set veils over their hearts lest they should understand this, and over their ears, deafness.

Qur'án 18:57 Y

Had we pleased we had certainly given to every soul its guidance.

Qur'án 32:13

The preceding passages should not be taken literally. They express the unique language of revelation. They point to human freedom, and not to God's interference. God gave us both the eye and the eyelid. He is the Giver of gifts; we are the receivers and choosers. God gave us

both the choice of seeing and the choice of not seeing. The Báb's words clarify this point:

God desireth not to straiten the heart of anyone, be it even an ant, how much less the heart of a superior creature...⁶ The Báb

A similar message is uttered through Ezekiel:

“Do I have any pleasure at all that the wicked should die?” says the Lord God, “and not that he should turn from his ways and live”? Ezekiel 18:23 NKJ

- Both Books declare that the gift of faith is in God's hands:

No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him... Christ (John 6:44 NIV)

You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit—fruit that will last. Christ (John 15:16 NIV)
See also John 6:65; 3:27

No soul can believe, except by the Will of God. Qur'án 10:100

He guideth whom He pleaseth to the straight Path. Qur'án 10:25

Whomsoever Thou willest Thou causest to draw nigh unto the Most Great Ocean, and on whomsoever Thou desirest Thou conferrest the honor of recognizing Thy Most Ancient Name.⁷ Bahá'u'lláh

- Both Books condemn those who prevent others from seeking the truth:

Woe to you...you yourselves do not enter, nor will you let those enter who are trying to. Matthew 23:13 NIV

As for those who...turned others aside from the way of God, to them we will add punishment on punishment...
Qur'án 16:88

- Both Books speak of Satan^{*} (tempters) and the way to resist the temptations of the deceivers:

Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. Ephesians 6:11

If a suggestion from Satan assail thy [mind], seek refuge with God. For He heareth and knoweth [all things].
Qur'án 7:200⁸

- Both Books refer to people's resistance to accept God's gift of Guidance:

He came unto his own, and his own received him not.
John 1:11

I am reproached and mocked all the time for uttering the word of Lord.
Jeremiah 20:8 NEB

...never came Messengers to them whom they did not deride.
Qur'án 15:11
Also 36:30

- Both Books declare that faith has the power to liberate people from their heavy burdens:

Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.
Matthew 11:28

He [Muhammad] releases them from their heavy burdens and from the yokes that are upon them.
Qur'án 7:157

- Both Books disqualify miracles as evidence of divine truth. They point to the futility of trying to convince people by the power of the supernatural:

^{*}In Bahá'í Scriptures, the word "Satan" is considered a metaphor. It stands for deception or deceiving individuals.

Even if We [God] opened above them a gate in Heaven...they [people] would surely say: It is only that our eyes are drunken, nay, we are bewitched.
 Qur'án 15:14-15

He said to him, "If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead."
 Luke 16:31 NIV
 See also Matt. 4:7

Nothing hinders Us [God] from sending thee [Muhammad] miracles, except that the peoples of old treated them as lies.
 Qur'án 17:59

Say: Consider ye whatever is in the Heavens and on the Earth, but neither signs, nor warners, avail those who will not [want to] believe!
 Qur'án 10:101

Bahá'u'lláh asks His followers not to pollute His Faith with the report of miracles:

We entreat Our loved ones not to...allow references to what they have regarded as miracles and prodigies to debase Our rank and station, or to mar the purity and sanctity of Our name.⁹
 Bahá'u'lláh

Attributes of True Seekers

When a true seeker determineth to take the step of search in the path leading to the knowledge of the Ancient of Days, he must, before all else, cleanse and purify his heart, which is the seat of the revelation of the inner mysteries of God, from the obscuring dust of all acquired knowledge...He must so cleanse his heart that no remnant of either love or hate may linger therein, lest that love blindly incline him to error, or that hate repel him away from the truth...That seeker must at all times put his trust in God, must renounce the peoples of the earth, detach himself from the world of dust, and cleave

unto Him Who is the Lord of Lords. He must never seek to exalt himself above any one, must wash away from the tablet of his heart every trace of pride and vainglory, must cling unto patience and resignation, observe silence, and refrain from idle talk...

...At the dawn of every day he should commune with God, and with all his soul persevere in the quest of his Beloved...

Only when the lamp of search, of earnest striving, of longing desire, of passionate devotion, of fervid love, of rapture, and ecstasy, is kindled within the seeker's heart, and the breeze of His loving-kindness is wafted upon his soul, will the darkness of error be dispelled, the mists of doubts and misgivings be dissipated, and the lights of knowledge and certitude envelop his being.¹⁰ Bahá'u'lláh

14

Defensive or Offensive Wars?

There is a tendency to judge a race, a nation, or any distinct group by its least worthy members. Eric Hoffer

Because of the prevailing violence spread by Muslim terrorists, many people think that Islam is a religion of violence. The same objection has been raised against Christianity. Let us see how Christians defend this accusation:

What about all the wars and suffering that have been caused in the name of Christianity? You cannot judge the teachings and truth of a religion by the conduct of people who do not live up to them. Some people try to discredit Christianity by pointing out the misdeeds done by Christians who were not following Christ's teaching or by people who weren't real Christians at all. The standard by which to judge Christianity is the teaching of Jesus Christ. Christianity has had a tremendous positive impact on the world. Many men who pioneered modern science were Christians.¹

A common misconception in the West is that Muhammad resorted to the sword to spread Islam. To resolve this question, let us first examine the Qur'án to see what it teaches about war, for the Qur'án is the Islamic constitution. The following verses give us all the facts we need to make an informed judgment:

And fight for the cause of God against those who fight against you, but transgress not the limits [do not initiate hostilities]. God loveth not such injustice. And kill them

wherever ye shall find them, and eject them from whatever place they have ejected you, for civil discord is worse than carnage. Yet attack them not at the sacred Mosque, unless they attack you therein; but if they attack you, slay them. Such is the reward of the infidels. But if they stop, then verily God is Gracious, Merciful. Fight therefore against them until there be no more civil discord, and the only worship be that of God. But if they stop, then let there be no hostility, save against the wicked.

Qur'án 2:190-193

The preceding verses contain these concepts:

- Wage war against your enemies to protect the cause of God.
- Who are your enemies? Those who attack you.
- Engaging in an offensive war is unjust.
- How should you respond to those who attack you and want to kill you? Treat them the way they treat you. This is an act of justice.
- If your enemies force you out of your land, then force them back out of that land. In other words, take back what is rightfully yours.
- Peace and security of your land should be your first concern. It must be preserved at any cost, even at the cost of war and death of the agitators, those with evil intentions.

Are not the preceding rules reasonable, especially in a primitive culture? Do they not express the principles that even today we honor and practice in civilized world against violent groups who wish to disturb the peace of the planet?

You may ask, “Why were the Muslims told to kill their enemies wherever they could find them?” For the same reason that western nations are searching for terrorists and

killing them wherever they can find them. Those terrorists are not just outlaws and murderers. Their ultimate goal is to undermine the security of nations, and to rule and control the world through tyranny. If left to themselves, they can cause unimaginable chaos and destruction throughout the world.

On September 11, 2001, a violent group named Al-Qá'ida terrorized the world. How did some western nations respond? By going after them and killing them wherever they could find them. Both sides involved in this conflict did not hesitate even one moment to attack and kill each other. Comparing the primitive and idolatrous people of pre-Islamic Arabia with the most violent people of our time is a fair comparison. It is ironic that Muhammad appeared in the same country where Al-Qá'ida was born, and He faced the same kind of violent people we are facing today. The difference is this: at that time the enemies killed each other with a sword. Today they kill with planes, guns, and rockets. If the terrorists of our time could get their hands on nuclear bombs, would they hesitate to attack the United States? If they could poison the waters of a large city, such as Sydney or London, would they hesitate? If the idolaters of Arabia could eradicate Muhammad and all His followers, would they hesitate? People have not changed, they have not advanced, only their weapons have. It is ironic that western nations criticize Muhammad for seeking to destroy the terrorists of His day, and yet they raise the same battle cry against today's terrorists.

Note how the idolaters of Arabia treated Muhammad:

The military expeditions of Muhammad...were always defensive actions: a proof of this is that during thirteen years, in Mecca, He and His followers endured the most violent persecutions. At this period they were the target for the arrows of hatred. Some of His companions were killed and their property confiscated; others fled to

foreign lands. Muhammad Himself, after the most extreme persecutions by the Qurayshites, who finally resolved to kill Him, fled to Medina in the middle of the night. Yet even then His enemies did not cease their persecutions, but pursued Him to Medina and His disciples even to Abyssinia.² ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Consider this statement from an enlightened Muslim author:

...the aim of Islam is to remove persecution and oppression, so that freedom may be restored and justice may flourish. At all times, physical battle is the last resort, and is to be used only under the most extraordinary circumstances, when all other attempts at just and peaceful solutions to the dispute fail. If non-Muslims are living peacefully, or even indifferently, with the Muslims, there are no grounds or justification to declare war on them. Muslims are commanded to avoid initiating hostilities, embarking on any act of aggression, or violating the rights of others.³

There are rules for everything. War also has its own rules. Those rules seem cruel to us, but not to soldiers in the battlefield who must face this reality: “It is either you or me!” A common strategy used in war is “preemptive strikes.” You don’t wait for your enemy, you go after him. This practice is universally accepted. One has a right to defend himself by going after his enemy instead of waiting for the enemy to find him and kill him. That is what happened during the time of Muhammad. His forces sometimes pursued their enemies and killed them wherever they found them.

We should recognize that in those days and those primitive cultures, people had to tell themselves: “You either kill your enemy now, or he will live to kill you later.” The idea

of taking prisoners of war made no sense. There were no prisons, no police, no defense attorneys.

What would you do if you were sure someone had hired a “hit man” to kill you and your loved ones? Would you wait for him with *open* arms, or with arms *at the ready*? Defending oneself is common sense, and yet when the critics judge Muhammad, they change the rules. They expect Him to wait for His enemies and welcome their swords!

The enemies of Islam look for any loophole, any alibi to accuse Muhammad with a desire for aggression and war. For instance, they say: “When He was in Mecca with only a few followers, He played the role of a peacemaker. But as soon as He gained power in Medina, He revealed His true motives: He began to wage wars.” On the surface, their claim seems innocent, until we pay close attention. The problem with this accusation is this: It omits one critical word: defensive. It replaces “*defensive war*” with “*war*.” That one word makes a world of difference. As we noted, when Muhammad was in Mecca, He endured much suffering, and to avoid death, He escaped to Medina. He escaped because He had no power to defend Himself. But the threat to His life and the safety of His followers continued. But *when He had the power to defend Himself, He did. He did what any reasonable person would.* By omitting one word—defensive—the critics conceal the truth. No wonder Jesus warned such accusers:

I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for *every careless word* they have spoken. For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned. Christ (Matt. 12:36-37 NIV)

Most people, even the most educated often violate this obvious but most profound principle:

Do not follow blindly what you do not know to be true.
For ears, eyes, and the heart are all accountable.

Qur'an 17:36

These are they whose hearts and ears God hath [allowed to be] sealed up. They are the *careless ones*.

Qur'an 16:108

Further, those who raise such objections fail to remember that the Jews were also asked to behave the same way. At the beginning of His Mission, Moses, like Muhammad, endured much suffering and mistreatment from His enemies, without responding in kind. What was He asked to do, when He gained power?

When the Lord your God brings you into the land you are entering to possess and drives out before you many nations...and when the Lord your God has delivered them over to you and you have defeated them, then you must destroy them totally. Make no treaty with them, and show them no mercy. Do not intermarry with them. Do not give your daughters to their sons or take their daughters for your sons, for they will turn your sons away from following me to serve other gods, and the Lord's anger will burn against you and will quickly destroy you...For you are a people holy to the Lord your God. The Lord your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be his people, his treasured possession.

Deuteronomy 7:1-6 NIV

Yes, wars are absolutely cruel, but sometimes necessary. They are called defensive wars. These are the ones Muhammad waged. He fought for the survival of His Faith. If He had played the role of a "pacifist" among primitive and hostile Arabs of His time, the Islamic civilization would never have been born. The advancement of science would have been delayed. We would not be enjoying the present fruits of civilization.

Further, by teaching idolaters to believe in one God, and to accept Jesus, Moses and the other Prophets, Muhammad created a safe haven for Jews and Christians in lands that had once been the realm of murderous and feuding tribes.

We should note that the forces of light and darkness have always been at war. The Bible contains several records of such wars. Consider the following statement from the footnote of the *Amplified Bible* concerning the fulfillment of a Bible prophecy:

During a single night this prophecy was fulfilled, when “the Angel of the Lord went forth and slew 185,000 in the camp of the Assyrians; and when the living arose early in the morning, behold, all these were dead bodies” (II Kings 19:35)...^{4*}

Some Christian theologians criticize the wars waged by Muhammad, but glorify future wars expected to be waged by Jesus. Statements such as the following are found abundantly in Christian publications:

God’s wrath will fall when Jesus returns (Jude 14-15). The passage in Revelation which pictures the return of Jesus says that He will return in righteousness to judge and wage war (Rev. 19:11).

The first time Jesus came, He came in loving compassion with eyes filled with tears. But when He returns, He will come in vengeance (Rev. 6:12-17), with eyes like a flame of fire (Rev. 19:12). He will come to destroy the enemies of God (Rev. 19:11).

The presidents and kings and prime ministers of the world will get on their knees and cry out for the rocks and mountains to fall upon them, so great will be the

*Such prophecies should not be taken literally. They contain inner meanings. Unfortunately, many Christians take them word for word.

terror of the Lord (Rev. 6:15-17). The unrighteous will stumble about like blind men, and their blood will be poured out like dust (Zeph. 1:17)...

Does this make God a “monster”? No! On the contrary, it proves His goodness, for how could a good God ignore the evil of sin and allow it to go unpunished? His wrath against evil will demonstrate His righteousness.⁵

The Way Muhammad Treated Jews and Christians

The definitive standard by which we can know the true spirit of Islam is to study the way Muhammad treated the Jews and Christians who lived in His time and territory. We should note that there are different types of people in every society. We have both pacifists and violent groups, criminals and saints, loyalists and traitors. This is how it is today and how it was in the time of Muhammad. Amongst the violent idolaters of Arabia, there were people who already believed in God and belonged to a religion. They were mostly Jews and Christians who were spiritually on a much higher plane than the idolaters. In a way, they were like the believers of our time who go to their houses of worship and try to live by the ethical rules of their faith. Those believers knew they must love God and obey His commands:

You shall love the Lord your God and keep for all time...the commandments. Deuteronomy 11:1 NEB

The best way to know the true Islamic standard of waging war is to see how Muhammad treated the religious minorities of His time—mostly Jews and Christians. Let us once again hear from ‘Abdu’l-Bahá:

Muhammad never fought against the Christians; on the contrary, He treated them kindly and gave them perfect freedom. A community of Christian people lived at Najran and were under His care and protection. Muhammad said, “If anyone infringes their rights, I Myself will be his enemy, and in the presence of God I will bring a charge against him.” In the edicts which He promulgated it is clearly stated that the lives, properties and honor of the Christians and Jews are under the protection of God; and that if a Muhammadan married a Christian woman, the husband must not prevent her from going to church, nor oblige her to veil herself; and that if she died, he must place her remains in the care of the Christian clergy. Should the Christians desire to build a church, Muslims ought to help them. In case of war between Islam and her enemies, the Christians should be exempted from the obligation of fighting, unless they desired of their own free will to do so in defense of Islam, because they were under its protection. But as a compensation for this immunity, they should pay yearly a small sum of money. In short, there are seven detailed edicts on these subjects, some copies of which are still extant at Jerusalem. This is an established fact and is not dependent on my affirmation. The edict of the second Caliph still exists in the custody of the orthodox Patriarch of Jerusalem, and of this there is no doubt.⁶

George Townshend—who before recognizing Bahá'u'lláh was a prominent church leader in Ireland—in his book *Christ and Bahá'u'lláh*, presents the following evidence to show Muhammad's love and respect for Christians:

To the Christians Muhammad showed the greatest kindness. Insisting that all Muslims should fully accept both Jesus Christ and His Gospel and assuring them in the Qur'án (Surah 5 verse 85) that they would find the

Christians nearest of all men to them in affection. He took the Christians under his express protection.

A remarkable illustration of this is afforded by the charter which Muhammad granted to the Christians in general and to the monks of the monastery of St. Catherine, near Mount Sinai, in particular, the actual document itself having been faithfully preserved down the centuries by the analysts of Islam.

Quoting this charter in *The Spirit of Islam* (p. 84) Syed Ameer 'Alí remarks that it "has been justly designated as one of the noblest monuments of enlightened tolerance that the history of the world can produce," and he calls attention to its marvelous breadth of view and liberality of conception. "By it," he writes, "the Prophet secured to the Christians privileges and immunities which they did not possess even under sovereigns of their own creed; and declared that any Muslim violating and abusing what was therein ordered, should be considered a violator of God's testament, a transgressor of His commandments, and a slighter of His Faith.

He undertook himself, and enjoined on his followers, to protect the Christians, to defend their churches, the residences of their priests, and to guard them from all injuries. They were not to be unfairly taxed; no bishop was to be driven out of his bishopric; no Christian was to be forced to reject his religion; no monk was to be expelled from his monastery; no pilgrim was to be detained from his pilgrimage. Nor were the Christian churches to be pulled down for the sake of building mosques or houses for the Muslims.

Christian women married to Muslims were to enjoy their own religion, and not to be subjected to compulsion or annoyance of any kind on that account. If Christians should stand in need of assistance for the repair of their

churches or monasteries, or any other matter pertaining to their religion, the Muslims were to assist them. This was not to be considered as taking part in their religion, but as merely rendering them assistance in their need, and complying with the ordinances of the Prophet, which were made in their favor by the authority of God and of His Apostle. Should the Muslims be engaged in hostilities with outside Christians, no Christian resident among the Muslims should be treated with contempt on account of his creed. Any Muslim so treating a Christian should be accounted recalcitrant to the Prophet.”...

So kindly were the relations between the two Faiths and so strong the spiritual influence of Muhammad that the Christian masses were disposed to accept the Faith of the Arabian Prophet.⁷

Can we find anywhere in the Bible a record of such a magnanimous example? Do Christian leaders who criticize Muhammad for being intolerant and even violent, treat religious minorities in their lands the same way, with the same standard of love and compassion?

In the following verses, the Qur’án declares that all houses of worships—not only mosques but also churches and synagogues—where God is the point of adoration, must be protected:

Permission to take up arms is hereby given to those who are attacked, because they have been wronged. God has power to grant them victory to those who have been unjustly driven from their homes, only because they said: “Our Lord is God.” Had God not defended some men by the might of others, monasteries and churches, synagogues and mosques in which His praise is daily celebrated, would have been utterly destroyed. But whoever helps God shall be helped by Him.

Qur’án 22:39-40

The Quranic verses clearly imply that the protection of all houses of worship is the duty of Muslims. The believers are asked not only to defend themselves, but also the rights of all people, including the freedom to worship God in synagogues and churches.

How can a man—raised in an idolatrous culture—be so tolerant, so accepting of other belief systems? How can He, on His own, recognize and proclaim people’s God-given right to worship freely without fear? Even today such an attitude is rare. Even today many people would not mourn the destruction of houses of worship—as long as they were not theirs! And yet over 1400 years ago, in primitive Arabia, where freedom of worship had no meaning, Muhammad upheld and promoted that freedom! How then could anyone accuse a man—so advanced in His teachings—with aggression and intolerance?

Consider the implications of this verse:

And insult not those whom they [idolaters] worship besides God, lest they insult God without knowledge.

Qur’ān 6:108

The Muslims are asked not to insult the beliefs of idol worshippers, and yet Muhammad is accused of killing them simply because they refused to worship God!

We should note that the Muslims ruled Spain for centuries, and yet they gave Christian residents freedom to practice their own faith. Consider the following statement from a Christian source:

Beginning in the seventh century, Islam spread westward into North Africa, eastward to Pakistan, India, and Bangladesh, and down to Indonesia...As it did so, it entered into conflict with a militant Catholic Church, which organized Crusades to recover the Holy Land from the Muslims. In 1492 Queen Isabella and King Ferdinand of Spain completed the Catholic reconquest

of Spain. Muslims and Jews had to convert or be expelled from Spain. The mutual tolerance that had existed under Muslim rule in Spain later evaporated under the influence of the Catholic Inquisition.⁸

No doubt the Muslim leaders who displayed tolerance toward Christians were influenced by the Quranic teachings such as:

There is no compulsion in religion. Qur'an 2:256

Today the Spaniards as a whole are more Christian than some other European nations who never lived under an Islamic political power.

It is unfair to blame Jesus for what Christians did in His name. The same holds true with Muhammad. The Islamic forces waged wars to win converts, the Christian forces waged wars to win a city—Jerusalem! The Popes initiated and pursued a war—the Crusades—that lasted nearly three centuries just to conquer a city!

It is assumed that Islam was always spread by the sword. Muslim authors remind us of the following exceptions:

- Indonesia: Over a hundred million Indonesians are Muslims, yet no conquering Muslim army ever landed on any of its over two thousand islands.
- Malaysia: Most of its residents are Muslims, yet no Muslim soldier landed there.
- Africa: Many millions of Muslims live in that continent, without ever being attacked by Muslims.⁹
- What about millions of Muslims who live in China, India, Bangladesh, and Pakistan?

The preceding examples show that Islam had a message that appealed to the people. Otherwise why would so many millions adopt a new religion without any pressure?

The Way Traitors Were Treated

The “followers of the Book”—the Bible—lived in complete safety during the time of Muhammad. They had nothing to fear, as long as they did not collaborate with the idolaters. Some of the Jews who did collaborate, proved by their action that they were hypocrites and traitors—disloyal even to their own beliefs. These traitors received the same treatment that the idolaters did: death.

We should remember that the Jews who sided with idolaters were not true believers in Moses. If they truly believed in one God, they would have been among the first to side with Muhammad, because that was precisely the belief He was promoting among the Arabs. He was doing exactly what Moses had done. The idolaters did not honor Moses, but Muhammad glorified Moses and remembered Him frequently. The story of the Israelites occupies many pages of the Qur’án. Muhammad gave credibility to the faith that the Jews followed. They should have given Him every support within their power as a sign of gratitude. Instead, some of them supported the idolaters. How angry would you feel to see the people who are expected to be your friends, side with your bitter enemies—murderers who plan to eradicate you and all your loved ones?

These Jewish traitors had played a critical part in support of Muhammad’s enemies: ***They had tipped the balance in their favor.*** The severe punishment they received cast fear in the heart of Muhammad’s enemies throughout Arabia. It presented a powerful lesson to all those who felt they could stop the spread of Islam. If Muhammad had not taught His enemies this critical lesson, ***many more people would have been killed in future wars.***

Every event should be judged in the context of history. Many Christians, who are critical of Muhammad, believe that everything recorded in the Bible is literally true. If we accept their assumption, then how can they justify this harsh punishment inflicted on the Jews:

Then he [Moses] said to them, “This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: ‘Each man strap a sword to his side. Go back and forth through the camp from one end to the other, each killing his brother and friend and neighbor.’” The Levites did as Moses commanded, and that day about three thousand of the people died. Then Moses said, “You have been set apart to the Lord today, for you were against your own sons and brothers, and he has blessed you this day.”

Exodus 32:27-29 NIV

We should note that in ancient times, punishment was far more severe than it is today. *According to the Laws of Moses, people would receive death penalty even for a minor misdemeanor such as breaking the Sabbath or for a failure to live up to certain ethical values.* In such a context, death penalty for traitors would not be unreasonable. Even today traitors receive severe punishment, such as life imprisonment and in some countries even death. The case of an American couple, known as Rosenbergs who were convicted of sharing nuclear secrets with the Soviet Union, is well-known. Both of them were executed.

Taking human life, for any reason, is tragic. Even killing a snake is a painful experience, but sometimes that is the best of the worst choices. Recently there was the case of the two snipers who would hide in their car and aim their guns at anyone within their sight. Before they were captured, they had killed ten innocent people. What would you do if you were a police officer, and saw them aiming their gun at another victim?

Even today anti-Semitism is prevalent. The Qur'án, however, teaches us to be pro-Semitism! It declares this view despite the opposition Muhammad received from certain Jewish tribes and leaders in Arabia at a most critical time in His ministry. He bestowed blessings on Jewish people that He did not bestow even on His own followers. How can we explain this:

O Children of Israel! Remember My favor wherewith I have favored you, and that high above all mankind have I raised you...
Qur'án 2:122

And We [God] chose them...above all peoples.
Qur'án 44:32

Unfortunately, some of the Jews living at the time of Muhammad proved not to be deserving of the honors they had received. By siding with the idol-worshippers, they fell from grace.

This brief verse offers much insight into the Qur'án. It teaches us how a helpless enemy should be treated:

And if anyone of idolaters seek thy protection, protect him till he hears the Word of God, then deliver him to a place of safety...
Qur'án 9:6

Please note that the Qur'án does **not** say:

- Force or threaten the refugee to become a believer.
- Torture him to find out if he is a spy.
- Kill him.
- Keep him and use him as a slave.
- Mistreat him and then release him.

Muslims are asked to protect him, teach him the word of God, and then take him to a place of safety. The idolaters were enemies of Islam, and yet Muslims were asked to treat them like friends. The critics also accuse the Muslims with

robbery. While Muhammad lived in Medina, several times while in desperate need, His followers attacked and robbed the caravans owned by their enemies, carrying goods from Mecca to other cities. Once again, without knowing the details, this behavior seems reprehensible. But once we learn the detail, we find it to be justified. For one of the rules of rendering justice and surviving in hostile and primitive societies is revenge. You take my goods; I will take yours. The Muslims in this case did to their enemies what they had done to them earlier. They protected the law of Moses: an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth. This is how justice was practiced in ancient times otherwise aggression would be encouraged and rewarded.

Once again, by omitting one critical piece of information, the critics try to promote prejudice against Islam. They know that by proving only one moral flaw in Muhammad's character, they can undermine His credibility. They want to say: "How can a dishonest man be a Prophet from God? And who would want to follow a thief?" This is the power of only one lie! Imagine the power of multiple lies!

I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken.

Christ (Matt. 12:36 NIV)

Who Can Be the Judge?

To be fair in our judgment, we should ask: Can anyone know for sure what dangers and dilemmas Muhammad had to face in mid 7th century AD in that primitive culture? What if He had tried to appease the idolaters? What if He had tried to treat them with mercy rather than with justice? Could He have survived long enough to establish His faith? Who among us has the wisdom to make a fair judgment?

Consider the wars waged in our time. Do people of this age agree on the necessity of those wars? When the United States, largely a Christian country, tried to liberate Muslims living in former Czechoslovakia under a dictator, the Eastern Orthodox Church in Russia opposed the war. Politicians from many countries were also divided. Why? What about the war against Saddam Hussein, a dictator who massacred tens of thousands of his own people? Why has there been so much disagreement between nations and various political parties concerning the war against Saddam? If we cannot agree even on the necessity or morality of a given war waged in our time, ***how then can we judge a war waged so many centuries earlier in a culture so radically different from ours?***

What about the wars waged by Muslims *after* Muhammad? Naturally Muhammad took no part in those wars just as Jesus took no part in the wars waged by His followers. As we know, Christian nations of Europe engaged in wars against each other for centuries. Most of those who participated on both sides in the two world wars were also Christians. Should we blame Jesus for these wars? In World War II alone some 40 million people were killed. Napoleon, a Christian, who is often revered as a great emperor, was responsible for the death of the 500,000 soldiers he sent to Russia, and then another 50,000 in Europe at the battle of Waterloo. Why did he wage those wars? For personal glory. He caused all those deaths merely to make himself look great. What do we call a man who kills another to feel good about himself? A murderer. What do we call Napoleon? Napoleon the Great! This example shows how faulty human standards are.

Then there is the moral question: Is war *sometimes* justified? The best way to answer this question is to bring it closer to home—close to our family. How would you respond if you saw a man ready to torture and kill your

loved ones? If you could save the innocent, would you not at least try? Yes, war is terrible, yet sometimes it is the best choice. Why did Jesus say:

...if you don't have a sword, sell your cloak and buy one. Luke 22:36 NIV

Because it is better to be alive without a shirt than to be dead with a shirt. That is the reality of life. Now suppose you did not know Jesus, and someone quoted the preceding passage to demonstrate that He taught His followers to be violent. Would you not accept his conclusion? That is the method used by many theologians to introduce Muhammad to Christians. Jesus made the preceding statement because of this bitter reality:

...there are times when war becomes the powerful basis of peace...¹⁰ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

How Would Jesus Act?

Some of the objections raised against Muhammad are derived from this thought: If war is sometimes essential, why then did Jesus not defend Himself and His followers?

Every disease requires a special treatment. The conditions that the two great Messengers—Jesus and Muhammad—encountered were quite different. The Jews living at the time of Jesus were far more humane than the primitive and idolatrous tribes of Arabia living at the time of Muhammad. The Jews, to some extent, honored the Ten Commandments. They had their own Scriptures that glorified God. They were already familiar with the virtues that Muhammad was trying to teach the savage idolaters. The Jews in the days of Jesus were already exposed to divine teachings such as:

...what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.

Micah 6:8 NIV

It is hard to find common links in the law abiding culture of the Jews and the barbarous culture of the idolaters of Arabia. The Jews as a whole were so tolerant that they invited St. Paul to their synagogues to teach them the Message of Jesus. Jesus Himself was allowed to declare His Message in synagogues. How often even today do Christians invite the Bahá'ís to their churches to tell them about the Second Coming of Jesus? Have Muslims ever followed this practice? The Jews have been blamed for crucifying Jesus as if that was an isolated event. All nations have mistreated their Redeemers. If it were not for the verdict of the two powerful Jewish leaders—Annas and Caiaphas—who feared the loss of their powers, the story of Christ and the history of Christianity would have been different indeed. They and their few fanatic followers incited the people against Jesus.

The treatment that Muhammad and His followers received from the idolaters of Arabia was far more violent than what Christ and the early Christians received from the Jews. Only by the use of force could Muhammad and His early followers survive and protect the new Faith. 'Abdu'l-Bahá gives us a glimpse of life in pre-Islamic Arabia among the idol worshippers:

These Arab tribes were in the lowest depths of savagery and barbarism, and in comparison with them the savages of Africa and wild Indians of America were as advanced as a Plato. The savages of America do not bury their children alive as these Arabs did their daughters, glorying in it as being an honorable thing to do. Thus many of the men would threaten their wives, saying, "If a daughter is born to you, I will kill you." Even down to the present time the Arabs dread having daughters...

When a man who had ten wives died, the sons of these women rushed at each other's mothers; and if one of the sons threw his mantle over the head of his father's wife and cried out, "This woman is my lawful property," at once the unfortunate woman became his prisoner and slave. He could do whatever he wished with her. He could kill her, imprison her in a well, or beat, curse and torture her until death released her. According to the Arab habits and customs, he was her master. It is evident that malignity, jealousy, hatred and enmity must have existed between the wives and children of a household...

Again, consider what was the condition and life of these oppressed women! Moreover, the means by which these Arab tribes lived consisted in pillage and robbery, so that they were perpetually engaged in fighting and war, killing one another, plundering and devastating each other's property, and capturing women and children, whom they would sell to strangers. How often it happened that the daughters and sons of a prince, who spent their day in comfort and luxury, found themselves, when night fell, reduced to shame, poverty and captivity. Yesterday they were princes, today they are captives; yesterday they were great ladies, today they are slaves.¹¹

After describing the utter savagery of the pre-Islamic tribes of Arabia, 'Abdu'l-Bahá concludes:

If Christ Himself had been placed in such circumstances among such tyrannical and barbarous tribes, and if for thirteen years He with His disciples had endured all these trials with patience, culminating in flight from His native land—if in spite of this, these lawless tribes continued to pursue Him, to slaughter the men, to pillage their property, and to capture their women and children—what would have been Christ's conduct with regard to them? If this oppression had fallen only upon Himself, He would have forgiven them, and such an act

of forgiveness would have been most praiseworthy; but if He had seen that these cruel and bloodthirsty murderers wished to kill, to pillage and to injure all these oppressed ones, and to take captive the women and children, it is certain that He would have protected them and would have resisted the tyrants. What objection, then, can be taken to Muhammad's action?...

To free these tribes from their bloodthirstiness was the greatest kindness, and to coerce and restrain them was a true mercy. They were like a man holding in his hand a cup of poison, which, when about to drink, a friend breaks and thus saves him. If Christ had been placed in similar circumstances, it is certain that with a conquering power He would have delivered the men, women and children from the claws of these bloodthirsty wolves.¹²

We should also remember that although Jesus was the essence of love and mercy, He declared:

Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to turn “a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law...”

Matthew 10:34-35 NIV

If we take Jesus' statement out of context, we can call Him a warrior—a label some Christian leaders have attached to Muhammad. We know Jesus did not come to bring war and contention. What He meant was that His message would divide the Jews into believers and non-believers. This has been the trend throughout history. The Bahá'í Faith has come to put an end to this trend. Until now the world was not ripe for global unity. For the first time in history, religious diversity will cease and all nations will follow one religion and worship one God. But it will take a long time before the veil of misconceptions can be lifted, before all

people will appreciate this most glorious day in human history, before they will recognize the uniqueness of this age and the supreme honor of rising to the occasion.

The Religion of the Sword

It is often stated that Islam is “the religion of the sword.” Is this true? To respond to this question, we need to understand how spiritual transformation takes roots, how the seed of faith grows in the heart. The heart can be severed or silenced by the sword, but can it also be captured or transformed by the sword? Suppose you were kidnapped by a group of armed men who tried to force you to change your religion. They could force you to praise them, but could they also force you to respect them? Their pressure would probably make you more resistant to their beliefs. Imposing one’s beliefs on others is against one of the most fundamental laws that binds us to our Creator.

Recently, a powerful tyrant, in a country ruled by force, asked a beautiful and highly gifted university student to marry him. She staunchly refused. The man resorted to every means at his disposal to subdue her. At last he succeeded, but at the cost of violating a most fundamental right that God has given to every human being. Forcing a woman to marry a man she cannot love is sheer cruelty.

It is far from the glory of God to force His creatures to love Him. Forced love is worthless to us, how much less to our Creator. To think that God would ever demand such a love is a grave insult to His awesome glory. The gift of faith is so precious that God conceals it behind a thousand veils. Only those with courage, deep desire, and pure hearts are able and allowed to tear the veils apart, only they receive the honor of becoming the chosen ones of God:

A man can receive only what is given him from heaven.

John 3:27 NIV

See also John 6:44

No soul can believe except by the Will of God.

Qur'án 10:100

The one to whom God gives no light, has no light at all.

Qur'án 24:40

See also Qur'án 24:35

If someone approaches God with a closed heart, even miracles cannot reach him and touch him.

Even if We send the angels to them and the dead speak to them, and ***if We bring everything before their eyes, they will not believe unless God wills.*** But most of them prefer to live in ignorance.

Qur'án 6:111

Consider this conversation between Abraham and a greedy wealthy man who had found his home in hell:

In hell, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away...So he called to him, "Father Abraham, have pity on me...I am in agony in this fire." But Abraham replied, "...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." He answered, "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 replied, "They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them." "No, father Abraham," he said, "but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent." He said to him, "If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, ***they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.***"

Luke 16:23-31 NIV

After the Islamic Revolution in Iran, several fanatical Muslim leaders tried to force the Iranian Bahá'ís to recant

their Faith and adopt Islam. To show how serious they were in their resolve, they executed over 200 Bahá'ís, men and women, mostly from the ranks of their elected leaders. They put many others in prison, tortured them, and took away all their possessions. But the opposite of what they intended occurred. Their persecution strengthened the faith of the Bahá'ís. The point is this: only love and devotion can win the hearts, not power and pressure.

True faith is a gift of God. Can it ever be the spoils of the sword? What role, then, can the sword play in spreading faith? Although weapons cannot capture or transform the heart, they can facilitate the *process* of doing so. A new religion has little if any honor in the eyes of the people. The majority do not like to become a part of the minority; they do not like to identify themselves with the weak. They prefer to be on the side of the powerful and the popular. When a new religion wins power, it gradually wins the hearts. *It makes people open to new ideas.*

When the Islamic forces conquered a country, people took notice. They paid attention. At the outset, some of the conquered accepted Islam because they saw the worldly benefits of siding with the powerful. And then gradually they became convinced of its divine origin. The history of all great religions shows that at the outset people refuse *to pay attention* to the news of the advent of their expected Redeemer. No wonder when Jesus spoke about His Return, He emphasized one word more than any other:

Take ye heed, *watch* and pray... Mark 13:33

Watch ye therefore, and pray always... Luke 21:36

The religious history indicates that most people prefer to ignore the advent of new Faiths. They refuse to “watch” or pay any attention to the “greatest News.” At the dawn of Islam, the sword served this very purpose. It captured the attention of those who pay no attention to their divine

destiny. It sent this message to the violent and belligerent people of Arabia: Take notice! Watch! Do not take this news lightly!

Power does not make people believers. It removes the barriers that prevent them from becoming believers. That is what happened when Constantine acknowledged Christianity. He played the same role as “the sword” does. He gave the new Faith the power, the exposure, and the prestige it needed at a most critical time in its history—when it was in its infancy. In effect, he served as “the sword” of Christianity.

Both under the sword of Islam and the power, the wealth, and the prestige of Constantine many people reluctantly entered those faiths. Once they entered, they experienced positive changes in their lives. By then all their fears, reservations, and resistance had vanished. In one of His Tablets, Bahá'u'lláh refers to this fact. He states that God's victory opened people's “eye of justice,” and “willy-nilly” they entered the Faith of God.¹³

Those who resist a new faith can be likened to a child who hesitates to try a new but tasty food. But once he takes a bite and finds it delicious, he asks for more! This is what sword accomplished for Islam. Human heart can be injured or stopped from beating by the sword, but it cannot be transformed or enlightened by the sword. Only the Word of God has the power to change the heart.

The process of spiritual transformation does not change. Human beings tend to pay attention to the present and ignore the future—their everlasting destiny. How do people become believers in this age of freedom?

What happened then is also happening today among the followers of all religions. For instance, how do people choose their beliefs? Do they first investigate and believe, or do they simply believe? As a child, when they are

helpless, they notice the authority, the power, and the love of their parents. (Love also serves as a power.) They also notice the power of the prevailing religion in their culture, subculture, and the influence of family and friends all working together to shape their beliefs. Love and power alone do not make a person a believer. They only prepare the way for becoming a believer. Otherwise, why do most people follow the religion of their parents?

Thus, by seeing the power of the sword, many people accepted Islam simply by *confessing* to be believers. And later as a result of hearing the Word of God, they became *true* believers.

Power in any form—whether it is found in popularity, wealth, or love—paves the way, makes people more receptive. That is why many young people imitate their favorite heroes. In this respect, as it is reasonable to call Islam “the religion of the sword” it is also reasonable to call Christianity “the religion of a king!” It is fair to do so, as long as we pay attention to the details, as long as we know what we mean by those expressions.

Because many Christians and atheists continue to associate Islam with violence and war, further Quranic references to war are presented in an appendix at the end of this book.

Consider the Bahá'í Faith. At this point in history, most people have not even heard about it, and most of those who do hear about it, fail to “watch” or pay any attention to it. What if the Bahá'í Message could be constantly proclaimed to the peoples of the world? What if one prominent and popular world figure accepted the Bahá'í Faith and strived to promote it? Imagine if the Pope suddenly issued this declaration: “O my fellow-believers in Christ! I have the most incredible news for you! Christ has already returned! He has come just as He promised: *Like a thief in the night!* Only a detective who pays close attention can find a thief!

It is truly tragic! We have not performed our duty. We have not played the role of a good detective! For more than a century we have failed to pay attention to the greatest news the world has ever known: The news of the return of our Redeemer. Yes, He has come with a new name! He has come in the glory of the Father. His new name is Bahá'u'lláh-the Glory of God!”

What do you think would happen, if such a declaration was issued? At first, many Christians, especially the Evangelicals would attack the Pope. This would be the news of millennium. There would be special programs on every Christian channel throughout the world. As a result of the ensuing turmoil, many Christians (especially the Catholics, who consider the Pope infallible) would begin to investigate the Bahá'í Faith. They would find no reason for hesitation because they would discover that the evidence for the Second Advent of Christ is at least a hundred times more than the evidence for His First Advent.*

The ensuing turmoil and confusion among Christians would reach unimaginable heights. The news of the Advent of Bahá'u'lláh would take the front page in virtually every newspaper. Millions of books would be published and distributed throughout the world. Countless millions of Christians would begin to investigate the Bahá'í Faith and many of them would recognize Bahá'u'lláh.

* This statement is absolutely true. If you have any doubts, please examine these volumes:

I Shall Come Again

Lord of Lords

King of Kings

The Evidence for Bahá'u'lláh (The Glory of the Father)

Christ Has Come!

Come Now, Let Us Reason Together

The most explosive news proclaimed and promoted by a man of power would then awaken and motivate the followers of other faiths to follow the example of Christians. Muslims and Jews just like Christians, would discover that the evidence for the divine origin of the Bahá'í Scriptures far outweighs the evidence for the divine origin of the Hebrew Scriptures or the Qur'án. For, the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh produced Scriptures equal to over a hundred volumes with distinctions equal to those of the Bible and the Qur'án. They would also discover hundreds of verses throughout their Scriptures that predict the Advent of the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh. What would then happen in Islamic cultures is unimaginable. How would those with vested interests, such as religious leaders, respond to the loss of their powers?

Centuries would pass. What would the Bahá'í Faith be called then? Just as many people call Islam “the religion of the sword!” and still others call Christianity “the religion of the King!” the Bahá'í Faith would be called: “The religion of the Pope”

Then there is the question of religious freedom. How would you feel if someone tried to prevent you from going to your church or synagogue? That is what Muhammad faced. He was not allowed to promote His faith with freedom. If the idolaters had not violated Muhammad's right to teach Islam, there would have been no wars. While in Mecca, Muhammad endured much persecution without defending Himself. He resorted to force only after the idolaters tried to stop the spread of Islam by military force. Muhammad had the God-given right to arise and fight against those forces. Thank God He did. What if He had submitted to those tyrants? The world would never have enjoyed the enormous contributions of Islam to civilization. We would still be living at the primitive stage in which our ancestors lived and died centuries ago.

Power can never dictate faith. It can only remove one's natural resistance to a new Faith. Suppose you wish to enter a garden to plant seeds, but the guards prevent you from entering. You can choose either to walk away or subdue the guards. The Islamic forces did the latter. They entered the garden by force and planted the seeds of the new Faith.

Question: Can anyone force the seed to grow? No! Its growth is controlled by specific laws that God has created. The same holds true with the seed of faith.

We should differentiate between the wars Muhammad waged during His life and the wars waged after Him. Although Muhammad waged defensive wars, some of His followers took this a step further: they also waged offensive wars. They firmly believed in their cause, and assumed that the end justifies the means. This is an ethical question humankind has been facing throughout history. Consider this example: Was it ethical to remove Hitler by waging war? Is it ethical to save a nation from ignorance, prejudice, genocide, cruelty, disease, and poverty by force?

Before responding to these questions, let us see how the Message of Jesus was spread. What was the turning point for the spread of Christianity? Its turning point arrived around 300 A.D., when King Constantine acknowledged the divine station and mission of Jesus. Historians believe that Constantine's prestige and power played a critical role in the spread of Christianity.

Christian scholars and leaders, however, have a strong aversion to remembering and acknowledging this most significant historical event in the life of their faith. They do not want to believe that political power played a critical role in the spread of Christianity. Constantine did not have to fight to conquer a country. He was already in charge and used his power to influence people. To some extent, that

was the example the Islamic forces followed. They won the hearts through political power.

King Constantine deserves much credit for spreading the Message of Jesus. He may have converted far more people than any other missionary, including St. Paul, yet seldom if ever does he receive any credit, let alone appreciation for this. Few Christians realize that if it was not for his courage and good will, their ancestors may have never accepted Christ. Who knows? They may have even lived and died as pagans!

To conclude, King Constantine did not wage war to win influence, but he used some of the fruits of war—such as pomp and power—to spread it.

Consider also Christian missionaries who have been feeding the poor and offering free medical service to the sick for centuries. Have they not, in effect, been using the same strategy? By receiving aid, the poor and the sick feel obligated to listen to Christian teachers, and as a result they are more likely to accept their message. Can anyone be bribed to believe? No, a heart cannot be purchased at any price. God never steps into a rental heart. He enters only His own house.

This is the method the missionaries use to turn unbelievers into believers: they help the unbelievers associate the earthly bread with the heavenly. They show them much kindness. They set in motion a law that governs all human beings. Psychologists call this law: “conditioning.” By liking the people who help us, we also tend to like and embrace their beliefs. In making a heart receptive, a piece of bread, given at a critical time, has more power than a drawn sword! The stomach and the heart are in constant communication!

Does the end justify the means? An action can be judged only by the motives that activate it. We are not justified in feeding the poor for the purpose of “converting” them. We

should help them, detached from any personal desire or motive. If as a result of our pure love, the poor accept our faith, this is justified.

We should note that, according to the sacred Scriptures, in spreading beliefs, the end does *not* justify the means. Neither the force used by the Islamic leaders after Muhammad's death, nor the gift of material resources, used by some Christian missionaries to win converts, is morally defensible.

To conclude: Muhammad subdued His enemies—the aggressive idolaters—by sheer force. Once He established Himself as a powerful leader, then the magic began to unfold: the idolaters noticed the positive influence of Islam on Muslims and indeed on the whole society. That observation gradually changed their hearts and attracted them to the new Faith. They had never seen an alternative to their brutal way of living. Islam offered them a better choice, and the masses of people began to adopt a new life and a new way of thinking. The new faith served their self-interests. It gave them a chance to see heaven on earth. The visible heaven gave them faith and hope for an invisible heaven.

What happened at the time of Muhammad has happened throughout all ages. Have you wondered why so many Afro-Americans converted to Islam? They found American Muslims to be more tolerant of racial differences. It was not Muhammad who attracted them; it was the tolerant Islamic culture around them. By associating with Muslims, they began to adopt Islam as their Faith.

Muhammad's Sufferings

God's Messengers are not sent to noble people:

To a wicked people are we sent...

Qur'án 51:32

We should note that all great Messengers have suffered a great deal. The established institutions are always threatened by the news of the Advent of these Messengers who are surrounded by zealous and determined enemies, all or most of their lives. Muhammad's life was no exception.

The missing link in books written about Islam is the sufferings that Muhammad endured at the hands of the violent and primitive people of Arabia. In *The Book of Certitude* Bahá'u'lláh briefly reminds us of this forgotten link:

...the sovereignty of Muhammad, the Messenger of God, is today apparent and manifest amongst the people. You are well aware of what befell His Faith in the early days of His dispensation. What woeful sufferings did the hand of the infidel and erring, the divines [religious leaders] of that age and their associates, inflict upon that spiritual Essence, that most pure and holy Being! How abundant the thorns and briars which they have strewn over His path! It is evident that wretched generation, in their wicked and satanic fancy, regarded every injury to that immortal Being as a means to the attainment of an abiding felicity...¹⁴

Bahá'u'lláh then quotes this statement from Muhammad:

No Prophet of God hath suffered such harm as I have suffered.¹⁵

Bahá'u'lláh then quotes a Quranic verse that was revealed at a time when Muhammad's sufferings had reached the highest peak:

But if their oppositions be grievous to Thee—if Thou canst, seek out an opening into the earth or a ladder into heaven.
Qur'án 6:35

Bahá'u'lláh then concludes:

The implication of this utterance is that His case had no remedy, that they would not withhold their hands from Him unless He should hide Himself beneath the depths of the earth, or take His flight unto heaven.¹⁶

Missing in books written by Christian authors are also stories about Muhammad's tolerance, gentleness, and nobility. Let us review one such story.

It is reported that when Muhammad would reach near His home, His daughter would know in advance and keep the door open for His entrance. How would she know? By listening to the sound of stones thrown by children at her Father—children who were merely imitating their parents. Sometimes the stones would indeed hit their intended target. She would then tend to His wounds. By keeping the door open she would only reduce the chance of the stones hitting her dear Father. Such a degree of meekness displayed by a man accused of aggression and violence! Jesus faced the same dilemma: flying stones. In response, He would simply withdraw from the enraged mobs. All Messengers of God have common characteristics. They are all meek and humble. Many references are offered in Chapter 18: *Are God's Messengers Perfect?*

Holy War

Many people assume that the Qur'án commands the believers to engage in "holy wars." This expression does not exist in the Qur'án. It is the result of extending and abusing the word "Jihad," meaning "striving" for a cause, such as remaining faithful to God and depending on His Word as a means of defending one's beliefs. Consider these verses:

Therefore listen not to the unbelievers, but *strive* against them with it (the Qur'án) with the utmost efforts.

Qur'án 25:52

Note also the use of the word **strive** in the following verse:

We [God] have enjoined on people kindness to parents.
But if they **strive** to make you join partners with
Me...then obey them not. Qur'án 29:8

The Qur'án also asks believers to strive and stand firm against the aggressors. Defense is an act of courage. Only cowards say “It is not my job!”

During Muhammad's life, Muslims resorted to many peaceful strategies to avoid war:

- They withdrew from violent people. They left a hostile town (Mecca) and migrated to a friendly town (Medina).
- They migrated to a far-away land (Abyssinia).
- They resorted to economic blockades.
- They formed peace treaties and alliances.

They engaged in war only as a last resort. As Diana Eck, points out:

Actual armed jihad is permissible under two conditions alone: one is for self-defense, and the other is for fighting against oppression.¹⁷

Consider the following virtues mentioned in Surah 22:

- Trust in God
- Detachment from material possessions
- Hope for an everlasting life
- Forgiveness
- Remembering God and praying
- Consulting with others before making a decision
- Engaging in acts of charity

- Defending one's rights when one is wronged

What would the world be like if everyone lived by these virtues? Islam is neither a religion of "an eye for an eye" nor "turn the other cheek." It is a combination of both:

The recompense for an injury is an injury equal thereto (in degree), but if a person forgives and makes reconciliation, his reward is due from God, for (God) loveth not those who do wrong. Qur'án 42:40 Y

Consider also this verse:

If you punish, let your punishment be commensurate with the wrong that has been done you. But it shall be best for you to endure your wrongs with patience. Qur'án 16:126

Thus the one wronged has a choice: to punish, or to forgive and cling to patience. He is, however, encouraged to choose the latter. Thus Islam combines the Jewish and Christian ways of treating wrongdoers.

Anger and hatred against others do not give a believer the justification to engage in violent behavior:

O ye who believe! Stand out firmly for God, as witnesses to fair dealing, and let not the hatred of others to you make you swerve to wrong and depart from justice. Be just: that is next to piety, and fear God, for God is well-acquainted with all that ye do. Qur'án 5:8 Y

The Qur'án calls all believers to uphold the principle of justice:

O ye who believe! Stand out firmly for justice, as witnesses to God, even as against yourselves, or your parents, or your kin, and whether it be (against) rich or poor, for God can best protect both. Follow not the lusts (of your hearts), lest ye swerve, and if ye distort (justice)

or decline to do justice, verily God is well-acquainted with all that ye do. Qur'án 4:135 Y

Verses such as the following show that the so-called “Holy War” is totally unjustified and unholy. It is contrary to the spirit of Islam.

Call men to the path of your Lord with wisdom and kindly exhortation. Reason with them in the most courteous manner. Qur'án 16:125

Say: “O unbelievers...you have your own religion, and I have mine.” Qur'án 109:1, 6

Say: This is the truth from your Lord. Let him who will believe it, and let him who will deny it. Qur'án 18:29

The Qur'án upholds the sanctity of human life. Those who take the lives of the innocent, commit the most atrocious act and will receive the most severe punishment in the next Kingdom:

...whoever kills a human being...shall be regarded as having killed all mankind; and whoever saves a human life shall be regarded as having saved all mankind. Qur'án 5:32

Suicide is also forbidden:

Do not commit suicide, for God is most merciful to you. Qur'án 4:29

The Fruits of Islamic Theocracy

The question of force should be examined from still other perspectives:

- The self-interests of those who are forced to believe in God and His teachings.

- The natural consequences of living under Islamic theocracy.
- One's right to promote his beliefs.

How did Islamic theocracy affect the lives of the idolaters? Did it serve their self-interests? To find an answer, let us begin with a personal question. Suppose you had an 18-year old son who had been addicted to hard drugs and was resorting to violence and crime to meet his needs. How would you respond? Would you leave him alone to follow his lifestyle, or resort to power to protect him and others? The primitive tribes of Arabia, like a rebellious son, needed a powerful father figure who would save them from self-destruction. Particularly at stake was the welfare of women and children who lived and died at the mercy of brutal men. Islam, aside from being a religion, was a political power that put an end to the dire conditions that prevailed in Arabia.

At the end of the 20th century, a similar condition prevailed in Afghanistan under an extremely fanatical and cruel group of Muslims known as the Taliban. They mistreated women and prevented girls from receiving any education. To stop terrorism, the United States invaded Afghanistan and put an end to the brutal treatment of women in that country. Instead of criticism, Muhammad deserves much praise for placing Himself and His family in grave danger to transform and elevate those primitive people to the crest of glory and honor.

Muhammad did not force the Arabians into believing. He forced them into *behaving*. What attracted the great masses of unbelievers was not “the message of believing and going to heaven,” but “*behaving* and living in heaven.” The idolaters who adopted Islam not only received the gift of a peaceful life here on earth, but also the greater gift of

eternal life in heaven. Islam gave them the key to the Kingdom of God in both worlds.

What if God had never spoken to humankind? What kind of world would we have? Compare the fruits of any religion God has sent with the bitter fruits of atheism. In the 20th century these fruits were Hitler, Stalin, and Mao. They caused the death of over 100 million innocent people. If the world had accepted the Bahá'í Faith, those mass murders would never have happened. Those who killed in the name of religion were not believers; they had no fear of God. They worshiped only their own fantasies. They were unbelievers with a lust for power and revenge. They were wolves in sheep's clothing. They used religion to achieve their selfish desires. Religion does not cause war; lack of it does. Knowledge does not lead to poverty; lack of it does. Love of God does not lead to cruelty; lack of it does.

Misinterpreting the Scriptures

To be fair in our judgment, let us remember one more fact. How do the literal-minded Christians expect Christ to behave at His Second Coming? They expect Him to kill thousands of millions of people! Whereas the forces of Muhammad saved the lives of believers in God—Jews and Christians—Christ, it is believed, would not follow that example. He would kill not only all atheists and agnostics but also all believers in God, except Christians who are “saved.” They expect Jesus to be far more cruel than they believe Muhammad was! They feel comfortable with a Savior who kills thousands of millions, but uncomfortable with a Savior who had to kill a few thousands for the defense of His followers and the survival of His faith. The theologians who take the expected “Armageddon” literally are, for the most part, the ones who criticize Muhammad's wars. They admire the power of their Savior to wage a

global war on a scale never before witnessed, but criticize Muhammad for marshalling a few thousand soldiers for the defense and survival of His followers, His family, and His faith in His own land!

The expectation of a war waged by Jesus is based on the prophecies of the Book of Revelation. That book speaks of a terrible war (the Armageddon) to be waged by the Redeemer of the world, a war in which *countless millions* are killed—many times more than those killed in all wars since the dawn of history. The number of earthly soldiers who are expected to participate in this global war against the forces of Jesus Christ is 200,000,000—a figure larger than the combined forces of the USA, USSR, China, all Europe, and in fact of the entire earth! To see how literal-minded Christians interpret the Armageddon, let us consider an example. Statements like the following are found in abundance in Christian literature:

Jesus speaks the Word which releases a plague to smite the vast armies of the Antichrist and the 200 million strong Oriental army. They are immediately blinded; their eyes are consumed away in their sockets. They are immediately dumb; their tongues are consumed away in their mouths. In fright, they reach out and grab one another for security. That only frightens them more, so they turn to fight among themselves. Their flesh begins to consume away from their bones. Their blood gushes to the earth, creating the pool of blood described in Revelation 14. It stretches over an area of about 185 miles in the valley of Megiddo and the Plains of Jezreel.¹⁸

The literal-minded theologians who criticize Muhammad and the Qur'an cannot even begin to understand their own Scriptures. The Armageddon is not a clash between the forces of Christ and the military powers of the earth, but a clash between truth and falsehood. That war is being waged

at this very moment in religious centers of the world and beyond. It is a *spiritual* war waged mostly by words, beliefs, and ideas. This book is an evidence of that war.

If we are literal-minded, then we must also take these verses literally:

The Lord is a man of war. The Lord is his name.

Exodus 15:3

I will call for a sword upon all the inhabitants of the earth, saith the Lord of hosts.

Jeremiah 25:29

But those enemies of mine who did not want me to be king over them—bring them here and kill them in front of me.

Christ (Luke 19:27 NIV)

No! God would never bring Himself down to our level. He would never wage war against His helpless and often ignorant creatures.

The Golden Rule

This rule requires that we should treat others the way we would like to be treated. Let us see how one of the best-known defenders of Christianity—Dr. Norman Geisler—defends a war supposedly waged in ancient times. Here is a description of that war:

Thus says the Lord of hosts: “I will punish Amalek for what he did to Israel...Now go and attack Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and do not spare them. But kill both man and woman, infant and nursing child, ox and sheep, camel and donkey.”...And Saul attacked the Amalekites...[✧]

I Samuel 15:2-7 NKJ

[✧]For a description of similar wars, see Deut. 7:2; 20:10-20; Josh 6:15-21; 8:26-27; 10:4; 11:12, 20. Such descriptions should not be taken on face value. They have no roots in reality, for they contradict everything we know about God.

A critic made the following statement concerning the preceding war:

...I believe that killing innocent people is morally wrong. And killing Canaanite civilians is to be sharply distinguished from killing soldiers in the battles that were necessary for the Israelites to conquer the land that God had promised them. I frankly find it difficult to believe that it was God's will that every Canaanite—man, woman, and child—be slaughtered. Since the Bible clearly says that this was God's will, I must conclude that the biblical writers in this case were mistaken. The error of confusing patriotic sentiment with God's will is a common one in human history, but it is an error nonetheless.¹⁹

Let us now see how Dr. Geisler responded to the previous criticism:

Were the human authors of Scripture speaking for themselves and not for God? Is it possible that God could have commanded these massacres? First, we must recognize that the reason for asserting that there is an error here is a subjective one—personal moral sentiment. This is the authority that judges what can and cannot be called the Word of God. Second, it is misplaced sentiment. True, it is wrong for man to kill innocent people, but it is not necessarily wrong for God. As the Giver of life, He has the right to take it as He wills (Job 1:21; Deut. 32:39). If the above critic's thinking were carried out consistently, wouldn't one have to repudiate the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah and flood in Noah's time too? Third, it is false to assume that these people were "innocent." In fact, the Bible tells us that the Canaanites were so guilty that the land "vomited" them out (Lev. 18: NIV). Even children are conceived in sin (Ps. 51:5). Finally, it is presumptuous to think that our own moral standards

should judge God and tell Him what is right and wrong. God's unchangeably just nature is the standard for justice.²⁰

Many Christian theologians, like Dr. Geisler, have double standards. If the God of the Bible orders the slaughter of helpless women and children, that is acceptable. But if the God of the Qur'án orders the slaughter of His enemies, that is cruel!

Consider the following statement from Chris Hedges in his book *When Atheism Becomes Religion*:

Terrorists arise in all cultures, all nations and all religions. Terrorists lurk within our own society. The bombing on April 19, 1995, of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City killed 168 people—19 of them children—and injured hundreds. It was carried out by an American citizen named Timothy McVeigh. William Krrar and Judith Bruey of Noonday, Texas, pleaded guilty in 2003 to possession of a weapon of mass destruction. Investigators found inside their home and in three storage facilities a sodium cyanide bomb capable of killing thousands, more than a hundred explosives, half a million rounds of ammunition, dozens of illegal weapons, and a mound of white-supremacist and antigovernment literature. McVeigh was not a Muslim; neither was Krrar or Bruey. None of those people was inspired to acts of terror by religion. Terrorists, for all their claims of religious martyrdom and noble self-sacrifice, are criminals. They mask their indiscriminate violence with noble abstractions, but they are all morally depraved.

...Conrad and Dostoevsky saw the breakup of personal identity, alienation, feelings of collective and personal humiliation and shame as the forces that fed acts of horrific violence. Revolutionary political change, whether

dressed up on the language of religion, anarchy, fascism or communism, was another form of criminality.²¹

Freedom of Conscience

Freedom of conscience is the rule in every religion. This rule will never change:

...proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof... Leviticus 25:10

To know the spirit of Islam, we should also recognize the teachings of the Qur'án on freedom of beliefs. Christian theologians give Muhammad no credit for His promotion of liberty. The fundamental principle of one's right to choose one's spiritual destiny is found in all religions:

Let there be no compulsion in religion. Now is the right way made distinct from error. Qur'án 2:256

Therefore do thou [Muhammad] give admonition, for thou art one to admonish. Thou hast no authority over them... Qur'án 88:21-22

Thou are not one to compel them. Qur'án 50:45

Verily We have revealed the Book to thee in Truth, for mankind. He, then, who receives guidance benefits his own soul, but he who strays injures his own soul. Qur'án 39:41 Y

Invite to the way of thy Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching; and argue with them in ways that are best and most gracious... Qur'án 16:125 Y

But if thy Lord had pleased, verily all who are in the earth would have believed together. What! wilt thou compel men to become believers? No soul can believe but by the permission of God...Say: O men! now hath the truth come unto you from your Lord. He therefore

who will be guided, will be guided only for his own good, but he who shall err will err only to his own loss; and I am not your guardian! Qur'án 10:99-108

...the faith of no man can be conditioned by any one except himself.²² Bahá'u'lláh

If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. John 7:37 NIV

Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters... Isaiah 55:1 NIV

O my God...where is the thirsty one who can direct his face towards the living waters of Thy love?²³ Bahá'u'lláh

The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life. Revelation 22:17 NIV

Most institutions have a "mission statement." The statement defines their prime purpose. It is a guiding light that illumines their path and gives them a sense of direction. It serves as a constitution. The Qur'án repeatedly declares and defines Muhammad's prime Mission in words such as:

Verily thy mission is declaring [the message] only; and ours [God's] is to take account. Qur'án 13:40

Obey God and obey the Messenger, and be on your guard. But if you turn back, know that our Messenger is only bound to deliver a plain announcement. Qur'án 5:92

But if they turn away from you, still thy Mission is to proclaim [the Message] plainly. Qur'án 16:82

Nowhere is Muhammad told that His "mission" is to "convert" people by coercion. On the contrary, He is told that He is no one's guardian—not responsible for other people's choices:

We have sent thee to mankind as a Messenger. Whoever obeyeth the Messenger has indeed obeyed God. As to those who turn their back to thee, We have not sent thee to be their guardian.
 Qur'án 4:79-80

In some Muslim countries, if a Muslim leaves his faith and joins another, he receives severe punishment—such as death—and is called an apostate. Such a practice clearly violates the Quranic teachings:

O ye who believe! Should any of you desert His religion, God will then raise up a people loved by Him, and loving Him, lowly towards the faithful, mighty towards the pagans. For the cause of God will they strive, and not fear the blame of the blamer. This is the Grace of God! On whom He will He bestoweth it! God is Vast, Omniscient!
 Qur'án 5:54

The Most Common Way the Facts are Distorted

We are taught to respect and trust authorities. This is a good advice except for this: Sometimes the vested interests of authorities do not allow them to be honest. Misinformation comes in many shades and colors. Those who have advanced in the art of deception are so skillful that they can be “honest” and deceive at the same time! The Word of God is like a puzzle that must be viewed in its entirety. The most common and effective way of distorting the facts is to omit some critical pieces of the puzzle. A speaker once quoted this Quranic verse: “Kill them wherever you find them!” (2:191), without referring to the remaining part of the verse: “And drive them out from wherever they drove you out.” The listeners readily accepted his conclusion. They knew the quotation was accurate.

This strategy is used extensively by religious leaders and scholars who wish to undermine the people's trust in a "competing" religion. It is also used by politicians and of course in advertising. Many examples have already been given to show how those who wish to discredit Islam, resort to this strategy.

Let us now consider an example in the business of promoting a product. Drug companies love to tell the sick people that their patented medicine will remove all their suffering, but they are reluctant to mention its side effects. Sometimes those side effects are so effective that they take away not only the pain but also the patient! Suppose you hear about a new drug for diabetes that has been tested by eminent scientists in a large university and proven to be a hundred percent more effective in reducing blood sugar than the old one. What do you think is wrong with this claim? Think for a moment, before you proceed. Here is the answer:

- The old drug reduces the blood sugar by only half a percent, the new one by only one percent!
- What if the new drug reduced blood sugar by 1 or even 20 or 30 percent, but also increased death by 20 or 30 percent!

As we can see in this example, the advertiser has not lied; he has simply *concealed* some critical facts. Such a strategy is not new:

O People of the Book! Now there has come to you Our Messenger to make clear unto you much of what you have been *concealing* of the Bible.

Qur'án 5:15

See also 4:46

There may be a hundred ways to distort the facts. Omitting details is effective because it saves the one who distorts them from being called a liar!

The purpose of referring to this popular strategy is this: Do not believe everything you hear, even if it comes from an “authority figure.”

If you were a judge in a court, how would you decide the cases brought before you? Often experts or specialists testify against each other. Only by listening to both sides can a judge or jury make a decision.

Often people read books written by authors who suffer from a total lack of insight into “the spiritual design” of creation. Academic knowledge in itself is not the key to an understanding of divine Wisdom. This Quranic verse gives us a clue to this mystery:

Surely the Qur’án is a noble discourse contained in a Book, well-guarded, which no one can touch save the pure—a Revelation from the Lord of the worlds.

Qur’án 56:77-80

A Lesson of Tolerance

Let us conclude this chapter with a verse from the Qur’án:

Verily, they who believe [Muslims], and the Jews, and the Sabians, and the Christians—whoever of them believeth in God and in the last day, and doth what is right, on them shall come no fear, neither shall they be put to grief.

Qur’án 5:69

As the verse indicates, to please God, we must meet three conditions:

- Believe in Him.
- Live a righteous life.
- Believe in the last day (the afterlife or the day of the Lord).

The preceding verse shows that Muhammad instilled the highest level of tolerance in Muslims toward the followers of other faiths. Can a true Muslim find any justification for showing prejudice or discrimination against a believer who has pleased God by meeting these three conditions, even if that believer is not a Muslim? If Muslims had practiced the message declared in this verse, would they have persecuted the Bahá'ís? Did not Bahá'ís meet all these three conditions to the fullest? Similarly, if Christians had heeded the message of tolerance declared in the preceding verse, would they have persecuted the Jews during the dark ages?

To appreciate the Qur'án—this most marvelous Book—born in a most primitive culture, let us consider one more verse. It teaches a message of tolerance that is still ahead of its time. It proclaims an eternal message that will never be outdated. In this verse, God asks Muslims to speak with the people of the Book in this way:

We believe in the Revelation that has been sent down to us [Muslims] and in the Revelation that was sent down to you [Jews and Christians]. Our God and your God is one, and to Him we must all submit. Qur'án 29:46

The verse teaches the principle of the *oneness of religion*—one of the core teachings of the Bahá'í Faith—which is the principle for which this book was written. If the peoples of our time practiced the principle of tolerance and unity of purpose proclaimed in this verse, there would be no sign of religious discord and prejudice in the world. It teaches that we are all children of one Creator, we believe in one God and one progressive Revelation of Truth. This same great Spirit appears from age to age to teach humankind ever-increasing measures of truths:

When he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. Christ (John 16:13 NIV)

The puzzle of Islam, or any other religion, contains many segments. The Quranic verses on war were revealed for a specific place and time and conditions in history. They have no relevance to our time or the future. Why do the critics select those segments from the puzzle that point to specific events in specific places and times that have long passed, but omit the prominent pieces of the puzzle that proclaim broad principles that apply to all places, times, and peoples—principles that can transform our planet into a paradise of tolerance and peace?

The Qur'án invites people to practice religious tolerance, yet it advocates the most severe punishment for the criminal segments of society. This is God's way of teaching us how to relate to each other, and yet protect the society from mischief makers and criminals. If we practice these two principles, we will have a much safer and more peaceful world. The severe punishment also benefits those who lack conscience. It prevents them from committing evil deeds. This issue is explored in detail in chapter 15.

For further Quranic references on war, see Appendix II: *A Second Look at the Quranic References to War*.

15

The Severity of Divine Laws

Some Christian authors criticize the severity of Islamic laws, such as the cutting of the hands of thieves and agitators who disturb the peace of the land (Qur'an 5:33), like the terrorists of our time. It is easy to sit in our secure homes and pass judgment on criminal laws practiced long ago in primitive cultures. Suppose you were living in a town of thieves, terrorists, robbers, and rapists, with no police officers to protect you. What strategies would you adopt to protect yourself? Would you not favor the most severe punishment to cast fear in the hearts of the criminals? Muhammad lived in such an environment. Those whose hands or legs were severed, served as living examples to others.

Consider the number of people—over 10,000—killed every year in the United States by drunk drivers. And yet the punishment for drunk driving is extremely mild. If terrorists kill three thousand people once, that is big news, but the death of those 10,000 killed every year is not. What would happen if the United States adopted a law such as the following:

- The first time that drunk drivers are apprehended, they will lose their driver's license for three years.
- The second time they will lose their license permanently.
- The third time they will be imprisoned for ten or even twenty years.

Such a law may appear harsh and even cruel, but let us see it in the light of its consequences. Suppose this law protected your only child from permanent paralysis. Would you not support it? What if for every drunk driver removed, we could save a thousand lives and protect thousands of others from permanent disability and suffering?

Today many people believe that criminals should be treated with mercy. All sacred Scriptures declare that as individuals we should be merciful, but society must be ruled by justice, not mercy. The same principle holds true today:

Beware lest, through compassion, ye neglect to carry out the statutes of the religion of God...¹ Bahá'u'lláh

So punishment is one of the essential necessities for the safety of communities, but he who is oppressed by a transgressor has not the right to take vengeance. On the contrary, he should forgive and pardon, for this is worthy of the world of man.² ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Only the One who made us knows what is best for us. Only He can define the meaning of true justice. Only He knows the kind of punishment that would benefit all people, including criminals, because fewer people would dare to break the laws. Human beings do not have the wisdom to judge divine laws.

The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul. The statutes of the Lord are trustworthy, making wise the simple. The precepts of the Lord are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the Lord are radiant, giving light to the eyes. The fear of the Lord is pure, enduring forever. The ordinances of the Lord are sure and altogether righteous. They are more precious than gold, than much pure gold; they are sweeter than honey, than honey from the comb. By them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward. Psalms 19:7-11 NIV

To see how difficult it is to be a good judge, let us bring this issue home by seeing how a Christian author describes and defends the Mosaic Laws:

The ordinary mode of capital punishment was stoning, though other forms, as hanging and burning, are also mentioned. It is believed, however, that these latter, were preceded by death in the ordinary way of execution (Exod. 19:13; Num. 25:4; Lev. 21:9; Josh. 7:25)...

The severity of the Old Testament dispensation in this respect has often been made a subject of unfavorable criticism. But the character of the people, and the condition of the times, and the necessity for impressing the importance of morality and religion, and of developing the right national life furnish sufficient explanation. It is not to be forgotten, moreover, that the doctrine of a future life, as a state of reward and punishment, was not strongly emphasized in those times as afterward....

The wide range of crimes punishable by death according to the Mosaic law may be accounted for by the peculiar conditions of the Israelites. A nation of newly-emancipated slaves, they were probably intractable; and their wanderings and isolation did not permit of penal settlements or remedial punishments. They were placed under immediate divine government and surveillance. Willful offenses under such circumstances, evinced an incorrigibleness which rendered death the only means of ridding the community of such transgressors, and this was ultimately resorted to in regard to all individuals above a certain age, in order that a better class might enter into Canaan (Num. 14:29, 32, 35).

(1) Capital crimes. (a) Absolute; 1. Striking or reviling a parent (Exod. 21:15, 17). 2. Blasphemy (Lev. 24:14, 16, 23). 3. Sabbath-breaking (Num. 15:32-36; Exod. 31:14;

35:2). 4. Witchcraft, and false pretension to prophecy (Exod. 22:18; Lev. 20:27; Deut. 13:5; 18:20). 5. Adultery (Lev. 20:10; Deut. 22:22). 6. Unchastity (Deut. 22:21, 23; Lev. 21:9) 7. Rape (Deut. 22:25). 8. Incestuous and unnatural connections (Lev. 20:11, 14, 15; Exod. 22:19) 9. Man-stealing (Exod. 21:16; Deut. 24:7). 10. Idolatry, actual or implied, in any shape (Lev. 20:2; Deut. 13:6, 10, 15; 17:2-7; see Josh., ch. 7, 22:20; Num. 25:1-8). 11. False witness, in certain cases (Deut. 19:16, 19)...

Thus we see, at the root of all the enactments of the Mosaic penal code there lies the principle of strict but righteous retribution, and its intention is to extirpate evil and produce reverence for the righteousness of the holy God in the heart of the people.³

The Law of Divorce in Christianity

The law of divorce, as declared by Jesus, can also be considered harsh:

It has been said, “Anyone who divorces his wife must give her a certificate of divorce.” But I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, causes her to become an adulteress, and anyone who marries the divorced woman commits adultery.

Matthew 5:31-32 NIV

See also Matt. 19:8-11

Today the preceding law seems unreasonable. Consider the dysfunctional families of our age. Living a lifetime with an irresponsible and violent spouse, who may be alcoholic or be afflicted with severe mental disorder, can be for many people, a more painful punishment than death, yet Jesus did not allow divorce for any reason other than adultery.

Consider also the impact of a disturbed or destructive family life on children. Protestants have been forced to disregard Jesus' verdict on divorce. Catholics are still struggling with this law.

All laws should be judged from a global perspective. Indeed every law is subject to criticism, because the laws are for the good of *all* people. Since people are different, there are always cases where the law—however reasonable—may be unfair. The strict law of divorce in Christianity was not intended for our time. It is now outdated. But it served its purpose. It harmed some families, but saved many marriages. It discouraged divorce for trivial reasons.

Judging the Laws of God

Who has the wisdom to judge the laws of God? Do you know any judge you could fully trust except God Himself? Many people criticize the laws of God without recognizing the inability of any human being to judge those laws. Take capital punishment as an example. Capital punishment seems cruel to many people. This question has been debated for thousands of years. What about God? Are some questions also controversial for Him? What if God made a judgment? Can we disagree with our Creator? Whether we like it or not, capital punishment is justified in both the Bible and the Qur'án. The *idea* of taking a human life as punishment has not changed, only the reason for justifying it. It has changed because the world has changed.

According to the Ten Commandments, a person can be put to death for breaking the Sabbath or for insulting his parents. Should we criticize God for His harsh laws? Are we better law-givers than God? Can we judge the value of

the Mosaic laws as they pertained to the primitive life of the Israelites some 3,500 years ago?

We cannot be good judges of even our own laws. Consider the Supreme Court in the United States. To be selected for that honor, a judge must reach the peak of his profession. Not even one American in a thousand can claim achievements equal to that attained by those selected members. Yet those members disagree on virtually every judgment issued by their court.

The preceding example should teach a sense of humility to all of us who think “we know better.” It should destroy every trace of ego in any human being who claims to have the last word on laws and legal issues. The only fact that we can be certain of, about any law, is this: only God knows and only He has the right to make a judgment. All of us should bow our heads with absolute selflessness and contrition before His Supreme Court of Judgment.

Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers.

Psalms 1:1-3 NIV

The following verses from the Qur’án should give us much insight concerning the sanctity of human life as well as the right of people to live in freedom and peace:

That was why We laid it down for the Israelites that whoever killed a human being, except as punishment for murder or corruption in the land, shall be regarded as having killed all mankind; and that whoever saved a human life shall be regarded as having saved all mankind. Our Prophets brought them veritable proofs, yet many among them, even after that, did prodigious

evil in the land. Those that make war against God and His Prophet and spread disorder in the land shall be slain or crucified or have their hands, and feet cut off on alternate sides, or be banished from the land. They shall be held up to shame in this world and sternly punished in the hereafter, except those that repent before they fall into your power. Know that God is forgiving and merciful.

Qur'án 5:32-34

Those who criticize Islam often quote the verses that provide for the amputation of hands and feet without mentioning the verse regarding the sanctity of human life or any details surrounding the law. They say: “Notice how cruel these laws are!” Sympathetic listeners accept their opinion without considering how people lived long ago. Consider this example: What if we maim a dozen criminals—make their lives miserable—but save many innocent lives, perhaps thousands, from being harmed. Which side would you choose? Would you side with the criminals or with the innocents?

The Quranic verses teach us the following lessons:

- Human life is sacred. We are God’s most precious possessions. Taking these possessions by force is the most serious crime. Taking one life is as grave as taking *all* God’s possessions. This principle also applies to suicide. We do not own ourselves. “We are God’s and to Him shall we return.”⁴ A person who kills himself has destroyed one of God’s most precious creations. He has displayed disrespect for God’s masterpiece. Further, we are connected to each other. Some years ago, a young man committed suicide. His distraught mother could not endure the agony of separation. She followed the example of her son! The Qur’án forbids suicide:

O believers...do not kill yourself. God is indeed merciful to you. And whoever does so in rancor and injustice*—We will soon cast them into the Fire.

Qur'án 4:29-30

- Freedom of choice is our God-given right. Those who prevent people by force from recognizing God's Messengers engage in a crime with grave consequences. We have come to this world to acquire spiritual life by knowing and loving our Creator. To prevent a person from attaining the very purpose for which he was created, is even more serious than taking his life. For earthly life ends, but spiritual life never ends.
- To live in peace and security is the right of every human being. Violent people, such as criminals and terrorists who take away people's God-given right to live in peace and to choose their spiritual destiny, must receive the most severe punishment imaginable. Their maimed body and miserable life must provide a "living lesson" to all those who would be tempted to follow their example.

What purpose does amputation of someone's hands and feet serve? When criminals or terrorists are killed, they become invisible in a grave. But if they are allowed to live in misery, they serve as an object lesson to all those who would be tempted to follow their example. In a primitive society, in which there was no prison, this kind of punishment made a deep and lasting impression on potential villains. Every maimed body would serve as a billboard with this message: "Look at me! Do not follow my example!"

However, what amazes every fair-minded person is that God in His mercy gives the authorities who have to carry

* Like suicide bombers.

out this seemingly cruel punishment, another choice, an escape route! He declares:

Or exile [the mischief makers] from the land...

Qur'án 5:33

Today no country—however merciful—would simply exile a criminal to another land. Even if a criminal escapes to another country, he is brought back for trial and punishment. He may even face the death penalty. Those who try to find fault with the Qur'án, quote the part about the amputation of hands and feet, but make no mention of this God-given merciful alternative.

As stated, today we have several groups of terrorists, such as, Al-Qaeda, Taliban, and ISIS who are doing exactly what is described in the preceding verses. They have caused the death of thousands of innocent people in many lands. Their prime purpose is to undermine the prevailing world order and replace it with their own dangerous delusions. They are guilty of still another crime with far-reaching consequences: that of using the name and authority of Islam to attain their satanic desires.

Had severe punishment been imposed much sooner on the instigators, this global crime would not have spread. Unfortunately, they went unpunished until they grew in number causing unlimited pain and suffering in the lives of hundreds of millions of people.

We should note that the purpose of imposing severe punishment is to cast fear in the hearts of criminals in order to diminish crime, not to take revenge. Many criminals are so hardened that only the fear of the most severe punishment can prevent them from becoming violent. No one can estimate the countless lives that the “harsh” Mosaic and Quranic laws have saved in the past.

The way people lived long ago and the laws required at the time to achieve a peaceful society may have little if any

relevance to our present way of life and what laws we need today. As stated previously, slavery is now considered to be a serious crime. This practice was not even discouraged by previous religions. Christians were not commanded to release their slaves. They were simply encouraged to treat them with kindness. In the history of humankind, the Bahá'í Faith is the first religion that has forbidden this inhumane practice.

During the time of Muhammad, conquerors took possession of the slave women owned by the conquered. They added the new slaves to their harems. This was practiced as an act of humiliation and revenge toward their bitter enemies: “a tooth for a tooth and an eye for an eye.” The Qur’án did not forbid this practice, but rather justified it. In those days, revenge was the norm. That was the universal “language” people spoke and understood. We have outgrown that primitive way of life. We now have detectives, lawyers, judges, crime labs, courts, prisons, and house arrests.

In the time of Jesus, men were the masters, the unquestioned head of their household. That is how St. Paul—a teacher of great wisdom—described them. He even advised women to remain quiet in the church! Women had to submit to their menfolk and had no say in decision making. That was how women were perceived in those days.

To appreciate and understand the gradual and progressive nature of society, ponder this point: Just by stating—“Thou shall not keep any slaves!”—Jesus could have saved countless human beings from the humiliation of slavery. Why did He not make such a statement? Similarly, by stating: “Thou shall not keep more than one wife!”—He could have forbidden the practice of polygamy. Why did He not make such a statement? All these questions and concepts teach us a vital lesson: We cannot be good judges even in relation to the events of our time, much less try to

judge what was fair and practical long ago. Here is where humility shines, where it stands tall and proud!

To learn a lesson of humility, consider also this example: Millions of people firmly believe that a given political candidate is unworthy to become the president of their country. Many other millions hold the exact opposite view. Some of the voters on each side may consider the voters on the other side stupid or even insane! These people are contemporaries who have access to the same or similar information about each candidate, yet each group is amazed at the ignorance of the opposite group! Many of us—with a similar mind set—pass judgment with equal certainty, on how Moses, Jesus, or Muhammad should have behaved or what each of them should have said! We rush to judgment with little if any knowledge of how people lived centuries or even thousands of years ago!



Part V

**Other
Objections
Raised
Against
Islam**

16

Was Christ Crucified?

Christian literature contains an abundance of statements like the following:

Unlike the Bible the Qur'án is riddled with factual errors. A classic case in point involves the Qur'án's denial of Christ's crucifixion.¹

While Muslims believe, as Christians do, in the virgin birth, as well as the death, resurrection, ascension, and second coming of Christ, it is easy to overstate these misleading similarities...almost no Muslim scholars believe that Christ was crucified at all and those that do have been condemned as heretical.²

One cannot deny, for example, the irreconcilable conflict between the belief that Christ died for our sins and rose again (which is the very heart of Christianity) and Islam's blasphemous claim that Christ did not die on the cross, much less for sin, but that someone else died in His place. To sweep such differences under an ecumenical rug (as Roman Catholicism, and specifically Vatican II, seeks to do) is not kindness but madness.³

The Wonders of Spiritual Language

What divides Christians and Muslims in relation to the crucifixion of Jesus is quite instructive.

- It presents a classic example of the difference between divine and human language.

- It demonstrates the grave consequences of failing to recognize this difference—a failure that has caused the people of every age to reject their Redeemer.

The master key to the mysteries of divine language is a spiritual mind. In the celestial domain, the literal mind is a stranger. It is unable to unlock and enter God's heavenly mansions of truth. A mind centered on letters, like a cloud, conceals the glory of God.

He was robed in a cloud...his face was like the sun...

Revelation 10:1 NIV

Let us now examine the Quranic teachings concerning the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus:

They said (in boast): "We killed Christ, the Son of Mary, the Messenger of God." No! They did not kill Him, nor did they crucify Him! It only appeared to them that they did...Nay, God raised Him to Himself—the All-Powerful, the All-Wise.

Qur'án 4:157-158

Muslim theologians, who are as letter-minded as Christian theologians—claim that according to the preceding verses, Jesus did not die on the cross, someone else—who looked like Him—did!

In these verses God Almighty says that though it is true that Jesus was apparently placed on the cross, and that the intention was to kill him; yet it was wrong for the Jews and Christians to suppose that Jesus actually died on the cross. What happened was that God caused things to happen which saved Jesus from death on the cross.⁴

This claim hits at the very core of Christian theology—which rests on Jesus' crucifixion and triumph over death. This misjudgment alone can completely undermine the credibility of the Qur'án to Christians.

What the Qur'án teaches is this: the Romans and the rabbis assumed that by taking the life of Jesus, they stopped His

influence, that they killed the Message with the Messenger. But how wrong were they! They suffered from the grand delusion that Jesus was merely a bundle of bones and flesh. People do not change; those who lived at the time of Jesus thought the same way:

Ye judge after the flesh... Christ (John 8:15)

They did not know that:

The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing.
Christ (John 6:63 NIV)
See also Rom. 7:18; I Cor. 15:50

How Was Jesus Resurrected?

Consider the preceding verse in its context as translated in *Amplified Bible*:

What then [will be your reaction] if you should see the Son of man ascending to the place where He was before? It is the Spirit that gives life—He is the Life-giver; the flesh conveys no benefit whatever—there is no profit in it. John 6:62-63

The preceding verses remind us that Jesus will return to His previous home in heaven. Jesus' body came to us through His mother Mary. It is obvious that before coming to this world, Jesus' Spirit resided in heaven, but not His body. Why then would Jesus need a body after the resurrection to live where He had lived before as a Spirit?

The following declaration clearly confirms the message of the previous verses:

Father, into thy hands I commend my *spirit*.
Luke 23:46 NIV

God is *spirit*... John 4:24

But Stephen...saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at God's right hand. Acts 7:55-56 NEB

Imagine that God and the Glory of God are both Spirit with no body, but Jesus is different. He also has a body! If God and the Glory of God have no need for flesh and bone, why would Jesus? What about the demands of the flesh? The body needs to be washed; it needs rest and may suffer from fatigue. As we can see, by giving Jesus a body, we do not glorify Him, we demean His glory and grandeur.*

The following statement expresses Jesus' Mission and purpose of coming:

I have come that men may have life, and may have it in all its fullness. John 10:10 NEB

People have always been reminded of this self-evident truth, yet they have failed to grasp it:

*Wert thou to attain to but a dewdrop of the crystal waters of divine knowledge, thou wouldst readily realize that true life is not the life of the flesh but the life of the spirit. For the life of the flesh is common to both men and animals, whereas the life of the spirit is possessed only by the pure in heart who have quaffed from the ocean of faith and partaken of the fruit of certitude. This life knoweth no death, and this existence is crowned by immortality. Even as it hath been said: "He who is a true believer liveth both in this world and in the world to come."*⁵ Bahá'u'lláh

The rabbis and the Romans who rejected Jesus did not know that Jesus was the Spirit of God, the light and the life of the world. How can anyone crucify that most exalted

*I have covered this topic in more detail in another book written in response to the objections a pastor has raised against the Bahá'í beliefs. See: *Come Now, Let Us Reason Together*.

Spirit? How can anyone extinguish the light and the life of the world? They had no idea that, by crucifying Jesus, they were glorifying Him and extending the domain of His power. They did not realize that:

In the body He [Jesus] was put to death; in *the spirit He was brought to life*.

I Peter 3:18 NEB

Note that the preceding verse does not say that He was made alive in body—only in spirit. As we shall see, that is precisely what the Qur’án teaches.

We should note that what touches and transforms the human heart is not pomp and power, but poverty, pain, and suffering. The tragic life of Jesus—His sufferings—had a profound impact on the spread of His message. Today for every Jew, there are about a thousand Christians. Today there is no trace of the Roman rulers. Those who try to uproot the Word of God by force do not realize that they are its prime promoters! Pomp, power, and drama can astonish, impress, and amuse the eyes, but they cannot transform the hearts. Consider also the following verse:

And they who differed about Him [Jesus] were in doubt concerning Him. No sure knowledge had they about Him, but followed only a conjecture [an assumption]. They did not really slay Him, but God took Him up to Himself. God is the All-Mighty, the All-Wise!

Qur’án 4:157-158

The preceding verse confirms the stated conclusion: that Jesus’ enemies pursued only an illusion. They did not know that Jesus was a Spirit. Therefore, they did not slay Him. His Spirit remained alive and vibrant; and it finally returned to His Father.

The metaphoric use of the words *life*, *death*, and *resurrection* in Sacred Scriptures is quite common:

Jesus said to her, “I am *the resurrection* and *the life*. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and

whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?”
 John 11:25-26 NIV

Was Jesus referring to physical or spiritual resurrection? Fortunately, He used another keyword: *life*. The two words—*life and resurrection*—are synonymous. The underlying idea in both of them is bestowing spiritual life to the dead. Jesus spoke in the present tense: *I am resurrection*. When He spoke, He was already resurrected. He did not have to wait for the future. He was the very essence of spiritual life, the very power that lifts people’s souls from the grave of ignorance to the glory of knowledge, from the depths of despair to the crest of joy.

The word “resurrection” enriches and vivifies the word “life” by making it graphic. If we take resurrection literally, it remains unfulfilled. Jesus did not resurrect His followers to life.

The following passage further clarifies and confirms the spiritual language Jesus used:

And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus...
 Ephesians 2:6 NIV

How did God raise up St. Paul and other believers in Jesus? Spiritually. Those who believed in Him while alive were already resurrected. They were already “raised up.” They were already in heaven with their Lord.

Examples of Spiritual Language

Bahá’u’lláh frequently uses symbolic language:

Blessed the man who, assured of My Word, hath arisen from among the dead to celebrate My praise.⁶

Consider also these verses:

Most assuredly, I say to you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear will live.

John 5:25 NKJ

See also verse 28

For as the Father raises the dead and gives life to them, even so the Son gives life to whom He will.

John 5:21 NKJ

But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as you go...raise the dead...

Christ (Matt 10:6-8 NKJ)

Let the dead bury their dead...

Christ (Luke 9:60)

You have made known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence...

Psalms 16:11 NIV

He sent forth his word and healed them; he rescued them from the grave.

Psalms 107:20 NIV

O Lord...raise me up...

Psalms 41:10

The Qur'án also often speaks in spiritual language:

Ye were dead and He gave you [spiritual] life; next He will cause you to die; next He will restore you to life; next shall ye return to Him!

Qur'án 2:28

Then We raised you [the Jews] to life after ye had been dead, that haply ye might give thanks...

Qur'án 2:56

Shall the dead, whom we have quickened, and for whom we have ordained a light whereby he may walk among men, be like him, whose likeness is in the darkness, whence he will not come forth?

Qur'án 6:122

This is but an admonition, an eloquent Qur'án to exhort the living [the spiritually alive] and to pass judgment on the unbelievers.

Qur'án 36:69-70

And say not of those who are slain in God's path that they are dead; nay, they are living! But ye understand not.

Qur'án 2:154

The following verse requires some clarification. It declares that faith brings spiritual life, and loss of faith leads to spiritual death:

He bringeth forth the living out of the dead, and He bringeth forth the dead out of the living. Qur'an 30:19

Let us put the literal thinking to the test. Suppose an atheist reads the following verse:

...our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death.
II Timothy 1:10 NIV

If Jesus has destroyed death, he would ask, why then have Christians been dying? Why have they also been promised that “dying” will be abolished in the future?

There shall be no more death... Revelation 21:4

The literal mind has caused some Christian theologians to make the following claim:

They [all great Messengers] died and are still dead. Only Jesus had the power to lay down his life and to take it up again.⁷

According to Luke 9:28-30, Moses and Elias were alive at the time of Jesus; they spoke with Him. Since the question of resurrection is discussed at length in *Come Now, Let Us Reason Together*, it will not be repeated here.

A Classic Example of Spiritual Language

Perhaps the best example of the spiritual language spoken by God's Messengers is the fulfillment of the prophecies concerning the “return” of Elias in the person of John the Baptist:

John is the destined [promised] Elijah, if you will but accept it... Christ (Matt. 11:14 NEB)

Elijah has already come... Then the disciples understood that he meant John the Baptist. Matt. 17:12-13 NEB

John the Baptist was a different person with a different name, yet Jesus declared him to be Elijah!

Further, how can a literal-minded Christian reconcile the following contradictory statements:

John the Baptist is the destined [promised] Elijah. Matt. 11:14 NEB

“Are you Elijah?” “No,” he [John] replied. John 1:21 NEB

The only way we can reconcile the preceding verses is to shift our thoughts from literal to spiritual. Elijah and John were spiritually similar. They could be as the same person in “spirit and power” not in body and name.

The literal-minded Jews could have rejected Jesus for no reason other than being told that John the Baptist fulfilled the promise of the return of Elijah. This example alone demonstrates the perils of literal thinking—an epidemic disease that has afflicted the Jews, the Christians, and the Muslims.

Other Quranic Verses Concerning the Resurrection of Jesus

Several Quranic verses indicate that Jesus was indeed crucified before His ascension to God. However, such verses have been virtually ignored by both Muslims and Christians. Consider the following verse:

Remember when God said, “O Jesus! Verily I will cause thee to die, and will take thee up to myself and deliver thee from those who believe not; and I will place those

who follow thee above those who believe not, until the day of resurrection. Qur'án 3:55

Another translation:

Thus, God said, “O Jesus! I am terminating your life, raising you to Me, and ridding you of the unbelievers...”

The preceding verse implies that Jesus’ resurrection took place *after* His death. Let us study the passage piece by piece:

The Verse:

Explanation

O Jesus! Verily I will allow you to die.

Jesus was crucified only with God’s permission. Jesus also confirmed this fact: “You [Pilate] would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above” (John 19:11 NIV)

I [God]...will take thee up to Myself and deliver thee from those who believe not

This part points to the sequence of events. It shows that resurrection took place after Jesus’ death.

I [God] will place those who follow thee [Jesus] above those who believe not, until the day of resurrection.

Those who believe in Jesus are favored over those who deny Him—until “the day of resurrection.” The day of resurrection is the time of the Second Advent. When Bahá’u’lláh appeared, those who heard about His Advent are accountable to investigate His claim.

The following verse also refers first to Jesus’ death and then to His resurrection:

Blessed was I [Jesus] on the day I was born, and blessed I shall be on the day of my death, and on the day I shall be raised to life. Qur'án 19:33

Another translation:

Peace be upon Me the day I was born, the day I die, and the day I rise from the dead.

John the Baptist was also martyred. The Qur'án pays the same homage to him, and portrays the same sequence of events in his life and death:

Peace be on him, the day he was born, the day he dies, and the day he is raised to life. Qur'án 19:15

In still other verses—such as 4:157-158—the Qur'án refers clearly both to Jesus' resurrection and death. Consider also the following verse in which Jesus speaks to God:

I [Jesus] told them what you [God] commanded Me: “Worship God, your Lord and Mine. I served as a Witness over them, but when you allowed Me to die, you became the Witness over them. You are the Witness over all things. Qur'án 5:117

Why then do Muslims claim that, according to the Qur'án, Jesus was not crucified and Christians accept their flawed interpretation of the Qur'án? It is clear that Christian theologians look for differences between the Qur'án and the Bible, and they are delighted to think that Muhammad denied Jesus' crucifixion. This gives them an extra weapon to undermine His credibility. What about the Muslims? Why do they disregard the verses that confirm Jesus' death before His resurrection? Since they start with the assumption that Jesus was not crucified, they feel obligated to change the meaning of a specific word in the verses that contradict their false assumption. What word do they change? How do they achieve their purpose? In the passage just quoted, there is an Arabic word with the root meaning of “death.”

They change the literal meaning of that word into a neutral expression. Instead of translating “God allowed Him to die,” they write: “God took Him to Himself.” If they translate the word “death” or “dying” literally, the verse would contradict the earlier verse that says: “They did not kill Him nor did they crucify Him. It only appeared to them.” Further, if God “raised Jesus to Himself,” it seems He would not raise His dead body. Therefore Muslim theologians assume that God raised or took Jesus physically alive.

The Christian translator of the Qur’án, Rodwell, is inconsistent. Sometimes he translates the critical word correctly. Let us compare one of his translations with a popular translation from a Muslim:

O Jesus! verily I will cause thee to die, and will take thee up to myself...
Qur’án 3:55 R

Behold! Allah said: “O Jesus! I will take thee and raise thee to Myself...”
Qur’án 3:55 Y

Some Muslim translators also translate the critical word correctly. Here is an example:

When Allah said: “O Jesus, I will cause you to die, and will lift you up to Me...”
Qur’án 3:55 Majid Fakhry

We should note that some Christian theologians in translating the Bible follow the same course. Sometimes they alter the meaning of certain critical words to make the Bible conform to their doctrinal positions. Evangelical Christians are extremely critical of *The New World Translation* (by Jehovah Witnesses). According to a Christian source:

...the Translation Committee [of Jehovah Witnesses] sought to conform *NWT* to their religious traditions...⁸

Unfortunately the most popular translation of the Bible (*The New International Version*) supported by Evangelicals also suffers from the same flaw: the bias of the translators to make the Bible to conform to their theological traditions. (For an example, see *Come Now, Let Us Reason Together*, pp. 78-80.)

To see the grave consequences of literal thinking, consider the implications of the following verses:

But the prophet, which shall presume to speak a word in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or that shall speak in the name of other gods, even that prophet shall die. Deuteronomy 18:20

For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people. Acts 3:22-23

The preceding verses make two predictions:

- A false prophet “shall die.”
- Those who do not follow a true Prophet, like Moses, shall be utterly destroyed.

Literally, the opposite happened. Jesus was crucified, those who rejected Him suffered much, but as a whole they were not “utterly destroyed.”

Some Muslims have asked: Should not Christians give some credit to the Qur’án for declaring that God accomplished His grand purpose without allowing Jesus to suffer? Does not this belief glorify Jesus by ascribing even more power to Him?

Conclusion

To conclude this discussion, let us take a look at “the big picture.” A Man, a merchant named Muhammad is born and raised among idol-worshippers. This “unlettered” merchant glorifies someone born long before Him in another culture—a Man named Jesus. He acknowledges not only His blessed and divinely-ordained birth to a young virgin named Mary, but also His miraculous ascension to heaven! Can this happen by chance? Can such an acknowledgment come from an uneducated merchant raised in that primitive culture? What more can Christians expect? Should they blame Muhammad for attributing such divine powers to their Savior? Should they try to find fault with Him, or should they celebrate for knowing that a Messenger of such caliber—with more than one billion followers—has bestowed the most exalted honors on their Savior, has called Him the Spirit of God and the Word of God sent to save humankind from the darkness of ignorance and the agony of separation from God? How can those who truly believe in Jesus ignore or deny this well-known pronouncement from their Scriptures?

Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God... I John 4:2

How can they read and believe the following statements and then deny the divine origin of Muhammad?

No one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit. I Cor. 12:3 NKJ

I bear witness that Jesus Son of Mary *is the Spirit of God and His Word*, which He cast to Mary the virgin.⁹

Who was Jesus? According to the Qur’án, He was the Spirit of God. Can any human being crucify the Spirit of God? The answer is abundantly clear. Jesus was not flesh

and bone. According to His own Word, flesh has neither any significance, nor can it inherit the Kingdom of Heaven.

By saying that Jesus was not crucified, the Qur'án elevates His station. It teaches us that Christ—the Spirit of God—was untouchable, supreme, and beyond the reach of even the most powerful human beings. No one could ever inflict the slightest harm on that Spirit. What the people crucified was not Christ, but tissues, cells, and organs that belonged to the kingdom of earth, not to the Kingdom of Heaven. In that Kingdom only the Spirit reigns.

17

Muhammad's Married Life

Waves of Misinformation

Through knowledge shall the just be delivered.

Proverbs 11:9

O my Lord! Enhance my knowledge [of the truth].

Qur'án 20:114

Does our law permit us to pass judgment on a man unless we have first given him a hearing and learned the facts?

John 7:51 NEB

There is an abundance of misinformation about the world's great religions. Where does it come from? Who has vested interests in spreading myths, distorting the truth, and keeping the majority of humankind in spiritual darkness? One practice that has kept most people from learning the truth about other religions is this: the majority of believers prefer to learn about other religions from their own fellow-believers, especially their religious leaders. A zealous Jew would prefer to read a book written about Jesus by a Jewish leader and scholar rather than by a Christian. How many Christians have you met who preferred to learn about Jesus' life by reading a book written by a Jew, a Hindu, or a Muslim author? And yet those same Christians seek to learn about Muhammad by reading books written by their fellow-believers! The same holds true with zealous Muslims and Christians who want to learn about the Bahá'í Faith. They assume that a Bahá'í author would lie to them. They think that only a fellow-believer would tell them the

whole truth, expose to them the Bahá'í weaknesses, and reassure them that what they already believe is the best. This has been the trend throughout history. Let us hope that it will change in the future.

This pattern of searching for weaknesses in the “other religion” has been popular throughout history. Many religious leaders and scholars have used this strategy. Military leaders have used it successfully in warfare since ancient times. It follows the analogy that a chain is as strong as its weakest link. This strategy has also been used successfully by both Muslim and Christian leaders and authors against the Bahá'í Faith. It is a popular strategy because it works. If the critics can prove to the reader that Muhammad was lustful, they have already won the battle. They do not need to resort to any other weapons. Just as a little cloud can conceal the sun, so one supposed weakness attributed to Muhammad can tarnish His divine glory and splendor. It can by itself completely undermine His credibility. Surely if a man has any moral flaws, especially in relation to women, He cannot be a prophet from God. A suspicion of such a weakness—lust for women—is so powerful, so damaging, it can by itself completely undermine a Messenger's honor and authority.

Has Jesus been spared from such allegations? The Pharisees of His day accused Him of being a glutton and a wine bibber, and of associating with publicans and prostitutes (Luke 7:34-39). Now a recently published best-selling novel—*The Da Vinci Code*—alleges in the narrative that Jesus and Mary Magdalene had a secret love relationship, that they were married secretly and had a child together! No doubt many of those who buy the book are already predisposed to believing such rumors. They want to think that Jesus could not have suppressed His sexual desires in His love for a devoted disciple who admired and even worshiped Him. They project their own desires and

passions onto Jesus. Many others, who love and revere Jesus, may simply be captivated by the idea that His descendants are walking amongst us even to this day.

Christian authors and scholars have written many books to discredit *the Da Vinci Code*. Here are a few passages from a letter sent to millions of Christians:

Central to *Da Vinci Code* is Brown's claim that Jesus was married to Mary Magdalene and had children with her...this assertion is based on two passages from the so-called "Gnostic gospels"—alternate profile of Christ's life and teachings written one or two centuries after his death...the *Gospel of Philip*, claims Jesus kissed Mary romantically...Throughout the *Da Vinci Code*, Brown labors tirelessly—and successfully—to create the illusion of truth. Myth is presented as fact. Actual historical documents are referenced, then misinterpreted. Authoritative-sounding sources are accurately quoted, but their conclusions twisted...It's so seductive, in fact, that even mature, knowledgeable believers who never before questioned the biblical account of Christ have been...searching for the answer to the question: "Is this stuff really true?"...Obviously, the author wants to convince readers that, while technically a work of fiction, the book is absolutely historically accurate. That's where the lie begins.¹

Unfortunately, most people tend to believe what they read, especially if the author is a respected religious leader or someone with university degrees. They simply assume that someone who has a Ph.D. or D.D. cannot be prejudiced or ignorant. In the parable of the banquet of heaven, Jesus divided the believers into two groups: the spiritually wise and the spiritually foolish. The story of God's great Messengers shows that the lowly and the humble people have always demonstrated more wisdom than both the

secular and the religious leaders. Apparently spiritual wisdom is not necessarily the fruit of “book learning.”

Today the bitter enemies of religion are found primarily among the better educated members of our society. They are usually found among the advantaged members of society. They often enjoy positions of honor, have doctorate degrees, are accomplished authors and speakers, or are active in the public media—television and radio. One of them is Mr. Dashti from Iran, who has written several volumes to discredit three religions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. In a TV program, I once heard a famous Christian refer to Mr. Dashti as a “Muslim scholar.” Then he used the authority of Mr. Dashti—an atheist or agnostic—to discredit Islam! Surely most of his sympathetic followers would assume that if a Muslim scholar made a statement against Islam, it could not be false. How can such listeners doubt a “Muslim scholar”?

Mr. Dashti’s unfounded views are gradually finding their way into Christian literature and are being used as new weapons in the hands of some Christian leaders. For instance, the noted Christian scholar, Dr. Norman Geisler, in his book *Answering Islam*, quotes this “Muslim scholar” to support his own arguments against Islam!² These Christian leaders will surely ignore Mr. Dashti’s equally unfounded views about the Bible.

The leaders of thought—whether they are religious or atheists—exert an enormous influence on the masses of humankind. Their powers come from this false and dangerous assumption many people make: that “spiritual wisdom” is equal to “book learning,” that the more degrees a person receives, or the more books he reads or writes, the greater his spiritual wisdom. This assumption is as false and dangerous as believing that a person can fly a plane simply because he owns one.

How can one false but critical flaw, such as lust, undermine a Messenger's credibility? How can one false assumption prevent people from recognizing the glory of a great Messenger from God? Suppose you are lost in the woods, and you must go south to find the road. But you mistake north for south. What will happen? You may walk to your death. The same holds true with choosing and pursuing the spiritual path. One wrong move, one misconception can lead us to spiritual ignorance and spiritual death.

The Practice of Polygamy

An objection that Christian theologians raise against Muhammad is this: Why did He practice polygamy? Why did He marry as many as thirteen wives?*

Before responding to this objection, let us first look briefly at the history of polygamy. The most significant law, expressed in all sacred Scriptures, is this: sexual behavior is acceptable only between men and women bonded through marriage. What about polygamy? The Bible contains no clear statement for or against this practice. People are practically left to do what they please. It is no wonder that the Mormons in the United States practiced polygamy until "it was discontinued by a 'new revelation' in 1890, after thirty years of bitter controversy with the United States government."

According to the *New Bible Dictionary*:

Monogamy is implicit in the story of Adam and Eve, since God created only one wife for Adam. Yet polygamy is adopted from the time of Lamech (Gen. 4:19), and is not forbidden in Scripture.³

*The exact number is in dispute. It ranges from 9 to 24.

Abraham had three wives, yet God did not object; on the contrary, He blessed Him and His children. We are told that King Solomon had as many as 700 wives and 300 concubines (I Kings 11:3), and yet the Bible eulogized him as paragon of wisdom:

God gave Solomon wisdom and very great insight, and a breadth of understanding as measureless as the sand on the seashore.

I Kings 4:29 NIV
Also Matt. 12:42

We are also told that King David, a dearly beloved prophet of God, had 99 wives. Yet Christian authors and scholars do not seem to mind. Most of David's and Solomon's marriages took place during the prime of their lives, and yet the record of Muhammad's marriage to a dozen women, mostly widows, during almost the last quarter of His life, is the talk of the town!

Dr. Geisler in his book, *Answering Islam*, tries to show that the Bible, unlike the Qur'an, prescribes monogamy. To prove his point, he makes this statement:

The law of Moses clearly commands, "You shall not multiply wives" (Deut. 17:17).⁴

Let us see the previous verse in its context:

The king, moreover, must not acquire great numbers of horses for himself or make the people return to Egypt to get more of them, for the Lord has told you, "You are not to go back that way again. He must not take many wives, or his heart will be led astray. He must not accumulate large amounts of silver and gold."

Deut. 17:16-17 NIV

Do these verses "clearly command" monogamy? Instead of prohibiting polygamy, by using the word "many" the statement actually permits it. The king is asked to be prudent, to be content with a few—say a dozen—rather

than “many,” perhaps a hundred or more wives! The king is also asked to be content with only a few horses!

The question of sin plays a critical role in Christian theology. Consider this statement from a Christian publication:

According to the Bible, a Christian is a person who has faced realistically the problem of his own personal sin. One of the many things which distinguishes the Christian faith from the other religions of the world is that Christianity is essentially and fundamentally a *sinner's religion*.⁵

Many believers love sin-stories, especially dramatic and secret sexual adventures by famous people. Such stories help them justify their own sinful desires. They can then say, “I am just as human as the famous and the great. If they do it, it is not a big deal!” One such story related by Christian theologians is an incidence of adultery by King David. Is this story credible? Some scholars believe that certain narratives of the Hebrew Scriptures have no roots in reality. This accusation, they indicate, is one of them. For it is unreasonable to think that a dearly beloved Messenger of God, as distinguished and holy as David, would engage in such a deviant act.

In *The Book of Certitude* Bahá'u'lláh glorifies David as an “exalted Manifestation.”

...Messengers of the Word of God, such as David, Jesus, and others among the more exalted Manifestations...⁶

The Qur'án refers to David as a Messenger with a Scripture:

...and We gave David a Scripture. Qur'án 4:163

The Old Testament contains many unreliable stories. They are comparable to the thousands of fictitious hadíth (traditions)

attributed to Muhammad. The accusations made against David are of such caliber—they are both tragic and outrageous.

As Bahá'u'lláh testifies and the Qur'án confirms, David was an “exalted Manifestation of God.” His love for God and His devotion to the divine, as recorded in his Psalms, are unsurpassed. They are comparable to the hundreds of prayers revealed by the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh—equal to several volumes.

Some Christian theologians cite the example of Adam and Eve to prove that for them monogamy is the law. Others cite the following statement by Jesus:

Some Pharisees came to him to test him. They asked, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any and every reason?” “Haven't you read,” he replied, “that at the beginning the Creator ‘made them male and female,’ and said, ‘For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh’? So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate.”

Matt. 19:3-6 NIV

What is Jesus' intention? To prohibit polygamy or prohibit divorce? The idea of monogamy is implicit in His statement, but that was not the topic He was pursuing. Polygamy is a serious matter. The believers need clear and definitive directions. Consider how strict and definitive Jesus was about divorce. He wanted to virtually abolish it. He spoke with authority and precision:

I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, and marries another woman commits adultery.

Matt. 19:9 NIV

And yet Jesus did not make any statement about the number of wives a man is allowed to marry. He did not

even discourage polygamy—a tradition that had been accepted and practiced for centuries by the Jews. Ironically, today divorce is rampant among Christians, whereas polygamy has been outlawed and virtually abandoned. This example clearly shows how the social teachings of every religion are adapted and bound to the time and culture in which its founder appeared. By today's standards, slavery is outrageous. It is far worse than divorce, yet Jesus condemned divorce in the harshest words, but did not even discourage slavery.

The Qur'án for the first time in religious history sets a clear limit on the number of wives a man can marry: up to four. It also expresses the condition under which polygamy can be practiced: justice or fairness (Qur'án 4:4, 129). We may underestimate the significance of these two rules—setting limits and conditions on polygamy. But in the light of the nomadic culture of Arabia, they were revolutionary. In that culture, women were virtually worthless. To ask those brutal men to treat their wives with justice was a giant leap forward. What would our world be like if in our age, married couples—both men and women—treated each other with justice? Instead of undermining the validity of the Qur'án, the two rules—setting limits and conditions on polygamy—do just the opposite: they point to its divine origin. They present one more evidence, among many others, to show that this sacred Book—the Qur'án—was not the “fruit” of that primitive culture.

The world was not, however, ready for monogamy until the advent of the Bahá'í Faith. The Bahá'í Faith is the first religion in the history of humankind to clearly prohibit the ancient practice of polygamy.

Muhammad's Married Life

Although we have no right to judge God's Messengers by the state of their family life, it is essential to respond to the objections raised against them. Before responding, we need to learn the difference between the choices *we* make and the choices the Messengers make. Our choices follow our personal judgment; their choices follow the divine judgment. Their whole life and destiny is centered on a single purpose: to please God.

For I did not speak of my own accord, but the Father who sent me commanded me what to say and how to say it. I know that his command leads to eternal life. So whatever I say is just what the Father has told me to say.

Christ (John 12:49-50 NIV)

When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am the one I claim to be and that I do nothing on my own but speak just what the Father has taught me.

Christ (John 8:28 NIV)

Only what is revealed to me do I follow.

Muhammad (Qur'an 6:50)

O concourse of light! By the righteousness of God, We speak not according to selfish desire, nor hath a single letter of this Book been revealed save by the leave of God, the Sovereign Truth.⁷

The Báb

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. Can any one speak forth of his own accord that for which all men, both high and low, will protest against him? Nay, by Him Who taught the Pen the eternal mysteries, save him whom the grace

of the Almighty, the All-Powerful, hath strengthened.⁸
Bahá'u'lláh

If we truly accept their testimony, how then can we question the wisdom and value of the choices they make? We are so ignorant that sometimes we do not know what serves our own best interests, how then can we judge God's plan for His Messengers, who lived long ago in cultures radically different from ours?

If we question the choices the Messengers make, then we have questioned the One who sends them. We have rejected this attribute of God:

He doeth whatsoever He willeth and ordaineth
whatsoever He pleaseth.⁹ Bahá'u'lláh

Although we have no right to question God, we have a responsibility to respond to the critics, the ones who wish to undermine the validity of His Messengers.

Consider the case of Jesus who never chose a wife. Has He been immune to criticism? Not at all. People have speculated about, and passed judgment, on the reasons He chose to remain single. The Bible asks us to marry to perpetuate human life. And it sets no condition for doing this. Why, then, did Jesus not comply with divine directions revealed in the Hebrew Scriptures? What would happen if all Christians followed His example? Who then can be the judge? Who can say that polygamy is worse or better than staying single? Only now do we know why Jesus preferred to remain single. And if Bahá'u'lláh had not revealed this mystery, we would have never known the reason. What we can be certain of is this: Jesus had no purpose except to please God. And if God had asked Him to choose even a dozen wives, He would have obeyed.

Human imagination can readily fill any vacuum. If we love Jesus, we will fill the vacuum with positive thoughts; if not,

with negative thoughts. The same holds true with Muhammad and all the other great Messengers.

A parable found both in the Gospel and the Qur'án expresses a universal law: Our response to the Word of God depends on our spiritual potential.

“A sower went out to sow his seed. And as he sowed, some fell by the wayside; and it was trampled down, and the birds of the air devoured it. Some fell on rock; and as soon as it sprang up, it withered away because it lacked moisture. And some fell among thorns, and the thorns sprang up with it and choked it. But others fell on good ground, sprang up, and yielded a crop a hundredfold.” When He had said these things He cried, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear!”

Luke 8:5-8 NKJ

In a rich soil, its plants spring forth abundantly by the will of its Lord, and in that which is bad, they spring forth scantily. Thus do We diversify our signs for those who are thankful.

Qur'án 7:58

Some critics learn about a seemingly ordinary man who builds from the desert sands of Arabia a majestic castle that has housed, protected, and inspired billions of people for centuries. Instead of marveling at its marvels, they search for a flaw in its structure. They try to find fault with a brick here and there, or perhaps the shape of a doorknob, or even the arrangement of the flowers in the garden. In an attempt to degrade Muhammad, some authors have claimed that He had epilepsy. They want to link Him with some kind of mental disorder or defect. If that were the case, then Muhammad would deserve even greater praise, because He accomplished those wonders despite His supposed mental or physical handicap!

To gain insight into the reasons why Muhammad practiced polygamy, we need to have some understanding of the Arabian culture. We should note that in some primitive

societies polygamy provided a means of protection for women and orphans because unmarried women were often fair game for predators. In those societies, polygamy played a positive role.

To see how social issues are relative rather than absolute, consider the state of women and children in Africa at this point in history. Today we see the images of millions of starving people in several countries in that continent. Suppose in one of those countries a man marries 20 or even 50 homeless widows, and then protects them and their children from starvation, disease, and danger. Would you object?

Some books offer detailed information about Muhammad's married life. That is beyond the scope of our discussion. But a glance at *the pattern* of His marriages will provide all the clues we need to discern His intentions:

- Muhammad married at the age of 25 to a woman who had been widowed twice and was 15 years older than He was. How many young men do you know who are faithfully married to a woman 15 years older than they are?
- Muhammad had only one wife until the age of 50 or 51, and He married His second wife after the first one had died.
- He practiced polygamy during the last 15 years of His life—not during His youth.

Consider also the following facts:

- To be a fair judge, we should try to see Muhammad's position among the ignorant and antagonistic tribes of His time. How could a respected leader reduce bloodshed among hostile tribes? By creating marital links between them. Muhammad's marriages accomplished this very purpose. They conveyed this

message from Muhammad to powerful tribe leaders: “I am one of you because I married one of you. We are all one family!”

These marital unions served yet another purpose: They facilitated the promotion of the new Faith. Once again, the tribe leaders said, “Muhammad is one of us. He is our relative. Perhaps we should listen to His teaching with an open mind.”

This simple strategy pacified and befriended the hostile tribe leaders, and it saved many lives. Any person endowed with wisdom would have followed Muhammad’s example. The same principle holds true today. Inter-marriage between the diverse nations provides a giant step toward world unity.

- By marrying the widows of those killed in wars, Muhammad gave recognition to martyrs who had left widows and children with little if any support and protection.
- Further, Muhammad showed by example that the disadvantaged must be cared for. (Muslims are asked to follow Muhammad’s example. That is called Sunna, meaning tradition, custom, or law.)

What is the best way to teach? By setting a good example. Muhammad’s married life was a theatre open to all believers. By looking at the Prophet’s life, the believers could, and still can, learn a vital principle: conflicts should be resolved through dialogue and reasoning, not through power. They can also learn what it takes to be a loving husband. By the example of His life, Muhammad taught those brutal men how to respect women and treat them as human beings.

The opponents of Islam sensationalize Muhammad’s marriages. They turn them into a theatre of sensual

adventures. This they do by overlooking the events behind the scene. They also depend on conflicting and fictional stories (traditions) made up and narrated by both Muslims and non-Muslims.

...the traditions themselves grievously differ, and their obscurities are manifold.¹⁰ Bahá'u'lláh

There have been as many as a million statements, events, or stories attributed to Muhammad. Muslim scholars have tried to adopt various standards to separate the true from the untrue, but they have failed miserably. Christian authors often depend on undependable sources of traditions, and create confidence in their readers by stating that they are quoting from a valid Islamic source.

Jesus' ministry lasted only three years, and yet unreliable stories and rumors about what He did or said are rampant. Christian churches have, throughout the centuries, strongly discouraged their followers from paying attention to such stories. Only now are they gaining ground, only now are non-canonical (unauthorized) Bibles being more widely distributed. The Bahá'í Faith has set rules to discourage the spread or acceptance of false claims by its own followers. If we do not accept false statements and stories about Jesus, why should we accept them about Muhammad?

To demonstrate the prevalence and popularity of "hadíth" (statements attributed to Muhammad or the early Imáms), let me quote just one example from a popular book written by an enlightened Muslim author. In her book, she faithfully introduces her beloved faith and the Qur'án to non-Muslims. However, when it comes to the "hadíth" (traditions), she follows the tradition with equal faith, without pondering the implication or the authenticity of the statements attributed to Muhammad. For example, she quotes Muhammad as saying that any believer who dies

from the following diseases or in the following ways, is considered a martyr:

- One who dies of a plague.
- One who drowns.
- One who dies from a stomach ailment.
- One who dies from internal disease.
- One who is crushed to death when a building collapses.
- A woman who dies in childbirth.¹¹

The author does not ponder the implications of this totally unreasonable list. She does not consider that almost everyone dies from an “internal” disease. Unless an internal organ, such as the heart, is damaged, we will not die. The only thing not internal is our skin. Why discriminate against skin diseases, such as skin cancer? Why discriminate against a person who dies by falling into a deep hole, rather than be crushed by a building? Why discriminate against a person who starves to death? Why select “stomach ailment” among hundreds of others? Why discriminate against those who are mercilessly murdered?

Those who made up stories and statements, and then attributed them to Muhammad, inflicted a terrible blow on Islam: they offered its enemies the most powerful weapons against it. It seems the Qur’án predicted this tragedy by using the word “*hadíth*” in the following statement:

There are, among men, those who accept idle tales [hadíth], without knowledge, to mislead people from the path of God. They take their misdeed lightly. For such people there will be a humiliating punishment.

Qur’án 31:6

Many of those religious leaders who have written huge books on Islamic laws have also placed powerful weapons in the hands of the critics. So far those laws have not found

their ways into Christian literature critical of Islam. Some of those books can be called “Masterpieces of Pornography!” Let us hope that they will remain in obscurity!

To gain a true knowledge concerning Muhammad’s married life, we need to know specific reasons for each of His marriages. Consider the kinds of women Muhammad selected. With only one exception, they were either divorced or widows. If sensual pleasure was an issue, Muhammad could and would have chosen a hundred, or even a thousand beautiful young girls, just as kings and powerful rulers have done throughout history, and a few are still doing. This observation alone shows that sensual pleasure had nothing to do with Muhammad’s choice of wives.

To judge objectively, we need to see what went on behind the scene. We need to take a close look at Muhammad’s relations with His wives. When we do this, a new and astonishing picture emerges. We find the exact opposite of what we may expect. We discover that instead of offering Him sexual adventures, Muhammad’s wives served as a source of stress and distress for Him during the last fifteen years of His life!

As we know, in primitive Arabia, women were treated like slaves. They enjoyed little if any self-worth. However, those who entered Muhammad’s household encountered the opposite environment. They suddenly found themselves in homes dominated by freedom, respect, love, and justice. What happens when starving people step into a lavish banquet? They gorge themselves; they eat beyond their needs. Imagine the difference these women found between Muhammad and their previous husbands! They did not know how to cherish their newly-found freedom, and often abused each other and their gentle and compassionate

husband! Consider the following statement from a well-researched biography on the life of Muhammad:

Since the Prophet granted to his wives such an unusual position at a time when Arab women amounted to nothing at all in society, it was natural for his wives to abuse the liberty which none of their peers had known before, a liberty which went so far as to enable any of them to criticize the Prophet so severely as to spoil his disposition the rest of the day. He often ignored some of his wives, and avoided others on many occasions, precisely in order to discourage their abuse of his compassion.¹²

Certainly, Muhammad's leniency and gentleness encouraged rebellion, and the new status which he had conferred upon women in society fanned their vanity. Muhammad, however, was not free to spend his time dealing with household problems. The need soon came to be felt for a decisive lesson to reestablish discipline and to liberate him for teaching the message [of Islam] and fulfilling the mission of his prophethood. Hence, he decided to ignore his wives and, indeed, to threaten them with divorce. A lesson had to be taught to them, and the time had apparently come for a decision. Either these women were to return to reason or they would be given their freedom in a mutually convenient divorce...Muhammad isolated himself from all his women for a full month and refused to talk about them to anyone. Nor did anyone dare talk to him concerning them...

The marketplace of Madinah hummed with rumors about the impending divorce of the Prophet's wives. The wives, for their part, were repentant and apprehensive. They regretted that their jealousy of one another had carried them away, that they had abused and harmed their gentle husband who was to each one of them at all

times an elder brother, a compassionate father, a nearest kin, and the best of everything that might be hoped for in this life and the next.

Muhammad spent most of his time in a storeroom he owned, placing his servant Rabab at its doorstep as long as he was inside. Therein he used to sleep on a very hard bed or coarse date branches...At the end of the month during which Muhammad vowed to separate himself from his wives, the Muslims were despondent over the prospect of Muhammad's domestic affairs. Many signs of dejection and sorrow were apparent on their faces as they gathered in the mosque.¹³

The wives of the Prophet, having regained their wisdom and common sense, returned to their husband repentant, pious, and confirmed in their faith. Once reconciled by their repentance, Muhammad returned to his wives and his domestic life resumed its peace—the necessary prerequisite for any man with a mission to perform.¹⁴

If we pay close attention to the Quranic verses, we will discover that the preceding statements from His biography are quite accurate. The Qur'án devotes several verses to Muhammad's wives, who were not pleased with their standard of living and desired a more comfortable life:

If you seek this life and all this finery, come, I will make provision for you and release you honorably. But if you seek God and His Messenger and the hereafter, know that God has prepared a rich reward for those of you who do good work.

Qur'án 33:28-29

The Qur'án also gives Muhammad's wives warnings such as:

...whomever of you commits a flagrant foul act, her punishment will be doubled; and that for God is an easy matter. Whoever of you obeys God and His Messenger and does the righteous deed, We shall pay her wage

twice over, and We have prepared for her a generous provision. Qur'an 33:30-31

The preceding verses imply that Muhammad's wives were unhappy with their lives and needed warnings to behave themselves. They show that the Prophet's life with Khadijah was in stark contrast to His life with these unhappy women during the evening of His life. They confirm the historical records and prove the exact opposite of what the opponents of Islam claim and promote.

We should judge an event in its context. Consider the dictators who had hundreds of young beautiful women in their harem. These women were virtual slaves. They did not dare complain, and if they did, they would pay with their lives. The picture, however, changes when we see polygamy in the opposite context: in the life of a truly gentle, compassionate, and loving husband. In this context, it provides a fertile ground for seeds of jealousy, rivalry, conflict, and contention. We know the devastating powers of jealousy in the heart of Sarah—Abraham's wife—toward Hagar. Imagine the suffering Sarah inflicted on Hager and her baby because of her consuming jealousy.

Surah 33 devotes several verses to Muhammad, especially to His family life. He is honored by being called an Exemplar for the believers (33:21). The Surah shows clearly that Muhammad's married life was preordained, that He had no choice but to submit to the plan of His destiny. He practiced what He preached. That is what Islam means.

The Qur'an exonerates the Prophet by declaring that His family life is beyond reproach, for it is entirely in God's hand. He is the One who guides the Prophet. Therefore, no one has the right to raise an objection:

The Prophet is beyond blame in relation to what God has ordained (prescribed) for Him. Such has been God's

Way concerning those who appeared in the past. God's Command is a pre-ordained decree. Qur'an 33:38

The preceding verse teaches us three principles:

- The family life of the Messengers is entirely in God's hand. He has complete control over their deeds and destiny.
- No one has the right to raise any objection concerning God's Messengers, especially their married life.
- The fact that the Messengers live by the Will of God is not new. This principle embraces the lives of all those sent by God. Jesus also repeatedly expressed His submission to the Will of God.

As we can see, in just one verse the Qur'an settles an enduring question. Who sends the Messengers, and who decides the rules and the standards for them and for us? Who decides what is right, what is wrong? Does not God teach us that "He doeth what He willeth"? If He did everything the way we expect, how then could His Will transcend ours? Should God's standards always conform to ours?

As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts. Isaiah 55:9 NIV

Whatever God does contrary to our expectations is a test of our faith. What God chooses for His Messengers provides perhaps the best means for testing our faith.

Anyone who objects to the Messengers' family life is transgressing the bounds of his authority.

Transgress not thy limits, nor claim that which beseemeth thee not. Prostrate thyself before the countenance of thy God, the Lord of might and power.¹⁵ Bahá'u'lláh

Anyone who blames God's Messengers for any reason, he has indeed blamed the One who sends them.

Some critics ask why Muhammad married more than four wives—the limit allowed in the Qur'án. It is known that Muhammad's marriages took place before the Quranic law was revealed. Even if that were not the case, do we have the authority to object? As stated, the great Messengers act only by God's guidance. For instance, we are told that Jesus was:

...far above all rule and authority, power and dominion...

Ephesians 1:21 NIV

In this age, we often hear people complain that it is difficult to please one spouse—wife or husband. How then can a loving and compassionate man please 13 competing wives? How can he treat each of them with justice? Thus contrary to what many people may think, Muhammad would have been far happier if He had continued to practice monogamy. Without doubt, He was much happier during the 25 years that he lived with His first wife, Khadijah.

Asking this question is critical: Why would a man, who was happily married to one wife for 25 years, suddenly change course and become extremely sensual during the last fifteen years of His life? Why would He suddenly move from one wife to thirteen wives? And why would He choose to marry divorced or widowed women, instead of young beautiful girls, while He was at the peak of His power? When we look at Muhammad's total life, we can readily find the answer. We learn that His sole purpose was to please God. He always acted according to divine guidance. The new environment that emerged towards the end of His life required that He should change course. His marriages served many positive purposes.

Those who have searched for weaknesses in Islam have found a fertile ground in Muhammad's married life. Sexual

issues are so critical and so sensitive, they can cause the downfall of any man. We know how the stories of sexual adventures of several Christian leaders, such as Jimmy Swaggart and Jim Bakker, caused them to fall from fame. Muhammad's critics are well aware of this issue.

After criticizing the prophet's practice of polygamy, they have tried to analyze each of His marriages to see where He is most vulnerable. They have found two marriages that seem to offer them their hearts' desire, that seem to be heaven-sent as an indictment against Muhammad. The first one involves the young daughter of a prominent Arab leader, Abú-Bakr, who wanted to establish close ties with Muhammad. Before his daughter 'A'ishah was mature, Abú-Bakr asked Muhammad to accept her as a future wife, and He consented. The age of 'A'ishah at the time of her marriage to Muhammad is in dispute. It varies from eight to early teens. Keeping birth records has not been a science in the past. I have met quite a few people from Islamic cultures who did not know their precise age. Imagine building a case against someone on such shallow grounds!

The age of 'A'ishah comes to us through narratives or traditions that often contradict each other. Some Muslim scholars present much evidence to show that at the time of her marriage she was older than is commonly assumed. When there is so much doubt, is it wise to even raise this question? Is it reasonable to try to discredit a religion by clinging to a mere assumption?

The critics advance their claim as an established fact. Most people do not know their own religion, much less other religions. Why then should they doubt whatever they hear—whether it comes from a friend or foe? In this busy, chaotic, and confusing age, a lack of knowledge provides an ideal breeding-ground for spreading misinformation and promoting prejudice.

Even if we assume that ‘A’ishah, at the time of her marriage, had not attained maturity, we need to remember the powers of tradition and the roles of culture. We should note that in many primitive societies, marrying at a young age was quite common. Lifespan was short; the period of bearing and raising a child was also short.

To establish marital bonds, one family would ask for the daughter of another family while she was still at a tender age, for fear of losing her to someone else. Some authorities claim that at that time, girls matured earlier. We cannot, of course, be sure that this is indeed true.

According to a new study, 80 percent of American girls who are overweight attain puberty at age 9. The study was reported by CBS news, March 5, 2007. Again, on August 9, 2010, ABC News reported that, according to a study published in *Pediatrics*, some girls reach puberty as early as age 7.

It is believed that Muhammad’s daughter, Fátimah, married at the age of eight. If this is true, then we could say: Muhammad could have certainly found a suitable husband for her daughter at any age; why then did He accept ‘Ali’s request to marry her at that tender age? To judge these issues from the distance of more than a thousand years is impossible. We do not have authentic references. Even the age of Khadijah at the time she married Muhammad is questionable. She may have been younger than reported. But since we do not have solid evidence to prove this point, it is best not to question it.

One way we may be able to judge ‘A’ishah’s marriage to Muhammad is by its fruits or consequence. If we do this, we will find that the criticism aimed at Muhammad is unjustified, because this marital union turned out to be as good as one may ever expect. It may be comparable, in some ways, to Muhammad’s first marriage to Khadijah—

who was older. Apparently in Muhammad's marriages, age differences worked as a positive force. His happiest marriages were to a woman who was much older and with a young girl who was much younger! This, of course, could be just coincidence.

If 'A'ishah was happy in her marriage, what right do we have to object? Does anyone really know what happened between that couple? Perhaps she was too young to marry, but does anyone know when this marriage was consummated? Consider also this point: If Muhammad had sexual obsessions late in His life, as some critics allege, why did He produce five children by His first wife and only one child by the other twelve?

It is a well-established fact that after puberty, one's personality remains quite stable. Seldom if ever people experience major transformation after that period. In relation to Muhammad, we must make this irrational assumption: a man was quite satisfied with a divorcee (Khadijah), who was 15 years older than he was, but then suddenly late in His life, He experienced a total transformation. He suddenly started paying attention to His sexual needs!

Dr. William Phipps in his book *Muhammad and Jesus* states that "In domestic situations Muhammad appears to have been remarkably helpful." He then quotes the following statement from 'A'ishah concerning her husband:

The Prophet...when he was at home used to be at the service of his household, that is, he used to act as servant to them. He used to wash his own clothes and patch them, mend his own sandals and serve himself. He used to see to the feeding of his own domestic camel, sweep the house with a broom, hobble the camel, eat with the servant and help her knead her dough, and used to carry his own purchases home from the market.¹⁶

Let us now assume that this marriage was indeed objectionable. What about its positive consequences? What if we learned that it served the best interest of thousands of people, including ‘A’ishah and her parents. What if we learned that it saved countless lives? What if there were other reasons that we may never know? In God’s judgment, this marriage was acceptable. Is God obligated to give account of everything He does? There are many mysteries in the lives of all great Messengers—mysteries that we will never be able to decipher.

The powers of human imagination are limitless. With that power at our command, we can create any picture we desire. The critics focus on a small corner of the big picture, on one alleged weakness, and then they try to stretch it until it appears to break down Muhammad’s moral integrity. They say nothing about His marriage at the prime of His life to an older woman, but focus on this one (which occurred in the twilight of His life) to try to prove that He pandered to sensual desires!

Contrary to what many assume, Muhammad lived a life as difficult as it can be imagined. As soon as He proclaimed His Mission, all those invested with power rose against Him. Imagine one man with little if any education challenging the so called “learned,” the great, and the powerful—people who would kill an opponent for trivial reasons. The level of stress and distress Muhammad experienced during His Ministry is beyond belief. He was under a great deal of stress both from within and without. He Himself declares that no Prophet of God suffered as much as He did. God repeatedly urges Muhammad to be patient:

Patiently then await the judgment of thy Lord, and be not like him who was in the fish, when in deep distress he cried to God.

Qur’án 68:48

Bear thou up, then, with patience, as did the Messengers
endued with firmness, and seek not to accelerate their
doom. Qur'án 46:35

But do thou celebrate the praise of thy Lord, and be of
those who bow down in worship; and serve thy Lord till
the certainty... Qur'án 15:98-99

Wait thou patiently the judgment of thy Lord, for thou
art in Our eye; and celebrate the praise of thy Lord when
thou risest up, and in the night-season praise Him when
the stars are setting. Qur'án 52:48-49

The critics say nothing about Muhammad's sufferings and His efforts to educate and elevate the primitive people of Arabia. They also keep quiet about His noble character. Instead, they focus on His marriages and try to display Him as some rich prince who lived in beautiful castles with many young beautiful women!

With the exception of some of the basics in the Qur'án, almost all the information about the life of Muhammad comes from reports written centuries ago by both qualified and unqualified Muslim reporters and authors. As stated, it is a well-known fact that the majority of the sayings and stories attributed to Muhammad are false. The diversity of reports about what He said and did is such that it can satisfy the appetite of anyone in search of a story with any given ending. The number of unfounded sayings and stories attributed to Muhammad reaches hundreds of thousands. Various Muslim scholars have tried to separate the true from the fictitious. But it is absolutely impossible to succeed in this task. Most of the many of the so called "authenticated reports" reflect the ignorance and prejudice of both the reporters, and the selectors or judges, who considered them authentic. Christian theologians sometimes state that a given story comes from a source Muslims regard as reliable. An unwary reader would then

believe the report. He would say to himself: “If Muslims accept it, why should I doubt it?”

Critics have looked for and discovered yet another fertile ground for planting the “seeds of passion,” for attributing sensual desires to Muhammad. They claim that Muhammad’s love for a woman named Zaynab caused her husband to divorce her to allow her to marry the Prophet! This accusation is beyond belief. Muhammad could have found hundreds of unmarried, beautiful young women who would have wished to be His bride. To demonstrate how far Muhammad’s enemies go and how they weave their prejudice into their works, the biographer Haykal quotes the following statement from an author who harbors a deep passion to discredit Islam. Note how credible this biased author makes his case to appear:

Muhammad who in Makkah called men to asceticism and contentment, to monotheism and abstinence from the pleasures of this life, has now become a man of lust...He fell in love with Zaynab...Once, when he passed by the house of Zayd [Zaynab’s husband] in the latter’s absence, he was met by Zaynab wearing clothes which exposed her beauty. Muhammad’s heart was inflamed.¹⁷

As you can see, Muhammad’s critics present their case skillfully—as a fact. They add the kinds of details that make their accusation appear credible. Anyone who is already predisposed to believing such a story would accept it without hesitation, without suspecting any misjudgment or evil intentions.

Let us now study the story of Zaynab and Zayd. Zayd was a former slave who was purchased and set free either by Muhammad or by Khadijah; and Zaynab was a cousin of Muhammad from a distinguished family. Muhammad asked Zaynab to marry His adopted son Zayd, but such a union

was against a well-established tradition. Zaynab's brother refused to let his sister, from a noble family, marry a former slave.

Such a union was regarded by him as well as by the Arabs in general as a thing of great shame. For the daughters of the aristocracy to marry their slaves, even though their slaves had become free, was plainly unthinkable. But Muhammad sought to wipe out these racial and class distinctions between men. He sought to educate the whole world to the truth that no Arab is superior to any non-Arab unless it be in virtue and piety. For it was God who said, "Verily, the most dearly beloved amongst you in God's sight is the most virtuous amongst you." (Qur'án 49:13).

Muhammad did not choose to force this noble principle upon a woman outside his own tribe and clan. Let it then be Zaynab, he thought, his very cousin, that will carry the first burden of this flagrant violation of Arabian custom. Let her be the destroyer of these pagan traditions. Let her cause herself, and therewith the whole tribe and religion of Muhammad, to endure all the criticisms that such an act would engender. And let Zayd, his own adopted son, be the person of lesser lineage to marry the noble Makkan aristocrat.¹⁸

This marriage was difficult to arrange, but it needed to be done for a higher purpose. It taught, by example, social equality to the nomadic tribes of Arabia.

This marriage served its purpose, but unfortunately it culminated in divorce. Destiny, however, had other surprises in store. Muhammad was asked to marry Zaynab to break one more tradition: that a man could not marry the divorced wife of his adopted son. The evidence indicates that Muhammad had no desire to proceed with this marriage. This is how His biographer, Haykal, describes this dilemma:

Who, among the Arabs, could implement this legislation and thereby openly repudiate the ancient traditions? Even Muhammad himself, despite his tremendous willpower and profound understanding of the wisdom implicit in the divine command, found himself disinclined to implement this judgment by marrying Zaynab after Zayd had divorced her...It was at this stage that the following divine criticism was addressed to Muhammad:

Would you hide, O Muhammad, within yourself that which God was going to bring to light anyway? Would you fear the gossip of the people? Isn't God more worthy of being feared?" (Qur'án 33:37).¹⁹

Haykal continues:

The truth is, however, that Muhammad was the exemplar of obedience to God; his life was the implementation of that which he was entrusted to convey to mankind. The outcome, therefore, was that Muhammad would not give any weight at all to the gossip of the people if he were to marry the ex-wife of his adopted son, since the fear of social condemnation is nothing comparable to that of condemnation by God, of disobedience to divine commandment. Thus, Muhammad married Zaynab in order to provide a good example of what the All-Wise Legislator was seeking to establish by way of rights and privileges for adoption. In this regard, God said:

After a term of married life with her husband, We permitted you to marry her so that it may hence be legitimate and morally blameless for a believer to marry the wife of his adopted son, provided that wife has already been divorced. That is God's commandment which must be fulfilled (Qur'án 33:37).

As we noted, Muhammad was told:

Would you hide, O Muhammad, within yourself that which God was going to bring to light anyway? Would you fear the gossip of the people?*

Qur'án 33:37

The preceding verse contains a critical word that has well served Muhammad's critics. That word is "hide." On first glance, it seems the verse is referring to Muhammad's secret love for 'A'ishah. Anyone predisposed to the idea of Muhammad's sensuality, would be pleased to see that word. Such critics would not ask this obvious question: If Muhammad had such an evil intention, why would He bring disgrace to himself by admitting it in the Qur'án? Why would He place another weapon in the hands of His critics? As we can see, the critics distort the story to attribute sensual motives to Muhammad, whereas He did not even want to initiate this marriage.

This marriage served a third purpose: By marrying the divorced wife of a former slave, Muhammad further strengthened the bonds of social equality. Imagine that we heard about a king who married the former wife of a former slave! Such a union seems far-fetched, yet that is what Muhammad did. We should note that Muhammad was more powerful than a king. His followers worshiped Him and died for Him willingly. Yes, He was more than a king, but He lived simply, like most of His followers. In this case, the reports are unanimous. They all confirm Muhammad's frugal way of living. This provides one more evidence to show that Muhammad was not after the pleasures and comforts of this life.

* Such descriptions should not be taken literally. For, Muhammad had no will of His own before God's will.

Details Are Critical

As discussed earlier, the most effective and popular way the facts can be, and often are, distorted is to leave out ***the critical details***. This strategy is extremely popular in books written against “other” religions, especially against Christianity, Islam, and the Bahá’í Faith. This strategy is safe for the following reasons:

- The individual with a given agenda cannot be accused of lying.
- Those who are exposed to the distortion are unaware of the significance of the details. Seldom if ever the schools teach the skills required for critical thinking.
- If the listeners are sympathetic to the speaker, if they belong to the same party, sect, or religion, the ride is quite smooth. The listeners readily embrace what their “itching ears” love to hear:

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.

II Timothy 4:3 NIV

The previous prediction from St. Paul does not exclude Christians or any other group. It applies to the followers of all religions.

To see how much the details matter, consider this example. Someone says to you: “Mark is a murderer! He has killed a man! Do not go near him!” Should you rush to judgment, or should you ask for details? What are the missing details? “Mark killed an intruder who was about to rape his daughter and then murder the entire family.” What a difference those details make? They transform Mark’s

image from a murderer to a man of courage and good sense!

Consider also this example: “Lipitor reduces your cholesterol by 40 percent. It is an excellent drug.” What do you think is the missing essential detail? It is this:

- Lipitor not only reduces your cholesterol but also your lifespan!
- Lipitor reduces your Cholesterol, but does not change your lifespan. It simply makes your life miserable because of its side-effects!

The point is this: *We should not believe everything we hear even if it comes from a scholar or authority figure who presents “solid facts” to support his views.* We should be skeptical not because of what he says, *but because of what he does not say!*

Who Can Claim to be a Fair Judge?

Who can claim to have the wisdom to judge the marital choices of a man who lived more than fourteen centuries ago in a culture radically different from ours? Can anyone place himself or herself in primitive Arabia? We can see the relevance of culture in the lives of all great Messengers and Prophets of God.

The test of Muhammad’s flawless character is this: There is no record of any sexual behavior on His part before He married and no record of disloyalty to His wives after He married. As His biographer notes:

Throughout his married life with Khadijah as well as during his celibate years, Muhammad was never known to be one susceptible to womanly attractions at a time

when women wore no veils and showed their beauty and ornaments publicly...²⁰

The Qur'án allows Muslims to marry up to four wives:

Marry such women as seem becoming to you, two, three, or four. But if you fear that you may not be just, then marry only one, or your slaves... Qur'án 4:3

You will not be able to do justice to more than one wife however much you may try. And if you must marry another wife, do not incline excessively to one and leave the other like a thing suspended. Qur'án 4:129

As we noted, some critics raise this question: If the Qur'án allows up to four wives, why then did Muhammad marry thirteen? According to historical records, the verses that limit the number of wives “were revealed toward the end of the eighth year of the Hijrah after the Prophet had married all his wives. The purpose of these verses is to limit the number of wives to four whereas, until their revelation, there was no limit to the number of wives a Muslim could marry. This historical fact repudiates the claim that Muhammad has allowed himself that which he had forbidden to the people.”²¹

Even if we assume that Muhammad loved women and practiced polygamy to satisfy His sexual desires—certainly a false assumption—the positive consequences that resulted from those marriages far outweigh the negative. Imagine the number of lives Muhammad saved by doing what was fully accepted in His society and at the same time following what God had planned for Him. Nowhere do we see in His life any sign of disobedience to God's commands. He acted like a little child who always obeys and does his best to please his father. Muhammad's sense of devotion to God is evident on every page of the Qur'án.

In the spiritual journey we have many choices. We have a choice to see Muhammad's marriages as a sign of His total devotion and obedience to God, or to view them as proofs of seeking sexual adventures.

Jesus taught us to judge a tree by its fruits. If we follow His guidance, and test Muhammad by the "fruits" of His life and labors, we can readily see that in attaining His goal of promoting the oneness of God and submission to His Will—to what God has planned for each of us—He would not have succeeded without the help of a heavenly hand. Even when we judge Him by His relationships with women—but in the context of His time and culture—we are compelled to praise Him for His supreme wisdom. And yet some prejudiced and petty-minded critics, instead of acknowledging His supreme judgment—a sign of His wisdom and devotion to God—search for imagined and unproven weaknesses in His personal life to downgrade Him and His incredible accomplishments.

The Prudish Attitude Toward Sex

One way some theologians try to denigrate Muhammad is to compare Him with Jesus by showing a sharp contrast between the two Messengers in the way that they related to women. Muhammad, they say, married many wives, Jesus was so holy, He did not even marry. What a contrast! To respond to this comparison, we should ask: Do we really know why Jesus remained single? Only God has the answer, and He has disclosed it through Bahá'u'lláh. The answer will surprise most of us. Bahá'u'lláh assures us that Jesus refused to marry for the following reason: He was homeless. The choice Jesus made had nothing to do with holiness or unholiness of sexual behavior. He faced a serious obstacle and acted accordingly. Would it make any

sense to marry someone and then house her on the streets, or in the woods and the mountains?

To think that Jesus declined to marry someone because of any possible negative thoughts attached to sex is totally unsound and unbiblical. Would the very means that God created to perpetuate His most glorious creation—one that reflects His image—be sinful or unholy? No, everything that God makes is pure and perfect. And yet we have the ability through selfish desires to make His precious gifts impure and imperfect. Perhaps St. Paul's discouraging statements about marriage and encouraging statements about celibacy, as a means of serving God, have influenced Christian theology:

But to the unmarried people and to the widows. I declare that it is well (good, advantageous, expedient, and wholesome) for them to remain [single] even as I do. But if they have not self-control (restraint of their passions), they should marry. For it is better to marry than to be aflame [with passion and tortured continually with ungratified desire]. I Corinthians 7:8-9 Amplified Bible

Today there are thousands of nuns, monks, and priests who refuse, or are not allowed, to marry. The Qur'án considers the practice of celibacy a deviation from God's purpose for His creatures. It calls this tradition man-made rather than God-made:

...but as to the monastic life, they [Christians] invented it themselves. Qur'án 57:27

Note how advanced the Qur'án was and still is. Today we see the widespread practice of adultery and sexual abuse of children by priests. Such violations could have been minimized if priests were allowed, and even encouraged, to marry and raise children who would glorify God. As we can see, the Qur'án negates the unholy label that is attached to sex by some Christian theologians. It reminds us that

celibacy is not a virtue, that marriage is praiseworthy, and that the sexual act in the context of marriage is sacred.

Questioning the family life of God's great Messengers is not a right given to us. But since false rumors and accusations may prevent many sincere seekers from recognizing the greatness of these Messengers, it is essential that we learn the facts from an impartial perspective, and not allow the accusers to exert their divisive and dangerous influence on the heart of humankind.

These questions come to mind: Why does the Qur'án speak about Muhammad's married life? Is this not a private matter? What relevance does it have to the lives of the believers? Seemingly, none. But a careful observation reveals these possibilities:

- God wanted the Muslims to relate intimately to the life of Muhammad. Such accounts help the believers to identify more closely with their Messenger. In a way, they bring Him to their level. Those verses describe how Muhammad struggled to cope with mundane and seemingly trivial problems all of us face every day, in different ways, all the days of our lives.
- God wanted to provide a model for the believers: to show them how to resolve everyday problems through peaceful means. Instead of using His power, Muhammad resorted to dialog and reasoning to resolve conflicts.
- We learn from a study of the sacred Scriptures that God wants to conceal the supreme glory of His great Messengers in countless ways. Consider this statement from Bahá'u'lláh:

And when this process of progressive Revelation culminated in the stage at which His peerless, His most sacred, and exalted Countenance was to be

unveiled to men's eyes, He chose to hide His own Self behind a thousand veils, lest profane and mortal eyes discover His glory.²²

This is the reason Christ is prophesied to return “on the clouds” and “like a thief.” What is the prime purpose of a thief? To remain invisible to the “sleepers.” Can anyone see the sun shining behind the clouds? Only those who have the “eye” can pierce the obscuring “clouds” of illusions and ascend to higher spiritual horizons. Only they can discern the extraordinary in an apparently ordinary human being, only they can behold His blazing brightness. Surface-minded people get lost in the clouds of the Messengers’ earthly lives without getting a glimpse of their heavenly lives—the great glory shining behind the clouds.

- Such accounts point to Muhammad’s forthrightness and complete dependence on divine guidance. If Muhammad were a deceiver and had devised the Qur’án Himself, He would have kept His private life to Himself. He would have tried to appear “holy” to pretend to stand far above ordinary people. Instead of speaking openly about His private life, He would have concealed it.

Most of the materials we find in the sacred Scriptures provide “the raw materials” for building whatever our hearts desire. We can turn them into ladders to ascend to heavenly horizons or use them as building blocks to make prisons for our souls. God has given us such a wide range of freedom for a good reason: to test us.

Even gold passes through the assayer’s fire, and more precious than perishable gold is faith which has stood the test. These trials come so that your faith may prove itself worthy...when Jesus Christ is revealed.

We will certainly put you to the test... We expose your true qualities. Qur'án 47:31

O SON OF BEING!

Busy not thyself with this world, for with fire We test the gold, and with gold We test Our servants.²³ Bahá'u'lláh

The accounts about Muhammad's marriage, like most of the Qur'án, are spoken in "telegraphic language." We are not told about the details behind the scenes. There are hundreds of missing links. Consider a judge who wants to decide a case without testimonials from all the witnesses. We can judge the events of Muhammad's life, and fill in some of the missing details, either in a spirit of humility or in a spirit of hostility. We can use the same facts to build a case for or against Him.

Statements that attribute a human weakness to God's great Messengers can be found in all sacred Scriptures. Christian scholars have been puzzled by the records of such weaknesses attributed to Jesus—the One who was absolute perfection. And they have been unable to explain them. For the first time in history, 'Abdu'l-Bahá has given us the key to resolve this mystery, otherwise we would still be in darkness. Those who write books against "other" religions often take advantage of these supposed "weaknesses" to prove their point, but they make no mention of similar recorded weaknesses found in the Scriptures of their own faith about their own Redeemer. Let us examine a couple of examples from the Gospel and see how they can be interpreted in either a positive or negative light. Why did Jesus ask God to spare Him from the agony of crucifixion?

Abba, Father, all things are possible for You. Take this cup away from Me; nevertheless, not what I will, but what You will. Mark 14:36 NKJ

Was Jesus reluctant to drink from the cup of sacrifice that God had destined for Him? No, we cannot expect such a

weakness from the One who came to save the world and to be an example of all virtues, including courage. Why then did He make that request? He made it to help us identify with Him, to help us experience His agony at that critical hour. Would we love Jesus as much if He had lived a life of comfort and luxury? Accounts of His pain and suffering touch and transform our souls. Imagine the positive influence of His pains on the destiny of humankind. Imagine the sacrifices that His sacrifice has inspired.

Consider also the idea of temptation, which is a human weakness. To say that Jesus was truly tempted is an insult not only to Him but to the One who sent Him. And yet the Gospel declares that Jesus was indeed tempted:

...being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted.

Hebrews 2:18 NKJ

See also Matt. 4:1

What the preceding verse can teach us is this: Jesus is our hero who faced temptations. Did He submit to them? No, He defeated them! Should we then, not follow His example?

Some Christian scholars attribute sexual temptations to Muhammad. If we assume that Jesus was tempted, can we exclude sexual temptations? No, Jesus was absolute holiness. Temptation could find no way to His heart. That is an absolute impossibility. How can an evil act be born?

- The idea crosses the mind. This is the stage of thinking.
- The idea receives emotional support. This is the stage of temptation or desire.
- The desire or temptation is carried out.

Temptation implies evil thoughts or a desire to engage in an unseemly behavior. God's Messengers are completely free from all such thoughts, desires, and tendencies. The lower

selfish nature that dominates our lives can in no way reach or touch their Most Great Spirit.

The story of Jesus being tempted by Satan is just a story (Matt. 4:1-11). It may be a parable uttered by Jesus Himself to teach us a lesson. When we read such accounts, we have a choice to search for hidden treasures in them, or to be content with the chest that holds the treasures.

Expressions of weakness by the great Messengers also demonstrate their unconditional servitude and humility. The One who was the essence and source of all goodness refused to accept even the modest honor of being called good (Luke 18:19). He gave that honor to God alone. Bahá'u'lláh was absolute "refinement." He was the light and glory of God, yet He considered Himself "coarser than clay"²⁴ before God's awesome majesty. This issue is so significant, it is discussed in detail in a forthcoming chapter.

The Status of Women

Women have served as an "instrument of war" between the followers of the two great religions. Christian theologians refer to Islamic records, Muslim theologians refer to Christian records. Consider the following statement from a Muslim author:

Woman had no separate identity, no legal status in Christianity...The Married Woman's Property Act, giving her the right to possess property in her own name, was passed in England as late as 1882.²⁵

To prove their point, Muslim theologians cite also statements from St. Paul such as the following:

Let your women keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak; but they are to be submissive, as

the law also says. And if they want to learn something, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is shameful for women to speak in church.

I Corinthians 14:34-35 NKJ

According to *Unger's Bible Dictionary*:

...the dependence of the wife on her husband is shown by the Hebrew appellation for husband (baal, Ex. 21:3, 22) literally, lord, master...

The wife, subject to her husband as master, was obliged to regard the sanctity of the marriage relation, and any unchastity on her part was visited with death. The husband could take any unmarried woman he chose, and violate the laws of chastity; as we understand them, with impunity (Gen. 38:24).²⁶

Consider also the following statements from several canonized saints, quoted by a Muslim author to defend the Islamic view of women:

Woman is a daughter of Falsehood, a sentinel of Hell, the enemy of peace: through her Adam lost Paradise.

St. John Damascene

Woman is the instrument which the Devil uses to gain possession of our souls.

St. Cyprian

Woman is the fountain of the arm of the Devil, her voice is the hissing of the serpent.

St. Anthony

Woman has the poison of a wasp, the malice of a dragon.

St. Gregory the Great

Among all savage beasts none is found so harmful as woman.

St. John Chrysostom

Woman, you are the devil's doorway. You have led astray one whom the devil would not dare attack directly. It is your fault that the Son of God had to die; you should always go in mourning and rags.²⁷

St. Tertullian

The preceding statements are abhorrent to our minds. Were they also to the people who lived in past centuries? Perhaps even some of the women who heard them, accepted them. What should we learn from examining such outrageous thoughts expressed by believers who were honored as models of virtue and wisdom, who were revered and regarded by others as the purest and most saintly? We should learn not a lesson of pride and self-glory, but rather one of absolute humility. Because we also, at this point in history, may hold views about certain issues—such as the role of women in society—that may appear outrageous to future generations.

Muhammad appeared centuries before most of these Christian saints. Arabia, where Muhammad grew up, was an environment far more anti-women than Europe where most of these saints lived, yet He did not make a single statement that downgrades the station and honor of being a woman. How can we explain this wonder? Compare the following verse from the Qur'án (offered in two different translations) with the preceding statements from Christian saints:

Ye [men and women] are members of one another
[organs of one body]... Qur'án 3:195 Y

Male or female—the one of you is as the other.

Qur'án 3:195 A

Consider also this verse about how men should treat their divorced wife:

[Hence] let the women [who are undergoing a waiting-period] live in the same manner as you live yourselves,

in accordance with your means...And if they happen to be with child, spend freely on them until they deliver their burden; and if they nurse your offspring [after the divorce has become final], give them their [due] recompense; and take counsel with one another in a fair manner [about the child's future]. And if both of you find it difficult [that the mother should nurse the child], let another woman nurse it on behalf of him [who has begotten it].

Qur'ân 65:6 MA

The shifting attitudes about women, throughout all ages, provide a classical example of how social norms and practices—such as polygamy—should always be viewed in the context of the time and culture. Instead of criticizing St. Paul, as many Muslims do, we should view his statements about women in the light of his culture and his time rather than by today's standards.

It is easy to be judgmental, to look down on outsiders. But history reminds us to be humble. In terms of women's rights, today Christian nations have far surpassed Muslim nations, although the reverse was true in the past. Consider the following quotation by a Christian written about a century ago in Great Britain:

It must be remembered that the law of Islam in relation to women was until lately, when parts of it have been imitated in England, the most just law, as far as women are concerned, to be found in the world. Dealing with property, dealing with the rights of succession and so on, dealing with the cases of divorce, it was far beyond the law of the West, in the respect which was paid to the rights of women. Those things are forgotten while people are hypnotized by the words Monogamy and Polygamy...²⁸

From the nomadic tribes of Arabia Muhammad raised a great civilization. He created a brighter and a more

beautiful world for many nations. He promoted the belief in one God and raised the ethical values of millions of believers for centuries. We have a choice to look at the big picture—His colossal achievements—or search for flaws in the picture. We have this choice in relation to every facet of our lives. We can focus on God's countless blessings, on the vast and indeed inexhaustible gifts He has placed within our reach, or shift our attention to the worldly and ephemeral possessions we are allowed to control for a little while. We are the masters of our destiny.

To appreciate the Qur'án and recognize its divine origin, compare the following quotations about Mary, the mother of Jesus. The first three describe the Gospel's view of her, the last one presents the Qur'án's view.

The Ways God Tests His Servants

The earth is God's crucible of testing. ***To test His servants, God conceals His glory in apparent weakness.*** This is how He separates the surface thinkers from the sincere seekers of truth. In the lives of God's supreme Messengers, we see a clear pattern: Their divine distinctions are concealed in the norms, the traditions, and the prevalent practices of their culture. True seekers search for and see only ***the light within;*** others search for and see only ***the lamp without.*** They value the human standards, but ignore the divine distinctions.

Why did God choose a murderer (Moses) and a homeless and fatherless man (Jesus) to be His Messengers? Could He not find more "eligible" spokesmen or candidates to speak for Him? The married life of God's Messengers is one more way God tests us, one more way He separates the worldly and trivial thinkers from the sincere and spiritual seekers.

Still another way God tests us is by His language. To reveal His glory, He speaks in a superb language, incomparable to any other. To conceal His glory, sometimes He disregards the rules of grammar. Critics of Islam have noted some 400 instances of grammatical “mistakes” in the Qur’án. Instead of admiring the incredibly majestic, novel, and concise language of the Qur’án, they have focused on its disregard for certain rules of language. The critics notice the grammar of the Qur’án, but ignore its supreme majesty and glory.

The Gospel’s and the Qur’án’s Description of Mary

Christians believe that Mary is the mother of God. Seldom people ask: “How is this mother of God portrayed in the New Testament?” Let us now compare her portrayal in the two Scriptures, the Gospel and the Qur’án. Consider the following statements about Mary from two Christian sources:

She is negatively portrayed in Mark, less so in Matthew, and positively in Luke. In Mark 3:21 Jesus’ family seemingly accepts the verdict of the crowd that he [Jesus] is deranged and of the Jerusalem scribes that he is possessed by demons (3:21-30).²⁹

Harper’s Bible Dictionary

After the resurrection and ascension of Jesus, Mary appears in the midst of the Christian community, engaged with them in prayer for the baptism of the Holy Spirit, but ***without any discernible preeminence among them***. This is the last notice of her in Scripture. It is not known how or when she died.³⁰

The Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary

What does the Qur’án say about Mary?

And when the angels said, "O Mary, God has surely chosen thee. He has purified thee and *chosen thee above the women of the world.*"
Qur'án 3:42

Why would Muhammad—a man born among the most primitive people who did not even believe in God—bestow such an honor on a Jewish woman who had lived centuries earlier in another culture? Recognition of the spiritual station of Mary by Muhammad provides us with one more piece of evidence pointing to His divine origin. Muhammad could have bestowed such a supreme honor—that of being the first lady of the world—on His beloved wife Khadijih or His beloved daughter Fátimah, who were both exemplary women, each of them as distinguished, and as pure and virtuous as Mary. How can such a magnanimity be explained except by concluding that the Qur'án did not originate in Arabia from the mind of Muhammad, but from the One who created both of them.

To conclude, what has divided the world and produced religious prejudice is this: the leaders of each of the previous faiths have tried to find advantages in their own beliefs and disadvantages in the others. They have then tried to exaggerate them, to produce mountains out of a few sands. Their intention has always been the same: to create a large gap between their beliefs and those of others to make their beliefs appear as a brilliant light and the beliefs of others as darkness. They have tried to put unwary people in this position: "Only a fool would choose 'the other' religion over this one!" The tragedy is this: people trust their religious leaders. How can they doubt the ones who are helping them to receive forgiveness of sin and salvation? How can they not trust the ones who are trained and paid to lead them to heaven? How can they doubt those who promise them eternal life as long as they remain loyal to the Faith of their forefathers?

Since the followers have a deep trust in their leaders in relation to every aspect of their spiritual life, how then can they make an exception and reject their views about “foreign” religions? Why should they doubt the wisdom and sincerity of such leaders who specialize in the knowledge of their Scriptures and have dedicated their lives to the protection and promotion of their cherished beliefs?

18

Are God's Messengers Perfect?

Happy is the man who does not find Me a stumbling-block. Christ (Matt. 11:6 NEB)

One way theologians try to denigrate “other religions” is to find “moral weaknesses” in those who established them. And how pleased are they to find them in the Scriptures of those religions! They find such “weaknesses” in “other faiths,” but somehow miss them in their own faith! Although this topic was covered briefly earlier, because of its significance, it should receive extra attention by being addressed in a separate chapter.

Sacred Scriptures refer to certain apparent “weaknesses” in God’s great Messengers. Theologians in all religions are puzzled by such references and do not know how to explain them. Most of these statements fall into two categories. They are either addressed by God to the Messengers, or are expressed by the Messengers about themselves.

Several times the Qur’án speaks about Muhammad’s sins. Some Christian theologians use these verses to show a vast difference between Christ—who was sinless—and Muhammad:

Verily We [God] have granted thee [Muhammad] a manifest victory: that God may forgive thy faults of the past and those to follow, that He may fulfill His favor to thee, and guide thee on the straight Way. Qur’án 48:1-2 Y

Seek the forgiveness of your sin and proclaim His praise
evenings and mornings.

Qur'án 40:55

Also 47:19; 3:161

Christian theologians also quote the following Quranic verses to show moral or spiritual weakness in Muhammad:

So, if you [Muhammad] are in doubt concerning what We [God] have revealed to you, then ask those who have been reading the Book before you. Indeed, the truth has come to you from your Lord; so do not be one of the doubters.

Qur'án 10:94

Had We not enabled you to stand firm, you might have inclined toward them [nonbelievers] a little. Qur'án 17:74

'Abdu'l-Bahá offers the following explanation concerning the statements addressed by God to the Messengers:

All the divine discourses containing reproof, though apparently addressed to the Prophets, in reality are directed to the people, through a wisdom which is absolute mercy, in order that the people may not be discouraged and disheartened...

Moreover, the powerful and independent king represents his country: that which he says is the word of all, and every agreement that he makes is the agreement of all, for the wishes and desires of all his subjects are included in his wishes and desires. In the same way, every Prophet is the expression of the whole of the people. So the promise and speech of God addressed to Him is addressed to all. Generally the speech of reproach and rebuke is rather too severe for the people and would be heartbreaking to them. So the Perfect Wisdom makes use of this form of address, as is clearly shown in the Bible itself, as, for example, when the children of Israel rebelled and said to Moses: "We cannot fight with the Amalekites, for they are powerful, mighty and courageous." God then rebuked Moses and Aaron,

though Moses was in complete obedience and not in rebellion. Surely such a great Man, Who is the mediator of the Divine Bounty and the deliverer of the Law, must necessarily obey the commands of God.

These Holy Souls are like the leaves of a tree which are put in motion by the blowing of the wind, and not by Their own desire; for They are attracted by the breeze of the love of God, and Their will is absolutely submissive. Their word is the word of God; Their commandment is the commandment of God; Their prohibition is the prohibition of God. They are like the glass globe which receives light from the lamp. Although the light appears to emanate from the glass, in reality it is shining from the lamp. In the same way for the Prophets of God, the centers of manifestation, Their movement and repose come from divine inspiration, not from human passions. If it were not so, how could the Prophet be worthy of trust, and how could He be the Messenger of God, delivering the commands and the prohibitions of God? All the defects that are mentioned in the Holy Books with reference to the Manifestations refer to questions of this kind...in the Qur'án it is said to Muhammad:

We have granted Thee a manifest victory, so that God may forgive Thee Thy preceding and subsequent sins.¹

This address, although apparently directed to Muhammad, was in reality for all the people...²

Shining Examples of Humility

God's great Teachers and Messengers are models of perfection. An attribute of perfection is humility.

The greatest among you will be your servant. For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted. Matthew 23:11-12 NIV

In sacred Scriptures, we also find statements from God's great Messengers about themselves. This is how 'Abdu'l-Bahá explains them:

How often the Prophets of God and His supreme Manifestations in Their prayers confess Their sins and faults! This is only to teach other men, to encourage and incite them to humility and meekness, and to induce them to confess their sins and faults. For these Holy Souls are pure from every sin and sanctified from faults. In the Gospel it is said that a man came to Christ and called Him "Good Master." Christ answered, "Why callest thou Me good? there is none good but One, that is, God" (Matt. 19:17). This did not mean—God forbid!—that Christ was a sinner; but the intention was to teach submission, humility, meekness and modesty to the man to whom He spoke. These Holy Beings are lights, and light does not unite itself with darkness. They are life, and life and death are not confounded. They are for guidance, and guidance and error cannot be together. They are the essence of obedience, and obedience cannot exist with rebellion.³

To show the depths of His humility, Jesus—the One called by Bahá'u'lláh *the Lord of the visible and invisible*—washed the feet of His disciples (John 13:5)! Can you picture a king washing the feet of his servants or soldiers? Jesus was and is infinitely greater than all the kings who have ever lived; yet that is what He did. He was more humble than any human being can ever be.

The brief statement from Jesus—Why do you call Me good?—serves several purposes:

- It expresses *Jesus'* humility before His Father.

- It teaches *us* humility.
- It helps us *relate to and identify with* Him.

The Qur'án contains verses similar in meaning to “Why do you call Me good?” They portray a spirit of absolute humility from Muhammad as does the statement from Jesus:

Say: I am only a man like you. It is revealed to me that your God is one God. Go straight to Him, and implore His pardon. Qur'án 41:6

Say: Praise be to my Lord! Am I more than a man—a Messenger? Qur'án 17:93

Say: I am not the first of the Messengers and I do not know what will be done with me or with you. I only follow what is revealed to me and I am only a manifest warner. Qur'án 46:9 MF

Say: I say not to you, “In my possession are the treasures of God;” neither say I, “I know things secret;” neither do I say to you, “Verily, I am an angel.” Only what is revealed to me do I follow. Qur'án 6:50

O Prophet! We have sent thee to be a witness, and a herald of glad tidings, and a warner; and one who summoneth to God *by His permission*, and to be an illuminating Lamp. Qur'án 33: 45-46

Here Muhammad declares a fundamental fact: that God rules and all Messengers obey Him.

The Divine command cometh down through them [Messengers] all, that ye may know that God hath power over all things, and that God in His knowledge embraceth all things! Qur'án 65:12

The humility expressed by great Messengers is so critical that Jesus regards it as an evidence of their divine distinction:

He who speaks on his own does so to gain honor for himself, but he who works for the honor of the one who sent him is a man of truth; there is nothing false about him.

John 7:18 NIV

Jesus was a perfect example of this hallmark of divine distinction:

I am gentle and lowly in heart...^{*} Matthew 11:29 NIV

I crave no human honor. I look for no mortal fame.

John 5:41 AB

I am not seeking glory for myself... John 8:50 NIV

If I honor Myself, My honor is nothing. John 8:54 NKJ

We find the same state of humility in Bahá'u'lláh:

When I contemplate, O my God, the relationship that bindeth me to Thee, I am moved to proclaim to all created things “Verily I am God”; and when I consider my own self, lo, I find it coarser than clay!⁴ Bahá'u'lláh

Glorified art Thou, O my God! Thou knowest that my sole aim in revealing Thy Cause hath been to reveal Thee and not my self, and to manifest Thy glory rather than my glory. In Thy path, and to attain Thy pleasure, I have scorned rest, joy, delight. At all times and under all conditions my gaze hath been fixed on Thy precepts, and mine eyes bent upon the things Thou hast bidden me observe in Thy Tablets. I have wakened every morning to the light of Thy praise and Thy remembrance, and reached every evening inhaling the fragrances of Thy mercy...

^{*}Muhammad receives praises for His character from God: “For thou art of a noble nature” (Qur’án 68:4).

Though—as Thou beholdest me, O my God—I be dwelling in a place within whose walls no voice can be heard except the sound of the echo, though all the gates of ease and comfort be shut against us, and thick darkness appear to have compassed us on every side, yet my soul hath been so inflamed by its love for Thee, that nothing whatsoever can either quench the fire of its love or abate the consuming flame of its desire.⁵ Bahá'u'lláh

To show His unmatched humility, Jesus constantly referred to Himself as the Son of Man and the Son, seldom as the Son of God. Consider also the following statements from Jesus:

I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. Christ (John 15:1-2 NIV)

Anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these... Christ (John 14:12 NIV)

If I testify about myself, my testimony is not valid. There is another who testifies in my favor, and I know that his testimony about me is valid.

Christ (John 5:31-32 NIV)
See also John 8:14-18

And so I tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but anyone who speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come. Christ (Matt. 12:31-32 NIV)

Jesus declared that “all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me” (Matt. 28:18). Despite that, note how He responded to a request made to Him:

“Let one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory.”...Jesus said to them...“to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared.”

Mark 10:37, 40 NIV

There are also statements in the New Testament about Jesus from some of His distinguished followers:

Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation...

Hebrews 5:8-9 NIV

And Jesus increased in wisdom (in broad and full understanding...) and in favor with God.

Luke 2:52 AB

Consider also the following verses from St. Paul about himself:

We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin. I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do.

Romans 7:14-15 NIV

I robbed other churches by receiving support from them so as to serve you. And when I was with you and needed something, I was not a burden to anyone...

II Cor. 11:8-9 NIV

Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.

I Timothy 1:15

The following verses attribute “lack of trust in God” and “fear” to Moses:

...the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, “...you did not trust in me enough to honor me as holy in the sight of the Israelites...”

Numbers 20:12 NIV

...Moses struck him and killed him...He [Moses] said: “Lord I have wronged myself, so forgive me.” Then the

Lord forgave Him...The next morning, He became fearful...
 Qur'án 28:15-18

The expression 'Take this cup from me!' uttered by Jesus before His crucifixion is still another example of "apparent weaknesses" acknowledged by God's great Messengers:

Going a little farther, he fell to the ground and prayed that if possible the hour might pass from him. "Abba, Father," he said, "everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will."
 Mark 14:35-36 NIV

Muhammad—a Shining Example of Humility

It is amazing. Nowhere does Muhammad glorify Himself. Every reference is to God, who is the centerpiece of the Qur'án. He receives all the glory and honor. Muhammad gives Himself virtually no credit.

All things are His, and I am commanded to be one of those who surrender themselves to God. Qur'án 27:91

Their guidance is not thine affair, O Muhammad; but God guideth whom He pleaseth. Qur'án 2:272

He is the One Who sends to His Servants manifest Signs, that He may lead you from the depths of darkness into the Light. And verily, God is to you most Kind and Merciful. Qur'án 57:9

The humility expressed by Muhammad toward God shines throughout the Qur'án. Just like Jesus, Muhammad stands with absolute contrition before His Creator. He is as dependent on God as is a little child on his parents. Indeed sometimes He is addressed like a child. Let us examine some examples from the Qur'án. We should once again

remember that the statements are addressed to us through Muhammad, who served as a Mediator and an Exemplar:

Judge thou between them by what God has revealed, and follow not their vain desires. But beware of them lest they lure you away from what has been sent down to thee. Qur'án 5:49

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful. O Prophet, fear thou God, and obey not the unbelievers and the hypocrites. Truly God is Knowing, Wise. But follow what is revealed to thee from thy Lord. Cognizant truly is He of all your actions. And put thou thy trust in God, for a sufficient guardian is God.

Qur'án 33:1-3

And if, after the knowledge that hath come to thee, thou follow their wishes, verily then wilt thou become of the unrighteous. Qur'án 2:145

But for the grace and mercy of God upon thee, a party among them had resolved to mislead thee, but they shall only mislead themselves. Qur'án 4:113

Call not thou on any other god but God, lest thou be of those consigned to torment. Qur'án 26:213

Neither let them [the unbelievers] turn thee aside from the signs of God after they have been sent down to thee, but bid men to thy Lord; and be not among those who add gods to God. Qur'án 28:87

Say: I am bidden to serve God with a sincere worship, and I am bidden to be the first of those who surrender themselves to Him. Say: Verily I fear if I rebel against my Lord the punishment of a great day. Qur'án 39:11-13

...summon thou them to the faith, and go straight on as thou hast been bidden, and follow not their desires.

Qur'án 42:15

But when our clear signs are recited to them, they who look not forward to meet Us, say, "Bring a different Qur'án, or make some changes in it." Say: It is not for me to change it as mine own soul prompteth. I follow only what is revealed to me. Verily, I fear, if I rebel against my Lord, the punishment of a great day.

Qur'án 10:16

The Story of Jesus' Temptation

The story of Jesus' temptation has puzzled the believers for centuries:

Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the desert, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them he was hungry. The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread." Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone.'" The devil led him up to a high place and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. And he said to him, "I will give you all their authority and splendor, for it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to. So if you worship me, it will all be yours." Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.'" The devil led him to Jerusalem and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down from here. For it is written: 'He will command his angels concerning you to guard you carefully; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.'" Jesus answered, "It says: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'" When the devil had

finished all this tempting, he left him until an opportune time.

Luke 4:1-13 NIV

Consider also these references:

...He [Jesus] Himself suffered when He was tempted...

Hebrews 2:18 NIV

For we do not have a high priest [Jesus] who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who **has been tempted in every way**, just as we are—yet was without sin [emphasis added].

Hebrews 4:15 NIV

What is “temptation”? The dictionary defines it as a strong desire to have or do something even though you know you should not. “There might be a temptation to cheat if students sit too close together.”

How do Christian theologians explain Jesus’ temptations? Here are two examples by two distinguished authors:

Jesus displayed all the traits of humanity in His needs...He was also tempted to sin...⁶

The story of Temptation, in its Matthaean form (4:1-11), can be interpreted as reflecting a struggle within the soul of Jesus as he **endeavored to understand** the nature of his “sonship” or “Messiahship.”[Emphasis added.]⁷

An atheist can cite Luke 4:1-3 and Hebrews 4:15 and say, "Jesus declares to be the Lord. How can the Lord, the infinite source of knowledge, power, and wisdom, be tempted?" For temptation implies an attraction to sin; it is a sign of imperfection. When we say “He was tempted to accept a bribe or commit adultery,” we mean that he had a desire to follow his lower or selfish nature. Can the Spirit of God experience any inclination toward evil? To say yes is to demean the divine. Does the Spirit of God need to “endeavor to understand” something? Temptation, in any form, implies weakness; it cannot describe the One who is the source and essence of all perfections.

Note the following statement from a literal-minded atheist concerning Jesus' temptation by Satan:

That the story is a fable is obvious. Its purpose is to emphasize...that...Jesus was subject to temptations and therefore capable of sin. If not, what is the point? And, being a man, Jesus could have sinned, of course. And if he had sinned would not the Father—being “no respecter of persons”—have to deal with him as he dealt with Adam—banishing him from his presence? Moreover, if Jesus could have yielded to temptation, does it not follow that God the Father could, too? Are they not one? The story is ill-conceived and quickly collapses under the weight of its own contradictions.⁸

What then is the spiritual meaning of such verses? It is this: the Spirit of God wears the robe of human beings to communicate with them. It is essential that people identify with and intimately relate to that most exalted Spirit. To attain this purpose, the heavenly Being must live like human beings. He must act as closely to earthly people as possible. Any reference that may imply the slightest weakness must be viewed as a means of bridging the infinite gap between the divine and human. If we use St. Paul's own admonition—that spiritual truths can be understood with spiritual standards—his use of "temptation" makes perfect sense. If we adopt literal standards, we obscure the divine splendor of Jesus.

How then can we reconcile the vision of Jesus as God and as a man who was “tempted in every way” and also by an evil creature called “the devil”? Could God's great Messengers harbor in their hearts any sinful desires? Never! Such desires are contrary to their exalted Being, contrary to their divine distinctions. The story of Jesus' temptation is only a story with lessons for all of us, who manifest human weaknesses.

The topic of temptation appears also in the Qur'án. Muhammad is warned to stand firm against temptations:

And if a temptation from the Devil troubles you, seek refuge in God. He is truly All-Hearing, All-Knowing.

Qur'án 7:200

...other women are not lawful to you...even if you admire their beauty...

Qur'án 33:52

Such statements are not to be taken literally. On the surface, they are addressed to Muhammad, but their purpose is to teach us lessons in a unique way.

God's great Messengers and Redeemers cannot even have sinful thoughts, much less sinful desires. Everything they think, say, or do comes from God. They differ with us in countless ways. One of them is this: They have absolutely no tendency and they sense no inclination to do wrong. On the contrary, their only dream and desire is to do right.

Let us ponder the implications of the following facts. As we noted:

- The New Testament contains numerous references to Jesus' "apparent weaknesses."
- The Qur'án contains numerous references to Muhammad's apparent weaknesses.
- Yet the Qur'án does not contain even a single reference to Jesus' apparent weaknesses!

How can we explain this? If Muhammad had made the claim on His own, we would expect Him to compete with Jesus. We would expect Him to claim a higher position or status than He did. We would expect Him to display some degree of self-glory. Yet we see just the opposite. We see Him referring repeatedly to His own "weaknesses," but not attributing any weakness to Jesus. We find an "unlettered" merchant from Arabia who declares repeatedly that

everything He does or says comes from God. ***He then speaks about His own sins, but does not attribute any sin to Jesus!*** How can we explain this? The answer to this question gives us one more clue concerning Muhammad's divine distinction and origin.

A Means of Testing

God will not leave the believers alone until he separates the impure from the pure. Qur'án 3:179

You shall be tested in relation to your possessions and [the quality of] your self [heart]. Qur'án 3:186

In addition to the reasons stated, there is one more reason why God allows or bids His Messengers to say or do some things that would indicate apparent weaknesses in their lives, that would appear to be contrary to human standards and expectations. In the *Book of Certitude* Bahá'u'lláh offers this reason: God wants to test us, to separate the spiritually high-achievers from the low-achievers:

Yea, such things as throw consternation [confusion, amazement] into the hearts of all men come to pass only that each soul may be tested by the touchstone of God, that the true [believers] may be known and distinguished from the false...

...Such things take place only that the souls of men may develop and be delivered from the prison-cage of self and desire. Otherwise, that ideal King hath, throughout eternity, been in His Essence independent of the comprehension of all beings, and will continue, for ever, in His own Being to be exalted above the adoration of every soul...But inasmuch as the divine Purpose hath decreed that the true [believers] should be known from the false, and the sun from the shadow, He hath,

therefore, in every season sent down upon mankind the showers of tests from His realm of glory.⁹ Bahá'u'lláh

Bahá'u'lláh cites the birth of Jesus to an unwed mother as an example of such tests:

Likewise, reflect upon the state and condition of Mary. So deep was the perplexity of that most beautiful countenance, so grievous her case, that she bitterly regretted she had ever been born...after Mary had given birth to Jesus, she bemoaned her plight and cried out: "O would that I had died ere this, and been a thing forgotten, forgotten quite!"(Qur'án 19:23)...Reflect, what answer could Mary have given to the people around her? How could she claim that a Babe Whose father was unknown had been conceived of the Holy Ghost?...

And now, meditate upon this most great convulsion, this grievous test. Notwithstanding all these things, God conferred upon that essence of the Spirit [Jesus], Who was known amongst the people as fatherless, the glory of Prophethood, and made Him His testimony unto all that are in heaven and on earth.¹⁰

This may be the reason Jesus declared:

Blessed is the man who does not fall away on account of Me.
Matthew 11:6 NIV

Happy is the man who does not find Me a stumbling-block.
Matthew 11:6 NEB

Bahá'u'lláh also cites the example of Moses. Why did God choose Moses—the One who had killed someone—to become His Messenger?

When Moses came unto Pharaoh and delivered unto him, as bidden by God, the divine Message, Pharaoh spoke insultingly saying: "Art thou not he that

committed murder, and became an infidel?"...He [Moses] said: 'I did it indeed, and I was one of those who erred. And I fled from you when I feared you, but My Lord hath given Me wisdom, and hath made Me one of His Messengers'"(Qur'án 26:19-21).

And now ponder in thy heart the commotion which God stirreth up. Reflect upon the strange and manifold trials with which He doth test His servants. Consider how He hath suddenly chosen from among His servants, and entrusted with the exalted mission of divine guidance Him Who was known as guilty of homicide, Who, Himself, had acknowledged His cruelty, and Who for well-nigh thirty years had, in the eyes of the world, been reared in the home of Pharaoh and been nourished at his table. Was not God, the omnipotent King, able to withhold the hand of Moses from murder, so that manslaughter should not be attributed unto Him, causing bewilderment and aversion among the people?¹¹

Bahá'u'lláh

Bahá'u'lláh continues:

Behold how contrary are the ways of the Manifestations of God, as ordained by the King of creation, to the ways and desires of men! As thou comest to comprehend the essence of these divine mysteries, thou wilt grasp the purpose of God, the divine Charmer, the Best-Beloved. Thou wilt regard the words and the deeds of that almighty Sovereign as one and the same; in such wise that whatsoever thou dost behold in His deeds, the same wilt thou find in His sayings, and whatsoever thou dost read in His sayings, that wilt thou recognize in His deeds. Thus it is that outwardly such deeds and words are the fire of vengeance unto the wicked, and inwardly the waters of mercy unto the righteous. Were the eye of the heart to open, it would surely perceive that the words revealed from the heaven of the will of God are at one

with, and the same as, the deeds that have emanated from the Kingdom of divine power.¹² Bahá'u'lláh

How would the people of this age respond if Bahá'u'lláh had displayed serious weaknesses, such as being born to an unwed mother or committing murder?

And now, take heed, O brother! If such things be revealed in this Dispensation, and such incidents come to pass, at the present time, what would the people do? I swear by Him Who is the true Educator of mankind and the Revealer of the Word of God that the people would instantly and unquestionably pronounce Him an infidel and would sentence Him to death...Were a myriad voices to be raised, no ear would listen if We said that upon a fatherless Child hath been conferred the mission of Prophethood, or that a murderer hath brought from the flame of the burning Bush the message of "Verily, verily, I am God!"¹³ Bahá'u'lláh

One way God tests us is through the personal lives of His great Messengers. The murder of an Egyptian by Moses offers a classical example. The married life of His Messengers offers another example. Because of its prime significance, let us once again examine the Qur'án concerning this issue:

The Prophet was not at fault regarding what God prescribed for Him. Such was the Way with those who came before [Muhammad]. God's command is a pre-ordained decree.

Qur'án 33:38

See also 66:1

By declaring that Muhammad was not at fault, we are taught these lessons:

- His marriages may appear objectionable to us—by *our* standards.

- But they are not objectionable to God—by *His* standards.

The second part of the verse teaches us these lessons:

- The married life of the Messengers is preordained by God.
- Such has been in the past and such will be in the future.

If this is the case, then what right do we have to pass any judgment on the family life of God's Messengers? Can we blame God's Messengers for doing what God prescribed for them?

As stated before, the record of Muhammad's early life shows clearly that He would have been much happier with only one woman in His life. But God tested Him and tested us by asking Him to do what was contrary both to His desire and to our expectations.

God's purpose of testing us by the family life of Muhammad has been fully accomplished: this issue has indeed provided an opportunity for petty-minded people to criticize and even deny Muhammad for doing precisely what God prescribed for Him! Instead of entering and marveling at the beauty and grandeur of the "Divine Mansion," such negative thinkers have focused their mind on an imagined flaw—such as the design of a doorknob in the Mansion! The apparent weaknesses displayed in the lives of God's great Messengers is one more veil by which God conceals His Face from the spiritually unfit: those unworthy of witnessing His awesome beauty and splendor:

He has blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts, lest they should see with their eyes, lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, so that I should heal them.

John 12:40 NKJ

Verily We have set veils upon their hearts lest they understand it [the Qur'án], and put a deafness in their ears. If you call them to guidance, they will never be guided. Qur'án 18:57

The personal lives of the divine Messengers also provide a perfect opportunity for God to express this everlasting principle:

God does what He will. Qur'án 3:40

Every time God the True One—exalted be His glory—revealed Himself in the person of His Manifestation, He came unto men with the standard of “He doeth what He willeth, and ordaineth what He pleaseth.” None hath the right to ask why or wherefore, and he that doth so, hath indeed turned aside from God, the Lord of Lords.¹⁴

Bahá'u'lláh

Bahá'u'lláh declares that the apparent weaknesses in God's great Messengers are “clouds” that circle the sun:

In another sense, they [clouds] mean the appearance of that immortal Beauty in the image of mortal man, with such human limitations as eating and drinking, poverty and riches, glory and abasement, sleeping and waking, and such other things as cast doubt in the minds of men, and cause them to turn away. All such veils are symbolically referred to as “clouds.”

These are the “clouds” that cause the heavens of the knowledge and understanding of all that dwell on earth to be cloven asunder. Even as He hath revealed: “On that day shall the heaven be cloven by the clouds.” Even as the clouds prevent the eyes of men from beholding the sun, so do these things hinder the souls of men from recognizing the light of the divine Luminary. To this beareth witness that which hath proceeded out of the mouth of the unbelievers as revealed in the sacred Book: “And they have said: ‘What manner of apostle is this?

He eateth food, and walketh the streets. Unless an angel be sent down and take part in His warnings, we will not believe.” Other Prophets, similarly, have been subject to poverty and afflictions, to hunger, and to the ills and chances of this world. As these holy Persons were subject to such needs and wants, the people were, consequently, lost in the wilds of misgivings and doubts, and were afflicted with bewilderment and perplexity. How, they wondered, could such a person be sent down from God, assert His ascendancy over all the peoples and kindreds of the earth, and claim Himself to be the goal of all creation...¹⁵

The following verses from the Qur’án indicate that the statements concerning the connection between God’s Messengers and Satan also serve as a means of testing. Their prime purpose is to prevent those who have “diseased hearts” from joining the ranks of the faithful:

We have not sent any Messenger or Prophet before thee, in whom Satan did not instill some wrong desire. But God shall bring to naught that which Satan may suggest. Thus shall God affirm His revelations, for God is Knowing, Wise! That He may make that which Satan hath instilled, a test to those in whose hearts is a disease, and whose hearts are hardened. Verily, the wicked are far from the truth!

Qur’án 22:52-53

To conclude: God sets the standards. He makes His Messengers shine as brightly as the sun, but He also robes them in clouds:

He was robed in a cloud, with a rainbow above his head; his face was like the sun...

Revelation 10:1 NIV

What can such expect but that God should come down to them overshadowed with clouds?

Qur’án 2: 210

The clouds are created and placed around the Sun for a purpose: to test the people, to see who is willing to rise above “the veils of glory,” who has a desire to overcome the obstacles. If everyone saw the Sun without any effort or initiative, human life would become as boring and monotonous as living in and looking out of a prison cell. If there were no “clouds,” this book would have been quite different, and perhaps you would be less motivated to read it!

It behooveth us, therefore, to make the utmost endeavor, that, by God’s invisible assistance, these dark veils, these clouds of Heaven-sent trials, may not hinder us from beholding the beauty of His shining Countenance, and that we may recognize Him only by His own Self. And should we ask for a testimony of His truth, we should content ourselves with one, and only one; that thereby we may attain unto Him Who is the Fountainhead of infinite grace, and in Whose presence all the world’s abundance fadeth into nothingness, that we may cease to cavil at Him every day and to cleave unto our own idle fancy.¹⁶

Bahá’u’lláh

Most of those who deny God, expect Him to do everything according to their standards. They think they have a better blueprint for designing the universe. The weight of their ego holds them under the clouds. Unless they exchange their standards for God’s, they will be unable to soar and see glimpses of His glory. The same holds true with recognizing the truth of His great Messengers and Teachers. This is the reason Jesus declared:

They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky...

Matthew 24:30 NIV

But how can the eyes see the glory of the Son clothed with clouds? Only by breaking through the clouds.

...your sins [moral and spiritual weaknesses] have hidden His face from you...

Isaiah 59:2 NIV

19

Unfounded and Petty Objections Raised Against Islam

Objections raised against Islam are numerous. This chapter responds briefly to a few others not covered in previous chapters. The objections covered in this chapter come from two publications written by widely recognized and highly respected Christian theologians.

Response to Objections Raised by Dr. George Braswell

Dr. Braswell is a distinguished professor of missions and world religions. He is considered an authority on Islam and has published several books on the topic. The following statements come from his book, *What You Need to Know About Islam*.

Objection

There is no other religion like Islam in its specific and total denial of the major truth claims of Christianity. It disagrees with a vengeance. The Bible is corrupt.¹

Response

Many Muslims believe that the Bible has been altered. This belief is contrary to the teachings of the Qur'án. Just like Christians, Muslims cherish many beliefs that the Qur'án

does not confirm. Dr. Braswell recognizes this fact and presents verses from the Qur'án to remind Muslims that they contradict their own Scriptures. He deserves much praise for doing so.

We have without doubt sent down the Message.* And We will assuredly guard it from corruption. Qur'án 15:9

And dispute not with the people of the Book...But say: We believe in the Revelation which has come down to you. Our God and your God is one... Qur'án 29:46

And recite and teach what has been revealed to thee of the Book of thy Lord. None can alter His words... Qur'án 18:27

In response to those who believe that “the genuine text of the heavenly Gospel doth not exist among the Christians,” Bahá'u'lláh states:

How grievously they have erred! How oblivious of the fact that such a statement imputeth the gravest injustice and tyranny to a gracious and loving Providence!... Above all, how could the flow of the grace of the All-Bountiful be stayed? How could the ocean of His tender mercies be stilled? We take refuge with God, from that which His creatures have fancied about Him! Exalted is He above their comprehension!²

Objection

Muslims do not believe in original sin:

The problem of humanity is not rebellion against the will of God but an inherent weakness in human nature to be forgetful or ignorant about the will of God.³

*The details in the four Gospels vary, but their “Message” is the same.

Response

The belief in original sin is a misunderstanding often presented as a fact by many Christian theologians. This belief is rooted in the story of creation—a story that has a spiritual meaning, not literal.

There are two sides to this belief. Unfortunately, theologians present only one side. Let us glance briefly at the side they omit. Consider the following points:

- From a simply logical perspective, it is utterly unreasonable to place the burden of sin on an innocent person. Even in our legal system, a person is considered innocent until proven guilty.
- God's creation is good. Sin is evil. God does not and would not create sinful people.
- At birth we are innocent. We are as pure and perfect as God could make us. This is why Jesus said:

Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.

Christ (Mark 10:14-15 NIV)

See also matt. 19:14; Luke 18:16-17

The Book of Psalms pays glowing tributes to the glory and honor of being a human being. A sinful and depraved creature does not deserve such a praise:

...thou hast made him a little lower than the angels,
and hast crowned him with glory and honor. Psalms 8:5

Bahá'u'lláh repeatedly testifies to the honor of being God's most sublime creation:

O SON OF BEING! With the hands of power I made thee and with the fingers of strength I created thee; and within thee have I placed the essence of My light. Be thou content with it and seek naught else, for My

work is perfect and My command is binding. Question it not, nor have a doubt thereof.⁴

O SON OF SPIRIT! I created thee rich, why dost thou bring thyself down to poverty? Noble I made thee, wherewith dost thou abase thyself? Out of the essence of knowledge I gave thee being, why seekest thou enlightenment from anyone beside Me? Out of the clay of love I molded thee, how dost thou busy thyself with another? Turn thy sight unto thyself, that thou mayest find Me standing within thee, mighty, powerful and self-subsisting.⁵

- We live up to expectations. Emphasis on original sin encourages sinful behavior. If God created us sinful, why not prove Him right? Emphasis on our nobility and original perfection encourages noble behavior and desire for perfection.

Where, then, does sin come from? It comes from our *potential*. It is our potential to sin that allows us to enjoy freedom of choice, otherwise we would be mere animals. Thus we are not born sinful, but only with a potential to sin.

Objection

Islam teaches that:

God commands and humanity obeys, and God is the final judge. Humanity needs no Mediator.⁶

Response

Of course God commands and humanity obeys. Of course God is the final judge. Even Jesus Himself obeyed His Father, offered Him all the honors, and said that without Him He could do nothing. Did He exclude judgment?

I can do nothing on my own authority; as I hear, I judge; and my judgment is just, because I seek not my own will, but the will of him who sent me. John 5:30 RSV

To say that the Qur'án teaches that we do not need a Mediator is a misjudgment. Muhammad considered Himself and all the Messengers, including Jesus, a Mediator between God and man. Who is a Mediator? The One who speaks for God. Both Jesus and Muhammad held this position. The Qur'án refers repeatedly to the twin requirements of believing in God and in His Mediator and living a virtuous life:

Those who believe and do the things that are right, we will surely admit them into the company of the righteous. Qur'án 29:9

He sendeth a Messenger to reveal, by His permission, what He will. For He is Exalted, Wise! Qur'án 42:51

I do not have the power to help or harm myself, except as God pleases...I am only a warner and a bearer of good news to a people who believe. Qur'án 7:188

Jesus expresses the same level of dependence on God:

I did not speak on my own, but the Father who sent me commanded me to say all that I have spoken...So whatever I say is just what the Father has told me to say. John 12:49-50 NIV

The question is this: where did Dr. Braswell find this idea? He presents no reference from the Qur'án to substantiate his claim.

Objection

Islam teaches that:

Christians are “People of the Book” who follow untruthful doctrines.⁷

Response

According to a Christian Encyclopedia, there are over 20,000 Christian denominations. What has divided them? Doctrine! Which denomination follows the true doctrines? If Christians disagree about doctrines, what should Muhammad do? Accept all of them or one of them? Further, can we call someone who truly loves Jesus, a non-Christian because he disagrees with certain orthodox doctrines? Muhammad paid the highest homage to Jesus by calling him the “Spirit of God.” What more can we expect from Him? The fallacy of this objection is so evident that it does not require further defense.

Objection

Islam teaches that Jesus is not...the savior of man’s sins. Jesus did not atone for the sins of man.⁸

Response

Christian theologians act as if only Jesus can forgive sins. The authority to forgive sins comes from God. Those who truly accept God’s new Messengers receive great blessings, among them forgiveness of their sins.

But those who repent thereafter, and make amends—
God is All-Forgiving, All-Compassionate. Qur’án 3:83

God is impartial. He did not change His relationship with us in 27 A.D., when Jesus declared His Mission. He has always forgiven those who truly repent. Noah, Abraham, and Moses were sent to save us from sin and had the authority to forgive sins just as Jesus did and as the Báb and Bahá’u’lláh do in this age:

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.⁹

Bahá'u'lláh

We, verily, have come for your sakes, and have borne the misfortunes of the world for your salvation.¹⁰

Bahá'u'lláh

The Qur'án does not seem to contain any statement concerning “atonement.” Should the Qur'án contain a statement about every Christian doctrine? Did Jesus refer to every Jewish doctrine? Should the Jews reject Jesus because of such an omission?

Dr. Braswell refers repeatedly to “Islam” without clarifying what he means. He writes as if what Muslims believe and practice is precisely what the Qur'án teaches. What matters is what the Scriptures of a religion teach, not what their followers believe. Diversity of beliefs is widespread among the followers of both religions.

Objection

The Qur'án indicates that Jews and Christians profess to study the same Book but have nothing solid to stand on. But God will judge them on the Day of Judgment (Qur'án 2:113).¹¹

Response

Let us see the verse Dr. Braswell quotes to come to his unjustified conclusion:

The Jews say: “The Christians have naught [to stand upon]. And the Christians say: “The Jews have naught [to stand upon].” Yet they study the Book...But God will judge between them concerning their disagreements on the Day of Judgment. Qur’án 2:113

Contrary to what Dr. Braswell declares, the verse does not declare that Christians and Jews have no basis for their beliefs. It declares that Christians and Jews make such a declaration about each other. Christians believe that the Jews are not saved; the Jews believe that Christians are not saved. Who can resolve their conflicting views? The Promised One of our time—Bahá’u’lláh—who has indeed come and clarified all the unresolved questions. This is the Day of Judgment.

Objection

Islam teaches that:

Christians...have forgotten a good part of the message sent them originally from God (Qur’án 5:14).¹²

Response

Is this not true? Consider the following references from Dr. John White, a devoted Christian scholar, in his book *Re-entry*, with an introduction by Dr. Billy Graham:

But truth is truth and the Church is currently in a state of decline. No one grieved more than our Lord that the Church would fall into appalling decay prior to His coming. Indeed this is the primary reason for His coming...St. Paul made it unmistakably clear that “in the last days” men will “preserve the outward form of religion, but are a standing denial of its reality” (2 Timothy 3:5, NEB). The paradox which the agnostic Pierre Berton describes

in his best-selling *The Comfortable Pew*, is that while the polls reveal that almost everyone—some 94 percent—believes in God, accepts the doctrine of the virgin birth, and life after death, and is convinced of the power of prayer, so few churchgoers seem really to be Christian.¹³

And again:

The world is now a very tragic and anxious world... more people are asking today (than ever before) and asking with a new intensity, “What must I do to be saved?” The trouble with the Christian churches is that they give a confused, unconvincing and unsatisfying answer.¹⁴

According to St. Paul, the lapse into a “form of godliness without the power thereof” is to be a sign of the church as the end nears.¹⁵

Objection

“People of the Book”...are reprimanded for telling lies against God and misrepresenting the Book [the Qur’ân]...(Qur’ân 3:64-80).¹⁶

Response

This book clearly demonstrates that Christian theologians have distorted and misrepresented the Quranic teachings on God. Did not Jesus follow the same course of action? Did He not guide and enlighten the Jews? A new Messenger from God does not come to confirm people’s misconceptions but rather to *correct* them. Muhammad’s rejection of the doctrine of the Trinity is a perfect example. Muhammad, as a Mediator between God and man, condemned this unbiblical doctrine as a pagan belief. Did not Jesus clarify

the meaning of the Sabbath to the Jews? Did He not tell them that the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath?

And We have sent down to thee the “Reminder”[✧] so that you may make clear to mankind what hath been revealed to them, perhaps they may reflect. Qur’án 16:44

Objection

The Qur’án contradicts itself:

Let there be no compulsion in religion. Qur’án 2:256

If anyone desires a religion other than Islam, never will it be accepted of him... Qur’án 3:85

Response

The first verse points to our God-given *right* to choose our spiritual destiny; the second refers to our *responsibility* to seek, to find, and to accept the Messenger of the Age. When Jesus came, the Jewish Faith was outdated. Those who heard about Jesus were responsible to recognize the truth of His Mission. “No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6), is identical in meaning with, “If anyone desires a religion other than Islam, never will it be accepted of him.” Unfortunately both Christians and Muslims fail to recognize that the preceding verses have time limits. They relate to a dispensation—a specific period of time assigned to a religion. The time limit ends when a new Messenger comes, and repeats the statement once again.

[✧]“The Reminder” or “the Remembrance” (Zikr) has several meanings. Sometimes it refers to the Qur’án, and sometimes to divine Messengers. For details, see *Bahá'u'lláh in the Qur’án*.

According to the rules of justice, people could reach the Father only through the Son during Jesus' dispensation. The same holds true with Muhammad, and the same rule applies to us. Anyone who hears about Bahá'u'lláh must investigate the truth of His Mission. This rule will never change.

Objection

Islam teaches that:

...there is no human depravity and no need for salvation.¹⁷

Response

The author presents no evidence, no verse from the Qur'án to substantiate his claim. How can anyone deny the evil deeds that spring from the human heart? If there were no human depravity, why would the Qur'án refer to hell 367 times? If there were no need for a Savior, how could Muhammad justify His own role as a Prophet from God?

Response to Objections Raised by John Ankerberg and John Weldon

Two theologians, Dr. Ankerberg and Dr. Weldon, have written a booklet called: *The Facts on Islam*. These authors are well-known in the Christian community, and have written many books with a wide circulation. To substantiate their claims about Islam, they resort to "authority figures," with impressive credentials—authors who appear to be impartial scholars and seekers of truth. They also quote statements as facts from a book written by a Christian pastor against Islam (Page 16). In this case, they do not even

mention his name! Further, they treat the Qur'án as if it is written by a theologian: They fail to follow the common practice of identifying the Quranic verses by chapter and verse number. Instead, they give only the page number of the copy of the Qur'án they quote from! The following are their most significant objections:

Objection

They begin their objections by trying to portray Muhammad as a deviant, a mentally disordered patient who did not know what He was doing. They first resort to the authority of Rodwell, a devoted Christian who produced an excellent translation of the Qur'án in English:

[Muhammad was] particularly liable to morbid and fantastic hallucinations, and alterations of excitement and depression, which would win for him, in the eyes of his ignorant countrymen, the credit of being inspired.¹⁸

The authors then present a quotation from Sir Norman Anderson, introduced as “Islamic Authority:”

Muhammad himself was at first doubtful of the source of these revelations, fearing that he was possessed by one of the Jinn, or spirits...¹⁹

To trivialize Muhammad, the two authors add still another testimonial from another authority, Alfred Guillaume, introduced as “Oxford-educated and professor of Arabic at Princeton University of London;”

Muhammad’s foster mother...states...that he was *possessed by a devil*...²⁰

The authors then conclude:

Nevertheless Muhammad came to accept his revelations as divine rather than *demonic*.²¹

Response

We should note that the same accusation was made against Jesus:

The Jews answered him, “Aren’t we right in saying that you are a Samaritan and demon-possessed?” “I am not possessed by a demon,” said Jesus, “but I honor my Father and you dishonor me. I am not seeking glory for myself; but there is one who seeks it, and he is the judge. I tell you the truth, if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death.” At this the Jews exclaimed, “Now we know that you are *demon-possessed!* Abraham died and so did the prophets, yet you say that if anyone keeps your word, he will never taste death. Are you greater than our father Abraham? He died, and so did the prophets. Who do you think you are?” John 8:48-53 NIV

Many of them said, “He is *demon-possessed* and raving mad. Why listen to him?” John 10:20 NIV

When his [Jesus’] family heard about this, they went to take charge of him, for they said, “He is out of his mind.” And the teachers of the law who came down from Jerusalem said, “*He is possessed by Beelzebub!* By the prince of demons he is driving out demons.”

Mark 3:21-22 NIV

As the Qur’án declares, Moses was also accused:

Pharaoh said to Him, “Verily, I deem thee, O Moses, a man enchanted.” Qur’án 17:101

Most people tend to believe what they read. It is unlikely that an unwary reader would doubt the accuracy of the preceding accusations made by those “authority figures” against Muhammad. But there is a practical way to test the validity of their accusation. If we falsely assume that Muhammad suffered from certain physical disabilities

(such as epilepsy) or mental disorders (such as being “possessed”), such an assumption would only serve to enhance His status! For we always admire those who attain greatness despite disabilities. A person suffering from the assumed disorders needs to be cared for in a hospital. How did a person supposedly so handicapped break such vast boundaries, set so many new records?

To gain a glimpse of Muhammad’s greatness, we should examine the judgment of great secular scholars with no religious prejudice or loyalties. Note how Will Durant, the noted historian of our time, assesses Muhammad’s role in history:

If we judge greatness by influence, he was one of the giants of history. He undertook to raise the spiritual and moral level of a people harassed into barbarism by heat and foodless wastes, and he succeeded more completely than any other reformer, seldom has any man so fully realized his dream...When he began, Arabia was a desert flotsam of idolatrous tribes, when he died it was a nation.²²

Michael Hart, an American author, has written a book about the 100 most prominent leaders with the profoundest impact on the world. Who is his first choice? Muhammad! He believes among all the leaders who have ever lived, Muhammad ranks first in shaping the world.

How can we possibly explain such an incredible achievement from an uneducated epileptic who is possessed or controlled by demons? How can such a severely handicapped man from the most primitive culture work such wonders, rise to such heights of grandeur?

As we can see, those who try to denigrate Muhammad, without knowing, glorify Him! Let us continue our examination of still other accusations.

Objection

Allah lacks such attributes as holiness, grace and love.²³

Response

The two authors present no evidence to substantiate their claim. In this case, they do not resort to authorities. Since Allah was introduced earlier in the course of several chapters, this accusation needs no response.

Objection

...even Muslim scholars concede that Allah is the author of evil.²⁴

Response

Once again, to prove their point, the two authors resort to “Muslim authorities” without naming them! Since Allah was introduced earlier, we do not need to defend Him again!

Objection

The two authors characterize prayers recited by Muslims “primarily as ritual.” They state:

The Muslim must recite prescribed prayers five times a day. Each time he must adopt a mechanical procedure: standing, kneeling, hands and face to the ground, etc.²⁵

Response

These gestures are physical expressions of one's devotion and servitude to God. Is shaking a friend's hand a "mechanical procedure"? What about hugging or kissing a loved one? Further, should we criticize the believers who pray five times a day to God, no matter how they pray—standing (to offer respect), bowing (to show submission), and raising their hands toward their Creator (to seek His blessings)?

Objection

Anyone who dies in a holy war is supposedly guaranteed eternal life in heaven...²⁶

Response

To substantiate their claim they cite Saddam Hussein's attack on Kuwait! How can a war be called "holy" if it is waged by a secular dictator against a Muslim country for no reason except to conquer it? Since the topic of war was covered extensively, we do not need to extend it further.

Objection

...in Saudi Arabia...it is illegal to build churches.²⁷

Response

As we noted, Muhammad treated the People of the Book with the utmost consideration. It is a great tragedy that in most Muslim countries the Quranic principle of religious freedom is violated. The Bahá'ís, like Christians and Jews,

should be considered “the People of the Book,” for they believe in God and support and practice the ethical teachings found in all sacred Scriptures. In addition, they acknowledge the divine origin of Muhammad. In this respect, they are even one step ahead of “the People of the Book.” Yet they have been so far deprived of their God-given right to practice and promote their beliefs in Islamic countries. Such treatments of religious minorities are contrary to the teachings of the Qur’án.

Objection

The belief that Islam is a friend of Christianity is wrong.²⁸

Response

Once again, the authors replace the *followers* of religion for *religion*. Islam is what Muhammad taught and the way He practiced His beliefs. Muhammad paid the highest homage to Christ. As we noted, He also treated Christians kindly.

How can anyone claim that Islam, as taught and practiced by Muhammad, is unfriendly to Christ and Christianity? Only misconceptions have alienated the followers of these two great religions from each other. And only God can bring them together.

He [God] brought their hearts together. Had you spent all there is on earth, you could not have brought their hearts together, but God has brought them together. He is Mighty and Wise.

Qur’án 8:63 MF

The two authors conclude:

Now consider the teachings of the Koran. It forcefully rejects the Christian faith and opposes the biblical God; it rejects the person and mission of Jesus Christ; it

insulates individuals against biblical salvation and thereby leads people to judgment; it offers a pagan God and harmful doctrines...The Koran offers a theology that is distinctly anti-Christ, claiming a method of salvation based entirely upon works, thereby leading people away from their Savior and eternal salvation.²⁹

All the preceding accusations are untrue. They are contrary to the spirit of Islam as taught in the Qur'án. The Qur'án does not teach "a theology that is distinctly anti-Christ." It only questions and undermines the false theology concocted and promoted by theologians who assume that their personal interpretation of the Bible was made in heaven and sent from heaven in many forms and versions to fit the diverse doctrines of several thousand Christian denominations!

Objection

There are factual differences between the Bible and the Qur'án.

Response

There are many factual differences between the various books of the Bible. Even the most conservative Christian theologians with an "Evangelical perspective" acknowledge that the Bible contains factual errors. Consider the following statement from Dr. Geisler, who is regarded as one of the most knowledgeable and best defenders of Christianity:

Evangelists do not try to prove that the Bible has no mistakes...³⁰

After making the preceding statement, Dr. Geisler adds:

Christians hold the Bible to be the Word of God (and inerrant) because they are convinced that Jesus, the Lord of the church, believed it and taught His disciples to believe it.³¹

How can we reconcile his contradictory statements? He first acknowledges the errors, and then he calls the errors the truth? No wonder religion has in our time lost its glory and honor.

“Let us reason together, saith the Lord” (Isa 1:18). Let us see which book in terms of details is more reliable. Because of the way the Qur’án was written and preserved, Muslims believe that it is free from errors. Which Scripture then should we trust more—the one that is well preserved, or the one that is not? Who decided what materials should become a permanent part of the Bible?

Even though millions of people world-wide read the New Testament—whether from curiosity or religious devotion—very few ask what this collection of books actually is or where it came from, how it came into existence, who decided which books to include, on what grounds, and when.

The New Testament did not emerge as an established and complete set of books immediately after the death of Jesus. Many years passed before Christians agreed concerning which books should comprise their sacred scriptures, with debates...that were long, hard, and sometimes harsh...³²

The debates over which texts actually were apostolic, and therefore authoritative, lasted many years, decades, even centuries. Eventually—by about the end of the third Christian century—the views of one group emerged as victorious. This group was itself internally diverse, but it agreed on major issues of the faith, including the existence of one God, the creator of all,

who was the Father of Jesus Christ, who was both divine and human, who along with the Father and the Holy Spirit together made up the divine godhead. This group promoted its own collection of books as the only true and authentic ones...

When was this New Testament finally collected and authorized? The first instance we have of any Christian author urging that our current twenty-seven books, and only these twenty-seven, should be accepted as Scripture occurred in the year 367 CE...³³

Any impartial thinker who investigates the historical evidence will arrive at this conclusion: The words of Jesus just like those of Muhammad shine brightly as the sun. They display the unmistakable hallmark of divine authority. The words of Jesus as recorded in the Gospel and the Book of Revelation, however, should not be compared with the letters written by Jesus' followers. The former are direct revelation from God and are as valid as the Qur'án. Can we put Jesus' words on the same level with those of St. Paul? Jesus' disciples often misunderstood the words of their Master. Note the following statement from a Christian author:

Christ had explained His mission to His disciples a number of times, but to no effect. They were so obsessed by their own self-centered anticipation of wielding great power in the messianic kingdom that His words fell without meaning upon their ears. Though His crucifixion would fulfill Scripture authenticating Him as the Messiah, to His disciples as well as to the rabbis it would seem to prove the opposite.³⁴

Moments after Jesus commended Peter for confessing that He was the Christ, that impetuous ex-fisherman insisted that Christ need not die on the cross. Here was a blatant denial of the central doctrine of Christianity.

“Get thee behind me, Satan,” was Christ’s immediate rebuke.³⁵

Objection

Isaac was the chosen son of Abraham, not Ishmael.

Response

Some Christian theologians spare no effort to show that Isaac was the favored brother. They look for any clues to show that when God made a covenant with Abraham, He excluded Ishmael and his descendants—who are assumed to be the Arabs. A noted theologian, with millions of listeners known as Pastor Cole, recently made the following statement on Christian Radio Broadcasting: “Isaac was Abraham’s only son. Ishmael did not count as His heir, because he was born to a slave.”

Consider also the following statement from another Christian theologian, Mr. David Reagan:

God made it clear that Ishmael would not be the child of promise through whom all the world would be blessed (Genesis 17:20-21)...³⁶

Mr. Reagan does not quote Gen. 17:20-22. He simply cites its source. Let us examine the verses he uses to validate his claim:

And as for Ishmael, I have heard you: I will surely bless him; I will make him fruitful and will greatly increase his numbers. He will be the father of twelve rulers, and I will make him into a great nation. But my covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah will bear to you by this time next year. Genesis 17:20-21 NIV

Is Mr. Reagan justified in his claim? The verses declare:

I will surely bless him [Ishmael]... Genesis 17:20 NIV

But my covenant I will establish with Isaac...
Genesis 17:21 NIV

It is ironic that Genesis Chapter 17 blesses only the following people: Abraham, Sarah, and Ishmael. The names it excludes from the list of the blessed are Hagar and Isaac. What then is the difference between Isaac and Ishmael? The word “covenant” is linked to “Isaac,” the word “blessing” to “Ishmael.” Does this difference really matter? Should we try to turn these unique favors bestowed on two noble brothers into walls or barriers of separation and superiority?

Is this not how racism grows and takes roots? Are we not told that we are children of one Creator, equally loved by Him?

Have we not all one Father? Did not one God create us?
Malachi 2:10 NIV

...is He the God of the Jews only? Is He not also the
God of the Gentiles?
Romans 3:29 NKJ

When we look at the big picture, we find that there is no difference between the two brothers, for God blessed their father and all His descendants. It is amazing that theologians confess that “there is no partiality with God” (Romans 2:11 NKJ), and yet they claim that He discriminated not only against Ishmael and his mother, but also against millions of their descendants forever! They do not ponder the implications of their belief. According to this illusion, a baby born to an Arab parent is not as worthy as a baby born to a Swedish parent. Why? Because the Arab baby can trace himself to Ishmael; the Swedish baby to Isaac! Even if this unfounded assumption were true, its moral implications would be highly destructive. It would put God’s justice on trial. If we look at this “grand illusion” from scientific perspective, we find that it has no bases in

reality. For intermarriage among nations and races has torn to pieces the illusion of a pure race, espoused and promoted by Hitler.

To see the futility of this popular and sweet illusion, consider the following dialogue between a Christian and Muslim:

Christian: When God made His covenant with Abraham—that He would bless His children—Ishmael was already born. He was not, therefore, covered by the covenant.

Muslim: Did God specify that the covenant covered only *the unborn* children of Abraham? No, He did not exclude Abraham's first son, Ishmael. If God is love, He cares for all His children equally. How far from His glory to discriminate between two brothers, because they were born at different times.

Christian: Isaac was born to Abraham's wife, Sarah. Ishmael was born to Hagar—a maid, a servant, a slave. How can a wife and a slave be equal?

Muslim: God did not create slaves, we did, and still are doing. We are all made in God's image. How then can anyone be a slave, another a master? We often judge people by worldly standards—race, gender, nationality, physique, wealth, position, and power. God judges us by spiritual standards. No one is born a slave. We can only choose to become a slave: to our passions and selfish desires. We should respect Sarah and Hagar as well as their sons equally. They were all blessed. Yet we should recognize that it was Sarah who became a slave to her jealousy. It was Sarah who acted

unjustly by forcing a new mother and her baby outside the security of her home and protection of her husband. We should, however, not take such stories literally. They may be only narratives with lessons for us. We should view them only in this spirit.

Christian: When Abraham's name was changed into Abraham, Ishmael was already born. Ishmael's father was called Abram, not Abraham. Only Abraham was blessed, not Abram.

Muslim: Have you forgotten this most splendid verse:

...the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

II Corinthians 3:6 NIV

The Spirit in Abram or Abraham never changed, only the letters of His name did. This is the kind of objection the Pharisees often raised against Jesus. They worshiped the letter of the Law, but disdained its spirit. Jesus called all "letter lovers" hypocrites. They received the harshest condemnations from Him.

Christian: A verse in the Hebrew Scriptures uses a negative word regarding Ishmael.

Muslim: Do you know the literal meaning of the word "Isaac"?

This claim of superiority, on account of letters, presents a classic example of how some theologians have abused God's Word to advance their selfish desires. What is the purpose of religion? To bring us together or to separate us? Our true value does not lie in our genes, but in our generosity, not in the labels we acquire, but in our love for God and for humankind.

To think that we are better than our neighbor because of our ancestors, is sheer racism. We are spirits, not bodies—flesh, blood, and bone. The spirit contains no gender or color. Our greatness does not depend on the genetic makeup of our forbears; it depends only on the purity and richness of our soul.

If “letter” and “flesh” mattered more than the “spirit,” then the Jews must be superior to Christians, because only *they* were called *the chosen people*. If our physical frame counted more than our spirit, Jesus would not say:

The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing.

John 6:63 NIV

Anyone who loves God and lives a righteous life is a *chosen* one. Unfortunately, in this age, most of us fail to live up to our potential. That is why we are told:

For many are called, but few chosen.

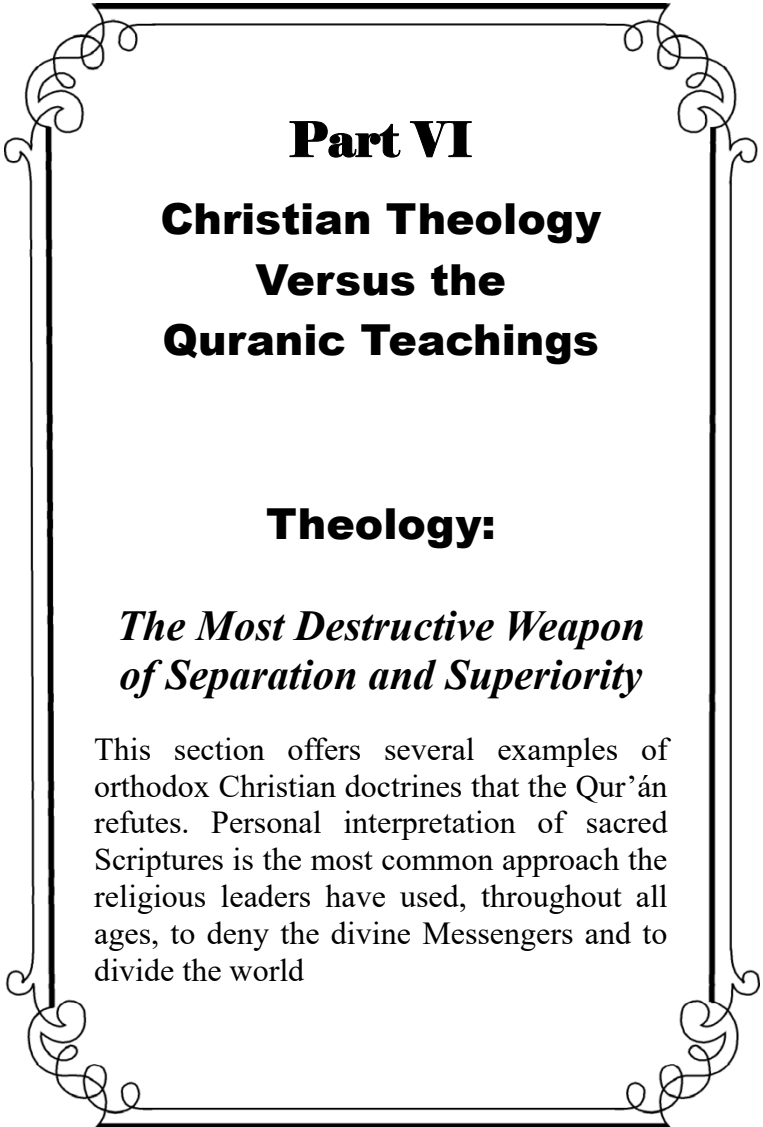
Christ (Matt. 20:16 NKJ)

Consider titles as various costumes people wear on special celebrations. Representatives from many nations and tribes may wear a hundred costumes. They may be all beautiful, and each one of them be described in a unique way, by special adjectives such as: beautiful, gorgeous, exquisite, awesome, creative, fantastic. Each of these words points to beauty and goodness. Do they need to compete with each other? Each costume is beautiful in its own way. The same holds true with titles of honor bestowed on great Messengers—titles such as: “Friend of God” “Converser with God” “Son of Man” “Son of God” “the Seal of the Prophets” “the Gate of God” or “the Glory of God.” Should we turn these titles of honor into idols of superiority and separation? Isaac and Ishmael were both the beloved sons of Abraham. Should we choose one over the other because at the time of their birth, their father had a different name?

He Who is your Lord, the All-Merciful, cherisheth in His heart the desire of beholding the entire human race as one soul and one body.³⁷ Bahá'u'lláh

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.³⁸ Bahá'u'lláh

Ye were created to show love one to another and not perversity and rancor. Take pride not in love for yourselves but in love for your fellow-creatures. Glory not in love for your country, but in love for all mankind.³⁹ Bahá'u'lláh



Part VI
Christian Theology
Versus the
Quranic Teachings

Theology:

*The Most Destructive Weapon
of Separation and Superiority*

This section offers several examples of orthodox Christian doctrines that the Qur'án refutes. Personal interpretation of sacred Scriptures is the most common approach the religious leaders have used, throughout all ages, to deny the divine Messengers and to divide the world

20

Are We Saved By Grace Alone?

To see how some theologians use “theology”—their own personal interpretation of Biblical doctrines—as a weapon of separation and denial, consider the following statement about the Bahá’í Faith from Dr. Walter Martin, a noted Christian theologian:

The cardinal doctrines of the Christian faith...are all categorically rejected by Baha’ism. They maintain that Christ was *a* manifestation of God, but not the *only* manifestation of the Divine Being.

There is very little indeed that a true Christian can have in common with the Bahá’í Faith. There is simply no common ground on which to meet or to talk once the affirmations have been made on the side of Jesus Christ, as opposed to Baha’u’llah...The refutation of Baha’ism must come from a sound knowledge of doctrinal theology as it appears in the Scriptures.¹

In this section, we will examine the major theological doctrines that Christian theologians use to reject other religions, such as Islam and the Bahá’í Faith.

Let us begin with the topic of grace. A common misconception that has found a secure position in Christian theology is that “*we are saved by grace alone, not by works.*” Consider this statement from a dictionary of theology:

Salvation is by grace alone...Even the human response of faith and the subsequent performance of good works are not meritorious...²

The doctrine of “salvation by grace alone” has profound implications, because it defines our relationship with God. It is a foundational principle on which practically all Christians build their spiritual destiny. Questioning it is an evidence of one’s disloyalty. It is a traditional and popular belief, but tradition and popularity can never become synonymous with truth. Every sincere believer should ponder and pray to know whether this doctrine is based on facts or fantasy. The consequence of not knowing the truth is grave indeed.

Before responding to the objection raised against Islam, we should first test this doctrine by the standards of both the Scriptures and reason. This chapter examines the validity of this doctrine, the next chapter responds to the accusation that the God of the Qur’án is not as gracious as the God of the Bible.

The most critical question in our life is this: How can we please God? Christians pose this question a different way. They ask: “How can we be saved?” All great Messengers declare that our relationship with God is based on two pillars:

- Faith
- Good deeds

The doctrine of “being saved by grace alone” suffers from two flaws:

- It replaces “faith” with “grace”
- It omits the faith’s essential pillar: good deeds

The theology of being saved by grace alone lacks both of those essential pillars. It is like a beautiful castle built on sand. The doctrine completely distorts our relationship with God. It downgrades the glory of offering the gift of good deeds to God, and distorts the purpose of receiving the gift

of grace from God. Like a crooked mirror, it alters the image of reality in several ways.

The emphasis on grace at the expense of good deeds has greatly damaged the dignity of believing. It has diminished the supreme honor of knowing and loving God. It has turned religion into a business, and faith into a gift that anyone can receive and keep with little if any effort. It has created this false and dangerous myth: as long as you go to your church, pay your dues, and confess your sins, you are saved.

Here is the first flaw in the doctrine: we are not saved by grace; we are saved by faith. Grace is not what saves us. Grace defines *how* God gave us the gift of faith. As we shall see later, true faith can never survive without good deeds, just as water cannot exist without oxygen.

How then should the doctrine be stated? This is the essence of what the Scriptures teach us: We can please God (and save our soul) by both faith and good deeds. Faith is a gift from God to us; good deed is a gift from us to God. They are inseparable.

For faith, which is life eternal, is the sign of bounty, and not the result of justice.³ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Faith empowers us to do “great things” far beyond what we may expect or even imagine. It activates the human potential:

Anyone who has faith in Me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these...

Christ (John 14:12 NIV)

What has made the doctrine of “grace alone” so popular is that it teaches us something we all like: receiving a gift. A gift is a favor; it does not require any effort. “Grace” is gentle, generous, free, and friendly. “Works” is tough and demanding. It requires self-sacrifice and submission to the

Will of God. The clouds of the distorted and dangerous doctrine of being saved by grace alone have overshadowed the glory of good character and the honor of good deeds.

Even the gift of faith has been turned into a cheap commodity. We are often told that we are saved simply by confessing that Jesus Christ is our Savior. That is not the true meaning of faith. True faith requires a sincere commitment to live by the highest ethical standards. True faith always generates good deeds, and good deeds always sustain and nourish true faith.

Instead of “grace” we should speak of “faith.” Can we save our soul by grace? No, we can save it by our faith. God ***gave*** us the gift of faith by His grace. Grace points to the past; faith pertains to the present and to the future. Grace points to God; faith points to us. Will God bless the ones who do everything against His Will? Will He pour His grace on those who hate and curse everything that is holy?

Suppose you apply for a job. The employer evaluates you in two ways:

- Will you be loyal to him (faith)?
- Will you come every day to work and do your best (works)?

In this example, where would “grace” fit in? “Grace” would be comparable to the efforts of the person who created the position, so that you would have a job.

Faith is only one side of a mutual contract between God and human beings. Suppose you are sick and poor, and you go to a caring and committed doctor who treats you kindly and offers you gifts: a prescription, some medicine, and a booklet of instructions about healthy diet. Now suppose you accept those gifts, but then, instead of taking the medicine and following the instructions, you just throw them away. Were you deserving of those gifts?

Compare faith and works to a seesaw. What happens if a heavy person sits on one end and a little child on the other? The seesaw fails to move. It cannot serve its purpose.

This is the impression we get from some Christian theologians: “Don’t worry about what you do. We humans are all sinful. We all make mistakes. To be saved, don’t depend on your deeds; depend on the grace of God. As long as you are a believing Christian, you are safe.” They may not express the idea so bluntly, but they make their followers believe it. These strategies have tarnished the glory of faith and the honor of being a Christian.

Consider the following statement from renowned evangelist Dr. Billy Graham. Note that he makes no reference to good deeds:

Only one answer will give a person the certain privilege, the joy, of entering heaven. “Because I have believed in Jesus Christ and accepted Him as my Savior. He is the One sitting at the right hand of God and interceding for me.” No one can deny that Christian his entrance into heaven.⁴

We all want to know and need to know how we can please God. The reward for pleasing Him is “saving our soul.” This is the first and most critical question in our life. Imagine if we live all the days of our lives by an assumption, and then at the end of our journey discover that we have lived by an illusion, we have followed a phantom.

Consider also this statement from another theologian:

The requirements for eternal life are not based on what *you can do* but on what *Jesus Christ has done*.

As mentioned, instead of saying “How can we save our souls,” we should ask: “*How can we please God?*” The emphasis should be on God, not on us. The definitive answer to the preceding question is: *By the twin and*

inseparable gifts of faith and good deeds. Suppose someone asked you: which side of a coin is more valuable? How would you respond? You would ask for clarification, because a coin cannot exist with only one side.

Loving God and obeying Him are inseparable. Love inevitably leads to obedience:

Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. Christ (John 14:21 NIV)

At the beginning of His Book of Laws—*the Most Holy Book*—Bahá'u'lláh makes this statement:

The first duty prescribed by God for His servants is the recognition of Him Who is the Dayspring of His Revelation and the Fountain of His laws...It behoveth everyone who reacheth this most sublime station, this summit of transcendent glory, to observe every ordinance of Him Who is the Desire of the world. These twin duties are inseparable. Neither is acceptable without the other. Thus hath it been decreed by Him Who is the Source of Divine inspiration.⁵

The same principle is confirmed also in the Qur'án and the Bible:

Those who have faith and do righteous deeds, they are the best of creatures. Qur'án 98:7

But those who believe and do righteous deeds, for them is mercy, and a great reward! Qur'án 35:7 Y

If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him... John 14:23 NIV

If you want to enter [eternal] life, obey the commandments. Matthew 19:17

Blessed are they who keep his statutes and seek him with all their heart. Psalms 119:2 NIV

We should note that there are two kinds of faith: enlightened and blind. God is absolute Reason. Would He give us the gift of reason and expect us to act against it? That was what Galileo told the closed-minded theologians of his time who wanted to silence him by the sheer force of their authority as the spokesmen for Jesus! The behavior of church leaders at that time toward a humble servant of God—Galileo—should teach us a lesson that we are reluctant to learn: that might does not make right.

In the parable of the Kingdom (Matt. 25:1-13) Jesus clearly teaches us that in addition to a good heart, we must follow the light of wisdom. In still another parable, Jesus teaches that to know Him at His second coming, we should not only be faithful but also wise (Matt. 24:45-51). Daniel also glorifies wisdom as a means of being redeemed at the end of the age (Daniel 12:3,10). How can we gain wisdom? By conforming to the majority, to authority figures, and to tradition, or by respecting the rules of reason? By walking in the light of true knowledge or by groping in the darkness of illusions and assumptions?

True wisdom is not only the fruit of the mind by also the fruit of the heart. Consider the following *prophecy*. It reveals the spiritual virtues that make us worthy of knowing the Lord—the promised Redeemer of our time:

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 NIV

What virtues does a true believer need —whether he is Jewish, Christian, or Muslim—to know the Lord?

- Humility
- Obedience to God's commandments
- Thirst for truth

- Righteousness

What if a believer lacks these virtues? He will be spiritually blind. He will not be able to see the beauty and glory of his Lord. Note that the prophecy makes no reference to studying the Bible, or gaining degrees in theology. The requirements for knowing the Lord are all spiritual, not intellectual.

To know God, we must understand His Word; and to understand His word, we must have a good heart and a critical mind. We must be free from bias, from the dictates of tradition. We must have the courage to follow the truth wherever it may lead us. An impartial heart does not pressure the mind to see what it favors. It allows the mind to work freely, to see everything, to have a global view. It motivates the mind to judge in the light of all instructions, of everything that God teaches.

Consider the following verses. The first gives the impression that to gain eternal life all we need is faith; the second makes us believe that all we need are good deeds:

Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him. John 3:36 NIV

Seek good...that ye may live... Amos 5:14

Can we come to a conclusion, can we know the truth without pondering the meaning of both of these verses? Where then does the doctrine of "being saved by grace alone" come from? From verses like this:

For by grace are ye saved through faith... Ephesians 2:8

How do theologians interpret the preceding verse? They simply say: It means we are saved by grace alone. But a careful analysis of the verse reveals the following:

- We are saved by faith

- We received the gift of faith by grace

True, everything comes to us by grace, including the gift of faith. But we cannot save our soul by grace; we can save it by our faith. How do we know we have faith? How do we know if our faith is alive and healthy?

What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him?...***faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.***

James 2:14, 17 NIV

Professing faith without good deeds is itself a sin called hypocrisy. It simply adds to our sins. In an Epistle to a believer, Bahá'u'lláh declares that it is better to be an infidel than to be deceptive or cunning:

Be thou of the people of hell-fire,

but be not a hypocrite.

Be thou an unbeliever,

but be not a plotter.⁶

How can we save our soul from “the fiery furnace”—remoteness from God? By “grace” or by “good deeds”?

The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. They will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear.

Matthew 13:41-43 NIV

Living by divine virtues and proving our faith by good deeds is the centerpiece of Bahá'u'lláh's Writings:

Let your acts be a guide unto all mankind, for the professions of most men, be they high or low, differ from their conduct. It is through your deeds that ye can distinguish yourselves from others. Through them the

brightness of your light can be shed upon the whole earth. Happy is the man that heedeth My counsel, and keepeth the precepts prescribed by Him Who is the All-Knowing, the All-Wise.⁷

The fruits of the tree of man have ever been and are goodly deeds and a praiseworthy character.⁸

O CHILDREN OF ADAM! Holy words and pure and goodly deeds ascend unto the heaven of celestial glory. Strive that your deeds may be cleansed from the dust of self and hypocrisy and find favor at the court of glory; for ere long the assayers of mankind shall, in the holy presence of the Adored One, accept naught but absolute virtue and deeds of stainless purity.⁹

“When asked on one occasion: ‘What is a Bahá’í?’ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá replied: ‘To be a Bahá’í simply means to love all the world; to love humanity and try to serve it; to work for universal peace and universal brotherhood.’ On another occasion He defined a Bahá’í as ‘one endowed with all the perfections...’”¹⁰

Let us consider one more analogy. Compare the twin pillars of faith and works to human legs. Can we walk with only one leg? We can, but only in our imagination. That is almost what some theologians have done. They have convinced many Christians to believe that they can walk to heaven with only one imaginary leg, called grace. As stated, they have altered the Word of God in two ways:

- They have exchanged the word “faith” (which requires effort) for grace (which requires no effort).
- They have omitted faith’s inseparable partner: works.

Can a person walk to heaven just by the grace of God? Consider also the following verse:

...God, who has saved us and called us to a holy life—
not because of anything we have done but because of his
own purpose and grace. II Timothy 1:8-9 NIV

Does the preceding verse declare that we are saved by grace alone? The verse refers to the past, not to the future. It says: we were ignorant; God gave us the gift of faith by grace. What should we do next? Now that we have received that gift, we must prove that we are worthy of receiving it. The verse does not mean that we will continue to be saved by grace alone.

Even a cursory study of the Bible shows that St. Paul's statements are balanced by many others.

...if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have
not love, I am nothing. I Corinthians 13:2 NIV

Let us see what Jesus taught. Did He say anything about “being saved by grace”? Nowhere in His teachings can we find even the slightest connection between the words “save” and “grace.”

Question: If “being saved by grace alone” is so critical, why did Jesus never mention it? As we shall see later, Jesus did just the opposite: Instead of linking “being saved” with “grace,” He linked it repeatedly with works and faith, but mostly with works.

Emphasis on grace at the expense of works has grave consequences. It denigrates the sublime station of faith. It diminishes the glorious honor of believing. It has caused many nonbelievers to criticize the Gospel and to make fun of Christians. Consider this statement from a Jewish theologian:

Christianity...offers man a world to come, eternal happiness, with very little effort. A good Christian goes to church once a week, doesn't steal or commit adultery or murder (unless it is in the name of the Church, such

as during the Crusades), puts a little money in the collection plate on Sunday, and presto! he gets eternal happiness. That is a rather cheap price to pay for such bliss...The Jew must study every spare moment he has, he must try to always do acts of charity...To be a Jew requires a lot of commitment; to be a Christian requires only faith—and when eternal bliss is waved before one’s eyes, it is easy to believe in anything.¹¹

If you had a choice to be saved either by your “works” or by “grace” which one would you choose? The first requires constant struggle against your selfish desires; the second requires almost no struggle. Could not the emphasis on grace at the expense of good deeds be a fulfillment of this prophecy:

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. II Timothy 4:3 NIV

Once I read about a young man who said, “I need a bicycle, but don’t have the money to buy one. So I will steal a bicycle, and then confess my sin. God is full of grace. I know I will be forgiven!”

Let us now look at the big picture—the one our Creator wants us to see. Let us see what Jesus Himself emphasized, and then compare His Words with those of Muhammad, Bahá’u’lláh, and Hebrew Prophets.

Wherever we look, we see that our Creator is speaking about works, about obeying His commands. That is the ultimate test of being a believer, and even being a human being.

See, I am setting before you today a blessing and a curse—the blessing if you obey the commands of the Lord...

Deut. 11:26-27

Lord, who may dwell in your sanctuary? Who may live on your holy hill? He whose walk is blameless and who does what is righteous, who speaks the truth from his heart and has no slander on his tongue, who does his neighbor no wrong...

Psalms 15:1-3 NIV

The following three verses give us a full picture of how we can please God:

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have *everlasting life*.[✧]

John 3:16 NKJ

“I tell you the truth,” Jesus said to them, “no one who has left home or wife or brothers or parents or children for the sake of the kingdom of God will fail to receive many times as much in this age and, in the age to come, *eternal life*.”

Christ (Luke 18:29-30 NIV)

If you want *to enter life*, obey the commandments.

Christ (Matt. 19:17 NIV)

The preceding verses specify the requirement for receiving eternal life. The first statement refers to “faith,” the second and the third refer to “works.” Which one has received greater attention in Christian literature? The first one. John 3:16 is quoted hundreds of times, perhaps thousands of times more often than the verses that emphasize works.

Consider also the following verses. Jesus begins His discourse by emphasizing the glory of believing; and concludes it by reminding us of the consequences of demonstrating our faith by virtuous deeds or failing to do so:

I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life...those who have done

[✧] John 3:16 is usually attributed to Jesus. Some authorities believe that the statement is from John.

good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned. John 5:24, 29 NIV

Christian authors often quote the first part of Jesus' discourse, without mentioning the second. The Scriptures show clearly that the evidence for being a true Christian is good deeds, not mere profession of faith. The same rule holds true with Jesus. How did He prove His faith in His Father? And how did He ask us to judge Him?

If I am not acting as my Father would, do not believe me. But if I am, accept the evidence of my deeds.

John 10:37-38 NEB

In the following verse Jesus declares the obstacle that prevents people from recognizing Him is their evil deeds:

Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God. John 3:19-21 NIV

The implication of the preceding verses is clear: anyone who is deficient in good deeds cannot be a true Christian. Carrying the label "Christ is my Savior" without true commitment to His commands has little if any value.

Bahá'u'lláh repeatedly confirms Jesus' statement:

Behold how their evil doings have hindered them from recognizing, in the Day of Resurrection, the Word of Truth, exalted be His glory.¹²

The same message is found also in Hebrew Scriptures:

Surely the arm of the Lord is not too short to save, nor his ear too dull to hear. But your iniquities have separated

you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear. Isaiah 59:1-2 NIV

Jesus emphasized both faith and works. St. Paul emphasized grace. Most Christian theologians have sided with St. Paul. Instead of talking so much about grace, they should focus on faith and works, and then indicate that they are inseparable.

It is easy to claim loyalty to a cause. In the United States, about eighty percent of people declare that they believe in God. But it is only by works, not by words, that they can demonstrate their sincerity. An evidence of true faith is self-sacrifice:

If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. Christ (Matt. 16:24 NIV)

We are told repeatedly that our rewards depend on our deeds, not on the grace of God. Even “faith,” the essential partner of “works” is not mentioned as often:

Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done.

Revelation 22:12 NIV

Verily the Hour is coming—my [God’s] design is to keep it hidden—for every soul to receive its reward by the measure of its endeavor. Qur’án 20:15 Y

For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father’s glory...and then he will reward each person according to what he has done. Matthew 16: 27 NIV

You render to each one according to his work.

Psalms 62:12 NKJ

The days of God in which He rewards men according to their deeds. Qur’án 45:14

Surely you will reward each person according to what he has done. Psalms 62:12 NIV (Also Eph. 6:8)

He repays a man for what he has done; he brings upon him what his conduct deserves.

Job 34:11 NIV

See also Prov. 24:12; II Cor. 5:10

The Lord will establish you as his holy people, as he promised you on oath, if you keep the commands of the Lord your God and walk in his ways.

Deuteronomy 28:9 NIV

Also Jonah 3:10

The Lord will again delight in you and make you prosperous, just as he delighted in your fathers, if you obey the Lord your God and keep his commands and decrees that are written in this Book of the Law and turn to the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul.

Deuteronomy 30:9-10 NIV

Blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it.

Luke 11:28

Also Luke 18:29-30

The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.

I John 2:17 NIV

The face of the Lord is against them that do evil.

I Peter 3:12

Also Job 8:20; Prov. 15:29

He who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also...

John 14:12 NIV

If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.

John 8:31-32 NIV

You are my friends if you do what I command.

John 15:14 NIV

Anyone who breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

Matthew 5:19 NIV

Behold, I set before you today a blessing and a curse: the blessing, if you obey the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you today; and the curse, if you do not obey the commandments of the Lord your God, but turn aside from the way which I command you today...
Deuteronomy 11:26-28 NKJ

This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God.
John 3:19-21 NIV

In the following statements, Jesus considers obedience the prerequisite for receiving eternal life:

If you want to enter into life, keep the commandments.
Matt. 19:17 NKJ

I tell you the truth, if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death.
John 8:51 NIV

In the following verse Jesus considers faith the essential requirement for receiving eternal life:

I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?
John 11:25-26 NIV

Good deeds are the fruits of faith. A fruitless tree is fit for fire (Luke 3:9). A critical reason for the renewal of religion from age to age is the decline of good deeds:

If the followers of the Lord Christ had continued to follow 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 to earth.¹³ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

The following verses emphasize the importance of faith:

The time has come for...rewarding...those who reverence your name... Revelation 11:18 NIV

Your faith has saved you; go in peace. Luke 7:50 NIV

Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.

Mark 16:16 NIV

If you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins. John 8:24 NKJ

Christian theology, in relation to many doctrines, is shaped more by what Jesus’ disciples and followers have said and are saying than by what Jesus Himself taught. Excessive dependence on “grace” as a means of salvation provides an excellent example. Where is this theology rooted? In the words of Jesus or those who tried to understand and explain His teachings? In all four Gospels, the word “grace” appears only four times (Luke 2:40; John 1:14, 16, 17) and in Revelation two times (Rev. 1:4; 22:21). In none of these statements does Jesus link the concept of grace, even remotely, to the gift of salvation. What about the Epistles that Jesus’ disciples and followers wrote? In their works, the Scriptural scene changes radically. In their Epistles, the references to the word “grace” appear 122 times! In the words of Jesus the emphasis is clearly on good deeds; in the works of those who tried to understand and interpret His teachings the emphasis shifts to grace.

Jesus’ disciples were “the salt of the earth.” They were enlightened, spiritual, dedicated, and detached from the world. They had the purest souls. What about their ***understanding*** of the words of Jesus? What grade would Jesus give them? The best way to respond to this question

is to listen to Jesus Himself, to examine what He said about the *mind-set* of His devoted disciples.

When Jesus' disciples failed to understand the meaning of a parable, Jesus said:

Are you still as dull as the rest? Matthew 15:17 NEB

Consider also the following encounter between Jesus and Peter:

Peter took him [Jesus] aside and began to rebuke him. "Never, Lord!" he said. "This shall never happen to you!" Jesus turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men."

Matthew 16:22-23 NIV

See also Mark 8:32-33

Further, who were the theologians who decided which books or Epistles should be accepted as a part of the New Testament, and which books should be rejected? Were they also infallible? Who gave them the authority to make their choices? Did Jesus give them that authority?

The following story demonstrates our relationship with God. It contains almost all the lessons we need to know in order to please God:

Now a man came up to Jesus and asked, "Teacher, what good thing must I do to get eternal life?" "Why do you ask me about what is good?" Jesus replied. "There is only One who is good. If you want to enter life, obey the commandments." "Which ones?" the man inquired. Jesus replied, "Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not give false testimony, honor your father and mother, and love your neighbor as yourself." "All these I have kept," the young man said. "What do I still lack?" Jesus answered, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you

will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.”
When the young man heard this, he went away sad,
because he had great wealth. Matthew 19:16-22 NIV

The man preferred worldly riches to spiritual blessings. He was only infatuated by Jesus. He did not demonstrate true faith. He acted like a man who feels attracted to his girlfriend, but refuses to make the commitment of marrying her. What did Jesus communicate to the rich man? Did He say: “To gain eternal life, to be perfect, and to be saved, believe in the Son and the Holy Spirit”? He spoke only of works, of good deeds, of self-sacrifice. He communicated this message: “If you are sincere in your love for truth, show me the evidence. Only then will you become worthy of me.” We should note that for many people giving their wealth away is at least as hard as “carrying their cross”!

When Bahá'u'lláh was in prison and exile, a well-known religious leader sent Him a letter asking to meet with Him in a safe and secret place. In response, Bahá'u'lláh sent him a poem with this message: If you are concerned with your safety, don't come, and don't bring any trouble. Come only if you can sacrifice everything, even your life. The religious leader declined the invitation. He acted like the rich man who walked away from Jesus.

Consider also the following verses:

And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books...and each person was judged according to what he had done...If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

Revelation 20:12-15 NIV

In the preceding verses, Jesus speaks first about deeds, and then about faith. Only the names of those who accept the

Redeemer of the Age are registered in the Book of Life. Only they can enter the heavenly Kingdom. Their good deed is this: when they hear the news of the return of their Lord, they take immediate action. They investigate the news. Those who deny or ignore their Redeemer cannot gain life. They are dead even before dying:

I know your deeds; you have a reputation of being alive,
but you are dead. Christ (Rev. 3:1 NIV)

As God has ordained, the destiny of those who deny their Redeemer is bleak indeed. What can be worse than being thrown into the lake of fire—a metaphor for remoteness from God. Note that the deniers are not even escorted to the fire; they are thrown into it!

In the preceding verses, Jesus once again confirms God's justice, not His grace or mercy. The voice of wisdom constantly sends this message to every human being: When you pass away, expect to be judged with justice, to be rewarded according to your works, and not to be saved from your misdeeds by grace. If God set His justice aside, and treated some people, or even all people by grace, then the Kingdom of Heaven would become as chaotic as the kingdom of the earth. God would have to play favorites, just as we do here on earth.

The preceding verses from Jesus (Rev. 20:12-15) indicate that permission to enter heaven is granted to those who recognize the Redeemer of the Age. The station of such believers, however, will depend on their deeds.

It is amazing! Wherever we look, we find Jesus emphasizing works rather than grace. And yet His teachings have been clouded and distorted by theological doctrines that seem to make going to heaven almost as easy as opening one's mouth and uttering a few words. Note the sense of desperation, and even perhaps anger, in the following words of Jesus:

Why do you call me, “Lord, Lord,” and do not do what I say? I will show you what he is like who comes to me and hears my words and puts them into practice. He is like a man building a house, who dug down deep and laid the foundation on rock. When a flood came, the torrent struck that house but could not shake it, because it was well built. But the one who hears my words and does not put them into practice is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. The moment the torrent struck that house, it collapsed and its destruction was complete. Christ (Luke 6:46-49 NIV)

The glory of Jesus can manifest itself only in the heavenly virtues that surround us like a circle of light:

Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven. Christ (Matt. 5:16 NIV)

Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another. Christ (John 13:34-35 NIV)

The necessity of accepting God’s great Messengers and obeying them is confirmed repeatedly in all the sacred Scriptures. They all declare that our relationship with God rests on two pillars:

- Knowing, loving, and glorifying God.
- Accepting and **obeying** God’s latest Manifestation and Messenger.

That true faith and good deeds are inseparable is also confirmed in the Qur’án:

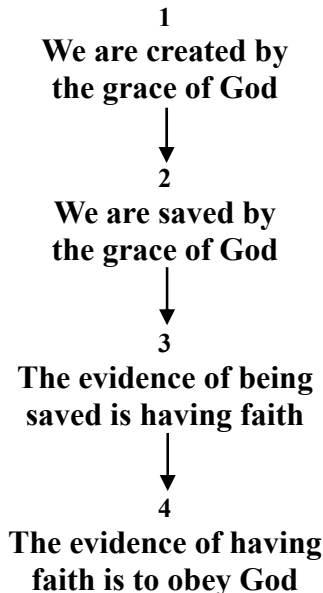
Neither by your riches nor by your children shall you bring yourselves into nearness with Us; but they who believe and do the thing that is right shall have a double reward for what they shall have done, and in the pavilions of Paradise shall they dwell secure! Qur’án 34:36

Shall we treat those who believe and do the things that are right like those who propagate evil on earth? Shall we treat the God-fearing like the impious? Qur'án 38:28

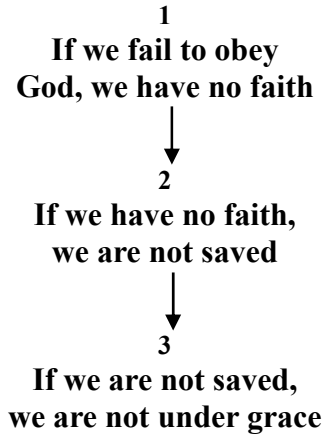
It is unwise to build our everlasting destiny on God's grace alone. We must build that destiny on His justice. We can **count** on God's absolute justice, but we can only **hope** for His grace.

Let us summarize this chapter through an analogy. Compare the gifts of "being created" and "being saved" to the wheels of a bicycle. Compare the gift of faith to the handlebar (for faith gives direction to our lives), and the gift of good deeds to the pedals. What happens when we stop pedaling? We fall. The same happens when we fail to engage in righteous deeds. We fall from grace. The missing link in the popular theology of "grace alone" is the pedal—an essential part of the system.

Once again consider all the links that support the gift of grace:



Let us now look at the preceding links in reverse order:



As we can see, the three gifts of grace, faith, and good deeds are intimately intertwined. Faith is a gift from God to us; good deeds is a gift from us to God. Unless we strive sincerely to be grateful to God by offering Him the gift of good deeds in return for His blessings, we will fall from grace.

Let us conclude this chapter with a memorable quotation from the Hebrew Scriptures:

What does the Lord your God require of you, but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways and to love Him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul.

Deuteronomy 10:12 NKJ

21

The Son of God

What Does it Really Mean?

Statements like the following are found abundantly in Christian publications concerning Islam:

The Qur'án denies that Jesus is the Son of God...For this reason God is never called "Father" in the Qur'án.¹

The Qur'án repeatedly declares that God does not have sons or daughters:

God, the eternal, the absolute. He begetteth not, nor is He begotten. Qur'án 112:2-3

...in their ignorance have they falsely ascribed to Him sons and daughters. Glory be to Him! Let Him be exalted above that which they attribute to Him! Sole maker of the Heavens and the Earth! How the One who hath no partner, should have a son? He hath created everything, and He knoweth everything!...No vision taketh in Him, but He taketh in all vision, and He is the Subtile, the All-informed. Qur'án 6:100-103

And they say, "God hath a son." No! Praise be to Him!...Sole maker of the Heavens and the Earth! And when He decreeth a thing, He only saith to it, "Be!" and it is. Qur'án 2:116-117

They say, "God hath begotten children." No! by His glory! He is the self-sufficient. All that is in the Heavens and all that is in the Earth is His!...What! Speak ye of God that which ye know not? Say: Verily, they who devise this lie concerning God shall fare ill.

Qur'án 10:68-69

His is the Kingdom of the Heavens and of the Earth! No son hath He begotten! No partner hath He in His Kingdom!
 Qur'án 25:2

Christian theologians use the preceding verses to show that the God of Islam and the God of the Gospel are different, for “the Father” has a Son, whereas Alláh is childless! They cannot be the same. To resolve this question, let us begin with Jesus’ conception. The Qur’án teaches that Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit:

And make mention in the Book, of Mary, when she went apart from her family, eastward, and took a veil to shroud herself from them. And We [God] sent Our Spirit to her, and He [the Spirit] assumed before her the form of a perfect man. She [Mary] said: “I take refuge from thee to the God of Mercy!...He said: “I am only a Messenger of thy Lord, that I may bestow on thee a holy Son.” She said: “How shall I have a Son, when man hath never touched me? And I am not unchaste.” He [the Spirit] declared: “So shall it be! Thy Lord hath said: ‘Easy is this for Me!’ And We [God] will make Him [Jesus] a sign [of glory and power] to mankind, and mercy from Us. Thus hath it been decreed.”

Qur’án 19:16-21

Is this not also what the Bible teaches?

“How will this be,” Mary asked the angel, “since I am a virgin?” The angel answered, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you.”

Luke 1:34-35 NIV

This glory that the Qur’án bestows on Jesus should not be taken lightly. Larry King has interviewed many prominent people on television. Once he “said that Jesus Christ was the person he would most like to interview—and the question he would most like to ask Christ is ‘Were you

indeed born of a virgin?’ According to King, the answer to this one question would define the rest of history.”²

What the Qur’án rejects is not the title “Son of God,” but the meaning that some Christians have attached to it. God is a Spirit, and so is the Holy Spirit. The conception of Jesus was sheer miracle. It came about by the power of the Spirit. To think that it was activated by natural means is sheer blasphemy. It is an insult to God. For it brings the Creator to the level of the created. This is the concept that the Qur’án rejects.

Some of misconceptions about the meaning of the Son of God may come from the word “begotten.” The word may bring to mind the idea of natural conception. When we say, “we are sons and daughters of God,” we think only in spiritual terms. But when we add the word “begotten,” the focus shifts from spiritual to physical.

This is how the dictionary defines the word “beget:” to become the father of a child. Thus “the only begotten Son of God” means: The only child fathered by God.

The following verses show God’s anger at those who attribute to God their own human conditions:

The disbelievers say, “The Lord of Mercy has offspring.” How terrible is this thing you assert, it almost causes the heavens to be torn apart, the earth to split asunder, the mountains to crumble to pieces, that they attribute offspring to the Lord of Mercy. Qur’án 19:88-91

God hath not begotten offspring; neither is there any other God with Him...Far from the glory of God be what they attribute to Him! Qur’án 23:91

This is Jesus, the son of Mary...It beseemeth not God to beget a son. Glory be to Him! When He decreeth a thing, He only saith to it “Be!” and it is. Qur’án 19:34-35

Say: He is God alone, God the eternal! He begetteth not, and He is not begotten; and there is none like unto Him.

Qur'án 112:1-4

The words “impute to Him” in the following verse indicate that some people would denigrate God by associating human needs and desires to Him:

Say: If the God of Mercy had a son, the first would I [Muhammad] be to worship him. But far be the Lord of the Heavens and of the Earth, the Lord of the Throne, from that which they impute to Him! Qur'án 43:81-82

According to historical records, some of the Christians living at the time of Muhammad, or earlier, thought of Jesus' conception in human terms. The Qur'ánic verses intended to uproot that misconception. Consider these verses once again:

How could He who hath no consort [wife] have a son?

Qur'án 6:101

His the Kingdom of heavens and the earth! No son hath He begotten! No partner [spouse] hath He in His Empire!

Qur'án 25:2

And they say, “God hath a son”...When He decreeth a thing, He only saith to it, “Be!” and it is. Qur'án 2:116-117

A careful reading of the verses shows clearly that what the Qur'án rejects is not the title of the Son, but how the Son came into being. The Quranic verses indicate that the way God produces a Son is not to adopt a spouse, but simply say, “Be!” and the Son is created.

The only thing physical about the conception and birth of Jesus was the womb, or the shell that protected and nourished that heavenly Pearl until He was born. The only physical link in His creation was His most blessed and exalted mother, Mary.

It is for this reason that the Qur'án refers to Jesus as “the Son of Mary.” It uses that title 23 times without ever referring to Joseph as His father. But surprisingly, the Gospel identifies Joseph as Jesus’ father:

Philip found Nathanael and told him, “We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote—*Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.*”
John 1:44 NIV

And *Jesus* himself began to be about thirty years of age, being (as was supposed) *the son of Joseph*, which was the son of Heli...[many generations]...which was the son of Adam, which was the son of God. Luke 3:23-38

When his parents saw him, they were astonished. His mother said to him, “*Son*, why have you treated us like this? *Your father* and I have been anxiously searching for you.”
Luke 2:48 NIV

Here the Muslims could reverse the argument by saying that the Qur'án more accurately describes the sublime station of Jesus. Because unlike the Gospel, it makes no mention of Joseph as the father. As a father Joseph has no place in the Qur'án. Imagine if the reverse were true. No doubt Christian theologians would raise bitter objections to the Qur'án for referring to Joseph as Jesus’ father.

Let us now look at the ability of the human mind to distort the truth to create conflict and prejudice. A prophet named Muhammad grows up in a most primitive and violent culture among pagans who worship hundreds of idols. Those who raise Him, His guardians, do not believe in a spiritual Being as their Creator. The idea of an invisible God and the Holy Spirit is as far from their heart and soul as the heavens from the earth. From this sterile, pagan, and primitive environment, a man named Muhammad arises and challenges the beloved beliefs and traditions of His people. In spite of grave danger to His life, He destroys

their dearest objects of adoration—their idols—and then declares that a baby named Jesus—born some six centuries earlier to a Jewish mother—was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit! Even many Christians of our age who attend church every Sunday, who are raised in a Christian family and culture—including many priests, bishops, and pastors—do not believe in this miracle. What more do Christians expect?

What does Muhammad's acknowledgment indicate? And what should be our response? It indicates that it comes from a Source far beyond human level and human culture. And our response should be unconditional reverence for Muhammad and the Qur'án on the part of all Christians. Muhammad's acknowledgment of Jesus' miraculous conception should be great news for every Christian, it should be recited in every church, it should generate unbreakable bonds of friendship, unity, and love between the followers of the two great religions. And yet many Christian theologians have cut these bonds into pieces and turned them into traps of misunderstanding, separation, superiority, and prejudice.

Let us now see what “the Son of God” really means. Should we take titles literally? Or should we consider them metaphors and symbols—signs that stand for inner meanings?

Human beings love titles. Give a person a high position along with a big title and he will do a lot more for you. Call a young man “the chief elder of our church” and watch the glow in his eyes, and the new level of dedication to his church! The new title gives him a new birth and identity. This is how powerful titles are. Names, labels, and titles are charged with power. They can both divide and unite nations and peoples.

But they often divide, because they relate to “the letter” and not “the Spirit.” According to *Unger’s Bible Dictionary*:

The doctrine of the eternal Sonship of Christ has been the ground for many hard-fought battles.³

Question: What does a title say about a person? For instance, we say: “The Honorable Senator...” What does “the Honorable” really mean? Does it say anything about the Senator’s character? What about those who are not entitled to this title? Are they less honorable?

People are so attached to names, labels, and titles, it is hard to liberate them from these bonds and carry them from the surface to the depths; from words and letters, to the Spirit that lies behind. Take the title “Son of God.” Christians use this title to show the uniqueness and greatness of Jesus. What does it really mean? Does it say much about Jesus—the Spirit behind the name? Let us ask some questions:

- The title “sons of God” is bestowed repeatedly on all human beings.

Thus saith the Lord, Israel is my son, even my firstborn... Exodus 4:22

But as many as received him [Jesus], to them gave the power to become the sons of God... John 1:12

If all people are sons of God, then each person is a son of God. Thus the title is not unique at all. It applies to every human being.

- Let us assume that God had only one son. Did He close the door to having other sons in the future? Can anyone claim, on his own, that this will be impossible?
- Suppose God chooses to have another Son or even many other Sons and Daughters. Will Jesus lose His greatness or uniqueness by receiving a few younger brothers and sisters?

- If all human beings—both men and women—are sons of God, then what is unique about Jesus? Is it His birth? Not really, because Adam, according to the Bible, had neither a father nor a mother. If having no human being as a father is a sign of greatness, then Adam must be greater than Jesus. He had neither.⁴

The *Book of Hebrews* declares still another biblical figure to be without parents:

Melchizedek was...Without father or mother,
without genealogy... Heb. 7:1-3 NIV

- Let us assume that the title “Son of God” was given exclusively to Jesus, that He was indeed unique for being “the only Son of God.” Does that title tell us anything about His greatness? Not really. Because uniqueness does not equal greatness. Let us assume that God decided to have a daughter, and she was called: the only begotten Daughter of God. Could anyone claim that she cannot be equal to Jesus because of her gender?

The verse from Exodus refers to “Israel” as God’s son. The verse from John calls every faithful Christian a “son of God.” What about women? Are they not the daughters of God? Answer: God does not see us as men and women. From His perspective, gender has no relevance to who we are. To Him, every daughter is “a son of God!” Some women—who are confined by “letters”—may feel offended by this usage. Others—who are able to tear away “the veil of words”—feel proud simply for being connected to God, whatever they may be called. They are not prisoners of words and letters. The Jews who rejected Jesus were prisoners of one word: King. The Christians who reject Bahá’u’lláh are also prisoners of one word: Sky. They will recognize and accept their Redeemer only if He comes from the sky—of course, without a parachute!

The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned. I Corinthians 2:14 NIV

Thus, the more we grow spiritually, the less we see the worldly veils, such as gender, race, nationality, titles, and labels. The application of “the son of God” to women offers an excellent lesson concerning the true meaning and significance of titles from God’s perspective.

As the following prophecy declares, God will in this age remove the shroud that veils all peoples and nations. Names, labels, and titles are a segment of the veil:

On this mountain [of the Lord] he will destroy the shroud that enfolds all peoples, the sheet that covers all nations...
Isaiah 25:7 NIV

Let us now assume that God calls each of His Messengers and Redeemers by one of these titles:

- The Greatest Spirit
- The Most Glorious Being
- The Most Beloved Messenger
- My Most Exalted Redeemer
- My Only Friend
- My Most Beloved Friend

The preceding titles are all unique. Which one carries more honor? Who can decide which one bestows more greatness than the others? Who can say that the title “Son of God” represents a higher position than the preceding ones?

God can give millions of unique titles or positions to millions of people. Uniqueness is not an evidence of greatness. The Bible calls Abraham the Friend of God and Moses the One who spoke with God. Can anyone, by these titles, tell which one of the two Messengers was greater? As

we can see, titles are helpful for communication, but they do not fully reveal the Spirit that hides behind them.

Consider these biblical metaphors and their meanings:

<i>Metaphors</i>	<i>Meanings</i>
Husband	God
Bridegroom	Jesus
Bride	Religion
Harlot	Corrupt religion
Adulterous	Disloyal believers

Ponder the meaning of “husband” in this verse:

“In that day,” declares the Lord, “you will call me ‘my husband;’ you will no longer call me ‘my master.’...I will betroth [wed] you to me forever; I will betroth you in righteousness and justice, in love and compassion. I will betroth you in faithfulness, and you will acknowledge the Lord.”

Hosea 2:16-20 NIV

The time of the fulfillment of the preceding prophecy is now. If we are “true believers,” we are entitled to the honor of being God’s intimate partner. How should we interpret this title? What does it really mean?

Again, what does it mean to be the son of light?

...the light has come into the world... John 3:19 NKJ

...believe in the light, that you may become sons of light.

John 12:36 NKJ

Both the Qur’án and the Bahá’í Scriptures bestow the title “The Spirit of God” on Jesus. In His Epistle to the king of Negus, Muhammad declared:

I bear witness that Jesus Son of Mary is the Spirit of God and His Word...⁵

See also Qur’án 21:91

Which title gives Jesus a higher status? “The Son of God,” or “The Spirit of God”? The latter one, of course. Since God is a Spirit, we can conclude that, based on the literal meaning of this title, Jesus was God.

Is it not then ironic that instead of recognizing and acknowledging the heights of glory to which Muhammad has raised Jesus, many Christians complain that He has not confirmed their narrow understanding of the meaning of “the Son”? As we can see, Muhammad elevates Jesus to unimaginable heights of glory and honor. By bestowing on Him the title “the Spirit of God” He glorifies Him indeed more than Christians do!

Thus the title—the Spirit of God—enjoys two advantages over “the Son of God:”

- It exalts Jesus to a higher level than “the Son of God” does.
- It ensures the uniqueness of Jesus. Because, unlike “the Son of God,” it is used exclusively for Him. He alone, since the beginning of time, can claim that title. He alone can bask in that honor.

It is obvious that if a title is shared by many people, it loses its uniqueness. The title “the Pope” carries much prestige, because only one person can claim it. Compare that with “priest,” which is so commonplace.

The title “Son of Man” should pose a challenge to the literal-mind believers, because literally it refers to every human being except Jesus: every person has a human

father—a man—*except Jesus!* He had a heavenly Father. The title “Son of Man” offers a classic example of God’s unique language: It conveys or expresses the precise opposite of its intended meaning! The “letter” of the title contradicts its “spirit.” All these examples throw light on the fallacies of being title-minded.

To see everything from God’s perspective, consider the titles that Bahá’u’lláh has bestowed on Jesus:

The Lord Christ	The Essence of detachment
The Lord of all being	The Essence of the Spirit
The Lord of the visible and invisible	The Word of God
The Spirit of God	That peerless Beauty
The Divine Spirit	The Revealer of the Unseen Beauty
The Spirit	The Daystar of the Heaven
The Essence of Being	of Divine Revelation

The preceding titles are like various facets of a most glorious diamond. Each title describes or represents one facet or feature of the Great Spirit that dwelled in Jesus.

It is ironic that Jesus’ favorite title was Son of Man. According to *Unger’s Bible Dictionary*, “He employed this expression to designate Himself some eighty times...”⁶ But rarely did He use “Son of God” to identify Himself. John 10:36 is among a few exceptions. See also Luke 1:35, and John 5:18, 23, 36. Thus the title that bestows on Jesus a unique status is Son of Man, not Son of God. That title is almost exclusively His. And yet seldom if ever Christians refer to Him as Son of Man. Why?

The love for names and labels is universal. Followers of all religions use them to ensure their distinction. But names and labels serve as clouds; they conceal the light of truth

and oneness. These clouds have endured so long, and have been so perfectly preserved and entrenched in the heart and soul of humankind, that no power except the Sun of God can disperse! No wonder Jesus predicted that He would come on the clouds.

The age of creating “clouds” and “veils” out of titles and labels has passed. The Bahá’í teachings destroy all these barriers, and set before our eyes the glorious Spirit. Consider this example: In ancient times, brides concealed their faces. Guests of honor had to use their imagination to see her beauty. They could call her or think of her as: beautiful, gorgeous, or comely. They could also call her “one of the kind.” But can these labels really tell anyone how she looks? Only when she removes her veil, can we really know. That is precisely what Bahá’u’lláh and the Báb have done.

The mystic and wondrous Bride, hidden ere this beneath the veiling of utterance, hath now, by the grace of God and His divine favor, been made manifest even as the resplendent light shed by the beauty of the Beloved.⁷

Bahá’u’lláh

The twin Redeemers of our time—the Gate of God, and the Glory of God—have removed the shroud that has prevented the human race from recognizing its spiritual kinship and oneness. They have given us a glimpse of the glorious Spirit of God that dwells equally in Jesus and all the other great Messengers and Redeemers. That Spirit, we are told, is one. Labels divide; the Spirit unites. When all of us recognize that God, the supreme Judge, treats all His creatures equally, that He loves them with the same heart and the same love, suddenly the shadows of separation, superiority, and uniqueness disappear. The followers of all faiths recognize that they have worshipped one God and honored one Spirit manifested in many Mirrors.

22

Is Jesus God or a Messenger of God?

Trinity: an Obstacle to Unity

The first of all the commandments is: “Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Mark 12:29 NKJ

This chapter presents a topic of prime significance, for the following reasons:

- The doctrine of the Trinity is the most fundamental doctrine in Christianity, supported by Catholics and almost all Protestants.
- It degrades God and distorts our knowledge of God—the very purpose for which we have been created.
- It is the most divisive doctrine, for it elevates Jesus far above all other great Messengers and Redeemers.

What Is the Trinity?

Most Christians accept the doctrine of the Trinity without pondering its profound implications. Seldom if ever they are exposed to the facts that reveal its fallacy. Let us begin with a definition of this doctrine. According to a Catholic encyclopedia:

The Trinity is the term employed to signify the central doctrine of the Christian religion... Thus, in the Words of

the Athanasian Creed: “the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God, and yet there are not three Gods but one God.” In this Trinity...the persons are *co-eternal* and *co-equal*: all alike are uncreated and omnipotent.¹ In Scripture there is as yet no single term by which the Three Divine persons are denoted together.² [Emphasis added.]

Another source describes the Trinity this way:

God is not an eternal solitary, but an Eternal Society.³

Each member of the “Trinity family,” it is assumed, specializes in a certain task. For instance, the Department of Administration belongs to the Holy Spirit. He is considered:

...the Executor of the Godhead through whom all that God does in the world is done, especially, although not exclusively...⁴

What about Jesus? He is “the Giver or Sender of the Holy Spirit to the Church.”⁵

From another source:

The Father is the Originator, the Son is the Agent, and the Holy Spirit is the Administrator.⁶

The terminology adopted parallels business terminology:

The Father: The originator or founder

The Son: The agent

The Holy Spirit: The administrator

The Qur’án strongly rejects the theory of the Trinity. Few subjects provoke God’s anger as strongly as these two popular Christian beliefs:

- God is one in three.
- God has begotten or reproduced a son.

The Qur'án shows that these two doctrines constitute the most serious insult to our Creator:

O People of the Book! Commit no excesses in your religion [do not exaggerate your beliefs], nor say of God except the truth. Christ Jesus the Son of Mary was a Messenger of God, and His Word, which He bestowed on Mary, and a Spirit proceeding from Him [God]. So believe in God and His Messengers. Say not "Trinity!"...It will be better for you. For God is One God, glory be to Him, exalted is He above having a son. To Him belong all things in the heavens and on earth. Qur'án 4:171 Y

Infidels [pagans] now are they who say, "God is the Messiah, Son of Mary." Whoever shall join other gods with God, God shall forbid him the Garden, and his abode shall be the Fire. They surely are pagans who say, "God is the third of three" for there is no God but one God. Will they not, therefore, turn unto God, and ask pardon of Him? For, God is Forgiving and Merciful!

Qur'án 5:72-74

See also Qur'án 5:17

The Knowledge of God

Knowing God is the very purpose for which we have been created, and the first step in knowing God is recognizing and acknowledging His oneness.

The beginning of all things is the knowledge of God...⁷

Bahá'u'lláh

True knowledge...is the knowledge of God...⁸ the Báb

The spirit that animateth the human heart is the knowledge of God...⁹

Bahá'u'lláh

The supreme cause for creating the world and all that is therein is for man to know God.¹⁰

Bahá'u'lláh

...let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me...
Jeremiah 9:24

For the highest and most excelling grace bestowed upon men is the grace of "attaining unto the Presence of God" and of His recognition, which has been promised unto all people. This is the utmost degree of grace vouchsafed unto man by the All-Bountiful, the Ancient of Days, and the fullness of His absolute bounty upon His creatures.¹¹

Bahá'u'lláh

But knowing God truly is a difficult task, and only a few can attain this most glorious honor.

You worship what you do not know. John 4:22

Do ye say of God what ye know not? Qur'án 7:28

Acknowledging the oneness of God is the first step in knowing God and the foremost commandment. It is so fundamental that Bahá'u'lláh repeats it hundreds of times in His prayers and Tablets:

Regard thou the one true God as One Who is apart from, and immeasurably exalted above, all created things. The whole universe reflecteth His glory, while He is Himself independent of, and transcendeth His creatures. This is the true meaning of Divine unity. He Who is the Eternal Truth is the one Power Who exerciseth undisputed sovereignty over the world of being, Whose image is reflected in the mirror of the entire creation. All existence is dependent upon Him, and from Him is derived the source of the sustenance of all things. This is what is meant by Divine unity; this is its fundamental principle.¹²

The theory of the Trinity is the most fundamental principle in Christianity. As an author states, it is "the one basic of all the Christian beliefs."¹³ This commonly accepted and unquestioned doctrine has placed the darkest and the

gravest veil on the face of God. It is one more cloud that has concealed His supreme Glory:

He was robed in a cloud...his face was like the sun...

Revelation 10:1 NIV

Who Is Jesus?

The identity of Jesus forms the very foundation of Christianity. Without knowing who Jesus really is, we grope in darkness. Settling this question is a giant step toward harmony and unity not only among Christians but also between Christians and Muslims, who together constitute about half the earth's population.

Even within Christianity there have been bitter arguments about the identity of Jesus. Sometimes differences of opinion have led to violence and war:

Trinitarians have often persecuted and even killed those who rejected the Trinity doctrine.¹⁴

Why can't the believers agree on this most fundamental question? Consider the following reasons:

- The Gospel offers seemingly conflicting statements about the position or identity of Jesus.
- The language of the Bible is metaphoric. This allows for a wide range of interpretations.

According to *The Dictionary of Bible and Religion*:

The doctrine of the triune God is not found explicitly in the New Testament, but the raw materials are there.¹⁵

Since God often speaks in metaphoric language, those with a strong imagination can always find "the raw materials" to fashion any concept that their hearts may desire.

How can we settle this perplexing question? Who has the true answer? The only One who can speak with absolute authority on all controversial issues is Jesus Himself. He promised that when He returns He will no longer speak to us in parables. He will explain everything in plain language (John 16:25).

Bahá'ís believe that Jesus has already fulfilled His promise. He has already returned and resolved all complex questions in plain language. The time for arguing is past; the age of knowledge has come!

Every hidden thing hath been brought to light by virtue
of the Will of the Supreme Ordainer...¹⁶ Bahá'u'lláh

The Scriptures ask us to postpone judgment concerning complex issues—mysteries. They encourage us to be patient and wait for the Lord to come and clarify all questions for us (I Cor. 4:5). The Lord has now come and told us who He really is!

I love Jesus at least as much as the Christians do. My intention is not to topple Him from Godhood, but simply introduce Him as He is, to reveal His glory in a new light—a light that is shining through the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh, the Glory of God.

The Gospel introduces Jesus in a number of ways: a Servant of God, a Prophet, a Priest, a Savior, an Image of God, the Son of Man, the Son of God, and the Lord. To resolve these seemingly diverse statements and titles concerning the identity of Jesus, Christian theologians have come up with a new theory or doctrine and a new word to describe it. That word is *Trinity*.

Since we are studying Islam, let us see how Christian theologians reject the Islamic position. The following statement from Dr. Morey is typical of the view held by the majority of Christian theologians:

The God of the Bible is one God in three persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. This trinity is not three gods but one God.

When we turn to the Qur'án, we find that it explicitly denies the trinity. The Qur'án states that God is not a Father and Jesus is not the Son of God. Neither is the Holy Spirit God.¹⁷

Is the doctrine of the Trinity based on biblical facts, or is it merely an untested assumption? Before responding to this question from the Bahá'í perspective, let us once again examine the meaning of the Trinity as expressed by Christian theologians. According to *Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary*:

The doctrine of trinity means that within the being and activity of the one God there are three distinct persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit...God is not only one but a family of persons...who are one in will and purpose...¹⁸

...while God is one and many at the same time, he is not one and many in the *same sense*.¹⁹

The Bahá'í Scriptures confirm the Qur'án in upholding the absolute oneness of God and clearly demonstrate that the doctrine of the Trinity is totally without foundation. Many Christian scholars and several denominations also consider the Trinity a myth—sheer illusion. It is a concept contrary to reason. It is as unbiblical as any concept can ever be. It is a denial of the most evident truth. What does the theory of the Trinity accomplish?

- It undermines the unity of God.
- It creates an imaginary mansion with three occupants: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.
- It fails to resolve the central issue: Who Jesus really was?

The dogma of the Trinity seals the door to this imaginary mansion. It implies that Jesus was the only person who stepped into this triangle, and that no one else will ever again receive this honor. This, it claims, is how it is and how it will be for all eternity.

The idea of uniqueness, superiority, and exclusion is universal. Muslims have also built a similar mansion and sealed its door to all newcomers. They looked throughout the Qur'án for any clue, any reference, any sign that would bestow a unique status on their Messenger and their religion. What did they find? One word—"seal"—in this verse:

Muhammad is...the seal of the prophets... Qur'án 33:40

They claim that by calling Muhammad "the seal of the prophets:"

- God suddenly closed and sealed the door to His mansions of knowledge to further revelation of His glory and greatness—as manifested by His Messengers—for all eternity to all human beings.
- That Islam was God's greatest and final revelation of truth and knowledge.
- That in the year 632 A.D., when Muhammad passed away, God finished His architectural design of directing the spiritual, social, and political affairs of humankind. He supposedly locked and sealed His lofty and final mansion—called Islam.

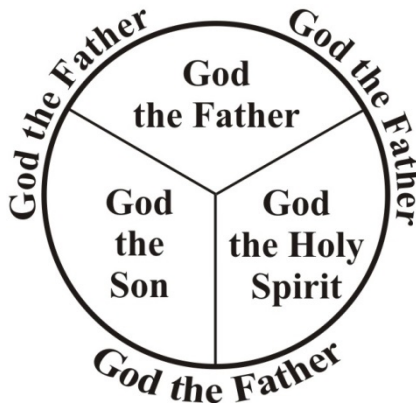
The idea of superiority, finality, and exclusion is so universal and compelling that even the Jews did not escape from it. They also built their own unique exclusive mansion:

And to you there came Joseph in times gone by, with clear signs...when he died, ye said: “No Messenger will God send after him.”
Qur’án 40:34

Let us now see the theory of the Trinity in graphic form:

The Trinity

**God is one,
and yet He consists
of three Persons**



Question: If the whole circle is God, who is a third of a circle at the top of the whole circle?

Unger’s Bible Dictionary states that:

The doctrine is to be accepted by faith in the divine revelation; and while it is above reason, and cannot be comprehended in its depth and fullness, it does not follow, nor can it be shown, that it is opposed to reason.²⁰ ...little stress, if any, is to be laid upon apparent resemblances between pagan religions and Christianity at this point—resemblances more apparent than real.²¹

What does the doctrine of the Trinity imply? What does it really accomplish?

- It distorts the reality and unity of God by dividing Him.
- It attributes human qualities to God.
- It diminishes the awesome and infinite greatness of God.
- It ensures a unique position for Jesus and the Holy Spirit.
- It makes God smaller, and Jesus and the Holy Spirit greater by taking away from one of the three “persons,” the first one (God), and giving it to His two “companions” or “family members” (Jesus and the Holy Spirit)!

The Fallacy of the Trinity

Let us now test this doctrine, first by reason, and then by the Scriptures. “Let us reason together, says the Lord” (Isa. 1:18). Did God give us the gift of reason for no reason? As an impartial thinker can you understand this doctrine? Can you make any sense out of it? What does it mean to say that God is one Being, and yet He consists of three persons? How could anyone think of such an idea? How could anyone dare to divide God?

As the noted Christian theologian, Hans Küng states:

Why should anyone want to add anything to the notion of God’s oneness and uniqueness that can only dilute or nullify that oneness and uniqueness?²²

Among Christians, the Jehovah’s Witnesses have stood firmly against the Trinity:

“Those honoring me I shall honor,” says God. (1 Samuel 2:30) Does it honor God to call anyone his equal? Does

it honor him to call Mary “the mother of God” and the Mediatrix...between the Creator and His creatures,” as does the *New Catholic Encyclopedia*? No, those ideas insult God. No one is his equal; nor did he have a fleshly mother, since Jesus was not God.²³

Why would all the God-inspired Bible writers speak of God as one person if he were actually three persons?... Jesus called God “the only true God.” (John 17:3) Never did he refer to God as a deity of plural persons.²⁴

To gain an insight into this issue, we need to consider some critical questions. For instance, can there be a person without personality? That is absolutely impossible. To have one without the other is a contradiction in terms. *Unger’s Bible Dictionary* confirms this fact:

The Sonship of Christ involves an...eternal distinction of personality between the Son and the Father.²⁵

Then what does it mean to say that God consists of three persons? Does it not imply that God has multiple personalities? What do we call such a person and where do we send him? We call him a patient and send him to a therapist! How would you feel if you were accused of having multiple personalities? Would you not be extremely offended?

As we can see, the doctrine of the Trinity attributes three separate identities to God. If the three Beings have perfectly identical personalities, then they must be one. They cannot be three persons. If there is even the slightest difference between them, then each of them must have his own personality. In that case, it would be accurate to say that God has multiple personalities!

The first step in disclosing the contradiction in the doctrine of the Trinity is to analyze its definition. The analysis reveals that the omission of one critical word in the

definition conceals the contradiction that it contains. Let us undo the concealment by restoring the omitted word. This is how theologians define the Trinity:

God is one, but He is three Persons.

Now consider the following definitions, which are identical in meaning with the preceding one:

God is one *Spirit*, but He is three Spirits.

God is one *Person*, but He is three Persons.

Since God is not the mathematical number 1, when we say that God is 1, we do not mean that He is just a number; we mean that He is one “Spirit” or one “Person.” What conceals the clear contradiction in the definition of the Trinity is the omission of the critical word “Person” in the first part of the definition. The omission of that critical word deceives the mind. Let us now restore that missing word:

God is one (Person), but He is three Persons.

Consider this analogy. What happens when you make extreme changes in your style of dress and makeup? Some people may not even recognize you. The omission of a critical word or the use of diverse words in the popular definition serves a similar purpose. They prevent us from seeing the obvious.

To conclude: Once the definition of the Trinity is exposed, once the clouds that conceal its true meaning are removed, we arrive at a concept that our mind cannot accept:

- God is one Person, but He is three Persons!
- God is one Spirit, but He is three Spirits!

Other examples:

- Who is God? He is one (Creator), but three Creators!

- Who is God? He is one (Governor), but three Governors!

As we can see, the omission of the word “Creator” and “Governor” deceives the mind. Once those words are restored, the contradiction becomes obvious.

Consider also this question: If the Holy Spirit is a Person, just like Jesus, then we should treat Him as such. What was the prime purpose of this person—the Holy Spirit—a member of the holy family called the Trinity? To “beget” or procreate Jesus:

This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, *she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit...what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.*”
Matthew 1:18-20 NIV

If God gave the Holy Spirit the honor of “begetting” or reproducing the physical frame of Jesus in the womb of Mary, why should we take that honor away from Him? Why should we not call Him the true Father of Jesus? No verse declares that Jesus was conceived or fathered by “the Father.” If the Bible “says what it means and it means what it says,” as literal-minded interpreters claim, should we not then conclude that Jesus’ father was the Holy Spirit rather than the other family member called “the Father”? Thus Jesus’ accurate title would be *the Son of the Holy Spirit* rather than *the Son of God!*

Consider also this verse:

Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done. Christ (Luke 22:42 NIV)

If Jesus was God, would He pray to Himself to save Himself from death? We know we seek help from a greater source, from someone higher than we are. The same rule holds true with Jesus. This verse alone shows that the Son

is not “co-equal” with His Father. Why then did Jesus ask God for help? The literal mind thinks: “Jesus wanted to save Himself from a painful death.” The spiritual mind thinks: “Jesus simply wanted to show us His human side, to help us bond with Him and appreciate both the glory and the agony of His sacrifice.”

Theologians who believe in the Trinity often try to support their beliefs by referring to a few biblical verses such as the following:

God said, let *us* make man in *our* image... Genesis 1:26

If God is one, then why did He say “*us*” instead of “*I*”? The use of “*us*” and “*our*” they conclude, is an evidence that God is more than one “person.” He is “persons”! This argument is unfounded, because it ignores the difference between God’s language and human language. When God or His Messengers want to show their authority, they speak as “*we*.” This is called the imperial or royal “*we*” because the kings or queens also used it for the same reason. In the following Tablet (Epistle) addressed to the kings of the world, Bahá’u’lláh refers to Himself first as “*He*” and then as “*We*.”

O Kings of the earth! *He* Who is the sovereign Lord of all is come....*We* see you rejoicing in that which ye have amassed for others...The treasures ye have laid up have drawn you far away from your ultimate objective. This ill beseemeth you, could ye but understand it. Wash your hearts from all earthly defilements, and hasten to enter the Kingdom of your Lord, the Creator of earth and heaven...²⁶

Consider also these examples:

Thou [the Báb] art the Repository of all *Our* [God’s] proofs in this Day.²⁷ The Báb

The day is approaching when *We* will have rolled up the world and all that is therein, and spread out a new order in its stead. He, verily, is powerful over all things.²⁸

Bahá'u'lláh

The Qur'án also uses “We” for God quite often:

To John [the Baptist] *We* [God] said: “Observe the Scriptures with a firm resolve.” *We* bestowed on him wisdom, grace, and purity while yet a child...Blessed was he on the day he was born and the day of his death; and peace be on him when he is raised to life.

Qur'án 19:12

Moreover, to Moses gave *We* [God] “the Book,” and *We* raised up Messengers after him; and to Jesus, son of Mary, gave *We* clear proofs of his mission, and strengthened him by the Holy Spirit.

Qur'án 2:87

If we check any English dictionary, we will find that even in today's language, the words “we,” “us,” “our,” “ours,” and “ourselves” can be used to mean “I,” “me,” “my,” “mine,” and “myself” respectively, by a judge, or even an editor, to indicate that the authority of his or her position or profession is being represented. This practice can be found also in other languages such as Arabic and Hebrew.

Let us continue our analysis of the Trinity. When Jesus was asked about the time of His return, He said:

No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.

Matt 24:36 NIV

The statement from Jesus shows that the members of the Trinity may keep secrets from each other. If the three persons are in perfect harmony, why would the Father not let His Son know when He would return?

Is the Holy Spirit a person or a power? We are told that God loves us, so does Jesus, and that we must also love

them. Have you read any verses that indicate that the Holy Spirit loves us and that we must likewise love the Holy Spirit? If you have not—neither have I. Then does not this observation show that the Holy Spirit is a Power, not a Person?

The most common statement theologians use in defense of the Trinity is: “Some things are true, but beyond our understanding.” This statement deactivates our minds. It says: “Do not reason. Accept this doctrine on faith as many others have done before you, and still do.” This strategy is quite effective because it stands on a self-evident fact, but is flawed. It masquerades the real issue. We reject the doctrine of the Trinity not for reasons we cannot understand, but for reasons we *can* understand: that two contradictory statements cannot both be true at the same time. The doctrine of the Trinity is unfounded, not because it is *beyond* our understanding but because it is *contrary* to our understanding. It violates the most evident and elementary rule of reasoning: that 1+1+1 do not equal 1, that “*three* persons” with unique personalities or identities cannot be “*one* person” with one personality.

Question: Why did God divide Himself? Did He feel lonely? Did He need consultants? Some theologians claim that God wanted to set an example of a loving family for us. If that were the case, would it not be far more instructive if Jesus rather than God was chosen for an example. From Jesus, we could have learned practical lessons on how a man should treat his wife and children. Jesus’ family life would provide a perfect manual for married couples.

Once again we should ask: What is the role of the Holy Spirit? Does He or She then play the role of a mother? For a family without a mother is incomplete; it is not even a family. We have a Father and a Son. Who is the mother? We have an unfilled position and an extra person: the Holy

Spirit. Would it not be reasonable to fill that position with that person? The theory of the Trinity would be more appealing, especially to women if it looked like this:

God: the Father

Jesus: the Son

Holy Spirit: the Wife and the Mother

More questions: How do these three persons relate to each other? Do they have different tastes and talents? Do they consult before giving a command? Or is God always in charge? If He is always in charge, why then divide Him? Should we pray to the Holy Spirit?

As you can see, the concept of the Trinity raises many questions. Above all, it diminishes the awesome and the infinite greatness and glory of God.

As stated, the doctrine of the Trinity is not biblical. Nowhere does the Bible declare that God consists of three persons. This is a fundamental principle in Christian theology. If this doctrine had any basis in reality, would not Jesus utter at least one brief statement about it? There is not even a remote reference to this concept anywhere in the Scriptures. It is an ancient (pre-Christian) concept created by the human mind, based on unfounded and irrational deductions and assumptions. It is the kind of belief one would expect from *pagans*, not Christians!

Ask yourself: Why not put the Son and the Holy Spirit in an entirely different level? Why not make Jesus a Servant of God, a Redeemer or Savior sent by Him to speak for Him—a fact repeatedly confirmed in the Gospel?

The Son can do nothing by himself... John 5:19 NIV

But he who sent me is reliable, and what I have heard from him I tell the world...I do nothing on my own but speak just what the Father has taught me. John 8:26, 28 NIV

How can two individuals be *coequal*, yet enjoy entirely *different* rights?

Then the mother of Zebedee's sons came to Jesus with her sons and, kneeling down, asked a favor of him. "What is it you want?" he asked. She said, "Grant that one of these two sons of mine may sit at your right and the other at your left in your kingdom." Jesus said... "to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared by my Father." Matthew 20:20-23 NIV

Why create family members, partners, or consultants for God? God is a Spirit. How can one Spirit be three persons? The idea is beyond belief, yet most Christians accept it without asking the critical questions.

Let us now see how 'Abdu'l-Bahá, the authorized interpreter of Bahá'u'lláh's teachings, rejects the Trinity. He states that we cannot divide God, because:

...division and multiplicity are properties of creatures which are contingent [dependent] existences, and not accidents which happen to the self-existent.

The Divine Reality is sanctified [even] from singleness, then how much more from plurality. The descent of that Lordly Reality into conditions and degrees would be equivalent to imperfection...and is, therefore, absolutely impossible.²⁹

These concepts lead us to this question: are there logical answers to the objections raised against the theory of the Trinity?

No, there are no answers, there never have been answers, there never will be answers. That is the answer.

To see the vast difference between the spiritual and the literal (or mechanical) mind, compare the following statements about the conception and advent of Jesus.

Spiritual mind:

God impregnated Mary through miraculous means. Jesus was His creation. God said: “Be!” and there He was! God called Jesus His Son and gave Him the honor of speaking for the Father.

Mechanical mind:

God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit existed together. They wanted to communicate to people. Since they were members of one family, it was essential that they consult and arrive at a united decision. After consultation, they chose “God the Son” as their spokesman—as the one who would come to the earth to speak to people and save them. They gave the responsibility of impregnation of Mary to “God the Holy Spirit,” and the duty of supervising this divine drama to “God the Father.” True, the three members of the Trinity are co-equal and co-eternal, yet the Father remains in charge. His title gives Him a special status. It was logical that the Son, rather than the Father, should enter the womb of Mary. He should be the One to receive both the honor of speaking for the Father and suffering for His sake.

The Bahá’í Perspective

Let us now study the Bahá’í perspective concerning the relationship between God, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. According to Bahá’í teachings, their relationship is ***not*** one of “division” “partnership” or “sharing,” but rather one of “emanation” or “manifestation.” The Trinity, as defined by Christian theologians, implies division. ***It requires some change in the essence and identity of God.*** “Emanation” or “manifestation” implies “radiance” “reflection” and “expression.” ***It does not require any change in the essence and***

identity of God. For instance, you see a reflection of your face on a piece of glass. But that reflection or manifestation does not require any change in your face or your identity. There could be thousands of reflections of an image without requiring any change in the image.

Let us consider other examples. Our thoughts are “emanations” from our soul. We can think many thoughts without any alteration in the singleness of our soul. Light emanates from the sun, but it does not require any division within the sun. A painter may produce thousands of images without dividing himself. All planets emanate gravity, and yet gravity does not require any alteration in the planets.

It is evident that the Bahá’í perspective raises God to an infinitely higher level than the Trinity allows. It preserves the oneness of God and His awesome greatness and glory; and yet it does not, in any way, diminish the glory of Jesus. For, according to Bahá’í teachings, Jesus is God’s most sublime and exalted creation. He is not “part” of God, but rather a “Manifestation” of God. He is God in the mirror, not “a small sun” hidden in “the sun.” The following passages confirm the Bahá’í position:

He [Jesus] is the image [Manifestation] of the invisible God...
Colossians 1:15

...Christ, who is the image of God. II Corinthians 4:4 NIV

All these examples demonstrate that, unlike the Trinitarian theory, the Bahá’í explanation is simple, consistent, rational, biblical, and understandable. The idea of the Trinity is unreasonable, unbiblical, inconsistent, and contrary to the most evident and elementary rule of reasoning. Once again the words of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá:

...how can the mind be forced to believe a thing which it cannot conceive? A thing cannot be grasped by the

intelligence except when it is clothed in an intelligible form; otherwise, it is but an effort of the imagination.³⁰

Let us raise yet more questions. How did Jesus come into being? By divine Will. God is so infinitely exalted, so infinitely sublime, that by uttering only one word “Be!” He can create countless millions of Spirits as great as Jesus in a millisecond!

It is He who giveth life and death; and when He decreeth a thing, He only saith, “Be!” and it is. Qur’án 40:68

Our [God’s] Word to a thing when We will it, is but to say, “Be!” and it is. Qur’án 16:40

Potent art Thou to do what pleaseth Thee by Thy word: “Be, and it is.”³¹ Bahá’u’lláh

By the word of the Lord were the heavens made...
Psalms 33:6 NIV

Why did Jesus say: “No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6)? Because we lack the capacity to reach God directly. We need a mediator or a link. God’s Messengers are selected and inspired for this very purpose: to provide a link between the Creator and the created. They are indeed God’s Words and Thoughts.

God...has spoken to us by his Son... Hebrews 1:1-2 NIV

Consider this analogy. What happens when a light bulb touches the electrical current of a powerful generator? It instantly overheats and blows out. How can this be prevented? By controlling and directing the electrical output through adaptors, converters, and wires. God can be regarded as the great generator or power source of the universe, His Messengers or Mediators as adaptors and converters, and the Holy Spirit as the wire that connects our soul directly to the Mediators and indirectly to God. As soon as we touch the charged wire, we become illumined.

The light bulb cannot draw power from the generator except through connectors and converters. It can reach its potential only through them, otherwise it serves no purpose. That is why we are told that without faith we are spiritually dead. Similarly the connectors and transformers can serve their purpose only by attaching themselves to the great generator. Without the generator, on their own, they can produce no power. Consider these verses from the twin Scriptures, the Bible and the Qur'án:

...God is the source of my being, and from Him I come.

Christ (John 8:42 NEB)

Only what is revealed to me do I follow.

Muhammad (Qur'án 6:50)

The Lord God...hath sent Me unto you...

Moses (Exodus 3:15)

The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own authority; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works.

Christ (John 14:10 NKJ)

My teaching is not mine, but His who sent me.

Christ (John 7:16)

God gives authority to His Messengers.

Qur'án 59:6

I am not myself the source of the words I speak to you...

Christ (John 14:10 NEB)

See also John 12:49-50; 7:14-18; 5:30; 8:54-55; 15:5

...not my will, but thine, be done.

Christ (Luke 22:42)

Also Mark 14:36

Nothing whatsoever is possible without His [God's] permission; no power can endure save through His power, and there is none other God but He.³² Bahá'u'lláh

As we can see, the preceding verses clearly show the absolute and complete dependence of the Mirror on the Sun. They show that without the Sun, the Mirror remains in complete darkness.

We should consider and clarify the meaning of one more statement. What does the following verse indicate?

Through Him [Jesus] all things were made; without Him nothing was made. John 1:3

If Jesus created the universe, is He not God? This puzzling question has also been clarified by Bahá'u'lláh. He declares that the universe was created through God's Mediators, Messengers or Redeemers, who are in essence one Spirit. In the Bahá'í Faith, that Spirit is called: the Most Great Spirit. Everything except God was created through the Most Great Spirit, including the Holy Spirit. That Great Spirit is called by many titles, one of them is: the Primal Will of God. God is so exalted that He delegates the act of creation to that Most Great Spirit—a single Spirit that empowers all His great Messengers and Manifestations. At one time that Spirit appeared in the name of Moses, again in the name of Jesus, and later in the name of Muhammad. Today it is called “the Gate of God” and “the Glory of God.” Only the name changes, not the Spirit.

The Bahá'í explanation is not only logical but also biblical. It harmonizes all the apparent conflicts found in the Bible about our relationship with God and His Messengers; and the Messengers' relationship with God, with each other, and with us.

To explore and understand the divine position or station of Jesus, let us now examine this well-known verse from John:

In the beginning was the Word [the Most Great Spirit], and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

John 1:1

To gain insight into the preceding verse, let us replace the word “Word” with “Thought.” The exchange will help us see the verse in a new light, free from our previous tendencies:

In the beginning was the Thought, and the Thought was with God, and the Thought was God.

Let us do the exchange once again, this time replace “the Sun” for “God” and “Light” for “Jesus:”

In the beginning was the Light, and the Light was with the Sun, and the Light was the Sun.

As we can see, the new terminology helps us see the truth behind the original word in a new light. It liberates our minds from past exposure and conditioning. It activates our souls to look with new eyes.

What about the Holy Spirit? That also is an emanation from God—indirectly from God—but directly from the Most Great Spirit, as manifested in His great Messengers. It is a divine radiance that has been reflected from all heavenly Mirrors named: Moses, Jesus, Muhammad, the Báb, Bahá’u’lláh, and many others in the past and still many to come in the future. Through those Mirrors, the celestial light called “the Holy Spirit” reaches anyone who has a receptive heart, anyone who has a desire to receive it.

The Holy Spirit is the Bounty of God which becomes visible and evident in the Reality of Christ.³³ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Even the literal meaning of the Holy Spirit—“holy breath or holy wind”—points to its identity. It is a power that by spreading over the souls of humankind refreshes and revives its recipients.

God, the divine Essence, is infinitely exalted beyond the comprehension of even His great Messengers and Redeemers. No mind can ever gain even a glimpse of His awesome glory and greatness. Human language has no word that can, even to the slightest degree, describe the Essence of God. God’s great Messengers are no exception. They also can never pass beyond the limit that God has

ordained for them. They will always remain a radiance from the Sun, never a “part” of the infinite Sun.

The Báb was the embodiment of innocence and purity. And yet in His prayers and meditations to God, He declares that, before the awesome glory and greatness of God, His very existence is a sin. This declaration is similar to Jesus’ refusal to accept being called “good.” For He declared that only God is deserving of that honor. Statements by Jesus and the Báb give us only a glimpse of the humility the great Messengers and Redeemers experience before God—the unknowable Essence.

No one is good—except God alone. Christ (Mark 10:18 NIV)
See also Matt. 19:17; Luke 18:19

The humility expressed by God’s supreme Messengers is in itself an evidence of their greatness and their infinite love for God. Considering how great they are, their humility is beyond belief. Jesus was the essence and source of all goodness. The word “goodness” was surely inadequate to befittingly extol Him, and yet He rejected it as a compliment to Himself—saying that only God is “Good.”

Our Creator has been misunderstood, abused, and blamed for every evil that afflicts the human race. Some people have made idols out of Him. Others have considered Him dead! And still others, such as Hindus, have divided Him into thousands of pieces. Christians have been more cautious. They have divided Him into only three pieces or persons! God was also given a human name (Jesus) and then crucified! How could anyone have imagined that our Creator—that most awesome and exalted Essence—would lower Himself to the human level and then allow His most wretched and ignorant creatures to mock Him, revile Him, and crucify Him? God does not need to come to the earth. He simply “speaks” and countless millions of Spirits as

great as Moses, Jesus, Muhammad, and Bahá'u'lláh appear before His awesome majesty.

Understanding the unconditional and absolute singleness of God gives us only a glimpse of His transcendence. It helps us take one step toward “knowing” Him and, of course, loving Him, and standing with absolute humility before His indescribable, unimaginable, and awesome glory and splendor.

The Bahá'í explanation also resolves the puzzle of:

I and my Father are one. Christ (John 10:30)

My Father is greater than I. Christ (John 14:28)

The Sun is greater than its reflection in the mirror, and yet the reflection is not separate from the sun. In this sense, if the great Messengers and Redeemers declare themselves to be God, they have spoken the truth:

Were any of the all-embracing Manifestations of God to declare: “I am God,” He, verily, speaketh the truth, and no doubt attacheth thereto. For...through their Revelation, their attributes and names, the Revelation of God, His names and His attributes, are made manifest in the world...And were any of them to voice the utterance, “I am the Messenger of God,” He, also, speaketh the truth, the indubitable truth...Viewed in this light, they are all but Messengers of that ideal King, that unchangeable Essence...For they 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 the “Hidden”—all of which pertain to Him Who is the Innermost Spirit of Spirits and Eternal Essence of Essences. And were they to say, “We are the Servants of God,” this also is a manifest and indisputable fact. For they have been made

manifest in the uttermost state of servitude, a servitude the like of which no man can possibly attain.³⁴ Bahá'u'lláh

Let us examine still another example. In *The New King James Version*, the following verses appear under the title “Christ on a White Horse;”

And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron...And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written:
KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS

Revelation 19:15-16 NKJ

As we note, Jesus refers to Himself at His Second Advent as the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords. What do these titles literally imply? They imply that:

- We have several Lords.
- Jesus is their Chief and Master.

Both of these concepts undermine the theory of the Trinity, because the theory declares that:

- We have one Lord.
- The three independent Persons who function within “the Lord” are co-equal.

Once again this example demonstrates the dangers and the fallacy of literal thinking.

No Messenger has ever claimed to be the Lord as often, as emphatically, and as clearly as Bahá'u'lláh, and yet He stands with utter humility before God. Imagine if a quotation like the following were to be found in the words of Jesus:

There hath not been in My soul but the Truth, and in Myself naught could be seen but God.³⁵ Bahá'u'lláh

Consider also the following two quotations among countless others from Bahá'u'lláh. The first one is addressed to the kings, the second to a Pope:

O Kings of the earth! He Who is the sovereign Lord of all is come...Wash your hearts from all earthly defilements, and hasten to enter the Kingdom of your Lord, the Creator of earth and heaven...

Ye are but vassals, O Kings of the earth! He Who is the King of kings hath appeared, arrayed in His most wondrous glory, and is summoning you unto Himself... Arise, and serve Him Who is the Desire of all nations, Who hath created you through a word from Him...

By the righteousness of God! It is not Our wish to lay hands on your kingdoms. Our mission is to seize and possess the hearts of men. Upon them the eyes of Bahá are fastened.³⁶

O Pope! Rend the veils asunder. 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, whilst before Him march the angels of Paradise, bearing the banners of His signs. Beware lest any name debar thee from God, the Creator of earth and heaven. Leave thou the world behind thee, and turn towards thy Lord, through Whom the whole earth hath been illumined... Dwellest thou in palaces whilst He Who is the King of Revelation liveth in the most desolate of abodes? Leave them unto such as desire them, and set thy face with joy and delight towards the Kingdom...Arise in the name of thy Lord, the God of Mercy, amidst the peoples of the earth, and seize thou the Cup of Life with the hands of confidence, and first drink thou therefrom, and proffer it

then to such as turn towards it amongst the peoples of all faiths...³⁷

In spite of the statements like the preceding, Christian theologians continue to make claims such as:

...of all the influential religious leaders of the world (Buddha, Moses, Zoroaster, Krishna, Lao Tzu, Muhammad, Baha'u'llah), only Jesus claimed to be God in human flesh.³⁸

To prove his claim, the Christian author refers to Mark 14:62 without actually quoting the verse. Here is Mark 14:61-62:

Again the high priest asked him, "Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?" "I am," said Jesus. "And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven."

Mark 14:61-62 NIV

If Jesus traveled with the speed of light for all eternity, He would only reach the threshold of God. And that is where He was, He is, and will always be. As Bahá'u'lláh declares, all great Messengers:

...have regarded themselves as utter nothingness, and deemed their mention in that Court an act of blasphemy.³⁹

...they manifest absolute servitude, utter destitution and complete self-effacement.⁴⁰

Other Objections to the Trinity

There are as yet other inconsistencies in assuming that the three members of the "divine family" are co-equal. Ponder this verse:

My teaching is not my own. It comes from him who sent me. Christ (John 7:16 NIV)

If Jesus was co-equal with God, He would say, “My teaching is my Father’s **and** mine.” He would not say, “My teaching is **not** my own...” By using the word “not” without any condition, Jesus shows that He had no role except that of a deliverer. To see this point clearly, let us assume that a loved one sends you a gift through a friend or by mail. Could you conclude or even imply that “the gift giver” and “the deliverer” are co-equal? How can we compare, in any way, the status of the giver and the deliverer of a gift? Any comparison is irrelevant. Consider still another example. If you and your spouse are co-equal, you would not say: “This house is mine.” You would say: “This house is ours.”

The following verses show that as we are “nothing” compared to Jesus, so is Jesus compared to God. Jesus is as much dependent on God as we are dependent on Jesus.

...the Son can do nothing by himself... John 5:19 NIV

...apart from me you can do nothing. John 15:5 NIV

We find a similar statement from Muhammad expressing absolute selflessness before God:

Say: I have no power over any good or harm to myself except as God willeth. Qur’án 7:188

Compared to God, all great Messengers and Redeemers who have come, and who will come in the future, are as absolute nothingness—a zero. Add zero to one, and you will get one. Can we say that one and zero are co-equal?

Note how clearly Jesus’ own assessment of Himself contradicts the doctrine of the Trinity:

Theologians

The three persons—God, the Son,
and the Holy Spirit—are...*coequal*

Jesus Christ

My Father is *greater* than I.

John 14:28

Can you think of a contradiction more evident? The words “coequal” and “greater” are the exact opposites. If there was no other evidence against the doctrine of the Trinity, the preceding verse alone would be sufficient to prove its fallacy beyond any doubt.

What about this verse:

I and the Father are one.

Christ (John 10:30 NIV)

Does the word “one” imply that Jesus was God or co-equal with God? The idea of oneness carries this message: “We are united, we work together in perfect harmony. There is no duality of purpose between us. The Son is totally selfless before the awesome majesty of the One who sends Him and instructs Him every moment of His life.” The following prayer from Jesus clarifies the meaning of “one” or “oneness:”

I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; ***that they all may be one***, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; ***that they*** [the believers] ***also may be one in Us***, that the world may believe that You sent Me. And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, ***that they may be one just as We are one: I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one***, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me.

John 17:20-23 NKJ

Consider this analogy. Our body consists of many parts that work together as one system. Each body is one unit, yet its parts play different roles. A toe and a tooth are parts of one body, but are they equal with the heart or the brain?

Jesus' teachings show clearly that everything happens according to God's Will, not Jesus' Will. It is always "*Thy* will be done!" (Luke 11:2). It is never "my will" or "our will." Jesus was God's most glorious creation. How can the created have any existence before the Creator? Everything before the identity of God is as nothing.

Perhaps the Trinitarian's favorite quotation is this:

...before Abraham was, I am. Christ (John 8:58)

I existed before Abraham was even born.

The New Living Translation

A noted author quotes the preceding verse and simply concludes that it is "perhaps the strongest claim Jesus made to be Jehovah."⁴¹ He makes no attempt to explain how he arrived at his conclusion. This is flawed reasoning. It is jumping to a conclusion without any justification. What does the verse imply? It implies that Jesus pre-existed. Does this mean that He is God? Bahá'ís believe that the Most Great Spirit, which is present in all great Messengers, has existed from eternity, yet they do not believe them to be God. It simply does not make sense to jump from the idea of "pre-existence" to "God." Jesus' statement indicates that He existed out of the dimension of time. For Him, the past, the present, and the future are the same. Muhammad makes a similar statement. He declares that He was a Messenger of God "while Adam was between water and clay." This statement shows that Muhammad also pre-existed, and yet He does not claim to be God.

Another straw to which some Christian theologians cling to prove their theory is this verse:

...baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit... Matthew 28:19 NIV

Does the preceding quotation imply, even in the slightest way, that God consists of three separate and co-equal persons? The assumption is so unfounded, it does not require any rebuttal. As a Christian author notes: “Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are mentioned together numerous times, but that does not make them one.”⁴²

The Promised Counselor

What about the Holy Spirit? Is that Spirit a Person, or a Power and Radiance from God? All great Messengers manifest the Spirit of God to us. That Spirit has received many titles, such as *the Most Great Spirit*, *the Spirit of Truth*, and sometimes *the Holy Spirit*. They all describe *the Glory of God* in God’s Messengers. When we accept a new Messenger, that Spirit dwells with us, is with us, and will always be with us. Jesus promised the true believers that “**Surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age**” (Matt. 28:20 NIV).

The following prophecies from Jesus show clearly that He did not refer to the coming of the Holy Spirit, as believed and understood by Christians, but rather to the coming of that Spirit in a human being like Himself, such as Muhammad and Bahá’u’lláh:

And I will pray the Father, and He will give you *another Helper* (Comforter, Counselor), that He may abide with you forever; *the Spirit of truth*, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will [always] be in you. I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you...But the Helper (the Counselor, the Comforter), the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send

in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.

John 14:16-18, 21 NKJ

I have still many things to say to you, but you are not able to bear them nor to take them upon you nor to grasp them now. But when He, *the Spirit of Truth* [the truth-giving Spirit] comes, He will guide you into all truth. For He will not speak His own message—on His own authority—but He will tell whatever He hears [from the Father] and He will announce and declare to you the things that are to come—that will happen in the future.

He will honor and glorify Me, because He will take of [receive, draw upon] what is Mine and will reveal [declare, disclose, transmit] them to you. In a little while you will no longer see Me, and again after a short while you will see Me.

John 16:12-15 Amplified Bible[✧]

But when *the Comforter* (Counselor, Helper, Advocate, Intercessor, Strengtheners) comes Whom I will send to you from the Father, *the Spirit of Truth* Who comes (proceeds) from the Father, He [Himself] will testify regarding Me.

John 15:26 Amplified Bible

Both Muhammad and Bahá'u'lláh:

- *Testified that Jesus was the truth.*
- *Glorified Him.*
- *Disclosed new knowledge.*
- *Clarified the misunderstood Words of Jesus*, such as His teachings about His relationship with God. They took or selected certain misinterpreted teachings of Jesus and made their true meaning known to us.

[✧] All the words in brackets and parentheses are added by the translators of *Amplified Bible*.

- **Made many predictions that have come true.** The Qur’án contains numerous prophecies concerning the Advent of the Báb and Bahá’u’lláh.

Both Muhammad and Bahá’u’lláh fulfilled all five conditions contained in the preceding prophecies of Jesus.

Without providing any credible or concrete evidence, Christian theologians claim that all the preceding predictions were fulfilled on a given day during a special feast called **Pentecost!** To see the fallacy of their assumption, to recognize that “the Comforter” cannot be the Holy Spirit, let us replace the word “**Comforter**” with “**the Holy Spirit:**”

I will ask the Father, and He will give you **another Comforter.**

John 14:16 AB

I will ask the Father, and He will give you **another Holy Spirit!**

God bestowed many titles on Jesus at His Second coming, among them are Lord, Lord of Hosts, the Spirit of Truth, Desire of Nations, and the Holy Spirit. These are titles of honor. They should not be taken literally. Jesus is also called the Shepherd; we are called the sheep. Yet neither was Jesus a shepherd, nor are we sheep. The use of the word “another”—**another** Comforter—clearly shows that the prophecy refers to **another Redeemer like Jesus.**

Consider also this verse:

He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

Matthew 3:11 NKJ

The preceding verse shows clearly that the Holy Spirit is a power, not a person. If we can be baptized with the Holy Spirit and with fire, we should also be able to be baptized by Jesus or by God. We could be baptized **by** Jesus, but we cannot be baptized **with** Jesus. The word “fire” used along with the Holy Spirit shows that they are both invested with

power to burn evil and wash away vices that stain our soul. Some Christians acknowledge this fact:

Nowhere in the Old Testament do we find any clear indication of a Third person...The Jews never regarded the [Holy] Spirit as a person; nor is there any solid evidence that any Old Testament writer held this view... The Holy Spirit is usually presented in the Synoptics [Gospels] and in Acts as a divine force or power.⁴³

Consider also the prophecy of the Advent of a “Prophet like Moses:”

I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers; I will put my words in his mouth...

Deuteronomy 18:18 NIV

As we noted, the New Testament teaches that Jesus was the Prophet prophesied by Moses (Acts 3:22-24; John 5:46-47).

“Come now, let us reason together, saith the Lord” (Isa. 1:18). How can Jesus be a “Prophet like Moses” but be the Creator of Moses? For the concept of the Trinity teaches that Jesus was one of the three Persons who created the universe and everything in it. Moses had no part in this endeavor. What resemblance is there between the Creator and the created? In what way does a house resemble the one who designed it? Is there even a remote resemblance?

Because of its status, the concept of the Trinity, more than any other, undermines the Word of God. The Trinity is not a minor doctrine; it is a foundational principle. Christianity does not “stand or fall on resurrection,” as many suppose. It stands or falls on the true understanding or “the knowledge of God.” How can a religion stand on an illusion? Those who devised this concept did a great disservice to God. They distorted His Beauty and diminished His divine glory and grandeur on a scale unimaginable. The future generations will look back and wonder: How could so many millions of intelligent believers submit to such an unreasonable doctrine

for so many centuries? The times of submission and conformity have passed away. The age of reason has dawned.

Any religious belief which is not conformable with scientific proof and investigation is superstition, for true science is reason and reality, and religion is essentially reality and pure reason; therefore, the two must correspond. Religious teaching which is at variance with science and reason is human invention and imagination unworthy of acceptance, for the antithesis and opposite of knowledge is superstition born of the ignorance of man. If we say religion is opposed to science, we lack knowledge of either true science or true religion, for both are founded upon the premises and conclusions of reason, and both must bear its test.⁴⁴

‘Abdu’l-Bahá

The Abuse of Analogies

To prove their point, the supporters of the Trinity have appealed to numerous analogies. Analogies, of course, cannot *prove* complex ideas; they only *simplify* them. Let us put a few of them to the test. To prove the doctrine of the Trinity, a Christian author offers this analogy to Muslims:

Muhammad was simultaneously a prophet, a husband, and a leader. Why then should a Muslim reject the idea of a plurality of functions (persons) in God?⁴⁵

Notice that after the word “functions,” he inserts the word “persons” in parentheses to show that they are interchangeable. But are they? We all play many roles and have many functions, but do we also hide within our soul several distinct persons? What do we call those who do? In the past, they were called insane; today, they are called mentally disordered.

The author then resorts to mathematics:

The trinity of God is more like $1 \times 1 \times 1 = 1$. In other words, we multiply, not add, the one God in three persons. That is, God is triune, not triplex. His one essence has multiple personalities. Thus, there is no more mathematical problem in conceiving the Trinity than there is in understanding 1 to the third power (1^3).⁴⁶

Ponder the meaning of the preceding example. Multiplying the number one three times proves the exact opposite of what he tries to prove. We cannot, of course, divide God, but if we did, we would still arrive at one God. The problem with using the example of $1 \times 1 \times 1 = 1$ is this: In the theory of the Trinity, we do not begin with identical “ones.” We begin with “Beings” (units), who are not, like the number one, identical. Each member of the triune family has, supposedly, special functions. The Father is not identical with the Son, and neither of them is identical with the Holy Spirit. When we multiply the number one three times, we are multiplying three perfectly identical numbers. What happens when we multiply $1 \times 1 \times 1.1$? Do we still get one? The mathematical example he offers violates a fundamental principle of the Trinity: that each family member has special functions. If they did not have special functions, then we would be forced by reason to acknowledge one God, who is also one “person” rather than three persons.

To explain this theory, some Christian authors have resorted to foods with multiple layers or ingredients, such as eggs and ice cream:

An egg consists of three equally important parts—the shell, the white, and the yoke—yet all are one... Neapolitan ice cream is one, yet consists of chocolate, vanilla, and strawberry.⁴⁷

Note that the author replaces the word “co-equal” with “important.” The president of a company and a security guard are both important. Are they also coequal?

We find countless examples in nature and in man-made materials that contain three layers. Avocados and olives have three layers. They are important but are the three layers “co-equal”? This observation alone shows the discrepancy between the theory of the Trinity and the analogy. But do any of these analogies make the Trinity more credible? If I believed in the Trinity, I would give the example of an atom, which consists of electrons, protons, and neutrons. Even this example is flawed, because the three substances are not “co-equal.”

Let us consider one more analogy—this one by St. Augustine, the preeminent fifth-century bishop:

The root is wood, the trunk is wood, and the branches are wood, while nevertheless it is not three woods that are thus spoken of, but only one...(Thus) no one should think it absurd that we should call the Father God, the Son God, the Holy Spirit God, and that these are not three gods in the Trinity, but one God and one substance.⁴⁸

What fallacy does the preceding analogy contain? One way to test it is carry it to the human level. Let us consider a set of identical triplets. Like the root, the trunk, and the branches, they are made of one substance. They are even more alike than the three kinds of wood. But are they “one”? No, they are three “ones.” We cannot reduce the workings and wonders of human being to wood, let alone those of God.

In a radio interview, a psychologist who has conducted extensive research on people with multiple personalities offered the following analogy to show how they function. He said that their inner world can be likened to certain brands of cheese that are round, yet consist of several

triangular and independent pieces. Like those brands of cheese, he said, an individual afflicted with multiple personalities is one person, but has several independent personalities. Is not this analogy similar to the ones the Trinitarians use to demonstrate and prove their theories?

The following is a definition of a person afflicted with multiple personalities:

- He is one (person), but has several independent personalities.
- He is one (individual) but he is several persons.

Analogies are helpful if an idea is reasonable. The thinker knows by reasoning that the idea is true, but cannot form a picture of it in his mind. In such cases, analogies work perfectly. The problem with the Trinity is that it is unreasonable. That is why many thoughtful people reject it. Those who use analogies to prove the Trinity do indeed abuse the purpose of an analogy. Instead of clarifying a reasonable concept, they try to prove a concept that contradicts the most elementary rules of reason. They try to show that: $1.1+1.2+1.3=1$.

Theologians do not need to search for analogies. Jesus Himself offered one to demonstrate His relationship to God:

I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful.

John 15:1-2 NIV

What is the relationship between a gardener and a tree—the one who plants and protects a tree, and even cuts off its unwanted branches? Are a gardener and a tree co-equal? No, the distance between them is like the distance between the earth and the heavens. In His analogy, did Jesus even imply that He played a role as a gardener, that He belonged

to a “special department” or a “household” with two or three family members? If Jesus Himself used an analogy to teach us His relationship with God, why then do theologians ignore His Wisdom, why do they replace His perfect knowledge of truth with their own illusions and assumptions? Why did St. Augustine compare God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit to the root, the trunk, and the branches of a tree? If God is the gardener and Jesus is a tree, then the Holy Spirit is the wind that stirs the tree.

To see the limits of human imagination, we should briefly examine the beliefs of the Latter Day Saints or Mormons concerning God. Their views about God reach the ultimate limits of human potential for altering the Word of God. They claim that God was once a human being and then later became God! If other Christians bring God to the level of Jesus, Mormons go one step further: They bring Him down to the human level. They also believe that all human beings can become God, just the way God became God! And they have a prescription for this!

Note how Joseph Smith describes God:

God himself was once as we are now, and is an exalted Man...If you were to see him today, you would see him like a man in form...The Father of us all, dwelt on an earth...and you have got to learn how to be Gods yourselves...the same [way] as all Gods have done before you—namely, by going from one small degree to another...⁴⁹

If theologians, well-versed in the Bible, can downgrade God by claiming that He was once a person like us and then divide Him into millions of persons, we should not be surprised to see that other theologians, equally versed in the Bible, divide Him into three persons.

How Was the Idea of the Trinity Born?

Let us conclude this chapter with a little history and a summary. How was the idea of the Trinity born?

Constantine, the first Christian emperor, decided that the problems over the relationship between the Creator and Jesus must be resolved. Constantine had converted to Christianity hoping that the religion would help to unite his Roman government, which was disintegrating from civil wars. However, he found that Christians themselves were much divided over questions of doctrine. In an effort to settle this matter, he called together leaders from the entire Church. In the year 325, he gathered hundreds of bishops at a central city named Nicea to debate theology and agree on a creed. It is called the First Ecumenical Council because representatives from churches in Asia, Africa, and Europe were there.⁵⁰

Suppose you were asked to solve this riddle: We have three brothers. They are one person and three persons at the same time. How would you solve this riddle? Most people would say: The only way this can happen is this: The three brothers have three connected heads. They have three brains in one body.

In 325 A.D. there were two opposing groups of theologians:

- Those who believed Jesus was God.
- Those who believed Jesus was not God.

Which group won the most votes? The second group. And how did they resolve the puzzle of $1=3$? Simply by dividing God's mind into three parts, and then connecting them! This is how a literal mind works. It thinks of mechanical solutions, of having parts and pieces, and connecting them and separating them.

Those literal-minded theologians faced yet another puzzle. Where does the Holy Spirit fit? The Gospel *seems* to indicate that Jesus is God, but it does not bestow this most glorious honor on the Holy Spirit. Nowhere does the Gospel say that God and the Holy Spirit are one, or that the Holy Spirit created the universe, as it says about Jesus. What could they do with the Holy Spirit? “He” also needed a position, a permanent place of residence! So they gave “Him” equal status with Jesus. This is how the *Zondervan Bible Dictionary* describes the position of the Holy Spirit:

As the heavenly Father is God, and His Son Jesus Christ is God, so the Holy Spirit is God.⁵¹

The integration of the Holy Spirit into the position of Godhood, created a triangle. This triangle gave birth to the doctrine of the Trinity.

The literal-minded bishops who produced the theory of the Trinity, did not fully follow their own literal standards. They failed to include in their theory one significant person: Jesus as a man. Was Jesus as a human being different from Jesus as God? Apparently He was, as decided and declared by many theologians. Their descriptions point to a fourth person with unique powers, capacities, and standards of judgment. Consider the following statement from a well-known Christian scholar:

Did Jesus know everything? As God he did, since God is omniscient. But as a man Jesus said he did not know the time of his second coming (Matt. 24:36).⁵²

The author goes on to say that as Jesus grew up, His wisdom increased (Luke 2:52). He also declares that as God Jesus could not sin, but as a man he could, but did not. The author then concludes:

Dividing every question of Christ into two and referring them to each nature unlocks a lot of theological puzzles

that otherwise remain shrouded in mystery. And it makes it possible to avoid alleged logical contradictions that are urged upon Christians by Muslims and by other nonbelievers.⁵³

Here is an example of the “alleged logical contradictions” the quoted author wants to resolve:

God cannot be tempted (James 1:13).

Jesus...was tempted by the devil (Luke 4:1-2).

Jesus was tempted in every way (Hebrews 4:15 NIV).

The preceding verses provide further evidence that Jesus could not be God, for God cannot be tempted. Further, does not thinking of Jesus as God and as man imply that He was two persons, that He had two identities or personalities—one that could not be tempted, and another that could be tempted? Is it not reasonable then to conclude that a triangle does not fully describe God? The theory includes “Son of God” as a member of the Trinity. Why does it ignore “Son of Man” as a fourth member? The popular theory of the Trinity declares that each of the three members of the Trinity family is a person with its own personality. If Jesus as a man had less wisdom or knowledge, would He not be different from the One who had all knowledge and all wisdom? If Jesus as a man did not know the time of His return, does not this imply that Jesus as God would keep certain secrets from Jesus as a man, or that they would not communicate with each other? Those who take the Bible word for word would be more loyal to their word if they believed in a new theory: the theory of the Fourinity. This theory would not exclude or ignore a significant family member. It would include all of them:

- God as the Father
- God as the Holy Spirit

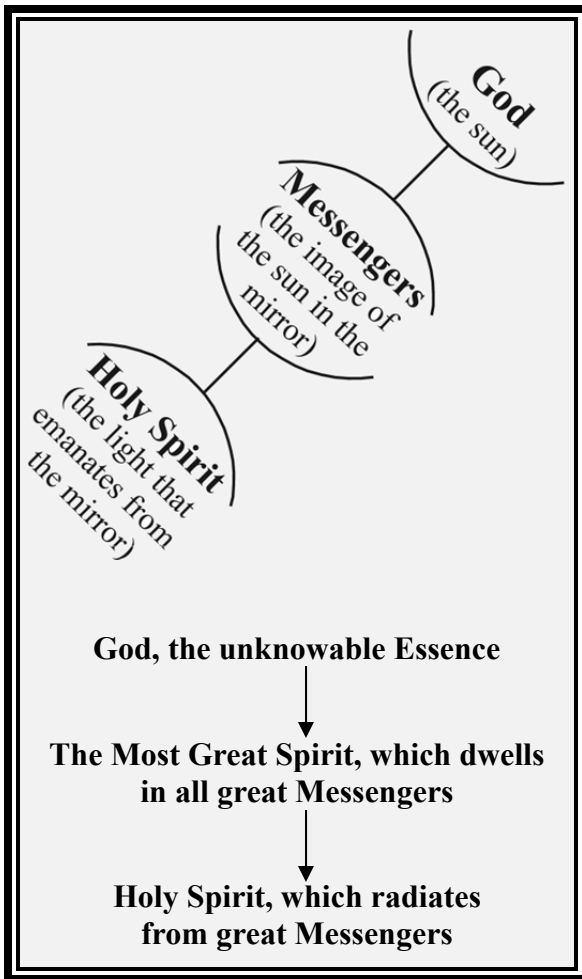
- God as the Son of God
- God as the Son of Man

This observation teaches us a critical lesson. What happens when the pieces of a puzzle do not fit and we try to make them fit? The Trinity theory is such a puzzle. The more we try to make the pieces fit, the less we succeed—the more glaring our failure becomes.

Should political pressure determine what people should believe? Imagine if the president or the prime minister of a country pressured the Pope and Protestant leaders to decide what Jesus meant by a certain verse. We would consider that incredible, yet that is exactly what Constantine did, and that is how the doctrine of the Trinity was born and embraced by Christians!

As we noted, the solution that the Bahá'í Faith offers is totally spiritual. It resolves the riddle without resorting to parts and pieces, and connecting or disconnecting them. It teaches that God did not and does not need to divide Himself. All He needs to do is to think or to speak. He thinks or says: “Be!” and there it is! It does not matter what He wills. If He wants to create a billion galaxies or a billion Spirits as great as Moses, Jesus, Muhammad, the Báb, and Bahá'u'lláh, the rule is the same. That is what the attribute “All-Powerful” means.

For those who need a visual experience, the Bahá'í Faith offers the analogy of the sun and the mirror:



As stated, our purpose of coming into this world is to know our Creator.

The supreme cause for creating the world and all that is therein is for man to know God.⁵⁴ Bahá'u'lláh

The first and foremost step toward “knowing our Creator” is to recognize His absolute oneness. After two thousand years, the following verse still holds true. True knowledge of God still is scarce:

O righteous Father, the world hath not known Thee...
Christ (John 17:25)

The human-made doctrine of the Trinity is not *above* reason, it is *contrary* to reason. It is completely alien to the Bible. To weaken or dilute in any way this most fundamental of all truths—the Oneness of God—is perhaps the greatest and gravest apostasy. What is astonishing is this: How could so many intelligent people have accepted, defended, and promoted such a fanciful belief for so many centuries? The principle of absolute and unconditional oneness of God is the first and foremost teaching of all the Messengers and Redeemers. It should not be taken lightly. The singleness of God is so sacred, so sublime, so significant that no believer should ever in any way question it. Believing in the Trinity is the same as “joining partners with God.” It is contrary to the spirit of religion. It is as cultic and pagan as any belief can ever be. The preponderance of evidence shows that early church leaders borrowed this idea from the pagans to resolve an issue that was beyond their comprehension. Scholars—both Christian and secular—have confirmed this fact. The noted historian Will Durant states:

Christianity did not destroy paganism; it adopted it...
From Egypt came the ideas of a divine trinity.⁵⁵

Consider also these quotations from four different sources:

The trinity was a major preoccupation of Egyptian theologians...Three gods are combined and treated as a single being, addressed in the singular. In this way the spiritual force of Egyptian religion shows a direct link with Christian theology.⁵⁶

If paganism was conquered by Christianity, it is equally true that Christianity was corrupted by Paganism. The pure Deism of the first Christians...was changed, by the church of Rome, into the incomprehensible dogma of

the trinity. Many of the pagan tenets, invented by the Egyptians and idealized by Plato, were retained as being worthy of belief.⁵⁷

...the Trinity “is a corruption borrowed from the heathen religions, and ingrafted on the Christian faith.”⁵⁸

Siva is one of the gods of the Trinity. He is said to be the god of destruction. The other two gods are Brahma, the god of creation and Vishnu, the god of maintenance... To indicate that these three processes are one and the same the three gods are combined in one form.⁵⁹

Bahá'u'lláh glorifies God and proclaims His absolute oneness in the most glowing terms:

God testifieth to the unity of His Godhood and to the singleness of His own Being. On the throne of eternity, from the inaccessible heights of His station, His tongue proclaimeth that there is none other God but Him. He Himself, independently of all else, hath ever been a witness unto His own oneness, the revealer of His own nature, the glorifier of His own essence. He, verily, is the All-Powerful, the Almighty, the Beauteous.

He is supreme over His servants, and standeth over His creatures. In His hand is the source of authority and truth. He maketh men alive by His signs, and causeth them to die through His wrath. He shall not be asked of His doings and His might is equal unto all things. He is the Potent, the All-Subduing. He holdeth within His grasp the empire of all things, and on His right hand is fixed the Kingdom of His Revelation. His power, verily, embraceth the whole of creation.⁶⁰ Bahá'u'lláh

To show His “absolute nothingness” before God’s awesome greatness and majesty, the Báb—the One whom the *Book of Revelation* calls the **Lord of Lords and King of Kings**, the One who was, like Jesus, the absolute essence of perfection

and purity—considers His very existence a sin! Who then can claim any existence before God?

The following prophecy gives us the good news that a time will come when the knowledge of God will spread, when our Creator will no longer be divided, but be acknowledged one Lord and Master of the universe. When an auxiliary universal language is adopted, His name shall also be one:

On that day there will be one Lord, and his name the only name. Zechariah 14:9 NIV

Let us conclude this chapter with one of Bahá'u'lláh's Tablets in which He glorifies God in the most majestic terms and testifies to His absolute oneness:

Beware, beware, lest thou be led to join partners with the Lord, thy God. He is, and hath from everlasting been, one and alone, without peer or equal, eternal in the past, eternal in the future, detached from all things, ever-abiding, unchangeable, and self-subsisting. He hath assigned no associate unto Himself in His Kingdom, no counselor to counsel Him, none to compare unto Him, none to rival His glory. To this every atom of the universe beareth witness, and beyond it the inmates of the realms on high, they that occupy the most exalted seats, and whose names are remembered before the Throne of Glory.

Bear thou witness in thine inmost heart unto this testimony which God hath Himself and for Himself pronounced, that there is none other God but Him, that all else besides Him have been created by His behest, have been fashioned by His leave, are subject to His law, are as a thing forgotten when compared to the glorious evidences of His oneness, and are as nothing when brought face to face with the mighty revelations of His unity.

He, in truth, hath, throughout eternity, been one in His Essence, one in His attributes, one in His works. Any and every comparison is applicable only to His creatures, and all conceptions of association are conceptions that belong solely to those that serve Him. Immeasurably exalted is His Essence above the descriptions of His creatures. He, alone, occupieth the Seat of transcendent majesty, of supreme and inaccessible glory. The birds of men's hearts, however high they soar, can never hope to attain the heights of His unknowable Essence. It is He Who hath called into being the whole of creation, Who hath caused every created thing to spring forth at His behest. Shall, then, the thing that was born by virtue of the word which His Pen hath revealed, and which the finger of His Will hath directed, be regarded as partner with Him, or an embodiment of His Self? Far be it from His glory that human pen or tongue should hint at His mystery, or that human heart conceive His Essence. All else besides Him stand poor and desolate at His door, all are powerless before the greatness of His might, all are but slaves in His Kingdom. He is rich enough to dispense with all creatures.

The tie of servitude established between the worshiper and the adored One, between the creature and the Creator, should in itself be regarded as a token of His gracious favor unto men, and not as an indication of any merit they may possess. To this testifieth every true and discerning believer.⁶¹

Bahá'u'lláh

23

Is Jesus Greater than Moses and Muhammad?

Among the objections Christian theologians raise against the Qur'án is that it considers Jesus only a Messenger or a Prophet:

O people of the Book! Do not exceed the bounds of your religion...The Messiah Jesus, son of Mary, is only a Messenger [or a Prophet] from God and His Word...and a Spirit from Him. Qur'án 4:171

Is the Qur'án's judgment of Jesus justified? To raise Jesus above other great Messengers and to ensure His uniqueness, Christian theologians have adopted several strategies. A common strategy is to avoid linking Jesus' name to commonplace words that would diminish His status and undermine His uniqueness. They know too well that words and labels carry awesome powers. One word that they have diligently avoided is “prophet.” What is wrong with the word “prophet”?

- The word “prophet” has such powerful connotations that it can undermine Jesus' uniqueness by bringing Him to the level of other Prophets—founders of great faiths, such as Moses and Muhammad. Moreover, its association with minor prophets makes it an ordinary title.
- Christians often associate the word “prophet” with the phrase “false prophets.” Have you ever heard “false saviors” or “false redeemers”?

Calling Jesus a Prophet is unacceptable to most Christians. At best, it brings Him to the level of Moses and the Hebrew Prophets; at worst it creates an image of falsehood in their minds. And yet the Gospel uses this title more frequently than “Son of God.”

To avoid the undesirable connotations that Christians associate with the word prophet, and to raise the status of Jesus above all other great religious figures, Christian theologians have adopted special words to refer to Him. The following are their favorites:

- Redeemer
- Savior
- The Lord

The preceding titles make Jesus stand above all the great figures sent by God. We often hear the phrase: “our Savior Jesus Christ.” But can you recall hearing even once: “Our Prophet Jesus Christ”? It sounds so unnatural! It takes time for our ears to adapt to new sounds and our eyes to new images.

A noted Christian author states that “Islam has no Savior.”¹ Many believers fail to realize that the name Jesus literally means: God saves. Ultimately, God is the Savior who spoke through Jesus. The same God spoke also through other Messengers, regardless of what we call them.

You may have noticed that in this book I have tried to break this bond or barrier of tradition by often using the titles “Messengers” and “Redeemers” together. I have used the word Messenger because it is rather neutral, but I have avoided the word “prophet,” because it may alienate some Christians.

An objection raised against Islam by almost all Christian scholars and authors is the Qur’án’s assessment of the

position or station of Jesus. The Qur'án considers Jesus a Messenger or a Prophet from God just like Muhammad:

The Messiah, Son of Mary, is a Messenger [Prophet]; other Messengers have flourished before Him. Qur'án 5:75

The Hebrew Scriptures are in perfect agreement with the Qur'án. They also call Jesus a Prophet, and yet Christian theologians raise no objection:

I [God] will raise up for them **a prophet like you** [Moses] from among their brothers; I will put my words in his mouth...
Deuteronomy 18:18 NIV

The New Testament confirms that the Prophet promised in the preceding verse is Jesus Christ:

For Moses said, “The Lord your God will raise up for you **a prophet like me** from among your own people; you must listen to everything he tells you...Indeed, all the prophets from Samuel on, as many as have spoken, have foretold these days.”
Acts 3:22-24 NIV

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 5:46-47 NIV)

Since Christian theologians cannot deny their own Scripture, they try to change or dilute the meaning of the word “like” by adding the word “some” to it. They say Moses and Jesus are “like” each other in “some” ways.

They claim that being “like one another” does not imply equality. Jesus is not another Moses. He is far greater. The desire to raise the position of Jesus in relation to other divine Figures is so intense that some Christian theologians make this incredible claim: Those who came before Jesus—such as Noah, Abraham, Moses and others—could save their souls only by turning toward Jesus! Because He was and still is the only Savior!

To see the awesome power of one word in changing the meaning of a sentence, consider the following example. Suppose you have three “similar” pieces of chocolate, and you want to offer them to three bright and discriminating children. To prevent a sense of superiority or competition among them, you say, “They are all alike. They weigh the same and have the same taste and color.” But soon after the children make their choices, each of them tries to find something special or unique about his choice. One of them says to the others: “My chocolate looks like a fish (a symbol used by Christians), your chocolate looks like the moon (a symbol used by Muslims), and your chocolate looks like a star (a symbol used by Jews!)” The one with the “fish-chocolate” continues: “Fish is prettier than the moon or star, and has life.” The one with “moon-chocolate” responds: “But the moon is much bigger than a fish and it doesn’t die like a fish!” The one with a “star-chocolate” arises and declares: “But a star is bigger than the moon. Further, stars give light, the moon receives light!”

To see the humor in such exchanges, let us carry the debate one step further:

- ***Jewish child:*** I feel sorry for both of you. I am one of the chosen people. You are not. My Prophet walked through the Dead Sea and defeated his enemies.
- ***Christian child:*** I also feel sorry for both of you. You both have only a Prophet. Mine is a Savior. Your Prophets are in the grave. My Savior is sitting next to God.
- ***Muslim child:*** I also feel sorry for both of you. Your Scriptures are outdated. I follow God’s last Word. Both of you are in kindergarten. I am in college.

Just like the adults, each child *feels* superior over the others because of the shape of his chocolate, because of a special word found in his Scripture. What happens next? Are feelings

inactive? No, they are charged with power. They lead to action. They pass through these states:

- The stage of separation: “I don’t want to associate with people who are ignorant, who are not in my group, who don’t agree with me, who are lost souls.”
- The state of dislike: “I don’t like such people. They are ignorant and gullible. They don’t respect my faith.”
- The stage of action: “We must do something to humiliate these people, to teach them a lesson.”

Are these examples unrealistic? Not really. What feelings, do you think, generated the religious wars of the past centuries? What are the feelings in our time that have generated violence in the name of religion?

It is amazing how a small alteration in God’s Word can lead to gigantic consequences. What will happen if we loosen or remove a bolt in the steering wheel of a car? The bolt may be small; but the consequence can be colossal. Moses says “I am like the next Prophet.” The Gospel confirms this. Then Muhammad says “I am like the previous Prophets, Jesus and Moses. We are all alike. God loves all people equally. He sends us for one purpose: to guide humankind.” But their followers continue to draw lines of separation and superiority between them. To attain their hearts’ desire, all they need to do is to change the meaning of *one verse just a little*. Instead of saying: “Moses and Jesus are alike,” they can say, “they are *somewhat* alike.” To see how much difference one word can make, consider these examples:

- Obey the Word of God.
- Obey the Word of God sometimes.



- God is just.
- God is somewhat just.



- Your son killed himself.
- Your son almost killed himself.

By claiming that Jesus and Moses are similar in “some” ways, we completely undermine God’s Word because *any* human being can be similar to Moses in “some” ways. Moses was a leader, so is any evangelist, bishop, or priest. Moses was a law-giver, so are many secular figures and politicians. Moses led a nation, so did Mahatma Gandhi.

Muslim theologians have carried the special title that God bestowed on Muhammad—“the Seal of the Prophets”—through the same metamorphosis! They have changed it just enough to get what they want out of it. They have derived the meaning of “last” from the word “seal” or “signature.” They say, since a seal or signature is placed at the end of a letter, that means Muhammad was the last Prophet!

To demonstrate the superiority of the Jewish Faith to the Christian Faith, a Jewish theologian has written a book called: *You Choose Jesus, I Choose God*. To show that his Redeemer is God, he quotes this verse:

O Lord, my strength and my Redeemer. Psalms 19:14 NKJ

This alteration of God’s Word has served as the grand generator of all religious prejudice. This generator has caused people to deny every new Messenger our Creator has sent. This generator has “electrocuted” millions of people in the name of God! The tragic history of religion shows that theologians are masters of the art of distortion. They are well aware of this fact: plant the seed of a new meaning and reap a colossal harvest. Change a little here, a little there, and they will add up to a mountain of difference. In that mountain you will find enough raw materials to build anything you will ever wish.

In reference to Jesus, no other title rests on a basis as varied and solid as “Prophet.” In describing Him, no other title receives support from so many sources. In reference to Him, Prophet is the only title that is found:

- In the Hebrew Scriptures
- In the words of Jesus Himself
- In the writings of a distinguished Apostle of Jesus
- In the words of the people who listened to Jesus

Let us review those sources:

From Moses

For Moses said, “I [God] will raise up for them a **prophet** like you from among their brothers; I will put my words in his mouth...” Deut. 18:18 NIV

Note that the verse from Deuteronomy does not say “a prophet **greater** than Moses.” It simply says, “**like** Moses.”

From an Apostle

The Lord your God will raise up for you a **prophet** like me from among your own people... Acts 3:22 NIV

From Jesus

Some of the Jews were astonished by Jesus’ supreme wisdom. They could not believe that the son of a carpenter could be so wise. Yet they refused to honor Him as a Prophet. Jesus offered a reason for their refusal:

Only in His own town and His own house is a **Prophet** without honor. Matthew 13:57

In the preceding passage it is obvious that Jesus applied the word “Prophet” to Himself.

In the following statement, Jesus again refers to Himself as a prophet:

At that time some Pharisees came to Jesus and said to him, “Leave this place and go somewhere else. Herod wants to kill you.” He replied... “I must keep going today and tomorrow and the next day—for surely no *prophet* can die outside Jerusalem!” Luke 13:31, 33 NIV

From People

“Prophet” was perhaps the most common title by which people in Jesus’ time referred to Him:

A great *prophet* [Jesus] has appeared among us. Luke 7:16

“Sir,” the woman said, “I can see that you are a *prophet*.”

John 4:19

Jesus of Nazareth...a *prophet*, powerful in word and deed... Luke 24:19 NIV

...the people held that *he was a prophet*.

Matthew 21:46 NIV

When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred and asked, “Who is this?” The crowds answered, “This is Jesus, *the prophet* from Nazareth in Galilee.”

Matthew 21:10-11

Jesus never called Himself a Savior or Redeemer, nor did Moses refer to Him by these titles, and yet for Christians those words have become His special titles—His hallmark. These two titles exert a powerful psychological impact on the minds of the believers. They point to Jesus’ uniqueness and superiority over all the other Messengers. Why would anyone leave a Savior and Redeemer to follow a prophet?

Let us conclude this chapter with an analogy. How can we test heights and weights? By accepted standards, such as centimeters and grams. In the Gospel, only two standards of comparison are used for Jesus. He is compared to two figures: Melchizedek and Moses.

Bahá'u'lláh, the supreme reflection of God's glory and perfection, the One the *Book of Revelation* calls **King of Kings and Lord of Lords**, often refers to Himself as a servant. In the following statement, just like Jesus, He declares that whatever He teaches comes from God, and not from Himself:

This Servant, this Wronged One, is abashed to claim for Himself any existence whatever, how much more those exalted grades of being! Every man of discernment, while walking upon the earth, feeleth indeed abashed, inasmuch as he is fully aware that the thing which is the source of his prosperity, his wealth, his might, his exaltation, his advancement and power is, as ordained by God, the very earth which is trodden beneath the feet of all men. There can be no doubt that whoever is cognizant of this truth, is cleansed and sanctified from all pride, arrogance, and vainglory. Whatever hath been said* hath come from God. Unto this, He, verily, hath borne, and beareth now, witness, and He, in truth, is the All-Knowing, the All-Informed.²

All Messengers and Redeemers are spokesmen for God. Without God they have no existence:

...whatever I say is just what the Father has told me to say. Christ (John 12:50 NIV)

Since God speaks in metaphoric or spiritual language, those who prefer “the letter” over the “spirit” can find an abundance of “raw material” to “prove” their chosen theological

*By great Messengers.

theories. We do not really know who Melchizedek was, but we have no evidence to think that he was greater than Moses. But we do know who Moses was. We have a well-established standard by which we can know Jesus. He is “a Prophet like Moses.” This is clear. It does not require any interpretation, addition, or alteration. There is absolutely no reference anywhere in the Bible that says “Jesus is greater than Moses.” Do we have the right to change the Word of God and add our word to His Word?

Consider these verses from St. Paul concerning Jesus:

You [Jesus] are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.
Hebrews 5:6 NKJ

...we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God... Hebrews 4:14 NKJ

Literally, a High Priest is equal in rank to a Bishop. What would happen if Muhammad had referred to Jesus as a Bishop, a Priest, or a Pastor?

Some Christians have waged wars over Jesus’ titles and positions, and yet all through the Gospel we find Jesus assuming primarily the role of a servant rather than a Master. As we noted, virtually always He referred to Himself as the Son of Man. His life demonstrated perfect humility.

How many people do you know who would willingly wash the dirty feet of their friends?

After that, he [Jesus] poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples’ feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him. John 13:5 NIV

The One on whom “all power” was bestowed (Luke 10:21-22) said:

...the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve... Christ (Matt. 20:28)

The Qur’án confirms the words of Jesus:

They are but Servants raised to honor [God]. They speak not before He speaks, and they act by His command.

Qur'an 21:26-27

According to God's standards and rules:

...the last shall be first, and the first last...

Christ (Matt. 20:16)

...whoever wants to be first must be your slave...

Christ (Matt. 20:27 NIV)

Note also Jesus' absolute humility expressed in this verse:

...anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these...

John 14:12 NIV

Jesus always glorified God the Father, not Himself. He was the Source of all goodness, yet He refused to be called "good." He was instead the Servant of His servants! All great Messengers have followed the same path. They glorified God, not themselves:

This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

Christ (John 15:8 NIV)

And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. Christ (John 14:13 NIV)

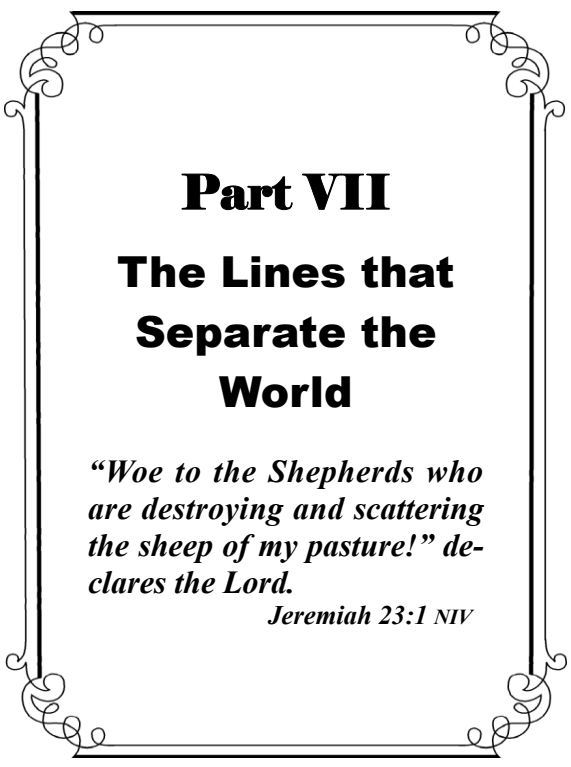
He who speaks on his own does so to gain honor for himself, but he who works for the honor of the one who sent him is a man of truth; there is nothing false about him.

Christ (John 7:18 NIV)

Bah'u'lláh affirms the oneness of all the great Messengers, who are identified in the following passage as "the Manifestations of His Cause:"

Beware, O believers in the Unity of God, lest ye be tempted to make any distinction between any of the Manifestations of His Cause, or to discriminate against

the signs that have accompanied and proclaimed their Revelation. This indeed is the true meaning of Divine Unity, if ye be of them that apprehend and believe this truth. Be ye assured, moreover, that the works and acts of each and every one of these Manifestations of God, nay whatever pertaineth unto them, and whatsoever they may manifest in the future, are all ordained by God, and are a reflection of His Will and Purpose. Whoso maketh the slightest possible difference between their persons, their words, their messages, their acts and manners, hath indeed disbelieved in God, hath repudiated His signs, and betrayed the Cause of His Messengers.³



Part VII
**The Lines that
Separate the
World**

*“Woe to the Shepherds who
are destroying and scattering
the sheep of my pasture!” de-
clares the Lord.*

Jeremiah 23:1 NIV

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The Roots of Religious Prejudice Part II

As we know, God’s Word can be interpreted in various ways. We go along with the one we have heard as long as we hear no other.

The first to present his case seems right, till another comes forward and questions him. Proverbs 18:17 NIV

How do Christian theologians interpret the following verse:

I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me. Christ (John 14:6 NKJ)

Would you like to learn the Bahá’í interpretation of the preceding verse? Consider God (the Father) as the sun, and Jesus (the Son) as the mirror. In the year 27 A.D., God manifested Himself through Jesus, who said: “I am the way, the truth, and the life.” Could not God send a similar Message through other mirrors with other names in other ages?

<i>The Message of Oneness</i>	<i>Dates</i>	<i>Mediators</i>
I am the way, the truth and the light. ¹	750 B.C.	Zoroaster
This is the way [to God]; walk in it.	740 B.C.	Isaiah 30:21

Just this path, there is no other. ²	560 B.C.	Buddha
I am the way and the truth and the life.	27 A.D.	Christ (John 14:6)
Follow me: this is the right way [to God].	622 A.D.	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. ³	1844 A.D.	The Báb
This is the Way of God unto all who are in the heavens and all who are on the earth. ⁴	1863 A.D.	Bahá'u'lláh

Have you ever seen a list like the preceding in Christian publications? What would happen if Christians saw these verses? Would the new discovery weaken or strengthen their faith in Jesus?

How could so many Messengers make such an exclusive claim to salvation? Either they all lied except one, or they all told the truth. But how could they all tell the truth?

- Because they all faced the same sun.
- The speaker was the sun, not the mirror.

In each age, the celestial sun selects a special mirror with a unique name to reflect its light. There are many mirrors but only one sun:

I am the first and I am the last; apart from me there is no God. Isaiah 44:6 NIV

I...I, am the Lord, and besides Me there is no savior. Isaiah 43:11 NKJ

I am a human being like you, except that I receive inspiration. Qur'an 18:110

Can “the mirror” do anything without the sun? Can it reflect any light on its own? Jesus repeatedly said no. Without God He was as helpless as a child:

By myself I can do nothing... Christ (John 5:30 NIV)

The belief that God sends only one Savior to save the human race or suddenly He stops sending new ones is as irrational as saying that God created the sun for only one region of the earth long after He created human beings, or He made it to shine only for one day! Such a belief completely undermines God’s sense of justice and reason.

Can there be justice without impartiality? Did not Jesus say:

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)

Is God less noble than the sun He created? Would the One who is the source of all knowledge, wisdom, and love select only one geographical region and one period in history to show His grace, to manifest His ever-shining light, His ever-lasting glory?

...is He the God of the Jews only? Is He not also the God of the Gentiles [non-Jews]? Romans 3:29 NKJ

Let us now look at the Gospel to see a few other pieces to the puzzle of “the only one”—pieces that most theologians ignore, because they contradict their popular theories.

Piece I

Know that the Lord is God. It is He who made us,
and we are His; we are His people, the sheep of His
pasture. Psalms 100: 3 NIV

Piece II

I was sent only to the lost sheep [the people] of
Israel. Christ (Matt. 15:24 NIV)

Piece III

...other sheep [peoples and nations] I have which are
not of this [Jewish] fold... Christ (John 10:16 NKJ)

Piece IV

I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and
am known by My own. As the Father knows Me,
even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for
the sheep. And other sheep I have which are not of
this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear
My voice; and there will be one flock and one
shepherd. Christ (John 10:14-16 NKJ)

What do the preceding verses imply? They imply that:

- Jesus is the heavenly Shepherd, and we are the sheep of His pasture.
- The heavenly Shepherd has many pastures, each of them with many sheep. The Jewish pasture is only one of them.
- A true shepherd loves all his sheep equally, and does his best to protect and save them all. He does not prefer or favor one group of sheep over another.

Jesus Christ is the loving Shepherd of all humankind. Would He ignore some of them? Would not a good Shepherd give His best, even His life, for his sheep? Is the heavenly Shepherd less loving than an earthly shepherd? Would He ignore “the Hindu or the Islamic fold”? Would He ignore countless millions of people who came to this world before Jesus?

Why then have theologians ignored Jesus’ reference to “other sheep”—the ones that belong “to other flocks”? Is not the “*inclusive*” interpretation of “I am the way” more reasonable—more in harmony with who Jesus was—than the “*exclusive*” one?

We should note that Jesus declares Himself to be the owner not only of the Jewish people but others as well. The Islamic and Buddhist folds are also His. There is only one great Spirit that owns all human beings. In His territory, there are no borders; no one is an alien. All are brothers and sisters of one universal family:

Then Peter replied, “I see very clearly that God doesn’t show partiality. In every nation he accepts those who fear him and do what is right. Acts 10:34-35 NLT

It is obvious that denying Islam is an insult to Jesus. It implies that, God forbid, He was a bad shepherd. He did not protect and save some of His sheep. He was unjust and uncaring to them. By saying that Jesus owns all the pastures and all the sheep, and that He loved all of them equally, we do not belittle Him. We glorify Him! We expand His territory and His priceless possessions: the human race. Note how clearly the following verse confirms the preceding conclusion:

...is He the God of the Jews only? Is He not also the God of the Gentiles [non-Jews]? Romans 3:29 NKJ

The principle of “Progressive Revelation” of truth can be clearly found in the words of Jesus. Compare the following verses:

I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth...

Christ (John 16:12-13 NKJ)

There is not a thing whose storehouses are not with Us. We send it [knowledge, truth] down only according to a well-defined measure.

Qur'án 15:21

Now you have heard two different interpretations of “I am the way.” Compare them to see which one is more reasonable:

Traditional Interpretation: God selected only one Savior from a town in a special year—27 A.D.—to guide His children and show them His love, guidance, and grace.

The Bahá'í Interpretation: God has selected many Saviors from many lands. Each of them was the Way for the people to whom He came. God never favors any group or any person above others, nor abandons His children.

The title of honor—“the chosen people”—bestowed on the Jews both in the Bible and in the Qur'án (2:122), is related to their history and was given to them for special reasons. Anyone who submits to God is a chosen one. Our distinction does not come from our race or roots, but from our relationship with God. The same holds true with titles bestowed on great Messengers: the Friend of God, the Son of God, the Anointed One, the Praised One, the Wronged One, the Gate of God, or the Glory of God.

Other Great Religions

What about the religions that preceded Christianity—religions such as Hinduism, Buddhism, and Zoroastrianism? The Bahá'í Faith also confirms the divine origin of these religions. Unfortunately, most of their Scriptures have been lost. We should not, therefore, equate what their followers believe and practice with their original, authentic teachings.

Have you seen any statement in the Bible about the falsehood of those three religions? There is none. Theologians have simply assumed that they are not from God because they are not mentioned in their Scriptures. Suppose you wrote a history book, but made no mention of Native Americans. Does that mean that they do not exist? Some of the Hebrew prophets were not mentioned by Jesus. Does this mean that they were not prophets? Although there is no direct reference either in the Bible or the Qur'án to those three great religions, we should not conclude that they were false. For it is contrary to God's covenant to allow a false religion to take roots:

Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

Christ (Matt. 7:19 NIV)

How Prejudice Takes Roots

Why then do Christians hear only one interpretation, the one based on “exclusive salvation”? Because over the course of history, theologians in all religions and denominations have waged “theological warfare” to win power. Is “warfare” too strong a word? If it is, why then have so many millions been killed in the name of religion? They have been sacrificed for this egotistical and selfish desire: ***I am better than you are!*** We all have a tendency to find a reason to think that we are better than the next person. As long as this desire does not lead to action, not much evil comes from it.

But what happens when millions of people begin to feel superior to others on the basis of a divisive ideology such as race, gender, religion, ethnic background, or nationality? The feelings in those millions begin to reinforce one another and become extremely powerful. As time passes, they take roots and assume an independent life of their own. We have a special word for these feelings. We call them prejudice. Once a given prejudice is established and accepted, it incites and demands action. Discrimination, cruelty, injustice, and war satisfy the demand. Hitler mobilized a nation against the Jews and Gypsies. He gave his people a purpose: only a super race—ours—must rule the earth!

At the root of every war lies prejudice. Religious wars are no exception. Feeling superior is sweet but poisonous—so poisonous that it can kill the soul. Note this warning from Bahá'u'lláh to those who may look down on others:

He [the true seeker] should forgive the sinful, and never despise his low estate, for none knoweth what his own end shall be. How often hath a sinner, at the hour of death, attained to the essence of faith, and, quaffing the immortal draught, hath taken his flight unto the celestial Concourse. And how often hath a devout believer, at the hour of his soul's ascension, been so changed as to fall into the nethermost fire.⁵

The idea of religious superiority is universal. It is found among virtually all religions and denominations. Consider the following conversation between the followers of several religions and churches:

Muslim: My religion is the best, because Islam is God's last religion and the Qur'án is His last Scripture. (He speaks as if God suddenly ran out of words!)

Jew: We are called God's chosen people. That is the best position. Why would anyone exchange

the best for less? (A Jewish author has written a book called, “*I Take God, You Take Jesus!*” because in the Hebrew Scriptures God says, “I am your Savior.”)

Christian: Jesus is *the Only* Savior. No one can come to the Father except through Him.

Buddhist: Look at all those Muslims, Christians, and Jews. They have been always fighting. We are the most peaceful people.

Jehovah Witnesses We are the only true witnesses of God at this age.

Mormons We are the best guided. Because Joseph Smith said: All churches are corrupt!

Baptists We stick to the word of God. We are not like those watered down believers.

Methodists We are not so rigid and closed-minded like some of these Baptists who take everything literally.

Seventh Day Adventists Sabbath is the true day of rest. All other denominations break this commandment.

Besides, we have the visions of Ellen G. White to guide us.

Catholics Those Protestants are so divided. We are one people with one Pope.

Unitarians Everyone must find his way to God. We must cherish and preserve our spiritual freedom. Why limit yourself to a set of doctrines?

As you can see, human beings love to feel superior to others. They like to think that they are special—one of a kind.

Neutralizing Religious Prejudice

The Báb and Bahá'u'lláh hit at the root of all illusions of superiority. They declare that all great religions have one source: God. Since there is only one Sun, no mirror, no source of light is better than the other:

These sanctified Mirrors, these Day-springs of ancient glory are one and all the Exponents on earth of Him Who is the central Orb of the universe, its Essence and ultimate Purpose. From Him proceed their knowledge and power; from Him is derived their sovereignty. The beauty of their countenance is but a reflection of His image, and their revelation a sign of His deathless glory.⁶

Bahá'u'lláh

For instance, were ye to place unnumbered mirrors before the sun, they would all reflect the sun and produce impressions thereof, whereas the sun is in itself wholly independent of the existence of the mirrors...⁷

The Báb

All these holy, divine Manifestations are one. They have served one God, promulgated the same truth...and reflected the same light...in name and form They differ, but in reality They agree and are the same.⁸ ‘Abdu'l-Bahá

They only differ in the intensity of their revelation, and the comparative potency of their light.⁹

Bahá'u'lláh

Do we lose anything by confirming the divine origin of all religions? Both Muhammad and Bahá'u'lláh call Jesus the Spirit of God. Can we imagine any Being greater than the Spirit of God? Would that Spirit lose its greatness if we believe that it has manifested its glory to humankind many times throughout history? In fact, such a belief makes that Spirit greater. Not only it points to its perfect love, but also

to its power to return and elevate the World again and again.

To consider Jesus the only Savior or Muhammad the last One is contrary to everything we know about God. The idea of exclusive or special salvation is Antichrist—the exact opposite of what Jesus stood for—and anti-Christian, because it puts limit on Jesus' love and power. The essence of all Jesus' teaching is love. To restrict God's love in any way points to His imperfection. It brings Him to our level—that of sinful people. Did you ever have a teacher who favored some students over others? Could you respect that teacher?

Now ponder the Bahá'í belief which expands Jesus' love to all nations and to all ages. Will Christians be disloyal to Jesus by accepting the Bahá'í belief? No, they will be even more loyal to Him because they will expand His justice, His grace, and His universal love to all nations and peoples and to all ages. That image is infinitely more beautiful than the one theologians have popularized.

The *same* Spirit that spoke through Jesus has always spoken in similar words. Once again that Spirit is speaking and proclaiming that He is 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.¹⁰ Bahá'u'lláh

I am...the beginning and the end. Christ (Rev. 21:6)

He is the first and the last, the manifest and the hidden...
Muhammad (Qur'án 57:3)

How Do We Learn to Believe What We Believe?

Our Creator in His Wisdom has endowed human beings with the twin gifts of the mind and the heart. The purpose of the mind is to know the truth; the purpose of the heart is to love the truth and appreciate and cherish the Beauty of God and His blessings. The twin forces of “knowing” and “loving” are intimate and inseparable partners. How do they get along? And which one is both the master and the trouble maker? The mind, like a little child, is innocent and obedient. Its duty is to see everything as it is in the light of knowledge. It is the ears and the eyes of the soul. It is a loyal partner and performs its duties as designed and intended by its Creator.

What happens next—after the facts are exposed to the mind? The forces of the heart—the center of emotions—then step in, take charge, and begin to control and manipulate the mind. They cloud it and tempt it to step into darkness where the world of reality becomes blurred, where things look not as they are, but as the forces of selfish desire and prejudice dictate, where the forces of the mind are defeated by the dictates of fancy and idle imagining.

Inasmuch as they have not apprehended the meaning of Knowledge, and have called by that name those images fashioned by their own *fancy* and which have sprung from the embodiments of ignorance, they therefore have inflicted upon the Source of Knowledge that which thou hast heard and witnessed.¹¹

Bahá'u'lláh

Blessed art thou for having utterly abolished the idol of self and of *vain imagination*, and for having rent asunder the veil of *idle fancy*, through the power of the might of thy Lord, the Supreme Protector, the Almighty, the one Beloved.¹²

Bahá'u'lláh

As a consequence, a struggle between the two forces of reality and fancy ensues. What happens next—which one wins?—defines a human being. In some people, the mind wins most of the time; in others, the heart changes and rules as a powerful dictator. The mind—God’s greatest gift to humankind—turns into a mere servant to justify whatever its master desires and dictates. Sadly, this is how most people live their lives. They allow a dictator to determine the course of their destiny. Their hearts dictates and their minds stands at the ready to justify the deeds and desires of its master.

When the mind rules, the soul remains in touch with reality. It sails smoothly through the turbulent river of life. This is the way it should be. This is what the Creator intended, when He designed human beings.

The submission of the mind to the forces of the heart is the motive power behind all evil in the world. Surely, there are “grey” spheres where the mind cannot see clearly to make a fair judgment. But in relation to the most critical issues in life—questions of conscience—the mind can see and judge quite well. It seems, “the golden rule” was etched into its genes! It knows instinctively that whatever hurts or helps its master, also hurts or helps others.

To be able to think, to reason, to discover, to know, and to understand is God’s greatest gift to human beings. Yet so many people live their lives in the deep darkness of ignorance and blind imitation. Once again, we should ask: Why is there so much evil in the world? The primary, perhaps the sole reason is that the heart clouds the mind, and then takes charge! Without the light of knowledge, the heart is blind. It turns a bright young man into a “suicide bomber.” It tells him: “The surest way to get to heaven is to kill “the enemy.” Who is “the enemy”? He is the one who worships God by another name and in another kind of building!

Everything evil ensues when the mind is distorted and abused by the heart, and everything good and noble ensues when the heart allows the mind to work as intended by its creator: ***to see everything as it is, to remain in touch with reality, not fantasy.***

The beauty of human life lies in the principle of ***unity in diversity***. We are all born with a pure mind and a pure heart. In this respect, we are one. Then we begin to write our own script—the story of our everlasting destiny. That is what makes human beings so fascinating! Every story, every script is unique, unlike any other. Otherwise, how boring our lives would be!

What is the greatest and most consequential teaching in all religions? What is the root of all virtues? What is the master key that unlocks the source of all goodness? It is allowing the gift of the mind to do its work as intended by its Creator.

If the followers of all great religions allow their mind to do its work as intended by its Creator, they will arrive at this one conclusion: Each of the great religions has a unique name and a unique history, yet they are all reflections of one light, the various shades or colors of one rainbow embracing humankind at designated times in history.

The great religions shine as brightly as the sun. Can anyone with open eyes mistake a light bulb for the sun? This is the reason Jesus said:

Every eye shall see him.

Revelation 1:7

He did not say “some eyes.” An “eye” has no choice but to see. An “eye” cannot fail to see. It cannot be blind, unless it is closed, unless the forces of desire under the command of its master encircle it with the clouds of illusions.

He was robed in a cloud...his face was like the sun...

Revelation 10:1 NIV

The first step in the journey of the search for truth is to disperse the clouds of ignorance, misunderstanding, and prejudice. And that is the prime purpose of this book.

*The essence of all that We have revealed for thee is Justice, is for man to free himself from idle fancy and imitation, discern with the eye of oneness His glorious handiwork, and look into all things with a searching eye.*¹³

Bahá'u'lláh

25

The Divisive Role of Religious Leaders

What role do the religious leaders play? Do they serve as a positive or a negative force in shaping the world? To respond to this question, we should ask: Are all people alike? Among the followers of all religions, we have a range of believers from the most to the least noble. Are religious leaders an exception to the rule? Some leaders are models of justice, understanding, and compassion. These leaders, whatever their religion, deserve the highest praise, for they serve as a cohesive force. Other leaders occupy the other end of the continuum. Instead of unifying people, they divide them; instead of promoting peace, they promote prejudice. They are fanatical, zealous, irrational, and narrow and literal-minded.

These leaders exert far more influence on the masses of humankind than their number justifies. They have been active in drawing lines of separation in all ages; our age is no exception.

Have you ever seen Jesus say: “Beware of fishermen, farmers, or carpenters”? No, He mentions only the narrow-minded theologians, who were called “teachers of the law:”

Beware of these teachers of religious law! For they love to parade in flowing robes and to have everyone bow to them as they walk in the marketplaces. And how they love the seats of honor in the synagogues and at banquets...Because of this, their punishment will be the greater.

Christ (Mark 12:38-40 NLT)

The teachers of the law...Everything they do is done for men to see...they love the place of honor at banquets and the most important seats in the synagogues; they love to be greeted in the marketplaces and to have men call them “Rabbi.”

Christ (Matt. 23:2-7 NIV)

Consider also the following references concerning such shallow and letter-minded leaders, who have led their followers away from God:

Israel’s watchmen are blind, they all lack knowledge... They are shepherds who lack understanding; they all turn to their own way, each seeks his own gain.

Isaiah 56:10-11 NIV

“Woe to the shepherds who are destroying and scattering the sheep of my pasture!” declares the Lord. Therefore this is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says to the shepherds who tend my people: “Because you have scattered my flock and driven them away and have not bestowed care on them, I will bestow punishment on you for the evil you have done,” declares the Lord.

Jeremiah 23:1-2 NIV

See also 25:34-36

The following verses from the Qur’án describe the spiritual state of those who trusted their leaders during their earthly lives, but after passing away to the heavenly life discovered that those leaders had misled them:

The Day that their faces will be turned upside down in the Fire, they will say: “Woe to us! Would that we had obeyed God and the Messenger!” And they would say: “Our Lord! We obeyed our leaders and our great ones, and they misled us. Our Lord! Double their punishment and curse them with a great curse!”

Qur’án 33:66-68 Y

Bahá’u’lláh refers repeatedly to the negative role of religious leaders in all ages:

It is clear and evident that whenever the Manifestations of Holiness were revealed, the divines [religious leaders] of their day have hindered the people from attaining unto the way of truth. To this testify the records of all the scriptures and heavenly books. Not one Prophet of God was made manifest Who did not fall a victim to the relentless hate, to the denunciation, denial, and execration of the clerics of His day!¹ Bahá'u'lláh

The good news is that the time of the divisive leaders has ended:

This is what the Sovereign Lord says: “I am against the shepherds and will hold them accountable for my flock. I will remove them from tending the flock so that the shepherds can no longer feed themselves. I will rescue my flock from their mouths, and it will no longer be food for them.” For this is what the Sovereign Lord says: “I myself will search for my sheep and look after them. As a shepherd looks after his scattered flock when he is with them, so will I look after my sheep. I will rescue them from all the places where they were scattered on a day of clouds and darkness.

I will bring them out from the nations and gather them from the countries, and I will bring them into their own land. I will pasture them on the mountains of Israel, in the ravines and in all the settlements in the land. I will tend them in a good pasture, and the mountain heights of Israel will be their grazing land. There they will lie down in good grazing land, and there they will feed in a rich pasture on the mountains of Israel. I myself will tend my sheep and have them lie down, declares the Sovereign Lord. I will search for the lost and bring back the strays. I will bind up the injured and strengthen the weak, but the sleek and the strong I will destroy. I will shepherd the flock with justice.” Ezekiel 34:10-16 NIV

The divisive leaders should heed this heavenly warnings:

O ye that are foolish, yet have a name to be wise!
Wherefore do ye wear the guise of shepherds, when
inwardly ye have become wolves, intent upon My flock?
Ye are even as the star, which riseth ere the dawn, and
which, though it seem radiant and luminous, leadeth the
wayfarers of My city astray into the paths of perdition.²

Bahá'u'lláh

Is it reasonable to leave our everlasting destiny in the hands of someone else, who may have only one advantage over us: he may have taken more courses, or read more books in theology? Why did Jesus make the following statement?

At that time Jesus said, “I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for this was your good pleasure.

Christ (Matt. 11:25-26 NIV)

Who were the learned? The theologians. Who were the wise? The leaders who gave advice to others. What advantage do children have over adults with minds crammed with misinformation? Innocence and lack of prejudice or preconceived notions. They have a mind untouched by deeply ingrained beliefs, and a heart free from prejudice. As Jesus declared, they are models for those who wish to join the hosts of heaven. They represent the kind of people God chooses for His heavenly mansions. Unless we recognize that it is God who chooses us, and His choice depends on the state of our heart and soul—not our mind—the prevailing tradition of conformity to the verdict of prestigious religious leaders will continue.

Why did Jesus choose simple, pure-hearted people, like Peter and Mary Magdalene, and why did He reject and condemn the greatest theologians of His time, Annas and Caiaphas? Because knowing a Redeemer from God is a

matter of heart and soul, not a matter of “book learning.” It is the fruits of a mind crowned with wisdom, not charmed with facts and figures.

To know God, His Messengers, and His Message, do we need a degree in theology?

The understanding of His words and the comprehension of the utterances of the Birds of Heaven are in no wise dependent upon human learning. They depend solely upon purity of heart, chastity of soul, and freedom of spirit.³

Bahá'u'lláh

Book learning often generates strings of pride, which are then woven into veils of denial:

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.⁴

Bahá'u'lláh

Human beings prefer the powerful; God favors the lowly.

We wish to favor the lowly in the land, to exalt them and make them our inheritors.

Qur'án 28:5

Many that are first shall be last; and the last first.

Christ (Mark 10:31)

We are living at a critical time in history, when religion is being employed as a weapon of violence and war. The divisive leaders, like a giant tree, have grown deep roots into the hearts and minds of humankind. They control the destiny of millions of devoted followers. Unless we expose these resilient roots to the light of knowledge, the tree will continue to thrive and bear its bitter fruits.

Let us now see how the divisive leaders have succeeded in their mission. To reach a goal or accomplish a mission, a

person needs to adopt a strategy, a means that will aid him attain his objective. What strategy have the divisive leaders adopted and employed? Exposing this strategy is essential. It is the first and most significant step towards unity, towards the goal of generating understanding, tolerance, and compassion among the followers of world's great religions.

A study of sacred Scriptures reveals that basically they contain four classes or categories of teachings:

- Social-cultural
- Prophetic-predictive
- Spiritual-ethical
- Theological-doctrinal

Social teachings—such as the rules of marriage, divorce, and burial—relate to the needs of specific cultures at specific periods of time. As social conditions change, so do these teachings. This is the primary difference between the great religions.

The purpose of prophetic-predictive teachings is to help the believers recognize their expected Redeemer. The religious leaders, throughout all ages, have turned the prophetic-predictive teachings into obstacles. Instead of leading their followers to their Redeemer by the light of these teachings, they have turned them into weapons of denial.*

Spiritual-ethical teachings show us how to live and love, how to relate to God, to ourselves, and to others. From age to age these teachings do not change. They are the heart and soul of all sacred Scriptures. Without them, life is impossible.

*For a detailed study of this subject, see: *Bahá'í Proofs*, Chapter 1: Prophecy: the Obstacle that Prevents People from Knowing Their Redeemer.

Theological-doctrinal teachings lie at the other end of the spectrum. They have little if any practical or far-reaching consequences. Whether we are baptized or not, or how and by whom, is a classic example of such teachings.

Moral-spiritual principles do not provide opportunities for debates and disagreements. Who would question the necessity of loving God and loving one's neighbor? Unlike moral-spiritual principles, theological-doctrinal issues offer ideal opportunities for dissension, disagreement, and debate. They provide perfect breeding ground for germs of prejudice, violence, and war.

Consider Catholics and Protestants. What separates them? Do they not believe in one God and one Redeemer? Why then do they remain divided? Is it not because of disagreement concerning theological-doctrinal issues? Why are there hundreds of Protestant denominations? There is an endless stream of books that are being constantly published on doctrinal issues. Consider the following questions about Satan from just one small book—questions that Christians have asked a famous theologian:

- Can Christians be demonized?
- Does Satan have access to our minds?
- Is Satan always the cause of sickness?
- Did demons have sexual relations with women in Genesis 6:4?
- Is the “binding and loosing” of demons biblical?⁵

Consider also the following questions:

- Should we speak in tongues?
- What is the true name of God?
- What is the true day of rest for Christians: Saturday or Sunday?
- Can you be “saved” if you are not baptized?

- Is being “slain in the spirit” consistent with biblical teachings?

Some doctrinal issues, such as the Trinity, are significant; nevertheless they should not lead to conflict and separation. We should respect and live peacefully with all people—whatever their doctrinal beliefs, for they do not lead us away from our ethical values—such as kindness and honesty.

This is the strategy that all divisive leaders have adopted to promote separation and prejudice: They have made mountains out of sands—the sands are theological-doctrinal issues. These leaders have ignored or downgraded the significance of moral-spiritual principles that bind all great religions, while exaggerating the significance of a few favorite doctrines.

History shows that this strategy has been extremely effective in promoting prejudice and helping the leaders to hold the reins of power. It has been so effective that it has become in itself a doctrine! To expose the fallacy of this practice, let us consider several examples. Suppose you have a friend who believes in the “right” doctrines (such as “we are saved by grace, not by works,”) but is dishonest. Now suppose you believe in the “wrong” doctrine, (such as “we are saved by works, not by grace,”) but live honestly. Then one day both of you meet your Lord. Who, do you think, would the Lord bless? Would He reject you for believing in the wrong doctrine? What would He say to your friend, who believed all his life in the right doctrines, but practiced deception? God will judge us by the quality of our soul, not the correctness of our “theological positions.” This simple example exposes clearly the sweet illusion of superiority generated in believers by telling them that what will ultimately matter is believing in the right doctrines, and implying that this is how they can save their soul.

Many Muslims believe that Muhammad is the last Messenger from God. A few challenge this belief. Suppose a Muslim rejected this popular doctrine, but lived a noble life. Even if we assume that he has believed in the wrong doctrine, would Muhammad reject him? Both Shi'as and Sunnis believe in one God, one Messenger, and one book. What separates them is the question of successorship to Muhammad. Consider two Muslims from each sect. How will they be judged? By their sect, or by the quality of their soul—their honesty, compassion, charitable deeds, and love for God?

Suppose a Jew worked on the Sabbath to help a poor family. Would Moses reject him because he did not keep the Sabbath? Suppose he also disregarded the Jewish dietary laws. Would he be rejected because of this?

Theological-doctrinal views have afflicted, divided, and demoralized all great religions. Islamic “traditions,” (statements attributed to Muhammad) have provided a fertile ground for debates and arguments among the narrow-minded and divisive Muslim leaders. Consider the following statement from a Muslim author:

How would the prophet Muhammad fare in our society? ...he would be severely criticized by most of today's Muslim scholars. The Mullahs, Imams and religious leaders would attack him and they may even have a fatwah (decree) that calls for his head. He would be arrested in any of the so-called Islamic countries, jailed and probably tortured to death. The Mullahs, scholars and religious leaders would be disturbed by him following the Qur'an alone and refusing all the innovations that filled the Hadith [traditions] and Sunnah [stories about Muhammad] books and added to today's Islam 200 years after his death. He would denounce the Hadith and Sunnah books, those who wrote them and those who follow them. The prophet Muhammad would have found himself

a stranger among the Muslims today. He would probably feel so much disappointment, he might tell God what he will be telling Him on the Last Day as stated in the Qur'án, “My Lord, my people have deserted this Qur'án” (25:30).⁶

To create conflict and separation, some divisive leaders step beyond doctrines. They even turn spiritual principles, such as “one loving God” into a theological debate. They do this by searching for minor differences between God as described in their Scriptures versus the other Scriptures. Consider the following dialogue between a Christian and a Muslim theologian about the one God they worship:

Christian: My God is the God of love. Yours is not as loving as mine! Further, your God is cunning; mine is not!

Muslim: My God is mightier than yours. Further, your God is jealous; mine is not!

Now compare the following statements from two prominent Christian leaders—one cohesive, the other divisive:

A Cohesive Christian Leader

If God wants to show his grace to all, then that grace must take on a socio-historical form if it is to become truly available to every man. The most acceptable mediating channels for this mercy are the religions. The religions are the depositories of grace, each offering ways of salvation and so in a positive sense they should be included in God's plan of salvation.⁷

A Divisive Christian Leader

The God of the Bible states unequivocally: “Before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me. I, even I, am the Lord; and beside me there is no savior” (Isaiah 43:10-11). He does not simply ignore the gods of other religions. He denounces them all, including Allah, as imposters who actually front for Satan or his demons.⁸

Allah is surely not “the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob” but their sworn enemy who desires the extermination of their descendants! Allah is a proper name—a name that existed long before Muhammad invented the anti-Israel and anti-Christian religion of Islam.⁹

No other example demonstrates the powers and the vast domain of “doctrine and theology” as does the topic of the resurrection. Theologians often declare that Jesus’ triumph over death is the foundation of Christianity and the ultimate evidence of Jesus’ identity. Statements like the following are found abundantly in Christian literature:

...His resurrection serves as the proof of His divine claims...Jesus’ identity is bound up inextricably with His resurrection. That is why He said, “I am the *resurrection* and the life.” (John 11:25).¹⁰

Many theologians use the resurrection as the distinguishing mark of Christianity over all other religions. They claim that all the great Messengers are dead except Jesus. Consider the following statement. The author does not even use the word “Messenger” to refer to founders of great religions. He calls them “religious leaders” and refers to their teachings as “opinions”!

The opinions of all other religious leaders are equally valid in that they are equally worthless. They died and are still dead. Only Jesus had the power to lay down his life and to take it up again. Thus, his opinion is infinitely more valid than theirs.¹¹

Is such a claim valid? Are we to judge Jesus' greatness and the proof of His Mission by His physical resurrection? The best way to show the fallacy of this unfounded claim is to study the words of Jesus. What did He say to miracle-seekers—those who wanted to believe in Him by seeing miracles? He condemned them in harshest language:

A wicked and adulterous [faithless, disloyal] generation
asks for a miraculous sign! Christ (Matt. 12:39 NIV)
See also Matt. 4:7

Would Jesus make an exception concerning His resurrection? Would He say that *while* He was alive people could not use His miracles to prove His divine distinction, but *after* His death they could? Where then did the “theology of resurrection” come from? The following statement is perhaps the cornerstone of this theology:

And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is
useless...if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not
been raised either. I Corinthians 15:14-16 NIV

St. Paul does not use resurrection as an evidence of Jesus' divine station. He simply gives us hope that Jesus is alive, that He has ascended to His Father. He does not even specify if he believes that the resurrection was physical.*

Jesus wanted to manifest and emblazon His divine glory and the evidence for His celestial Mission through His words and wonderful deeds. What about His miracles? He

* For a detailed discussion of this topic, see *Come Now, Let Us Reason Together*, by this author.

wanted to do just the opposite with them. He wanted to conceal them! He said, “See that no one knows about this” (Matt. 9:30 NIV), “See that you don’t tell anyone” (Matt. 8:4). Have theologians been faithful to Jesus’ instructions? No, they have followed an opposite course. Instead of emphasizing His words and deeds, they have mostly glorified and emblazoned His miracles.

Believing in Jesus because of His miracle is like building one’s house on sands. Loving God and the ones He sends is rooted in our heart and soul. It has no connection to material events, such as miracles. If a person is not spiritually receptive, nothing will convince him. Note the following statement from Jesus:

...they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead. Luke 16:31 NIV

Religion has declined in two ways. First, it has been commercialized. Compare the following:

- Buy this toothpaste and smile for the rest of your life.
- Say “Jesus is my Savior and receive eternal life.”

Statements like the following are found abundantly in Christian literature:

The requirements for eternal life are not based on what *you can do* but on what *Jesus Christ has done*.¹²

Second, religion has been materialized. Compare the following:

- Happiness and achievement come from material possessions.
- Jesus is great because He restored His material body.

Both of these trends have diminished the dignity of believing. Spiritual-moral teachings are the spirit of religion. Theological-doctrinal issues are its body. Jesus

promised that He would be with His followers until “the end of the age.” Now is the end of the age. The spirit has left all past religions. Theologians are trying to revive the body, but to no avail. Theological debates can raise people’s blood pressure but not their spirits!

If God will not judge us by our theological position, then how will He judge us? What standards will He use?

- There is conscious denial of truth.
- There are also errors of judgment.

We are accountable for our conscious denial of truth, but not for our errors of judgment. Let us consider an example in relation to each of these two standards. Denying God’s great Messengers and Redeemers pertains to a conscious denial of truth. Why? Because these Messengers shine as brightly as the sun. If anyone can say that the sun is invisible, so can he say that the light of Moses, Jesus, Muhammad, and Bahá’u’lláh is also invisible. Note the authority and certainty with which Bahá’u’lláh speaks:

This Cause is too evident to be obscured, and too conspicuous to be concealed. It shineth as the sun in its meridian glory. None can deny it unless he be a hater and a doubter.¹³

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!”¹⁴

Bahá’u’lláh

We are accountable to acknowledge the truth of all God’s great Messengers and Redeemers. This acknowledgment is absolutely essential. After acknowledging their divine glory, we begin to study their teachings. At that point, we begin to commit errors of judgment. No human being can be immune to such errors. God in His grace overlooks our unintentional errors, even as any loving parent would.

To know Jesus, we need to focus first and foremost on *His* words, not those of His apostles or followers. The Gospel shows clearly that His distinguished apostles, who were so close to Him, often misinterpreted His Word and misunderstood His intentions. It was for this reason that Jesus became so angry at St. Peter—the rock of His church—that He called him: “Satan” (Mark 8:33). Peter was a wonderful soul, he was Jesus’ greatest disciple, the one who received the most honorable title from his Master, yet he lacked wisdom to know the ways of God, to recognize that He advances His Cause through suffering, and not through miraculous means. Not only Peter, but all the apostles suffered from the same weaknesses: Sometimes they misunderstood their Master.

When we study the words of Jesus, we make an astonishing discovery: Virtually everything He said about “saving the soul” pertains to spiritual-ethical teachings, not doctrinal. Let us consider several examples:

On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. “Teacher,” he asked, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?” “What is written in the Law?” he replied. “How do you read it?” He answered: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind; and, love your neighbor as yourself.” “You have answered correctly,” Jesus replied. “Do this and you will live.”

Luke 10:25-28 NIV

Now a man came up to Jesus and asked, “Teacher, what good thing must I do to get eternal life?” “Why do you ask me about what is good?” Jesus replied. “There is only One who is good. If you want to enter life, obey the commandments.” “Which ones?” the man inquired. Jesus replied, “Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not give false testimony, honor your father and mother,” and “love your neighbor as yourself.” “All these

I have kept,” the young man said. “What do I still lack?” Jesus answered, “If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.” When the young man heard this, he went away sad, because he had great wealth.

Matthew 19:16-22 NIV

An examination of Jesus’ words reveals that He emphasized two principles:

- First, He constantly admonished us to believe in Him, to love Him, and to have true faith in Him and His Father. This is the essence of His spiritual teachings.
- Second, He encouraged us to prove our faith by loving others, by living a pure and noble life.

Jesus told us that the spiritual (love for Jesus) and the ethical (love for one’s neighbor) are intertwined. Just as water cannot exist without either oxygen or hydrogen, neither can the water of life without love for God and noble deeds.

If you love me, you will obey what I command.

John 14:15 NIV

I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you. This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

John 15:5-8 NIV

Consider also Jesus’ Sermon of the Mount:

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.

Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Matthew 5:3-10 NIV

Did Jesus say any of the following?

Blessed is he who believes in original sin.

Blessed is he who believes in the Trinity.

Blessed is he who believes in my miraculous conception.

Blessed is he who believes that he will be saved by grace rather than by good works.

Blessed is he who will believe in my physical resurrection.

Even when the Jews objected to the way Jesus acted on the Sabbath, He turned this theological-doctrinal issue—what we are allowed or disallowed on the Sabbath—to a spiritual-ethical principle. He said that the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. He downgraded the significance of Sabbath (a doctrine) and elevated the significance of good deed.

An examination of Jesus' words clearly demonstrates that His emphasis was on deeds, not on mere confession of faith:

Why do you call me, "Lord, Lord," and do not do what I say?

Luke 6:46 NIV

See also John 3:21

Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance...Luke 3:8

Each tree is recognized by its own fruit. Luke 6:44

He shall reward every man according to his works.

Matt. 16:27

See also Rev. 3:2

To expand our vision and gain a global perspective, we need to resolve the following questions:

- What separates the denominations? How did the one religion of Jesus branch out into some 20,000 denominations and sects?
- Why does the one religion of God, sent in different ages under different names, remain divided? Specifically, what separates Islam and Christianity?

As stated repeatedly, all religions are in essence one. They differ only in name:

And truly this your religion is the one [eternal] religion; and I am your Lord. Qur'án 23:52

This is the changeless Faith of God, eternal in the past, eternal in the future. Let him that seeketh, attain it; and as to him that hath refused to seek it—verily, God is Self-Sufficient, above any need of His creatures.¹⁵

Bahá'u'lláh

...one Lord, one faith...one God and Father of all...

Ephesians 4:5-6 NKJ

The line that separates Christian denominations consists mostly of disagreements concerning theological-doctrinal issues. The same line also separates Islam and Christianity. But here the lines are more distinct.

If theological-doctrinal issues were not emphasized or mentioned by Jesus, where did they come from? How were they generated? Most of the theological differences between major Christian denominations can be traced to the

words of Jesus' apostles, not Jesus' own teachings. Theologians, over the centuries, discovered a fertile ground for debates and arguments in those words. By worshiping "the letter" rather than loving "the spirit" they generated mountains out of sands. Then they stood on the top of their mountains and looked down on the others. They raised similar mountains in relation to other religions, but made them higher.

Let us now remove the clouds of theological theories generated by divisive leaders—clouds that have completely obscured Muhammad's glory and greatness—and try to see Him in the light of Jesus' own teachings.

Was Muhammad a True Christian?

Did He satisfy the standards of a true believer as defined by Jesus? What are those standards?

- Having true faith in Jesus.
- Demonstrating that faith by good deeds.

Muhammad glorified God constantly. He also glorified Jesus by attributing miracles to Him, but not to Himself! He bestowed on Jesus the most exalted title: the Spirit of God. But referred to Himself as a man—a Messenger from God. He even confirmed a theological issue that even some Christians find hard to believe: the miraculous conception of Jesus. Can a believer express greater faith in Jesus than attributing His conception to the Holy Spirit?

Muhammad was also the foremost teacher of Christianity. Today over one billion Muslims revere Jesus because of the Quranic teachings. True Muslims cherish as much respect and love for Jesus as true Christians do. To show their reverence, they do not mention Jesus' name without saying: peace be upon Him. What Muhammad has done for Christ

is far beyond what any Christian could ever do for Him. Contrary to what many are led to believe, Muhammad lived a life of absolute purity and virtue. Just like Jesus. He was totally devoted to God and obeyed all His commands. Historical records clearly indicate that despite His overwhelming power, He lived an austere life. Imagine a king who lives in poverty! Bahá'u'lláh quotes this statement from Muhammad: “Poverty is My pride.”¹⁶ How should we judge Him? By His “fruits”—by what He said, how He lived, and what He accomplished.

Even a child is known by his doings... Proverbs 20:11

Was then Muhammad a true Christian? By Jesus' standard, He definitely was. He satisfied the two essential requirements. He even exceeded the following standard set by St. John:

If a Prophet acknowledges that Jesus Christ [the Word of God] became a human being, that person has the Spirit of God.
I John 4:2 New Living Translation

As we noted, Muhammad did far more than merely acknowledging the Advent of Christ. Should Christians reject Muhammad because of His theological-doctrinal positions? When Jesus came did He approve the doctrinal positions held by the Jews? Did Jesus also say: “Anyone who acknowledges the theological and doctrinal views of Christian leaders is a true Christian”? Would He reject any believer because of his theological positions? Would not Jesus express His most profound love and respect to Muhammad—the One who had true faith in Him and glorified Him? Would not Jesus bestow the same title on Muhammad that Muhammad bestowed on Jesus—“the Spirit of God”?

Every discerning observer will recognize that in the Dispensation of the Qur'án both the Book and the Cause of Jesus were confirmed. As to the matter of names,

Muhammad, Himself, declared: “I am Jesus.” He recognized the truth of the signs, prophecies, and words of Jesus, and testified that they were all of God. In this sense, neither the person of Jesus nor His writings hath differed from that of Muhammad and of His holy Book, inasmuch as both have championed the Cause of God, uttered His praise, and revealed His commandments. Thus it is that Jesus, Himself, declared: “I go away and come again unto you.”¹⁷ Bahá’u’lláh

Let us conclude this chapter with one more issue: how are theologians shaping the world’s political trends?

Theology and Politics

As we noted, theological issues have divided religions. Have they also divided the nations? Unfortunately, here also theologians have an unsavory record. Here also they have failed the test. Religious wars were instigated by theological-doctrinal differences, not spiritual-ethical principles. Why would anyone who loves his neighbor kill his neighbor?

Are theologians and their beliefs shaping the course of events in our time? It was recently reported in the news media that the president of a Muslim country has stated that World War III is a prelude to the coming of Mahdi—the One promised to come and save the world. By this he implied that the sooner we bring about this war, the sooner our Savior will come!

We find evidence for a similar fanaticism also among some Christian theologians. Consider the following example. After the collapse of communism, the end of the Cold War, and the end of the threat of nuclear war, President Bush spoke of need for a new world order. This is how his views are described in a Christian publication:

President Bush, in his State of the Union address of January 29, 1991, described the coming new world order as one where "diverse nations are drawn together in a common cause to achieve peace." On March 5, amid the euphoria of an astounding triumph, the president exclaimed again before an ecstatic Congress that, yes, there's "a new world coming into view, a world in which there is a very real prospect of a new world order."¹⁸

That peace is better than war, that order and cooperation are preferable to disorder, contention, and conflict is a central teaching of Jesus; it is also a self-evident truth. Yet some Christian leaders have challenged this truth. They claim that peace, cooperation, and harmony have no value unless they are initiated by Jesus. They see the world moving toward unity and peace, and many of them don't like it: they do not see the Promised One—Christ in His Second Advent—in charge. One Christian leader recently wrote:

In June of 1991...an elite group of international financiers (the Builderbugers) met in...Germany to accelerate their plans for a New World Order...Will there really be a choice this November [in presidential elections] to put a stop to the mad rush for world government?...Our only hope for world peace lies in the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

The implication is this: since the New World Order (which requires cooperation rather than contention) does not come through Christ, we should prevent it from taking root and spreading! Pat Robertson, the founder of 700 Club has written a book against the idea of the New World Order.

Some literal-minded Jews acted the same way about the creation of the state of Israel: "Two years after the United Nations came into existence, it created Israel. Many orthodox Jews opposed the creation of Israel on the grounds that only the Messiah could do that."¹⁹

Adlai Stevenson has said, "Those who benefit by the vested privileges or injustices of an existing order always resent and resist change." Futurist Alvin Toffler, in his classic book *The Third Wave*, states:

A new civilization is emerging in our lives, and blind men everywhere are trying to suppress it...Pieces of this new civilization exists today. Millions are already attuning their lives to the rhythms of tomorrow. Others, terrified of the future, are engaged in a desperate, futile flight into the past and are trying to restore the dying world that gave them birth. The dawn of this new civilization is the single most explosive fact of our lifetimes.²⁰

To conclude: We are living in a most critical age in human history. The choices we make will have profound and everlasting consequences in shaping our destiny as well as the world's destiny. Today religion has become an instrument of prejudice rather than peace. We must either reverse this trend, or be prepared to face grave consequences. Replacing prejudice and hatred with peace and harmony is not as difficult as many are led to believe. The first and most essential step in achieving this goal is recognizing and acknowledging the following two facts:

- What really matters in our relationship with God is the observance of spiritual-ethical principles, and not the adoption of a set of theological perspectives promoted by a minority of powerful and zealous religious leaders.
- The spiritual-ethical teachings of all religions are one.

The realization and acknowledgement of these two principles by the followers of all religions will be a giant step toward understanding, unity, and peace.

Bahá'u'lláh offered this invitation and these counsels long ago to the peoples of the world. What would the world be like, if they were heeded?

O contending peoples and kindreds of the earth! Set your faces towards unity, and let the radiance of its light shine upon you. Gather ye together, and for the sake of God resolve to root out whatever is the source of contention amongst you. Then will the effulgence of the world's great Luminary envelop the whole earth, and its inhabitants become the citizens of one city, and the occupants of one and the same throne. This wronged One [Bahá'u'lláh] hath, ever since the early days of His life, cherished none other desire but this, and will continue to entertain no wish except this wish. 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...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.²¹

Bahá'u'lláh

“Come!” say the Spirit and the bride. “Come! Let each hearer reply. Come forward, you who are thirsty; accept the water of life, a free gift to all who desire it.”

Christ (Rev. 22:17 NEB)

Theology: the Great Divide Between Great Religions

What is the essence and purpose of religion? It is knowing and loving God, and demonstrating the fruits of that knowledge and love in our lives. Belief in one loving God must result in unity and harmony. Why is it serving the

opposite purpose? Why has religion become such a divisive force in the world?

All Muslims believe in the same Book—the Qur’án. Why then are they divided? Why is there so much conflict and hostility between Shí’ah and Sunni? Why have the believers in one God waged war supposedly for the sake of God? Similarly, all Christians believe in the same Book—the Bible. Why have they divided Christianity—this river of life—into thousands of denominations? The first and foremost reason is the personal perspectives of theologians—church authorities and leaders—regarding what Jesus, Peter, John, or St. Paul meant by a given verse or a single word! It is hard to find any doctrine about which the “experts on the Word of God” are not divided!

Who built these walls of separation? Who but religious leaders and authorities? They are the ones who enjoy the trust and support of their followers. Have they promoted peace or prejudice? Unfortunately, they have used their authority to divide rather than unite the peoples of the world.

What strategy have they used to transform the role of religion from an agency of peace and harmony into an agency of separation, violence, and war? Their favorite strategy has been the generation of theological doctrines to show their differences from, and their distinction over, their rivals. Gradually, they have expanded and embellished these doctrines and made them the basis for their beliefs. Most of these doctrines and the evidence offered in their support are confusing, complex, and irrational. Why is there disagreement among even the greatest theologians? In prophecies alone there are at least seven schools of interpretation and many sub-schools! Today it takes years of diligent study to receive a doctorate in theology.

The transformation and distortions of the Word of God through theological theories and doctrines is carried out to

such an extent that most believers have lost their self-confidence in understanding even the basic truths found in their Scriptures. They are expected to believe, without any question, whatever their leaders tell them is the truth! Christians are told that to understand the Bible, they must know Greek and Hebrew. That requirement alone can silence the believers; it can make them lose their self-confidence. Muslims are taught that in order to comprehend the Qur'án, they must be experts in Arabic and perhaps obtain a degree from a Muslim seminary. Who then dares to question an imám or mullá who knows Arabic and has a degree from a famous seminary?

What separates great religions, such as Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, is also rooted in theology. The views expressed by Mr. Vandeman, as covered in Chapter 1, and thousands of other theologians (whatever their belief system or denomination) provide a classical example of how and why the followers of world's great religions remain divided.

***He Shall Come
On the Clouds
Matt. 24:30***

Knowledge—in its pristine purity—is sheer light, and “theology” as perceived and practiced by theologians, the clouds that have obscured and concealed that light. Alas, the light of truth has always been robed in the cloud of confusion.

***I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will
never walk in darkness.*** *Christ (John 8:12 NIV)*

He was robed in a cloud...his face was like the sun...
Revelation 10:1 NIV

Wars have been waged in the name of God and for the sake of God. This book is written for the purpose of scattering

the theological clouds. It does this by exposing the strategies of concealment and confusion fashioned by religious authorities to keep the world divided and in darkness. Let us hope and pray that, in this age of enlightenment, the light of knowledge will shine in all its glory and splendor, so that the followers of all religions will become united by recognizing and acknowledging this simple and fundamental truth: We are one people with one Creator, who has spoken to us many times through many Messengers to remind us of our nobility and our divine destiny, so that we may know and love God, and manifest that love toward all His creation—the earth, the plants, the animals, and all human beings.

26

Lying The Foundation of all Evil

Who does more wrong than he who forges a lie against
God? Qur'án 6:21

Since lying is the most secretive, yet the most common and convenient weapon theologians use in the darkness of ignorance to promote prejudice, we should expose its secrets and destructive powers in the light of its opponent—the truth.

We may consider lying a minor misjudgment, but as we shall see, it is extremely serious, especially if it is directed not at one person but *an entire group of people for countless centuries*.

Lying is the magic spell that can change everything—for the worst! It is the raw material from which the human ego can build or destroy anything it desires. It is the stuff from which every evil is made, the substance that produces most of the world's pain and suffering. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and before Him Buddha, have exposed the vast empire and the evil powers of this source of all vices, this foremost enemy of human race:

...the foundation of all evil is lying.¹ 'Abdu'l-Bahá

There is no evil that cannot be done by a lying person...who is indifferent to a world beyond.

Dhammapada 176

How amazing! How can a seemingly harmless trait—lying—harbor so much evil potential and power? How can it occupy such a unique position among so many vices?

If lying is so evil, then what is the status of honesty or truthfulness?

Truthfulness is the foundation of all human virtues. Without truthfulness progress and success, in all the worlds of God, are impossible for any soul. When this holy attribute is established in man, all the divine qualities will also be realized.² ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Our age has more than its share of liars and deceivers. The Qur’án repeatedly refers to them:

Woe that day to those who practice falsehood...
Qur’án 52:11

God testifies they are truly liars. Qur’án 9:107

To disarm this “deceiver”—this foremost enemy of the human race—we must first remove its “veil” to expose its secrets. How can we do this? By searching for truth, by stepping into the light of knowledge, and by studying the strategies of deceptive forces.

When for selfish reasons we try to justify any act, attitude, or belief, we engage in a distortion of reality to make it fit our delusions and desires. Suppose we dislike certain features of our portrait. How can we make it pleasant to our eyes? We can change a few colors and conceal, extend, or shorten a few features until the portrait looks just right. Distortion is the brush that does all of this and more. It is the means by which we make our thoughts and deeds look innocent to our own eyes.

A lie always feels secure and comfortable in disguise. Without a good disguise, a lie is always in grave danger of losing its security and power. As soon as a lie is exposed, it loses its apparent prestige and honor. We must even conceal our lies from our own conscience in order to feel comfortable with them. For this reason, distortion takes place subconsciously.

We seldom ask ourselves: How can I distort reality? Hypocrisy is lying in disguise. Deceivers—intentional liars—on the other hand, always plot and plan their lies with a full awareness of their actions. They often have a specific motive for lying, and may be truthful about unrelated matters.

Since the earliest times, when primitive man began to think, human beings have been busy seeking to find and develop sophisticated strategies that would make their lies look innocent. The best-known strategies so far discovered are:

- Magnifying, making something look bigger, better, or more significant than it is.
- Minifying: making something smaller, worse, or less significant than it is.
- Showing or taking something out of context.
- Omitting essential facts or details.
- Denying, disregarding, or avoiding the issue.
- Changing the standards of acceptance: expecting higher or different standards from others than from one's self.

There are two kinds of lying:

- Deliberate lying. This is a deliberate strategy of con men.
- Unconscious lying, which mostly takes place on a subconscious level, and is rooted in self-deception. This is a moral weakness that afflicts everyone. The difference between one self-deceiver and another is a matter of degree and frequency.

Deliberate lying is like choosing to close one's eyes to the world. Unconscious lying is like looking at the world through a tinted or distorted lens. Deceit or distortion of reality, whether it is deliberate or unconscious, needs support from other human weaknesses, such as rationalization, projection,

and a variety of seemingly innocent excuses. We want to be comfortable with our lies. We want to make them harmless partners of our soul. We sugarcoat them; otherwise they would leave a bad taste in our conscience.

The skills that some people have developed to conceal their lies are astonishing. Consider the con men who falsely make a claim for injury and manage to convince twelve jurors and an experienced judge into believing their lies! Only their deeds can expose them. The enemy they fear most is a concealed camera or a camcorder in the hands of a skilled detective. Only the watchful eye of a detective can peer into and penetrate their clouds of deception. Consider also the millions of people who abuse their families, and yet think themselves justified.

Lying to *one's self* is the root of all lies. And it is the most evil and the most common of all lies. Perhaps for every lie that people tell others, they tell a hundred lies to themselves. Further, the lies that people tell themselves are perhaps a hundred times more consequential than the lies they tell others. Why?

- People believe their own lies.
- People often lie about questions that determine their everlasting destiny.

In the sacred Scriptures, the end product of unconscious lying is called: idle fancy, idle imagining, and conjecture. In other words, people often assume something to be true or false without doing their homework, without investigating, without getting in touch with reality. Many examples can be given. Here are a few:

- Abused women who say, "I can't live without him, but I will change him."
- Disturbed people who lie to themselves and others by denying that they need counseling.

- Married couples who overestimate the fault of their spouse but underestimate their own faults.

Now apply the same principal to the spiritual life of humankind. Consider people who:

- Underestimate their need for God and overestimate their need for wealth or professional success.
- Underestimate the significance of purifying their heart, but overestimate significance of washing their car or coloring their hair.
- Believe all other religions are false without ever carrying out an independent investigation of truth.
- Fully trust their religious leaders and put their destiny in his hands.
- Keep looking at the sky because they think Jesus will not come like a thief.
- Believe they are “saved” simply by thinking that they are.
- Notice or overemphasize the scriptural passages that support their erroneous traditional beliefs, but fail to note the passages that may undermine them.

What is the opposite of lying? Honesty. If lying is the source of all evil, honesty must be the source of all good—the mother of all virtues. Honesty is escaping from the “clouds of doubt” and stepping into the “sun of reality.”

But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light...

Christ (John 3:21 NIV)

Honesty means facing reality with courage without concern for one’s selfish interests and desires. Honesty gives birth to everything good and noble. It teaches us that we are all one; that we are connected as organs of one body; that we must make sacrifices to create a world of peace and oneness; that to find the truth we must search for it with an

open, impartial, and critical mind. The realization of the following brief statement from Bahá'u'lláh will give birth to a world of justice, peace, joy, and love, both within the soul and within the society:

The essence of all that We have revealed for thee is Justice, is for man to free himself from idle fancy and imitation, discern with the eye of oneness His glorious handiwork, and look into all things with a searching eye.³

Looking into everything with a “searching” eye rather than with a “clouded” or “closed” eye is the foremost enemy of lying. For lying can survive only in the clouds and darkness of illusions, and is destroyed instantly by the light of truth.

To love truth for truth's sake is the principal part of human perfection in this world, and the seed-plot of all other virtues.

John Locke

Of all duties, the love of truth...ranks first and highest. To love God and to love truth are one and the same.

Silvio Pellico

In books written against “other religions” all the strategies for distortion appear in abundance. Jews have written many books to discredit Jesus. Christians have written many books to discredit Muhammad. Muslims have written many books to discredit Bahá'u'lláh. And atheists have written many books to discredit God and undermine all religions.

When the Bahá'í Faith spreads more widely and attracts multitude of believers from other religions, when it poses a threat to the security and powers of leaders of previous faiths, the religious leaders will all find a common cause: discrediting the latest revelation from God—a faith without priest and pastor, a faith ruled by democratic principle, a religion that has come to bring all religions together.

If the root cause of all evil is lying, what then is the evil that has resulted from lying about “other religions”? The consequence of lying about “other religions” has been awesome—devastating to the destiny of humankind. It has given birth to every known evil: prejudice, violence, terrorism, divisiveness, hatred, and war throughout all ages. Were the religious wars the fault of religions, or the fault of liars and deceivers who used their imagination to skillfully conceal their lies? Unfortunately, those unaware of the truth, blame religion rather than the liars.

Are the books written by theologians against “other religions” valid? The examples offered in this book show how unreliable they are. Why read lies, unless one intends to expose them. And that has been the purpose of this book.

A noted theologian has written a book to discredit Islam. He interprets Islam for his Christian readers, and yet he states that:

So just as Christians should allow Muslims to interpret their own book (the Qur’án) on these matters [the divinity of Jesus] even so Muslims should allow Christians to interpret their own Book (the Bible).⁴

He filters the Qur’án through his Christian theology, but objects to Muslims who do precisely what he does.

To bring various peoples together and unite them, the Prophet Malachi asked:

Have we not all one Father? Has not one God created us? Why do we deal treacherously with one another by profaning the covenant of the fathers? Malachi 2:10 NKJ

Many theologians have ignored Malachi’s desire to unite us. They have followed the opposite course. Just as they have divided their own religion into many segments, they have also divided God—the only unifying force in the universe, the very foundation of all religions. If they can convince

their followers that their friendly and familiar God—the Lord—is the genuine God, and that any other God, such as Alláh, is a “strange god,” they have attained their heart’s desire. Consider the following statements from a Christian author:

In past centuries, when people spoke about “God” in Western Christendom, it was understood that they meant the God of the Bible. In these days...we are being confronted by a multitude of “strange gods”...⁵ “God” is not the name of the God of the Bible...The God of the Bible is often addressed as “Lord”—in Hebrew, Adoni...⁶

The author then concludes:

Now that it has been clearly shown that Alláh is not the God of the Bible, we must realize how seriously theologians like Küng [a liberal Christian] and others are leading people astray.⁷

It is ironic that after referring to Alláh as a “strange god,” the author admits that in Arabic-speaking countries, Christians refer to God as Alláh, a word that is also used in the Arabic Bible:

Just as the Muslim uses the word “Alláh” for his God, so Christian Arabs use “Alláh” when they are talking about the God of the Bible.⁸

Those who try to draw a line between the God of the Bible and the God of the Qur’án are spreading a lie—a big lie. The Qur’án predicted this distortion many times. Two references suffice:

It is the blasphemers who forge a lie against God. Most of them lack wisdom. Qur’án 5:103

Who is more unjust than one who forges a lie against God? Qur’án 7:37

Those who distort the truth and spread lies—do they not fear the consequences of their divisive influence, their careless words?

But I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken.

Christ (Matt. 12:36 NIV)

People not only lie about God, they also lie *to* God. They claim to believe in God without living by their beliefs. This is hypocrisy, condemned in all sacred Scriptures. Hypocrites are the foremost enemies of religion, for they undermine its dignity and honor.

Be thou of the people of hell-fire, but be not a hypocrite.⁹

Bahá'u'lláh

Some people tell little lies; while others display astonishing talents and skills in producing and spreading elaborate lies. They have developed to perfection the art of deception. They plot and plan ingenious strategies for attaining their selfish desires. Such deceivers can exert an enormous influence on humankind. The following prophecy pertains to plotters who plot against the Redeemer of our age.

Why do the nations rage and the peoples *plot* in vain? The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers gather together against the Lord [Bahá'u'lláh] and against his Anointed One [the Báb]. “Let us break their chains [of authority],” they say, “and throw off their fetters.” The One enthroned in heaven laughs; the Lord scoffs at them. Then he rebukes them in his anger and terrifies them in his wrath, saying, “I have installed my King on Zion, my holy hill.” I will proclaim the decree of the Lord...

Psalms 2:1-7 NIV

Persistent plotters and deceivers although humans, are not human; they belong to another breed of creatures. The Qur'án sometimes refers to them as “Jinn” and “Satan.” Jesus called them “wolves” in sheep's clothing. An occasional liar is like a

wanderer who breaks into a house on impulse; a deceiver or plotter is a thief who goes with a flashlight and a blueprint. He knows when the householder is sound asleep, and if he finds him awake, he may “put him to sleep!” No wonder Bahá’u’lláh declares that it is better to be an infidel, a non-believer, than a plotter—a deceptive or conniving believer:

Be thou an unbeliever, but be not a plotter.¹⁰

The unquestioned faith often placed in religious leaders provides an ideal opportunity for skillful deceivers, for they know how to plant the seed of trust in the heart of simple-minded people, and then to harvest its fruits for selfish ends. “False prophets” fall into this category. They carry most, perhaps all of the burden of blame for religious wars and persecution of God’s great Messengers. They stand on the high “moral” ground of literal thinking, activated by raw zeal, waving the sword of a charismatic leader—with an ingenious talent to hypnotize and mobilize multitudes. When Jesus said “Beware of false prophets,” He was referring to such deceptive leaders:

Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. By their fruit you will recognize them.

Christ (Matt. 7:15-16 NIV)

Bahá’u’lláh also addresses such “false prophets:”

O YE THAT ARE FOOLISH, YET HAVE A NAME TO BE WISE!
Wherefore do ye wear the guise of shepherds, when inwardly ye have become wolves, intent upon My flock? Ye are even as the star, which riseth ere the dawn, and which, though it seem radiant and luminous, leadeth the wayfarers of My city astray into the paths of perdition.¹¹

Bahá’u’lláh

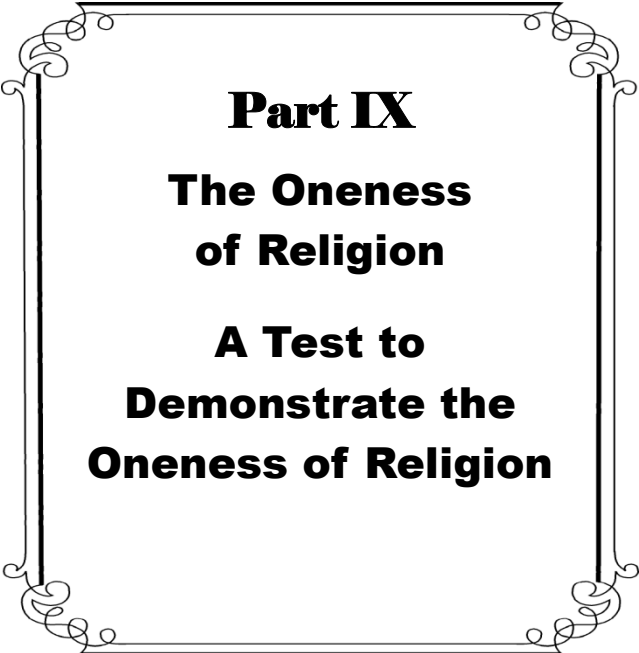
Sadly, so many simple-minded people fall under the charm of these false prophets. Instead of fearing them, they fear the true One—the One who has come to save them from

the deceivers, from “the false prophets!” In this lies a great paradox.

Christian, Muslim, and Jewish publications are filled with flawed theology. What can we expect from fallible human beings? They write their books in the darkness of their empty illusions and erroneous assumptions, under the flickering candlelight of their feeble understanding. Now the Sun has risen! The Glory of God has dawned with its full splendor. The time of unity has come. The age of separation and conflict has ended. We have received an abundance of true knowledge from the One who is the source of all Knowledge. The time of reading the ancient Scriptures under the candlelight is gone:

O people! The Sun of Utterance beameth forth in this day, above the horizon of bounty, and the radiance of the Revelation of Him Who spoke on Sinai flasheth and glisteneth before all religions. 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. By the righteousness of God! Ye shall hear all things proclaim: “Verily, He the True One is come. Blessed are they that judge with fairness, and blessed they that turn towards Him!”¹²

Bahá'u'lláh



Part IX
The Oneness
of Religion
A Test to
Demonstrate the
Oneness of Religion

27

Can You Tell the Sources of These Verses?

Blessed are those who hear the word of God...

Christ (Luke 11:28 NIV)

The great Messengers and Redeemers are like trees, and their words and teachings the fruits. We are told to recognize a tree by its fruit:

...by their fruit you will recognize them.

Christ (Matt. 7:20 NIV)

Miracles vanish, but the Word of God endures forever:

All men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of the Lord stands forever.

I Peter 1:24-25 NIV

See also Isaiah 40:8

As Jesus said, the Word of God has a distinct voice. If we are true believers, and if we listen or pay close attention to that Voice, we can recognize it.

My own sheep listen to My voice...and...follow Me.

Christ (John 10:27 NEB)

Prophecies are also the Word of God. In recognizing the divine origin of the great Messengers, they should not be separated from the fruits of their Revelation.

God has always regarded His Word as the ultimate evidence for the divine origin of His Messengers:

He verily establisheth the truth through His verses, and confirmeth His Revelation by His words.¹ Bahá'u'lláh

Consider, hath anything else besides the verses been established in the whole Book, as a standard for the recognition of the Manifestations of His Beauty...? On the contrary, in every instance, He hath threatened with fire those that repudiate and scoff at the verses...²

Bahá'u'lláh

And they say, “Unless a sign be sent down to him [Muhammad] from his Lord [we will not believe]...” Say:... “Is it not enough for them that we have sent down to thee the Book to be recited to them?” Qur’án 29:50-51 R

Have thou no doubt about that Book, for it is the very truth from thy Lord. But most people will not believe.

Qur’án 11:17

Can You Tell Where These Verses Come From?

Section I

The following are quotations from the Scriptures of four great religions: the Bahá'í Faith, Islam, Christianity, and Judaism. See if you can recognize the source of each quotation.

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

The references are given at the end of this chapter.

B C I J	Listen, my people, and I will speak...I am God, your God... ¹
B C I J	The Lord our God is one Lord... ²
B C I J	Truly your God is but one, Lord of the heavens and of the earth... ³
B C I J	Verily there is no God besides me... ⁴
B C I J	I am the Lord, who has made all things... ⁵
B C I J	Is there any doubt concerning God, maker of the heavens and the earth...? ⁶
B C I J	Glory to God... ⁷
B C I J	Glory be to God the Lord of the worlds. ⁸

B C I J	Great and marvelous are your deeds, Lord God Almighty. Just and true are your ways...Who will not fear you, O Lord, and bring glory to your name? ⁹
B C I J	Blessed be the name of the Lord, full of majesty and glory. ¹⁰
B C I J	Blessed be the name of the Lord from this time forth and for evermore. ¹¹
B C I J	The heavens declare the glory of God... ¹²
B C I J	All things...declare His glory...yet ye understand not... ¹³
B C I J	No one is good except God alone. ¹⁴
B C I J	Lord God Almighty...you alone are holy... ¹⁵
B C I J	Only what is revealed to me [from God] do I follow. ¹⁶
B C I J	God is the source of my being... ¹⁷
B C I J	I call only upon my Lord... ¹⁸
B C I J	I can of my own self do nothing... ¹⁹
B C I J	I have no power to help or harm myself, except as God pleases. ²⁰
B C I J	I only follow my Lord's utterances to me. ²¹
B C I J	This is God, my Lord; in Him do I put my trust... ²²
B C I J	I am...the truth... ²³
B C I J	We have come to you with the truth... ²⁴
B C I J	This book is...the truth from thy Lord. ²⁵
B C I J	These are the true words of God. ²⁶

B C I J	This is the way [to God], walk ye in it. ²⁷
B C I J	This is the true Path of God, the Almighty... ²⁸
B C I J	I have come down from heaven. ²⁹
B C I J	God is my witness! The Promised One hath come down from heaven... ³⁰
B C I J	Be thou content with Me and seek no other helper. For none but Me can ever suffice thee. ³¹
B C I J	Set all thy hope in God, and cleave tenaciously to His unfailing mercy. ³²
B C I J	Do not forget the covenant I have made with you... ³³
B C I J	Be faithful to the covenant of God... ³⁴
B C I J	Trust always in God, my people, pour out your hearts before him. God is our shelter. ³⁵
B C I J	My will and the will of another than Me, even as fire and water, cannot dwell together in one heart. ³⁶
B C I J	How goodly the reward of those who labor, who patiently endure, and put their trust in their Lord! ³⁷
B C I J	It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord... ³⁸
B C I J	God [is] rich without you...yet if ye be thankful He will be pleased with you. ³⁹
B C I J	It behooveth thee to glory in My name, not in thine own; to put thy trust in Me and not in thyself... ⁴⁰
B C I J	Be grateful for the favors of God... ⁴¹

B C I J	Detach yourselves from all else but Me, and turn your faces towards My face, for better is this for you than the things ye possess. ⁴²
B C I J	Cast away the things that keep you back from God and persevere on this far-stretching Way. ⁴³
B C I J	Thy Lord is nigh, ready to answer. ⁴⁴
B C I J	He is the hearer, the near at hand. ⁴⁵
B C I J	Withhold not from yourselves the grace of God and His mercy. Whoso withholdeth himself therefrom is indeed in grievous loss. ⁴⁶
B C I J	Beware lest the transitory things of human life withhold you from turning unto God, the True One. ⁴⁷
B C I J	There is no power nor strength but in God alone. ⁴⁸
B C I J	I know of a certainty that since I have God, the Ever-Living, the Adored One, I am the possessor of all things, visible and invisible... ⁴⁹
B C I J	The source of all evil is for man to turn away from his Lord and set his heart on things ungodly. ⁵⁰
B C I J	The source of error is to disbelieve in the One true God... ⁵¹
B C I J	Fear God, and keep His commandments; for this is the whole duty of man. ⁵²
B C I J	Break not the bond that uniteth you with your Creator... ⁵³
B C I J	There is no peace for thee save by renouncing thyself and turning unto Me. ⁵⁴

B C I J	God is with those who fear him and do good deeds. ⁵⁵
B C I J	The source of all learning is the knowledge of God... ⁵⁶
B C I J	Blessed is every one that feareth the Lord; and walketh in His ways. ⁵⁷
B C I J	For everything there is a sign. The sign of love is fortitude under My decree and patience under My trials. ⁵⁸
B C I J	We all believe in Thee, and eagerly hope to enter Thy presence. ⁵⁹
B C I J	Men ought always to pray... ⁶⁰
B C I J	True knowledge...is the knowledge of God, and this is none other than the recognition of His Manifestation in each Dispensation. ⁶¹
B C I J	He hath endowed every soul with the capacity to recognize the signs of God... ⁶²
B C I J	Blessed are the steadfastly enduring, they that are patient under ills and hardships... ⁶³
B C I J	The prayer of the upright is His delight. ⁶⁴
B C I J	And make mention of the name of thy Lord at morn, at even, and at night. Adore him, and praise him all nightlong. ⁶⁵
B C I J	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, could ye but perceive it. ⁶⁶
B C I J	Let the flame of the love of God burn brightly within your radiant hearts. ⁶⁷

B C I J	Make my love thy vesture, and thy shield remembrance of Me, and thy provision reliance upon God... ⁶⁸
B C I J	Walk in My statutes for love of Me and deny thyself that which thou desirest if thou seekest My pleasure. ⁶⁹
B C I J	Call unto me, and I will answer thee... ⁷⁰
B C I J	Call on Me and I will answer you. ⁷¹
B C I J	Whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive. ⁷²
B C I J	The station of absolute self-surrender transcendeth, and will ever remain exalted above, every other station. ⁷³
B C I J	Men should merge their will wholly in the Will of God, and regard their desires as utter nothingness beside His Purpose. ⁷⁴
B C I J	The source of all glory is acceptance of whatsoever the Lord hath bestowed, and contentment with that which God hath ordained. ⁷⁵
B C I J	I, the Lord, search the mind and test the heart... ⁷⁶
B C I J	God will test you... ⁷⁷
B C I J	Be not afraid of anyone, place thy whole trust in God, the Almighty, the All-Knowing. ⁷⁸
B C I J	"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the Lord. "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts." ⁷⁹

B C I J	...the word of the Lord is flawless. ⁸⁰
B C I J	Prefer not your will to Mine, never desire that which I have not desired for you... ⁸¹
B C I J	And we [God] test you by means of each other. ⁸²
B C I J	Put thy whole confidence in the grace of God, thy Lord... ⁸³
B C I J	O Lord of Hosts, thou dost test the righteous and search the depths of the heart... ⁸⁴
B C I J	If anyone revile you, or trouble touch you, in the path of God, be patient, and put your trust in Him Who heareth, Who seeth. ⁸⁵
B C I J	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... ⁸⁶
B C I J	Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path. ⁸⁷
B C I J	Know ye that your possessions...are only a test... ⁸⁸
B C I J	And He it is who hath made the heavens and the earth...that He might test you to show who would excel in works. ⁸⁹
B C I J	Let Him be thy helper and enrich thyself with His treasures, for with Him are the treasures of the heavens and of the earth. ⁹⁰

B C I J	He that giveth up himself wholly to God, God shall, assuredly, be with him... ⁹¹
B C I J	He that placeth his complete trust in God, God shall, verily, protect him from whatsoever may harm him... ⁹²
B C I J	Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. ⁹³
B C I J	Thy word is revealed, and all is light; it gives understanding even to the untaught. ⁹⁴
B C I J	Nothing save that which profiteth them can befall My loved ones. ⁹⁵
B C I J	Happy are they that have cast behind their backs all else save God and have held fast unto that which the Lord of strength and power hath enjoined upon them. ⁹⁶
B C I J	My yoke is easy and my burden light. ⁹⁷
B C I J	We [God] will not burden a soul beyond its power... ⁹⁸
B C I J	If you love only those who love you, what reward can you expect? ⁹⁹
B C I J	Happy is the man that heedeth My counsel, and keepeth the precepts prescribed by Him Who is the All-Knowing, the All-Wise. ¹⁰⁰
B C I J	For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. ¹⁰¹
B C I J	Happy are they that observe God's precepts; happy are they that have recognized the Truth... ¹⁰²

B C I J	This is what the Lord Almighty says: “Administer true justice; show mercy and compassion to one another. Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the alien or the poor. In your hearts do not think evil of each other.” ¹⁰³
B C I J	Happy are they that judge with fairness in all matters and hold fast to the Cord of My irrevocable Justice. ¹⁰⁴
B C I J	Sorrow not save that thou art far from Us. Rejoice not save that thou art drawing near and returning unto Us. ¹⁰⁵
B C I J	Turn away evil by what is better, and lo! he between whom and thyself was enmity, shall be as though he were a warm friend. But none attain to this [high standard] save those steadfast in patience, and none attain to it except the most highly favored. ¹⁰⁶
B C I J	Honor your father and your mother... ¹⁰⁷
B C I J	Blessed is he that draweth nigh unto Him, and woe betide them that are far away. ¹⁰⁸
B C I J	You have made known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand. ¹⁰⁹
B C I J	O ye the beloved of the one true God! Pass beyond the narrow retreats of your evil and corrupt desires, and advance into the vast immensity of the realm of God, and abide ye in the meads of sanctity and of detachment... ¹¹⁰
B C I J	“Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,” says the Lord Almighty. ¹¹¹

B C I J	Thou art He Who changeth through His bidding abasement into glory, and weakness into strength, and powerlessness into might, and fear into calm, and doubt into certainty. ¹¹²
B C I J	Honor your father and mother...that it may go well with you... ¹¹³
B C I J	Thy Lord hath ordained...kindness to your parents ...speak to them both with respectful speech; and treat them tenderly and humbly; and say, "Lord, have compassion on them both." ¹¹⁴
B C I J	The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. ¹¹⁵
B C I J	Repent to God of your sins. ¹¹⁶
B C I J	When the sinner findeth himself wholly detached and freed from all save God, he should beg forgiveness and pardon from Him. ¹¹⁷
B C I J	Return ye to God and repent, that He, through His grace, may have mercy upon you, may wash away your sins, and forgive your trespasses. ¹¹⁸
B C I J	This is the way; walk in it. ¹¹⁹
B C I J	The greatness of His mercy surpasseth the fury of His wrath, and His grace encompasseth all who have been called into being and been clothed with the robe of life, be they of the past or of the future. ¹²⁰
B C I J	Loyalty is my desire, not [the ceremony of] sacrifice, not whole-offerings but the knowledge of God. ¹²¹

B C I J	The purpose of God in creating man hath been, and will ever be, to enable him to know his Creator and to attain His presence. ¹²²
B C I J	The supreme cause for creating the world and all that is therein is for man to know God. ¹²³
B C I J	The Lord is my light and my salvation... ¹²⁴
B C I J	For the Lord God is a sun... ¹²⁵
B C I J	Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding... ¹²⁶
B C I J	But for man, who, on My earth, would remember Me, and how could My attributes and My names be revealed? ¹²⁷
B C I J	The Word of God is the king of words and its pervasive influence is incalculable. ¹²⁸
B C I J	Every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God is endowed with such potency as can instill new life into every human frame... ¹²⁹
B C I J	Woe to those who...make a show of devotion, but refuse to help the needy. ¹³⁰
B C I J	Whenever thou shalt long for Me, thou shalt find Me close to thee. ¹³¹
B C I J	He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. ¹³²
B C I J	Humble thyself before Me, that I may graciously visit thee. ¹³³
B C I J	He who forgiveth...shall be rewarded by God himself... ¹³⁴
B C I J	God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. ¹³⁵

B C I J	Nor walk loftily on earth; for God loveth not the arrogant and the proud. ¹³⁶
B C I J	Ask not of Me that which We desire not for thee, then be content with what We have ordained for thy sake... ¹³⁷
B C I J	Then you will call, and the Lord will answer; you will cry for help, and he will say: Here am I. ¹³⁸
B C I J	So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand. ¹³⁹
B C I J	Within thee have I placed the essence of My light. Be thou content with it and seek naught else, for My work is perfect and My command is binding. ¹⁴⁰
B C I J	His [God's] work is perfect... ¹⁴¹
B C I J	He [God] truly loveth not the men of pride. ¹⁴²
B C I J	It is the waywardness of the heart that removeth it far from God, and condemneth it to remoteness from Him. ¹⁴³
B C I J	He who hath made everything...most good... ¹⁴⁴
B C I J	The heart is the most deceitful of all things... who can fathom it? ¹⁴⁵
B C I J	The self is prone to evil. ¹⁴⁶
B C I J	Be not content with the ease of a passing day... ¹⁴⁷
B C I J	Bestow upon me my portion, O Lord, as Thou pleasest, and cause me to be satisfied with whatsoever Thou hast ordained for me. ¹⁴⁸

B C I J	Sorrow not save that thou art far from Us. Rejoice not save that thou art drawing near and returning unto Us. ¹⁴⁹
B C I J	Worship the Lord with gladness; come before him with joyful songs. Know that the Lord is God. It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture. Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name. ¹⁵⁰
B C I J	Rejoice that your names are written in heaven. ¹⁵¹
B C I J	Let not the happenings of the world sadden you. ¹⁵²
B C I J	Let not the world and its vileness grieve you. Happy is he whom riches fill not with vain-glory, nor poverty with sorrow. ¹⁵³
B C I J	Sorrow not if, in these days and on this earthly plane, things contrary to your wishes have been ordained and manifested by God, for days of blissful joy, of heavenly delight, are assuredly in store for you. ¹⁵⁴
B C I J	Those who sow in tears will reap with songs of joy. ¹⁵⁵
B C I J	Blessed are those who...walk in the light of your presence... ¹⁵⁶
B C I J	Delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart. ¹⁵⁷
B C I J	They hasten forward to Hell Fire, and mistake it for light. ¹⁵⁸
B C I J	In my Father's house are many mansions... ¹⁵⁹

B C I J	The mansions of the next life shall be better for those who fear God. ¹⁶⁰
B C I J	But seek, by means of what God hath given thee, to attain the future Mansion; and neglect not thy part in this world but be gracious to others as God hath been gracious to thee... ¹⁶¹
B C I J	If thou art overtaken by affliction in My path, or degradation for My sake, be not thou troubled thereby...Rely upon God, thy God and the Lord of thy fathers. ¹⁶²
B C I J	Be patient under all conditions, and place your whole trust and confidence in God. ¹⁶³
B C I J	Let the heavens rejoice, let the earth be glad; let them say among the nations, "The Lord reigns!" ¹⁶⁴
B C I J	As for God, his way is perfect; the word of the Lord is flawless. He is a shield for all who take refuge in him. ¹⁶⁵
B C I J	He, verily, shall increase the reward of them that endure with patience. ¹⁶⁶
B C I J	Be patient, for thy Lord is patient. ¹⁶⁷
B C I J	You have laid down precepts that are to be fully obeyed. ¹⁶⁸
B C I J	Cast away, O concourse of divines [religious leaders], the things ye have composed with the pens of your idle fancies and vain imaginings. ¹⁶⁹
B C I J	This is the Cause that hath caused all your superstitions and idols to tremble. ¹⁷⁰
B C I J	Blessed are they who keep his statutes and seek him with all their heart. ¹⁷¹

B C I J	As long as it is day, we must do the work of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work. ¹⁷²
B C I J	A new command I give you: Love one another. ¹⁷³
B C I J	We have found you behind the veils...measure not the Book of God with your selfish desires. ¹⁷⁴
B C I J	Nowhere doth your true and abiding glory reside except in your firm adherence unto the precepts of God. ¹⁷⁵
B C I J	No soul knoweth what joy of the eyes is reserved for the good... ¹⁷⁶
B C I J	Those who go down to the pit. ¹⁷⁷
B C I J	The bottomless pit... ¹⁷⁸
B C I J	Verily the hypocrites shall be in the lowest abyss [the bottomless pit] of the fire... ¹⁷⁹
B C I J	And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones...I tell you the truth, he will certainly not lose his reward. ¹⁸⁰
B C I J	Free thyself from the fetters of this world, and loose thy soul from the prison of self. Seize thy chance, for it will come to thee no more. ¹⁸¹
B C I J	Thine heart is My treasury, allow not the treacherous hand of self to rob thee of the pearls which I have treasured therein. ¹⁸²
B C I J	Hell, where the fire never goes out. ¹⁸³
B C I J	In the fire shall they abide for ever. ¹⁸⁴
B C I J	For he will command his angels...to guard you in all your ways; they will lift you in their hands... ¹⁸⁵

B C I J	Verily over you (are appointed angels) to protect you—kind and honorable, recording (your deeds). They know (and understand) all that ye do. ¹⁸⁶
B C I J	The angels of the Lord encompass around those who fear him. ¹⁸⁷
B C I J	The candle of thine heart is lighted by the hand of My power, quench it not with the contrary winds of self and passion. ¹⁸⁸
B C I J	To give and to be generous are attributes of Mine; well is it with him that adorneth himself with My virtues. ¹⁸⁹
B C I J	The spirit shall return to God who gave it. ¹⁹⁰
B C I J	To us [God] shall all return. ¹⁹¹
B C I J	They take with them the record of their deeds. ¹⁹²
B C I J	Give, and it will be given to you...For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. ¹⁹³
B C I J	O ye rich ones on earth! The poor in your midst are My trust; guard ye My trust, and be not intent only on your own ease. ¹⁹⁴
B C I J	Be ye trustworthy on earth, and withhold not from the poor the things given unto you by God through His grace. ¹⁹⁵
B C I J	And everything they do is in the Books; each action, both small and great, is written down. ¹⁹⁶
B C I J	And each shall have his book put into his hands ...they shall find all that they have done, and thy Lord will not deal unjustly with anyone. ¹⁹⁷

B C I J	[Their sins are] recorded...engraved on the tablets of their heart [soul]... ¹⁹⁸
B C I J	This earthly life shall come to an end, and everyone shall expire and return unto my Lord God Who will reward with the choicest gifts the deeds of those who endure with patience. ¹⁹⁹
B C I J	Busy not thyself with this world, for with fire We test the gold, and with gold We test Our servants. ²⁰⁰
B C I J	He who is kind to the poor lends to the Lord, and he will reward him for what he has done. ²⁰¹
B C I J	Cast your bread upon the waters, for after many days you will find it again. ²⁰²
B C I J	I know of a certainty, by virtue of my love for Thee, that Thou wilt never cause tribulations to befall any soul unless Thou desirest to exalt his station in Thy celestial Paradise... ²⁰³
B C I J	Nothing save that which profiteth them can befall My loved ones. ²⁰⁴
B C I J	He verily, shall increase the reward of them that endure with patience. ²⁰⁵
B C I J	Whatever good works ye send on before [death] ...ye shall find with God. ²⁰⁶
B C I J	Overstep not the bounds of moderation... ²⁰⁷
B C I J	It is through your deeds that ye can distinguish yourselves from others. Through them the brightness of your lights can be shed upon the whole earth. ²⁰⁸
B C I J	Set thine house in order, for thou shalt die... ²⁰⁹
B C I J	I will call you to account for your doings. ²¹⁰

B C I J	Be not troubled in poverty nor confident in riches, for poverty is followed by riches, and riches are followed by poverty. ²¹¹
B C I J	Rejoice not in the things ye possess; tonight they are yours, tomorrow others will possess them. ²¹²
B C I J	Good will come to him who is generous and lends freely, who conducts his affairs with justice. ²¹³
B C I J	This is my command: Love each other. ²¹⁴
B C I J	Thou dost wish for gold and I desire thy freedom from it. Thou thinkest thyself rich in its possession, and I recognize thy wealth in thy sanctity therefrom. ²¹⁵
B C I J	Should a man wish to adorn himself with the ornaments of the earth, to wear its apparels, or partake of the benefits it can bestow, no harm can befall him, if he alloweth nothing whatever to intervene between him and God, for God hath ordained every good thing, whether created in the heavens or in the earth, for such of His servants as truly believe in Him. ²¹⁶
B C I J	On a certain day shall every soul come to plead for itself, and every soul shall be repaid according to its deeds... ²¹⁷
B C I J	God brings everything we do to judgment, and every secret, whether good or bad. ²¹⁸
B C I J	Ye were created to show love one to another and not perversity and rancor. Take pride not in love for yourselves but in love for your fellow-creatures. Glory not in love for your country, but in love for all mankind. ²¹⁹

B C I J	You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit—fruit that will last. ²²⁰
B C I J	Man's merit lieth in service and virtue and not in the pageantry of wealth and riches. ²²¹
B C I J	Let each morn be better than its eve, and each morrow richer than its yesterday. ²²²
B C I J	And that which we have revealed...is the very truth... ²²³
B C I J	Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, whose confidence is in him. ²²⁴
B C I J	Say to the believing men that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty. ²²⁵
B C I J	Let those who do not find the means for marriage keep themselves chaste, until God gives them the means out of His grace. ²²⁶
B C I J	Deliver your souls, O people, from the bondage of self, and purify them from all attachment to anything besides Me. ²²⁷
B C I J	Those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint. ²²⁸
B C I J	Arise, O people, and, by the power of God's might, resolve to gain the victory over your own selves... ²²⁹

Did you benefit from special clues found in some passages, such as the use of Father in place of God? Did you get clues from the style of translation? If you did, discount those passages or any others you have read before. Then

determine your score. You may also wish to ask some of your friends to take this same challenge: telling one Voice from another. The test is most accurate with individuals who have had no exposure to the selected verses; the best jury member is one who knows nothing about a case.

Can You Tell Where These Verses Come From?

Section II

B C I J	Pride not yourselves in your learning. ¹
B C I J	He is indeed a captive who hath not recognized the Supreme Redeemer, but hath suffered his soul to be bound, distressed and helpless, in the fetters of his desires. ²
B C I J	God loveth those who are pure. Naught...in the sight of God is more loved than purity... ³
B C I J	Let us come before Him with thanksgiving and extol Him with music and song. For the Lord is the great God, the great King above all gods. ⁴
B C I J	Earth and heaven cannot contain Me; what can alone contain Me is the heart of him that believeth in Me, and is faithful to My Cause." ⁵
B C I J	Come, all you who are thirsty... ⁶
B C I J	Let him then who will, take the way to his Lord. ⁷
B C I J	Those that seek me shall find me. ⁸
B C I J	He hath chosen out of the whole world the hearts of His servants, and made them each a seat for the revelation of His glory. ⁹
B C I J	Thine heart is My treasury, allow not the treacherous hand of self to rob thee of the pearls which I have treasured therein. ¹⁰

B C I J	I will praise you, O Lord, with all my heart; I will tell of all your wonders. I will be glad and rejoice in you; I will sing praise to your name, O Most High. ¹¹
B C I J	Have faith in God...I tell you the truth, if anyone says to this mountain, "Go, throw yourself into the sea," and does not doubt in his heart but believes that what he says will happen, it will be done for him. Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours. ¹²
B C I J	O peoples of the world! Forsake all evil, hold fast that which is good. ¹³
B C I J	And follow not that of which thou hast no knowledge; because the hearing and the sight and the heart, each of these shall be questioned. ¹⁴
B C I J	Every man shall bear his own burden... ¹⁵
B C I J	By My life, the light of a good character surpasseth the light of the sun and the radiance thereof. Whoso attaineth unto it is accounted as a jewel among men. ¹⁶
B C I J	Ye are the trees of My garden; ye must give forth goodly and wondrous fruits, that ye yourselves and others may profit therefrom. ¹⁷
B C I J	Let integrity and uprightness distinguish all thine acts. ¹⁸
B C I J	Be fair to yourselves and to others, that the evidence of justice may be revealed, through your deeds, among Our faithful servants. ¹⁹

B C I J	Be ye a refuge to the fearful; bring ye rest and peace to the disturbed...be a healing medicine for those who suffer pain... ²⁰
B C I J	No bearer of burdens can bear the burden of another. ²¹
B C I J	Proclaim the message... ²²
B C I J	To proclaim a clear message is our only duty. ²³
B C I J	Ye shall surely make it known to mankind and not hide it... ²⁴
B C I J	If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you. ²⁵
B C I J	Again, I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you... ²⁶
B C I J	Be worthy of the trust of thy neighbor and look upon him with a bright and friendly face. ²⁷
B C I J	The brightness of the light of chastity sheddeth its illumination upon the worlds of the spirit. ²⁸
B C I J	Let your eye be chaste, your hand faithful, your tongue truthful and your heart enlightened. ²⁹
B C I J	They that follow their lusts...are of the lost. ³⁰
B C I J	Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know. ³¹
B C I J	Unless ye march forth...He will place another people in your stead... ³²
B C I J	I tell you...if you keep quiet, the stones will cry out. ³³

B C I J	Knowledge is as wings to man's life, and a ladder for his ascent. ³⁴
B C I J	True liberty consisteth in man's submission unto My commandments, little as ye know it. ³⁵
B C I J	The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their cry... ³⁶
B C I J	The liberty that profiteth you is to be found nowhere except in complete servitude unto God, the Eternal Truth. ³⁷
B C I J	If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not be guilty of sin; but now they have no excuse... ³⁸
B C I J	Surely, therefore, will we call those to account, to whom a Messenger hath been sent... ³⁹
B C I J	We verily behold your actions. If we perceive from them the sweet-smelling savor of purity and holiness, we will most certainly bless you. ⁴⁰
B C I J	For everyone who asks receives [what is best for him]; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened. ⁴¹
B C I J	If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land. ⁴²
B C I J	Look not upon the creatures of God except with the eye of kindness and mercy, for Our loving providence hath pervaded all created things, and Our grace encompasseth the earth and the heavens. ⁴³

B C I J	Blessed is he who prefers his brother before himself. ⁴⁴
B C I J	We love to see you at all times consorting in amity and concord...We shall always be with you; if We inhale the perfume of your fellowship, Our heart will assuredly rejoice, for naught else can satisfy Us. ⁴⁵
B C I J	Seek the Lord, all you humble of the land... Seek righteousness and humility, perhaps you will be sheltered on the day of the Lord's anger. ⁴⁶
B C I J	Take thou thy portion of the ocean of His grace, and deprive not thyself of the things that lie hidden in its depths. ⁴⁷
B C I J	In the garden of thy heart plant naught but the rose of love... ⁴⁸
B C I J	God guideth all who seek His good pleasure to ways of peace and safety. ⁴⁹
B C I J	For the Lord takes delight in his people; he crowns the humble with salvation. ⁵⁰
B C I J	Be ye as the fingers of one hand, the members of one body. ⁵¹
B C I J	Regard ye not one another as strangers. Ye are the fruits of one tree, and the leaves of one branch. ⁵²
B C I J	When I am afraid, I will trust in you. In God, whose word I praise, in God I trust; I will not be afraid. What can mortal man do to me? ⁵³
B C I J	One must see in every human being only that which is worthy of praise. When this is done, one can be a friend to the whole human race. ⁵⁴

B C I J	Lay not on any soul a load which ye would not wish to be laid upon you, and desire not for any one the things ye would not desire for yourselves. This is My best counsel unto you, did ye but observe it. ⁵⁵
B C I J	Ascribe not to any soul that which thou wouldst not have ascribed to thee... ⁵⁶
B C I J	The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; all who follow his precepts have good understanding. To him belongs eternal praise. ⁵⁷
B C I J	Happy...the believers, who...keep aloof from vain words. ⁵⁸
B C I J	The best beloved of all things in My sight is Justice; turn not away therefrom if thou desirest Me... ⁵⁹
B C I J	If any differences arise amongst you, behold Me standing before your face, and overlook the faults of one another for My name's sake... ⁶⁰
B C I J	And woe, on that day [our day] to those...who plunge into vain disputes... ⁶¹
B C I J	All the ways of the Lord are loving and faithful for those who keep the demands of his covenant. ⁶²
B C I J	These are they whose hearts and ears and eyes God hath sealed up; these are the careless one. ⁶³
B C I J	If ye become aware of a sin committed by another, conceal it, that God may conceal your own sin. ⁶⁴
B C I J	Forgive the sinful, and never despise his low estate, for none knoweth what his own end shall be. ⁶⁵

B C I J	Be generous in your days of plenty, and be patient in the hour of loss. ⁶⁶
B C I J	I seek you with all my heart; do not let me stray from your commands. ⁶⁷
B C I J	Be generous in prosperity and thankful in adversity... ⁶⁸
B C I J	My Lord! Bestow on me wisdom... ⁶⁹
B C I J	Give me now wisdom... ⁷⁰
B C I J	He to whom wisdom is given hath much good given him... ⁷¹
B C I J	Great is the blessedness awaiting the poor that endure patiently and conceal their sufferings, and well is it with the rich who bestow their riches on the needy and prefer them before themselves. ⁷²
B C I J	Come near to God and he will come near to you. ⁷³
B C I J	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. ⁷⁴
B C I J	Should any one among you be incapable of grasping a certain truth, or be striving to comprehend it, show forth, when conversing with him, a spirit of extreme kindness and good-will. ⁷⁵
B C I J	Wisdom proclaimeth: He that hath Me not is bereft of all things: Turn ye away from all that is on earth and seek none else but Me. ⁷⁶
B C I J	Blessed is he who hath kept it [his soul] pure... ⁷⁷

B C I J	My soul yearns, even faints, for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God. ⁷⁸
B C I J	Humility exalteth man to the heaven of glory and power, whilst pride abaseth him to the depths of wretchedness and degradation. ⁷⁹
B C I J	The heart wherein the least remnant of envy yet lingers, shall never attain My everlasting dominion... ⁸⁰
B C I J	No one should sadden another, not even for a moment... ⁸¹
B C I J	Be not the cause of grief, much less of discord and strife. ⁸²
B C I J	Those who have eyes but are blind, who have ears but are deaf. ⁸³
B C I J	They know nothing, they understand nothing; their eyes are plastered over so they cannot see, and their minds closed so they cannot understand. ⁸⁴
B C I J	Be as a lamp unto them that walk in darkness, a joy to the sorrowful... ⁸⁵
B C I J	Blessed are such as hold fast to the cord of kindness and tender mercy and are free from animosity and hatred. ⁸⁶
B C I J	Yet I am always with you; you hold me by my right hand. ⁸⁷
B C I J	A kindly tongue is...the fountain of the light of wisdom and understanding. ⁸⁸
B C I J	Breathe not the sins of others so long as thou art thyself a sinner. ⁸⁹

B C I J	Give then the good tidings to those who hear an utterance and follow the best [they find] therein. These are they whom God guideth and are endowed with wisdom. ⁹⁰
B C I J	Backbiting quencheth the light of the heart and extinguisheth the life of the soul. ⁹¹
B C I J	O God, you are my God, earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you, my body longs for you... Because your love is better than life, my lips will glorify you. I will praise you as long as I live, and in your name I will lift up my hands. ⁹²
B C I J	As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God? ⁹³
B C I J	The tongue is a smoldering fire, and excess of speech a deadly poison. ⁹⁴
B C I J	Beware lest ye contend with anyone, nay, strive to make him aware of the truth with kindly manner and most convincing exhortation. ⁹⁵
B C I J	Show honor to your parents and pay homage to them. This will cause blessings to descend upon you from the clouds of the bounty of your Lord, the Exalted, the Great! ⁹⁶
B C I J	Woe to you...you yourselves do not enter [the Kingdom of God], nor will you let those enter who are trying to. ⁹⁷
B C I J	Beware lest ye commit that which would sadden the hearts of your fathers and mothers. ⁹⁸

B C I J	It is seemly that the servant should, after each prayer, supplicate God to bestow mercy and forgiveness upon his parents. ⁹⁹
B C I J	My heart says of you, "Seek his face!" Your face, Lord, I will seek. Do not hide your face from me, do not turn your servant away in anger; you have been my helper. Do not reject me or forsake me, O God my Savior. ¹⁰⁰
B C I J	Blessed is he who remembereth his parents when communing with God. ¹⁰¹
B C I J	As for those who...turned others aside from the way of God, to them we will add punishment on punishment... ¹⁰²
B C I J	Blessed are the learned that pride not themselves on their attainments... ¹⁰³
B C I J	For his anger lasts only a moment, but his favor lasts a lifetime; weeping may remain for a night, but rejoicing comes in the morning. ¹⁰⁴
B C I J	Purge thy heart from malice and, innocent of envy, enter the divine court of holiness. ¹⁰⁵
B C I J	This is God your Lord, Creator of all things. No God is there but He. Why then do ye turn away from Him? ¹⁰⁶
B C I J	I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. ¹⁰⁷
B C I J	Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. ¹⁰⁸

B C I J	If a suggestion from Satan assail thy [mind], seek refuge with God. For He heareth and knoweth [all things]. ¹⁰⁹
B C I J	Well is it with him who is illumined with the light of courtesy and is attired with the vesture of uprightness. Whoso is endued with courtesy hath indeed attained a sublime station. ¹¹⁰
B C I J	By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another. ¹¹¹
B C I J	He who has clean hands and a pure heart...he will receive blessing from the Lord... ¹¹²
B C I J	I am reproached and mocked all the time for uttering the word of Lord. ¹¹³
B C I J	God desireth not to straiten the heart of anyone, be it even an ant, how much less the heart of a superior creature... ¹¹⁴
B C I J	Trust in him at all times, O people; pour out your hearts to him, for God is our refuge. ¹¹⁵
B C I J	O companion of My throne!...Speak no evil, that thou mayest not hear it spoken unto thee, and magnify not the faults of others that thine own faults may not appear great... ¹¹⁶
B C I J	Take heed, O people, lest ye be of them that give good counsel to others, but forget to follow it themselves. ¹¹⁷
B C I J	Never came Messengers to them whom they did not deride. ¹¹⁸
B C I J	He releases them from their heavy burdens and from the yokes that are upon them. ¹¹⁹



Appendices

Appendix I:

The Bahá'í Faith

Appendix II:

A Second Look at the
Quranic References to War

Appendix III:

My Identical Dreams
of Three Great Messengers

Appendix I

The Bahá'í Faith

If you are not familiar with the Bahá'í Faith, you may wish to begin your search by studying first its history and teachings, and then the evidences of its validity. For proofs of a faith are most relevant when one already knows its basic principles. The Message is the goal, and proofs the means for reaching the goal.

For our purposes, a brief reference or introduction to the Central Figures of the Bahá'í Faith and its goals is in order:

- ***The Bahá'í Faith*** literally means The Glorious Faith—the Faith that manifests the Glory of God.
- ***The Báb***. On May 23, 1844, a young man entitled the Báb (the Gate) declared the dawning of a new Day in the religious history of the world. The young man came from southern Persia. He announced that God would soon send a World Teacher and Savior to bring peace and order, and to unify all humanity. Within the brief span of His ministry (1844-1850), the Báb attracted many followers, thousands of whom were massacred, mostly by the order of fanatical religious leaders of Islam. The Báb Himself was imprisoned and finally executed in 1850.
- ***Bahá'u'lláh***. In 1863, a nobleman entitled Bahá'u'lláh (Glory of God) announced that He was the World Teacher and Redeemer promised by the Báb and expected by humanity since the dawn of history. Like His Herald, the Báb, Bahá'u'lláh encountered relentless opposition and oppression throughout His ministry. His imprisonment and exile lasted 40 years. He often refers to His sufferings

with both a sense of submission and pride—submission because He welcomed that which was ordained for Him, pride because He suffered for the sake of others to bring hope and love to the heart of humanity, and peace and justice to the world. Bahá'u'lláh wrote over a hundred volumes, offering teachings and unveiling all the truth (John 16:13). that humanity will need for at least a thousand years.

- ***‘Abdu’l-Bahá***. Before His passing in 1892, Bahá'u'lláh appointed His eldest son, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá (Servant of Glory), to serve as the Interpreter and Exemplar of His teachings and the Center of His Covenant. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá is also known as the Mystery of God. His station is not that of the Báb or Bahá'u'lláh, but of a Perfect Exemplar or Model for all to emulate. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá traveled to many countries, spreading the teachings of the new Revelation.
- ***Shoghi Effendi***. Shoghi Effendi did not consider himself one of the central figures of the Bahá'í Faith, yet he occupied a position of preeminence in the development of the new faith. After the passing of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, he served as the appointed Guardian of the Faith. His chief accomplishment was the building of the Administrative Order of Bahá'u'lláh, which constitutes a pattern for the future World Order—an Order called by Christ the Kingdom of God, and the Kingdom of heaven, meaning the coming of the Kingdom of God or the Kingdom of heaven on earth.
- ***The Universal House of Justice***. Shortly after Shoghi Effendi’s passing, the responsibility for leadership in the Bahá'í Faith was delegated to a supreme elected institution called by Bahá'u'lláh The Universal House of Justice. Its members represent and receive the full support of the entire Bahá'í community living in over two hundred countries and territories around the globe.

The Goals of the Bahá'í Faith

When that time comes...I will gather all the nations together...
Joel 3:1-2 NEB

And I...am about to come and gather all nations and tongues, and they will come and see my glory...they will bring all your brothers, from all the nations...

Isaiah 66:18, 20 NIV
See also Isaiah 10:13-14

Ye were created to show love one to another...Take pride not in love for yourselves but in love for your fellow-creatures. Glory not in love for your country, but in love for all mankind.¹
Bahá'u'lláh

...the old order of things has passed away...I am making everything new!
Christ (Revelation 21:4-5 NIV)

Soon will the present-day order be rolled up, and a new one spread out in its stead.²
Bahá'u'lláh

The Bahá'í Faith seeks to attain these goals:

- To transform our divided planet into a global community crowned with harmony, peace, and justice
- To inspire the heart of humanity with a divine purpose, and an immortal hope, and
- To raise the ethical standards to levels never before achieved. (For a detailed study of these goals, see any introductory book on Bahá'í teachings. See also Volume VI of this work: *By My Fruits Ye Shall Know Me*.)

All these goals are pursued in fulfillment of this divine prayer and purpose:

Our Father in heaven, thy name be hallowed; thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as in heaven.

Matthew 6:9-10 NEB

Many prominent figures of our time have testified to the positive and dynamic influence of the Bahá'í Faith in leading the world toward these goals.

I sympathize with the Bahá'í Faith with all my heart because it has the Spirit of Christ in it...You hold...the key that will settle all of our difficulties...³

Dr. George Washington Carver
Noted American Scientist

Bahá'í teachings on religious tolerance, the unity of mankind, the elimination of prejudice, equality of the sexes, and universal peace embody principles that all people of good-will admire and support...I join with you in praying that we may see the realization of these fundamental principles in every land.

President George Bush

...the highest and purest form of religious teaching...I know of no other [faith] so profound.

Leo Tolstoy
Russian Novelist

In our times we can only survive, and our civilization can only flower, if we reorient the conventional wisdom and achieve the new insights...proclaimed by the Bahá'í Faith and...now also supported by the latest discoveries of the empirical sciences.

Dr. Ervin Laszlo
Editor of *The World Encyclopedia of Peace*,
Renowned Authority on Systems Sciences and World Order

[The Bahá'í Faith] teaches the essential unity of mankind under one God...That is a force which cuts across politics, trade routes, racial groupings the world around. It can be made a powerful force in the practical affairs of the world.

Hon. William O. Douglas
U.S. Supreme Court Justice

...[The Bahá'í Faith is] the greatest movement working today for universal peace.

Dr. Auguste Forel
Renowned Swiss Scientist

Appendix II

A Second Look at the Quranic References to War

The Quranic verses on war should be viewed like parts of a jig-saw puzzle. Only if we see them together, can we understand and appreciate their true purpose. The broad picture of these verses show that Muhammad's intention in fighting was not to force people into belief, but to:

- Establish justice for all citizens of Arabia.
- To create an atmosphere of freedom for Muslims to teach their faith.
- To subdue and humiliate those who would oppose the preceding principles.

To attain the preceding goals, the Muslims were asked to wage war against:

- Those who initiated hostilities against them (justice).
- Trouble makers—the people who disturbed the peace of the land (justice).
- Those who broke their treaties. The violators were punished severely to set an example for others (justice).
- Hypocrites who would pretend to side with Muslims, but were their enemies at heart, and would sometimes serve as spies (justice and self-protection).

- Those who tried to expel Muhammad and His followers from their homeland (justice).

The verses on war are scattered throughout the Qur'án. Any given verse should be viewed not only in its own context but also in the light of all other relevant verses. The following references, viewed together, will portray a true picture of the purpose of the Quranic verses on war:

And fight for the cause of God against those who fight against you, but commit not the injustice of attacking them first. God loveth not such injustice. And kill them wherever ye shall find them, and eject them from whatever place they have ejected you. For civil discord is worse than carnage, yet attack them not at the sacred Mosque, unless they attack you therein. But if they attack you, slay them. Such is the reward of the infidels. But if they cease, then verily God is Gracious, Merciful. Fight therefore against them until there be no more civil discord, and the only worship be that of God. But if they cease, then let there be no hostility, save against the wicked...whoever offereth violence to you, offer ye the like violence to him, and fear God, and know that God is with those who fear Him.

Qur'án 2:190-194

They expel the Messenger and expel you because you have believed in God—your Lord.

Qur'án 60:1

The poor emigrants who were driven from their homes and possessions...

Qur'án 59:8

How could you not fight a people who have broken their oaths, who tried to drive the Messenger out, who attacked you first?...Fight them. God will punish them at your hand...

Qur'án 9: 13-14

If the hypocrites, the sick at heart, and those who spread lies in the city [Medina] do not refrain from hostilities... Wherever they are found, they will be seized and put to death.

Qur'án 33:60-61

So if they neither withdraw, nor offer you peace, nor restrain themselves from fighting you, seize them and kill them wherever you find them. We give you clear authority against such people. Qur'án 4:91

Tell the idolaters that if they desist [refrain from persecution] their past will be forgiven, but if they persist, they will be made an example, like those who came before them. [Believers] fight them until there is no more persecution, and all worship is devoted to God alone. Qur'án 8:38-39

And think not that the infidels shall escape Us! They shall not weaken God. Make ready then against them what force ye can...And if they lean to peace, lean thou also to it; and put thy trust in God, for He is the Hearing, the Knowing. But if they seek to betray thee, God will be all-sufficient for thee. Qur'án 8:59-62

Among the Quranic references to war, there is one reference that requires clarification. As we noted, breaking a treaty was considered a serious crime, and violators received harsh punishment, including death. The prime purpose of the severe punishment was to set an example to future violators. Otherwise, chaos would prevail and no one would know what to expect. An Arab tribe that had broken their treaties several times was given an ultimatum, one last chance to escape punishment, if they complied with certain conditions:

...wherever you encounter the idolaters [who broke the treaty] kill them...but if they turn [repent], maintain the prayer, and pay the prescribed dues, let them go on their way, for God is most forgiving and merciful. Qur'án 9:5-6

Muslim scholars believe that the previous verses refer to a specific tribe: “In this context, this [command] definitely pertains to those who broke the treaty. The article here is “ahdiyah” (specific) referring to what was already stated.”¹

The verses do not declare that: “If the idolaters become Muslims, they will be forgiven.” The violators were required to meet three specific conditions that involved concrete steps

or actions: Repentance, prayer, and the payment of a fine. Compliance with these specific conditions allowed them to escape death, and still remain disbelievers. The Muslims were told to “let them go on their way” that is, set them free, let them practice what they wish. This was an act of victory for Muslims and a means of humiliation for the violators of the treaty.

The Quranic verses clearly show that the Muslims were asked not only to fight and defeat the idolaters, but ***to humiliate them, to show them that God was in charge and had full authority over them.*** This concept is evident throughout the Qur’án, including in the preceding reference.

There are two ways we can judge a book. By finding:

- What it contains
- What it ***does not*** contain

There is not even a single verse in the Qur’án that says: “Force people to become Muslim!” It teaches the exact opposite. A Muslim scholar indicates that there are over a hundred verses that declare or imply the right of each individual to choose his own beliefs. The Quranic verses show that wars were waged for a social cause, for justice, for human rights, and for the good of the country, where all citizens of Arabia could practice and promote their beliefs with total freedom.

The idolaters feared the loss of their power and authority. They were intent on preventing the Muslims from taking it. We can compare their attitude and level of violence with several of contemporary groups of Muslims, such as Al-Qaeda and ISIS, who have murdered thousands of innocent people. Their prime intention is to kill as many Westerners as possible. The Westerners are doing the same: searching for them and trying to kill as many of them as possible wherever they hide.

Kill all the infidels just as they [wish to] kill all of you.

Qur’án 9:36

The level of violence demonstrated by Al-Qaeda and ISIS indicates that human nature does not change from age to age.

Perhaps the best way we can gain a true picture of the Quranic verses on war is to look at those related to religious minorities. The way the Jews and Christians were treated offers the best evidence as to Muhammad's method of promoting Islam. If force was intended, there would be at least one verse that would say, "Compel the Christians and the Jews to join you in your mosque for worship!" There are numerous verses about aggressive idolaters, but there is none that declares war against religious minorities—whether they be Christians, Jewish, or Sabeans.

It would have been easier for Christians, Jewish, or Sabeans to adopt Islam:

- They already believed in God.
- Muhammad confirmed the divine origin of their faiths.
- They were not violent.

Yet we cannot find a single verse that even implies that the people of the Book should be pressured to convert to Islam. Instead, we find verses that confirm the right of religious minorities to practice their own beliefs. They are even assured that they do not need to fear the divine punishment in the afterlife.

It is ironic that long ago the religion that fought for freedom of speech and freedom of conscience, is now being "high jacked" in many Muslim countries to repress those same God-given rights to humans. Over 20,000 Bahá'ís have been killed in Iran for no reason other than their beliefs. After a century and a half, the Bahá'ís still have not gained the freedom to promote their Faith. In recent years they have continued to be imprisoned and even killed for doing so.

In some countries, young people must undertake compulsory military service. In World War I and World War II millions

of people were drafted and sent to war. Some of those who refused to serve faced firing squads. What about Islam? Non-believers were exempt from military service. The principle behind this rule is: Why give your life for a cause you do not support? This rule was a blessing to religious minorities. Instead of placing their lives in danger, they had to pay a small tax called “jezya.” This was more than fair. Who would not prefer to give a little money instead of his life? If you had a choice, what would you do? Pay the tax, or go to war? Once again we can see justice was upheld at the expense of the Muslims.

To conclude: The people of the Book were even protected from verbal threats, much less physical punishment. Thus Muhammad’s treatment of religious minorities, who were not an obstacle to the spread of Islam, is the best test of the freedom of belief promoted and proclaimed throughout the Qur’án.

When we review all the Quranic references, both in relation to war and to human freedom, we discover that they intended to accomplish two goals:

- To subdue and humiliate the violent people of Arabia who had no regard for human rights.
- To teach us that the way to God has never been, nor will ever be, by force:

Let there be no compulsion [pressure] in religion.

Qur’án 2:256

Therefore do thou [Muhammad] give admonition, for thou art one to admonish. Thou hast no authority over them...

Qur’án 88:21-22

Freedom to Believe

What elevates us above animals? Is it not our freedom to choose our destiny? What are we without freedom? Mere slaves. True freedom exists where people can teach and promote their beliefs without fear. Did such an environment exist in Arabia in the 7th century? Those who criticize Muhammad engage in simplistic thinking. They assume that:

- He lived in a democratic society, where people enjoyed the freedom to promote their beliefs.
- He engaged in war to compel people to convert to Islam.

Both of these assumptions are false:

- Muhammad waged war against those who would not allow Him to teach His Faith.
- He never asked His followers to force people to become Muslims. If that was the case, then the Qur'án would contain numerous verses such as: "Compel people to become Muslims. If they refuse, kill them!" There is not a single verse that even implies such a treatment. On the contrary, we find numerous verses that command Muslims to allow people to follow the religion of their choice. These verses were presented in Chapter 13. The Qur'án declares, as do the Bible and Bahá'í Scriptures, that the gift of faith is in God's hand. Even those who leave Islam and recant their faith receive no punishment in this life. They are free to leave, but are told that they will face their punishment in the next life.

After the passing of Muhammad, some Muslim leaders, deviated from the Quranic teachings as did some Christian leaders who disregarded the counsels of Jesus. A fundamental purpose of religion is to establish peace and harmony. To engage in war in the name of religion is contrary to the teachings of all faiths. Unfortunately, this principle has been

violated throughout history. Should we blame Jesus for the Crusader wars initiated and perpetuated by the Popes?

The critics of Islam should be asked to place themselves in Muhammad's position. They should imagine living in a most brutal and hostile environment. Let us assume that you have an urgent Message that you wish to promote for the good of people. Suppose you see the majority of your countrymen living like beasts; they engage in tribal wars; they have little, if any, regard for human values, and have no reverence for life. They pursue customs so brutal that they are not found even among wild animals—such as burying their little daughters alive! Suppose you wish to save them from their brutal way of life. In your view, the best way to teach them human values is to start with God—to tell them about an invisible Creator who loves them and wishes to improve their lives. How would you proceed? How could you educate these brutal nomads? How could you transform their lives? Think of a strategy that would help you succeed. Ponder this question before making any judgment.

Consider also the question of justice. In every society, the character of people ranges from the kindest to the most cruel. In the past, and still today in many cultures, the least worthy of people, those with psychopathic tendencies—can rise to power and become dictators.

Should such people be allowed to rule? Would you endanger your life by standing up for justice in order to bring about a change of leadership? What title would you deserve if you did? That of a hero. If, on the other hand, you took no action, what would you be called? A member of the silent majority.

To gain a glimpse of what Muhammad had to face, compare the Arabian culture of the 7th century with the quality of life in the 20th century in Afghanistan under the Taliban—a zealous group of Muslim fanatics who are extremely brutal, especially toward women and girls. During the last decade, western countries under the NATO alliance have been trying to uproot them, to prevent them from pursuing violent acts against

innocent people. To succeed, they have sent thousands of soldiers to Afghanistan, and have invested billions of dollars. Despite all their endeavors, they have not fully succeeded. Muhammad faced a similar kind of people all by Himself. He stood against a nation and succeeded in transforming those brutal people. Is there a title of honor that truly describes His greatness? The courage required to stand alone against hundreds of brutal leaders is beyond human imagination.

Anyone who has the courage to do what Muhammad did, would deserve to be called the greatest hero the world has ever known. That is who Muhammad was and what He accomplished. He arose against the powerful tribal leaders of His time who feared the loss of their power. Would you dare to do what He did? Would you survive? Most people would not even dare to think about doing so, much less arise and take any action. The great miracle is this: Muhammad succeeded in His mission without support from any other individual or group—religious or political. He triumphed over those powerful and brutal leaders. What title does that lone Man deserve?

A few dictators who waged war to extend their territory and range of power, with no intention to transform people's moral-spiritual life, are called *great*—leaders such as Alexander and Napoleon, who caused the death of countless people to glorify themselves, to inflate their ego. They engaged in aggressive, not defensive wars.

Muhammad waged war against the brutal tribes of Arabia to establish an environment of freedom to teach His Message. He fought for what we cherish today—the freedom to believe what we wish. He waged war for the sake of human freedom. Should we blame Him or glorify Him for accomplishing the impossible? Should we criticize Him or admire Him for elevating a nomadic nation from worshipping stones and statues to worshipping the great Spirit of the universe? His critics

ignore the right of those people to be well informed, to know that there is more to life than their brutal leaders were teaching them. If no one steps forward, the cycle of ignorance and tyranny continues.

Today we see many young, educated Muslims risking their lives by demonstrating against dictators who control *their* lives. These young people are in some ways doing what Muhammad did long ago. They will be remembered and recognized for their courage. They are trying to topple dictators who do not allow freedom of speech for fear of being exposed—brutal leaders who are willing to kill thousands of innocent people to remain in power.

Muhammad's Covenant with Christians

‘Abdu’l-Bahá speaks of the following covenant in *Some Answered Questions*, and about six other covenants. These covenants show the love Muhammad had for Christians. The following is an excerpt from that covenant:

If a Muslim takes a Christian woman as a wife, he must respect her Christian beliefs. He must give her freedom to listen to her [religious] superiors, as she desires, and to follow the path of her own religion. Whoever, despite this order, forces his wife to act contrary to her religion, in any way whatsoever, he will have broken the alliance of Alláh and will enter into open rebellion against the pact [covenant] of His Messenger, and Alláh will count him among the impostors.

If Christians approach you seeking the help of Muslims in order to repair their churches and their convents, or to arrange matters pertaining to their affairs and religion, they [Muslims] must help and support them. However, they must not do so with the purpose of receiving any

rewards. On the contrary, they should do so to restore that religion, out of faithfulness to the pact of the Messenger of Alláh, as an act of charity, and as a meritorious deed before Alláh and His Messenger.

Appendix III

My Identical Dreams of Three Great Messengers

I have had the honor of being in the presence of three great Messengers of God: Bahá'u'lláh, the Báb, and Muhammad. My three dreams were almost identical. Each of them, I estimate, lasted about fifteen minutes.

During the entire periods of these visits, each one of these three Messengers spoke continuously. There was not even a second of silence. They spoke in a language I had never heard. I had some level of awareness of their words, but could neither register them in my mind nor fully comprehend their meaning. When I woke up, I forgot everything I had heard, except a single word I heard from the Báb. That word was “آزمایش” (azmayesh) meaning *tests and trials*. Unlike many other words that I heard, He pronounced this word so clearly and distinctly, I could never forget. Seven years after this dream, the predicted test was fulfilled, when unexpectedly I was diagnosed with cancer (lymphoma). This was a severe test of my faith: suddenly descending from perfect health and vitality to a disabling state of ill-health. My recovery, however, was miraculous. Within two months—with one chemotherapy—the cancer was gone.

My dreams did not happen by chance. Each of them had a special purpose. My dream of Muhammad came soon after I had finished this book. I think He wanted to express His

love and favor for defending Him and the Qur'án against fourteen centuries of accusations by His enemies.

By lifting the veil of mystery from all sacred Scriptures, the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh allowed me to resolve the puzzle of apparent conflict and contradiction between the Bible and the Qur'án, which has divided hundreds of millions of Jews, Christians, and Muslims for centuries. Without the knowledge that the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh have revealed, I could have never defended Muhammad, this great Messenger of God.

I glorify God for allowing His great Messengers to visit me in my dreams, to come to the level of a lowly person, showing their love and giving me a clue about my future tests and trials.

May God bless you all,

Hushidar

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5. Isaiah 44:24 NIV.
6. Qur'án 14:10.
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9. Revelation 15:3-4 NIV.
10. Qur'án 55:78.
11. Psalms 113:2.
12. Psalms 19:1 NIV.
13. Qur'án 17:44 Y.
14. Luke 18:20 NEB.
15. Revelation 15:3-4 NIV.
16. Qur'án 6:50.
17. John 8:42.
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19. John 5:30.
20. Qur'án 10:49.
21. Qur'án 7:203.
22. Qur'án 42:10.
23. John 14:6 NIV.
24. Qur'án 43:78.
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26. Revelation 19:9 NIV.
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37. Qur'án 29:58-59.
38. Psalms 92:1.

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71. Qur'án 40:60.
72. Matthew 21:22.

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77. Qur'án 16:92 Y.
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80. Psalms 18:30 NIV.
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87. Psalms 119:105 NIV.
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107. Exodus 20:12 NIV.
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171. Psalms 119:2 NIV.
172. John 9:4 NIV.
173. John 13:34 NIV.

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197. Qur'án 18:49.
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222. *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 138.
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3. *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 80.
4. Psalms 95:2-3 NIV.
5. *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 186.
6. Isaiah 55:1.
7. Qur'án 73:19.
8. Proverbs 8:17.
9. *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 297.
10. *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 322.

11. Psalms 9:1-2 NIV.
12. Mark 11:22-24 NIV.
13. *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 138.
14. Qur'án 17:36.
15. Galatians 6:5.
16. *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 36.
17. *The Hidden Words of Bahá'u'lláh* (Persian), no. 80.
18. *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 285.
19. Shoghi Effendi. *The Advent of Divine Justice*, Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1956, p. 20.
20. *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, p. 72.
21. Qur'án 39:7 Y.
22. Matthew 10:7 NEB.
23. Qur'án 36:16.
24. Qur'án 3:187.
25. John 15:7 NIV.
26. Matthew 18:19 NIV.
27. *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 285.
28. Shoghi Effendi. *The Advent of Divine Justice*, Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1956, p. 27.
29. *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 138.
30. *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 297.
31. Jeremiah 33:3 NIV.
32. Qur'án 9:39.
33. Luke 19:40 NIV.
34. *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, p. 26.
35. *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 336.
36. Psalms 34:15 NIV.
37. *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 335.
38. John 15:22 NEB.
39. Qur'án 7:6.
40. *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 307.
41. Matthew 7:8 NIV.
42. II Chronicles 7:14 NIV.
43. *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 33.

44. *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 71.
45. *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 315-316.
46. Zephaniah 2:3 NIV.
47. *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 279.
48. *The Hidden Words of Bahá'u'lláh* (Persian), no, 3.
49. Qur'án 5:16 Y.
50. Psalms 149:4 NIV.
51. *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 140.
52. *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 218.
53. Psalms 56:3-4 NIV.
54. *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, p. 169.
55. *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 128.
56. *The Hidden Words of Bahá'u'lláh* (Arabic), no. 29.
57. Psalms 111:10 NIV.
58. Qur'án 23:1-3.
59. *The Hidden Words of Bahá'u'lláh* (Arabic), no. 2.
60. *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 315.
61. Qur'án 52:11-12.
62. Psalms 25:10 NIV.
63. Qur'án 16:108.
64. *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, p. 55.
65. *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 266.
66. *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 138.
67. Psalms 119:10 NIV.
68. *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 285.
69. Qur'án 26:83.
70. II Chronicles 1:10.
71. Qur'án 2:269.
72. *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 202.
73. James 4:8 NIV,
74. *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 289.
75. *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 8.
76. *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 169.
77. Qur'án 91:9.

78. Psalms 84:2 NIV.
79. *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 64.
80. *The Hidden Words of Bahá'u'lláh* (Persian), no. 6.
81. *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 86.
82. *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 129.
83. Isaiah 43:8 NIV.
84. Isaiah 44:18 NIV.
85. *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 285.
86. *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 36.
87. Psalms 73:23 NIV.
88. *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, p. 15.
89. *The Hidden Words of Bahá'u'lláh* (Arabic), no. 27.
90. Qur'án 39:17-18.
91. *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 265.
92. Psalms 63:1-4 NIV.
93. Psalms 42:1-2 NIV.
94. *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 265.
95. *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 279.
96. *The Compilation of Compilations*, Volume I, p. 386.
97. Matthew 23:13 NIV.
98. *The Compilation of Compilations*, Volume I, p. 387.
99. *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 94.
100. Psalms 27:8-9 NIV.
101. *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 94.
102. Qur'án 16:88.
103. *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 315.
104. Psalms 30:5 NIV.
105. *The Hidden Words of Bahá'u'lláh* (Persian), no. 42.
106. Qur'án 40:62.
107. John 13:15 NIV.
108. Mark 10:43-44 NIV.
109. Qur'án 7:200.
110. *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 88.
111. John 13:35 NIV.

112. Psalms 24:4-5 NIV.
113. Jeremiah 20:8 NEB.
114. *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 133.
115. Psalms 62:8 NIV.
116. *The Hidden Words of Bahá'u'lláh* (Persian), no. 44.
117. *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 277.
118. Qur'án 15:11.
119. Qur'án 7:157.

Appendix I

1. *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 138.
2. *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 7.
3. You will find some of these quotations and many others in *The Bahá'í World*, Volumes viii and ix.

Appendix II

1. The Qur'án, translated by Abdu'l-Hakim, p. 117.