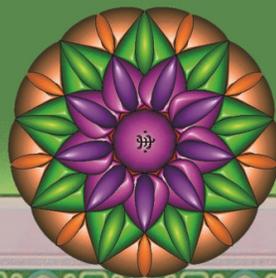


*The
Standards
of Being a
Bahá'í*



The Standards of Being a Bahá'í

The Fruits of Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation

*By their fruits ye shall know them.
Christ (Matt. 7:20)*

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The Standards of Being a Bahá'í

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I

Examples from the Life of the One Who Modeled the Bahá'í Life

The idea of testing or judging a faith by its “fruits” follows this law: only what is inside comes out and only what comes out is what is inside. What do we get if we squeeze an orange? Only orange juice. What do we get if we squeeze an apricot? Only apricot juice. Can we squeeze a papaya and get pear juice; or a carrot and get cabbage juice?

The test of judging a Faith by its fruits is so perfect that it is given as a guide in virtually all sacred Scriptures. Christ expressed it this way:

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. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? Likewise every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit... Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came

down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash. Matthew 7:15-18, 24-28 NIV

Let us now apply Christ's most critical test of truth to Bahá'u'lláh and see if He fulfills it with absolute perfection.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, Bahá'u'lláh's eldest Son, was a fruit Bahá'u'lláh offered to humanity as the highest expression and a perfect Model of His teachings and indeed His own Self. The stories that follow show what Bahá'u'lláh produced in His Son as Exemplar of Bahá'í life for all His followers and, indeed, for all humanity to emulate. Some of the stories are selected from a teacher training manual used for Bahá'í children's classes. They show what standard of behavior and wisdom Bahá'í children learn.

As you read the stories ask yourself: who can produce such noble fruits? Who has the power to create such magnanimous character, spiritual distinction, and profound wisdom?

One day Bahá'u'lláh sent 'Abdu'l-Bahá to inspect the work of the shepherds who were taking care of His sheep. 'Abdu'l-Bahá was a small child at the time, and the persecutions against Bahá'u'lláh and His family had not yet started. Bahá'u'lláh then had a good deal of land in the mountains and owned large herds of sheep. When the inspection was finished and 'Abdu'l-Bahá was ready to leave, the man who had accompanied Him said, "It is your father's custom to leave a gift for each shepherd." 'Abdu'l-Bahá became silent for a while, because He did not have anything to give them. The man, however, insisted that the shepherds were expecting something. Then 'Abdu'l-Bahá had an idea that made Him very happy! He would give the shepherds the sheep they were taking care of! Bahá'u'lláh was very much pleased when He heard about 'Abdu'l-Bahá's generous thoughts towards the shepherds. He humorously remarked that everyone had better take good care of 'Abdu'l-Bahá because someday He would give Himself away. Of course, this is exactly what 'Abdu'l-Bahá did for the rest of His life. He gave everything He had, each and every moment of His life, to humanity, to unite us and bring us true happiness!¹



While ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was a prisoner in ‘Akká, there was a man in that city who behaved very badly towards Him. He believed that he was showing love for God by showing hatred to the Bahá’ís. When he passed ‘Abdu’l-Bahá on the street, he would cover his face with his robe so that he would not see Him. Now, this man was very poor and had neither enough to eat nor warm clothes to wear. What do you think ‘Abdu’l-Bahá did for him? He showed him kindness. Sent him food and clothes, and made sure he was being taken care of. For example, once this man became very ill, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá sent him a doctor, paid for his medicine and food, and also gave him some money. He accepted the gifts from ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, but did not thank Him. In fact, this ignorant man held out one hand to the doctor to take his pulse, and with the other hand, covered his face so that he would not have to look upon the face of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá.

And thus many years passed. And then, one day, the man’s heart finally changed. He came to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s house, fell at His feet and with a very heavy heart and tears flowing down from his face, cried, “Forgive me, Sir! For twenty-four years I have done evil to you. For twenty-four years you have shown only kindness to me. Please forgive me!” Thus, the great love of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá triumphed over hatred and saved this man from his ignorance.²



Lua Getsinger, one of the early Bahá’ís of America, tells of an experience she had in ‘Akká. She had made the pilgrimage to the prison-city to see ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. One day He said to her that He was too busy to call upon a friend of His who was very poor and sick. He wished Lua to go in His place. He told her to take food to the sick man and care for him as He had been doing.

Lua learned the address and immediately went to serve as ‘Abdu’l-Bahá had asked. She felt proud that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá had trusted her with some of His own work. But soon she returned to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in a state of excitement. “Master,” she

exclaimed, “You sent me to a very terrible place! I almost fainted from the awful smell, the dirty rooms, the degrading condition of that man and his house. I left quickly before I could catch some terrible disease!”

Sadly and sternly ‘Abdu’l-Bahá gazed at her. If she wanted to serve God, He told her, she would have to serve her fellow man, because in every person she should see the image and likeness of God. Then He told her to go back to the man’s house. If the house was dirty, she should clean it. If the man was dirty, she should bathe him. If he was hungry, she should feed him. He asked her not to come back until all of this was done. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá had done all of this many times for the man, and He told Lua Getsinger that she should be able to do it once. This is how ‘Abdu’l-Bahá taught Lua to serve her fellow man.³



‘Abdu’l-Bahá could always tell what was in a person’s heart, and He greatly loved people whose hearts were pure and radiant. There was a lady who had the great honor of being the guest of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá at dinner. As she sat listening to His words of wisdom, she looked at a glass of water in front of her and thought, “Oh! If only ‘Abdu’l-Bahá would take my heart and empty it of every earthly desire and then refill it with divine love and understanding, just as one would do with this glass of water.”

This thought passed through her mind quickly, and she did not say anything about it, but soon something happened that made her realize ‘Abdu’l-Bahá had known what she was thinking. While He was in the middle of His talk, He paused to call a servant and say a few words to him. The servant quietly came to the lady’s place at the table, took her glass, emptied it, and put it back in front of her.

A little later, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, while continuing to talk, picked up a pitcher of water from the table, and in a most natural way, slowly refilled the lady’s empty glass. No one noticed what had happened, but the lady knew that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was answering

her heart's desire. She was filled with joy. Now she knew that hearts and minds were like open books to 'Abdu'l-Bahá, who read them with great love and kindness.⁴



One day 'Abdu'l-Bahá wanted to go from 'Akká to Haifa. He went to take an inexpensive seat in a coach. The driver was surprised and must have asked himself why 'Abdu'l-Bahá was so frugal as to ride in this cheap coach. "Surely, Your Excellence would prefer to travel in a private carriage," he exclaimed. "No," replied the Master. And He traveled in the crowded coach all the way to Haifa. As He stepped down from the coach in Haifa, a distressed fisherwoman came to Him and asked for His help. All day she had caught nothing and now had to return to her hungry family. 'Abdu'l-Bahá gave her a good sum of money, turned to the driver and said, "Why should I ride in luxury while so many are starving?"⁵



Humility was one of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's most impressive qualities. The friends wanted to give Him great titles, but He only wanted to be called "'Abdu'l-Bahá," which means "Servant of the Glory." He also liked simplicity. One time, some wealthy friends from the West made an elaborate plan for Him to wash His hands before a meal. They arranged for a specially-dressed boy to carry a fancy bowl with "crystal water" and they also had a perfumed towel waiting for Him. When the Master saw the group of friends with the little boy, the bowl, and the towel, He knew their purpose. He hurriedly found some water nearby, washed His hands, and dried them with a piece of cloth the gardener had. Radiantly, He then turned to meet His guests and asked them to use the water and towel to wash their own hands.⁶



'Abdu'l-Bahá preferred inexpensive clothes for Himself. When He had extra clothes He always gave them away to others. One day He was going to entertain the Governor of 'Akká. His wife felt that His coat was not good enough for the occasion. Well

ahead of time she went to the tailor and ordered a fine coat for ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. She thought He surely would not notice that His old coat had been replaced. He desired, after all, only to be scrupulously clean. When the day of the Governor’s visit arrived, the new coat was laid out for ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, but He went searching for His old one. He asked for His old coat, saying that the one laid out could not be His. His wife attempted to explain that because of the occasion she had bought Him a new coat, but He would not accept it. He told her that for the price of this one coat they could buy five simple ones like the one He normally wore. He told her that there was no reason to spend so much money on a coat for Him. If He needed a new one, they could send the expensive coat back to the tailor and order five ordinary coats for the same amount of money. “Then, you see, I shall not only have a new one, but I shall also have four to give to others!”⁷



Some of the Governors of ‘Akká were very kind to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, but others listened more to His enemies than to His friends and did very cruel things. For instance, some enemies of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá at one time started a rumor that He had left ‘Akká and gone to Haifa. With the help of His many friends, they said, He was building a strong fort on Mount Carmel. Very soon, He would take over all of Palestine and Syria, and the Turkish Government would be driven out.

It was true that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá had moved to the fresh air of Haifa with His family, and it was true that He had many friends of all nationalities, but the so-called fort He was building was the sacred Shrine of the Báb. The Governor, however, believed the stories the enemies told, and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s family was brought back to the prison-city of ‘Akká once again.

On one occasion an unfriendly Governor who hated the Bahá’ís decided to take over their shops and leave them with no means of making a living. So he gave orders to the police: “There are fifteen shops owned by Bahá’ís; go tomorrow morning early, lock them up, and bring the keys to me.”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá sent this message to the Bahá’ís: “Do not open your shops tomorrow but wait and see what God will send us.”

The next morning, the Governor waited for the keys. The police came to him and said that the shops were closed. The Governor sent the police out again, and said, “See if the shops are open now.” The police returned and said that the shops were still closed. They waited and waited. At ten o’clock the shops were still not open, although they were usually open for trade at seven in the morning. However, the Governor knew that the shops must open sometime, so he waited.

In the meantime, the High Priest of the town came to the Governor. “How are you?” asked the Governor. “Quite well,” the High Priest answered, “But I am very sad. I have a telegram here from Damascus which fills me with sorrow.”

The Governor took the telegram and was shocked to see the message from the Central Government. It said that the Governor had been removed from his office, and that the police should take him to Damascus immediately.

When ‘Abdu’l-Bahá heard of the Governor’s misfortune, He went to visit him. “You must not be sad because of this,” He told him. “Everything in this world changes. Can I do anything for you?”

The Governor was surprised at His offer, but very grateful. He said, “Now that I am being taken away from my loved ones, there will be no one to take care of them. My dear family will be sad, lonely, and helpless, with no one to advise them and help them in their need.”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá said, “Do not be unhappy, but tell me where you want your family to go.”

“If only they could follow me to Damascus!” he said.

“Now trust me,” said ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, “and let your heart rest at peace. I will gladly send your wife and children to Damascus. You will find that they will be there soon after you arrive yourself.”

And so it was done. When the family arrived in Damascus the Governor was very happy. He asked the guard who brought them there what the cost was for the journey. The guard answered, "It is nothing. I am only obeying the command of the Master, 'Abdu'l-Bahá."

The Governor then wished to give the guard a present for himself, but he said, "I want no reward. I am only obeying the Master's command. I can accept nothing."

When the Governor invited him to stay the night so he could rest and have some food, the guard said, "I obey the Master's command to return immediately."

"Then please take a letter to 'Abdu'l-Bahá," the Governor insisted. And he wrote the following letter:

"O 'Abdu'l-Bahá, I pray that you will pardon me. I did not understand. I did not know you. I have done you much evil. You have rewarded me with much good."⁸



Being with 'Abdu'l-Bahá made a person very happy. It also helped to make one a better person. One of the pilgrims to 'Akká felt that she could never again feel anything but love for another being. Yet one afternoon, while she was in the Holy Land in her room with two of her friends, she spoke unkindly about another friend.

While they were sitting together, 'Abdu'l-Bahá returned from visiting the poor and the sick. Immediately He sent for one of the people who had heard the unkind words spoken. He told her that while He was away someone had spoken unkindly about another person. And He told her it made Him sad that Bahá'ís should not love one another, or that they should speak against anyone. He told her, too, not to speak of it, but to pray.

A little later everyone went to supper. The unkind friend was not aware of the wrong she had spoken until her eyes met those of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, so full of gentleness and kindness. His eyes spoke to her. Suddenly, she was aware that she had done wrong,

and she burst into tears. He did not take notice of her for a while. Supper continued while she wept over what she had done.

After a few moments, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá turned and smiled at her and spoke her name several times as though He was calling her. In an instant she was filled with sweet happiness. In her heart she felt sure He would forgive her and help her to become more loving toward others.⁹



One day early in 1916, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and His faithful coachman took a trip from ‘Akká to Nazareth. The Master was tired, so they stopped at the home of the headman of a small village. There ‘Abdu’l-Bahá had a simple meal and slept for about an hour. Then He came to sit with the headman and the notables of the village who had gathered to meet Him. He spoke to them and gave them wise advice on many problems they had in the village.

After the talk, the headman thanked ‘Abdu’l-Bahá for His advice and for paying him the honor of a visit. He said, “Your visit will bring heavenly bounties to all the people in this village. Now, I have one more request.”

“What is your request?” said ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. “It will be a happiness for me to grant it, if I have the power.”

The headman said, “I have only one child, a girl of fourteen, who has been afflicted with tuberculosis for two years. All the doctors have told me that she will never recover. Day after day her mother and I and our relatives can do nothing but shed tears and moan. God has not given us another child. If your Holiness would pray for the health of my child, I feel that new life will be given to her. We feel sure that your prayers are acceptable to God, and we know that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s bounties shower on all people.” At this point the headman burst into tears.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá immediately rose from His seat. “Where is your daughter?” He asked. “In the other room,” the headman answered.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá immediately found the girl lying on a bed on the floor. The mother and the members of the family were sitting all around her. Some were acting as nurses, others were only crying.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá walked to the head of the bed and sat down beside her. He took the little hand and felt the pulse. Her temperature was very high. The child seemed to cough without stopping, and she spat up blood. She was like a creature of skin and bones, and was completely helpless. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá laid His blessed hand upon the child’s forehead and caressed it. Then He asked someone for a cup of tea. When the tea was brought ‘Abdu’l-Bahá drank some of it and prayed for about five minutes. Then He gradually poured the rest of the tea with a spoon into the girl’s mouth. Twice He placed His hands on her forehead. Once more He prayed, this time for about ten minutes.

When all this was done, He rose to His feet and turned to the parents. In a loud voice and with great authority He said, “Be assured that God will grant a complete cure to your daughter. Do not be unhappy, neither weep nor moan. Nurse her with complete confidence. Before long she will be in perfect health.”

He returned to the guest room for a short while, then He said good-bye to the headman and his guests, walked out of the house and stepped into the carriage.

That night the girl perspired a great deal, and gradually her temperature declined. According to the word of the village headman, within two months his daughter was once again in perfect health, and in the year 1922 she was married to a government official of ‘Akká and became the mother of three healthy children.

The father of the girl told this story many times in ‘Akká, Haifa, and Nazareth, and he always ended his story by saying, “My daughter was give back to me by His Holiness ‘Abdu’l-Bahá.”¹⁰



This is the story of how ‘Abdu’l-Bahá appeared at a party attended by about twenty people of fame and high social standing in America.

The lady who was giving the party had visited ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in ‘Akká while He was still a prisoner there. Her life had become completely changed by meeting Him, and she wanted her friends also to meet Him. But she was a little nervous about the party because her friends were important scientists, artists, doctors, and people who did not care much about religion. In fact some of them were not even sure whether or not there was a God, and they were not interested in finding out.

The lady, of course, wanted her party to be a success, so she kept wondering how ‘Abdu’l-Bahá would handle the situation. Nervously, she suggested to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá to talk on the subject of life after death, and left the choice to the Master.

As the dinner continued, the conversation was only about ordinary things, and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá made no effort to change the subject. So, after some time, the hostess herself requested ‘Abdu’l-Bahá to speak on spiritual matters.

His response was to tell them a story, and He did. Everyone laughed heartily. The ice was broken. Others added their own stories. Then ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, His face full of happiness, told another story, and another. His laughter filled the room. He told them that it was good to laugh. Laughter, He said, was a spiritual relaxation.

When they were in prison, He told them, they were living a most difficult life. But, at the end of the day, each person would tell the funniest thing that had happened to him during the day. Sometimes it was a little hard to find something funny to tell, but everyone would always laugh until tears rolled down their cheeks. Happiness, He said, does not depend on where you are, or what your material condition is.

And that was all that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá said during the dinner about spiritual things or about Bahá’u’lláh’s teachings. But the effect of His words was more than giving a long speech on religion.

After the guests were gone and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was leaving for His hotel, He came over to His hostess, smiled, and asked the lady in a shy sort of way, “Are you pleased with me?”¹¹



When ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was in Washington, DC, He invited a black American friend, Mr. Gregory, to come to the house of a high government official, who was giving a luncheon party in honor of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. Mr. Gregory was surprised because he knew he had not been invited to the lunch and he also knew that it was not the custom of white Americans to eat with a black man. However, he felt he must go if the Master wished to see him.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá met him with His usual kindness. For an hour they talked about many things. Suddenly the servant appeared at the door and announced, “Lunch is served.”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá got up quickly and went to the dining room, but Mr. Gregory stayed behind, not knowing what he should do. Should he leave or should he wait?

‘Abdu’l-Bahá went to the table, stopped suddenly, and in a rather loud voice He said, “Where is my friend Mr. Gregory? My friend Mr. Gregory must lunch with me!”

The servant was sent to invite Mr. Gregory. In the meantime, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá began pushing aside the many knives and forks and glasses to make a place beside Himself for Mr. Gregory.

So Mr. Gregory sat in the place of honor beside ‘Abdu’l-Bahá at the table. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá entertained the party in such a delightful way that soon all the guests forgot, at least for awhile, anything so unkind as looking down on another human being simply because of his skin color.¹²



‘Abdu’l-Bahá would never accept gifts of money from anyone. But simple gifts gave Him great pleasure—a handkerchief, a box of sweets, a basket of fruit, or a bouquet of flowers. Such gifts He would always accept with gratitude—and then He

would quickly give them away to visiting friends. And everyone loved to receive these gifts from ‘Abdu’l-Bahá.

One day a lady said to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, “I have here a check from a friend who begs you to accept it to buy a good car for your travels in Europe.”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá replied, “I accept with grateful thanks the gift of your friend.” He took the check into both hands, as though blessing it, then He said, “I return it to be used as gifts to the poor.”¹³



There is the story of a gift to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá from a poor Bahá’í workman of Ishqábád [in former Soviet Union]. This man heard that a traveler was passing through his town on the way to London to join ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, and he longed to send a gift to his beloved Master. But he had nothing to give, so he begged the traveler to take his simple dinner, which he had tied up in a cotton handkerchief, to be given to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, as a token of his love.

Many days passed before the traveler reached London. He came to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá when He was about to have lunch with some guests, and faithfully presented the workman’s gift with the story of how it was sent. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá untied the handkerchief. Inside was a piece of dry black bread and a shriveled apple. What did ‘Abdu’l-Bahá do with it? He broke small pieces off the bread and urged the guests to join Him in eating from the workman’s dinner. “Eat with me of this gift of humble love.” He said. And ‘Abdu’l-Bahá left His own lunch untouched.¹⁴



While ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was in Dublin, He stayed at a small hotel. A woman staying at the same hotel tells this story:

Early one morning she happened to glance out of the window, and she saw ‘Abdu’l-Bahá walking up and down dictating to His secretary. As she watched, an old man in very dirty, ragged

clothes walked past the inn. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá sent His secretary to call him back.

As the man approached, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá went forward to greet him. He took the poor man’s hand in His and smiled as though He was welcoming an old friend. Then He talked to him for a few minutes, trying to make him feel cheerful. Finally, the man did smile a little, but he was rather sad. While ‘Abdu’l-Bahá talked to him, He looked the man over. He noticed that his trousers were very torn and scarcely covered his body. He said, “We must do something about that.”

The street was empty because it was very early in the morning. With a gentle laugh, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá stepped into the shadow of the wall and began to fumble under His cloak. Then He stooped and His trousers fell to the ground. He pulled His cloak around Him and, turning to the old man, He handed him His trousers. “May God be with you,” He said. And after that He turned to His secretary and continued dictating as if nothing unusual had happened.¹⁵

For further stories about ‘Abdu’l-Bahá see *Vignettes from the Life of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá* and *Stories about ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*.



2

Difference Between Religion and Cult

What ethical principles guide Bahá'ís in their daily living? In an age when cults sprout and spread like weeds everywhere, people remain skeptical of anything new. They feel more comfortable with an established name, with the tried and true. And we cannot blame them for their initial feelings. Fortunately, the skeptics can resolve their doubts by a simple test: *judging a tree by its fruits*.

In God's vast garden all kinds of plants grow side by side. Diversity is a feature of the Design of Creation. Some people, out of ignorance or illusion, may call a flower a weed, or a weed a flower, but their false perception in no way changes the reality. Each individual stand accountable before God to investigate the truth for himself, by using God's unmistakable standards to separate a flower from the weeds and the weeds from a flower. This is *the only way* to true knowledge. The alternative is the prevailing chaos in which people either accept or reject anything they are told without full investigation.

When Christ came, He cast fear into the hearts of those who espoused the established religions. Some of them opposed Him, other ignored Him. An early historian introduced Christianity as "a pernicious cult." Sometimes I listen to a Christian Radio Broadcast. They have a regular feature about cults. Almost always they talk critically about several unconventional Christian denominations, primarily the Jehovah's Witnesses, the Mormons, the Christian Scientists, the Seventh Day Adventists, the Moonies,

and those of the Worldwide Church of God. These groups are categorized as cults because of their unconventional beliefs.

But, as a rule, the term cult refers to groups that brainwash people, isolate them from society, control their wealth, use narcotic drugs and alcohol, accumulate weapons, and often engage in immoral sexual conduct. Every one of these features stands diametrically opposed to what the Bahá'í Faith stands for. To get a clear picture of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh, let us make a simple comparison. The following table offers in the left column the main features of cults and in the next two columns to the right the comparable Christian and Bahá'í practices. The simple comparison proves to all skeptics the pristine purity and divine nobility of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh.

<i>The Cult Way of Life</i>	<i>The Christian Way of Life</i>	<i>The Bahá'í Way of Life</i>
Cult members are discouraged from investigating other ways of life.	Freedom of choice is accepted but not emphasized. Christians are not encouraged to investigate other faiths.	The Bahá'í Faith emphasizes freedom of choice more than any other religion.
Cult members are isolated from others	Christians are encouraged to associate primarily with members of their own church or faith.	Bahá'u'lláh specifically asks His followers to associate with followers of all faiths.
Cults accept money from anyone and often force their members to give up their possessions.	Christians accept money from non-Christians.	Bahá'í contributions are totally voluntary. Bahá'ís never accept money from others to further their cause.

The Cult Way of Life

Cults are often racist

Cults accumulate and use weapons.

Cult leaders use their followers as slaves.

The Christian Way of Life

Christianity teaches love but has no teaching specifically on racism. A few Christian denominations have used the Bible to justify racism. In my exhaustive concordance of the Bible, I could find neither the word prejudice nor racism. The word race appears only in the sense of competition.

No biblical law prevents Christians from accumulating weapons.

Christianity does not forbid slavery. In the past Christians have practiced it.

The Bahá'í Way of Life

The Bahá'í Faith condemns racism in the strongest terms. Bahá'ís in America were the first group to practice integration. In 1912 'Abdu'l-Bahá encouraged and arranged an interracial marriage.

Bahá'u'lláh specifically asks Bahá'ís not to carry weapons except for self protection, when their lives are in danger.

Bahá'u'lláh specifically forbids slavery.

The Cult Way of Life

Cults use sex as a means of attracting and keeping members.

Cults often thrive on what numbs the mind.

The Christian Way of Life

Christianity teaches chastity, as does the Bahá'í Faith. But when people lose their faith, they disobey the laws. For instance, today disregard for chastity among priests and pastors is widespread.

Christians do not have clear guidelines on narcotic drugs and alcohol. Many of them believe that drinking in moderation is o.k. I have not seen any clear reference in the Bible to narcotic drugs.

The Bahá'í Way of Life

Chastity is one of the most fundamental teachings of the Bahá'í Faith. What kind of a world does Bahá'u'lláh plan to create? He says, it would be a world in which, if a most beautiful woman walked from the East to the West, she would finish her journey in full safety, to the extent that no one would even turn his face toward her.

Bahá'ís are clearly forbidden to use alcohol or narcotic drugs of any kind. Never in a Bahá'í meeting will you find alcoholic beverages served.

Then why would anyone apply the word cult to the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh? For several reasons: ignorance, illusion, or prejudice. If it is stated that the Bahá'í Faith is a cult because of its teachings, we should ask which of its teachings qualify it for that label?

Oneness of humankind? Oneness of God? Oneness of religion? Universal education? Global peace? Harmony between religion and science? In fact, Bahá'u'lláh's teachings are so advanced, some of the most eminent scientists, such as Ervin Laszlo—who is not a Bahá'í—have eulogized them as a perfect model for a world in peace, prosperity, and harmony. Does the fact that Bahá'u'lláh declares Himself the Promised One of all ages and religions, and presents convincing proofs of His Mission, qualify Him for that label? As we have noted, people also labeled Christ a cult leader for similar reasons—for challenging the outmoded traditions and calling Himself the Promised One of the Jews. *No religion can be found today that stands as far from cultish beliefs and practices as does the Bahá'í Faith.*

3

Brief Quotations from Bahá'í Scriptures

Living in Harmony With God

Setting One's Hope in God Alone

Withhold not from yourselves the grace of God and His mercy.
Whoso withholdeth himself therefrom is indeed in grievous
loss.¹⁶

Bahá'u'lláh

Beware lest the transitory things of human life withhold you
from turning unto God, the True One.¹⁷

Bahá'u'lláh

Wouldst thou have Me, seek none other than Me; and wouldst
thou gaze upon My beauty, close thine eyes to the world and all
that is therein; for My will and the will of another than Me,
even as fire and water, cannot dwell together in one heart.¹⁸

Bahá'u'lláh

Break not the bond that uniteth you with your Creator...¹⁹

Bahá'u'lláh

Knowing God

True knowledge...is the knowledge of God, and this is none other than the recognition of His Manifestation in each Dispensation.²⁰

The Báb

Loving God

Seclude yourselves in the stronghold of My love. This, truly, is the seclusion that becometh you, could ye but know it.²¹

Bahá'u'lláh

Make my love thy vesture and thy shield remembrance of Me, and thy provision reliance upon God...²²

Bahá'u'lláh

Walk in My statutes for love of Me and deny thyself that which thou desirest if thou seekest My pleasure.²³

Bahá'u'lláh

Demonstrating the Love of God

But for the tribulations which are sustained in Thy path, how could Thy true lovers be recognized; and were it not for the trials which are borne for love of Thee, how could the station of such as yearn for Thee be revealed?²⁴

Bahá'u'lláh

Though my body be pained by the trials that befall me from Thee, though it be afflicted by the revelations of Thy Decree, yet my soul rejoiceth at having partaken of the waters of Thy Beauty, and at having attained the shores of the ocean of Thine eternity. Doth it beseem a lover to flee from his beloved, or to desert the object of his heart's desire? Nay, we all believe in Thee, and eagerly hope to enter Thy presence.²⁵

Bahá'u'lláh

Trusting God and Submitting One's Self to God

The Source of all good is trust in God, submission unto His command, and contentment with His holy will and pleasure.²⁶
Bahá'u'lláh

Blessed are the steadfastly enduring, they that are patient under ills and hardships, who lament not over anything that befalleth them, and who tread the path of resignation...²⁷
Bahá'u'lláh

Blessed the insatiate soul who casteth away his selfish desires for love of Me and taketh his place at the banquet table which I have sent down from the heaven of divine bounty for My chosen ones.²⁸
Bahá'u'lláh

Be not afraid of anyone, place thy whole trust in God, the Almighty, the All-Knowing.²⁹
Bahá'u'lláh

Prefer not your will to Mine, never desire that which I have not desired for you, and approach Me not with lifeless hearts, defiled with worldly desires and cravings.³⁰
Bahá'u'lláh

Heeding God's Counsels

Happy is the man that heedeth My counsel, and keepeth the precepts prescribed by Him Who is the All-Knowing, the All-Wise.³¹
Bahá'u'lláh

Happy are they that observe God's precepts; happy are they that have recognized the Truth; happy are they that judge with fairness in all matters and hold fast to the Cord of My inviolable Justice.³²
Bahá'u'lláh

Thanking God

Know thou, that I have wafted unto thee all the fragrances of holiness, have fully revealed to thee My word, have perfected through thee My bounty and have desired for thee that which I have desired for My Self. Be then content with My pleasure and thankful unto Me.³³ Bahá'u'lláh

Render ye thanksgiving unto God that perchance He may deal mercifully with you.³⁴ The Báb

Meeting God

Humble thyself before Me, that I may graciously visit thee.³⁵ Bahá'u'lláh

Be light and untrammelled as the breeze, that ye may obtain admittance into the precincts of My court, My inviolable Sanctuary.³⁶ Bahá'u'lláh

Seeking the Help of God

...whoever standeth firm and steadfast in this holy, this glorious, and exalted Revelation, such power shall be given him as to enable him to face and withstand all that is in heaven and on earth.³⁷ Bahá'u'lláh

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. No God is there but Thee, the Mighty, the Beneficent.³⁸ Bahá'u'lláh

Knowing God's Purpose in Creating Humankind

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.³⁹ Bahá'u'lláh

The supreme cause for creating the world and all that is therein
is for man to know God.⁴⁰ Bahá'u'lláh

Appreciating the Word of God

The Word of God is the king of words and its pervasive influence is incalculable...The Word is the master key for the whole world, inasmuch as through its potency the doors of the hearts of men, which in reality are the doors of heaven, are unlocked...It is an ocean inexhaustible in riches, comprehending all things.⁴¹ Bahá'u'lláh

Every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God is endowed with such potency as can instill new life into every human frame...⁴² Bahá'u'lláh

Living in Harmony With One's Self

Gaining the Spiritual Gift

Man is, in reality, a spiritual being, and only when he lives in the spirit is he truly happy.⁴³ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

While possessing physical life, he should lay hold of the life spiritual...Then is man worthy of the title man; then will he be “after the image and likeness of God...”⁴⁴ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Rejoicing

All the sorrow and grief that exist come from the world of matter—the spiritual world bestows only the joy!⁴⁵ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

The people must be so attracted to you that they will exclaim, “What happiness exists among you!” and will see in your faces the lights of the kingdom; then in wonderment they will turn to you and seek the cause of your happiness.⁴⁶ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Happiness is a great healer to those who are ill.⁴⁷ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Let not the world and its vileness grieve you. Happy is he whom riches fill not with vain-glory, nor poverty with sorrow.⁴⁸
Bahá’u’lláh

Not Being Content With Worldly Comforts

Abandon not the incorruptible benefits, and be not content with that which perisheth.⁴⁹ Bahá'u'lláh

Be not content with the ease of a passing day...⁵⁰ Bahá'u'lláh

Coping With Adversity

Rely upon God. Trust in Him. Praise Him, and call Him continually to mind. He verily turneth trouble into ease, and sorrow into solace, and toil into utter peace. He verily hath dominion over all things.⁵¹ 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Clinging to Patience

He, verily, shall increase the reward of them that endure with patience.⁵² Bahá'u'lláh

He will, certainly, repay all them that endure with patience and put their confidence in Him.⁵³ Bahá'u'lláh

Be patient, for thy Lord is patient.⁵⁴ Bahá'u'lláh

Understanding the Purpose of Tests and Trials

Nothing save that which profiteth them can befall My loved ones.⁵⁵ Bahá'u'lláh

The mind and spirit of man advance when he is tried by suffering. The more the ground is ploughed the better the seed will grow, the better the harvest will be. Just as the plough furrows the earth deeply, purifying it of weeds and thistles, so suffering and tribulation free man from the petty affairs of this worldly life until he arrives at a state of complete detachment.

His attitude in this world will be that of divine happiness. Man is, so to speak, unripe: the heat of the fire of suffering will mature him...the greatest men have suffered most.⁵⁶ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Do not grieve at the afflictions and calamities that have befallen thee. All calamities and afflictions have been created for man so that he may spurn this mortal world—a world to which he is much attached. When he experienceth severe trials and hardships, then his nature will recoil and he will desire the eternal realm—a realm which is sanctified from all afflictions and calamities.⁵⁷ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Recognizing the True Purpose and Worth of Earthly Possessions

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.⁵⁸ Bahá’u’lláh

In earthly riches fear is hidden and peril is concealed.⁵⁹ Bahá’u’lláh

If the whole earth were to be converted into silver and gold, no man who can be said to have truly ascended into the heaven of faith and certitude would deign to regard it, much less to seize and keep it.⁶⁰ Bahá’u’lláh

Recognizing the True Standards of Glory and Distinction

...ye must conduct yourselves in such a manner that ye may stand out distinguished and brilliant as the sun among other souls. Should any one of you enter a city, he should become a center of attraction by reason of his sincerity, his faithfulness and love, his honesty and fidelity, his truthfulness and loving-kindness towards all the peoples of the world, so that the people

of that city may cry out and say: “This man is unquestionably a Bahá’í, for his manners, his behavior, his conduct, his morals, his nature, and disposition reflect the attributes of the Bahá’ís.” Not until ye attain this station can ye be said to have been faithful to the Covenant and Testament of God.⁶¹ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá
In the darkness of the world be ye radiant flames...⁶² ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Exchanging Fancy for Reality

O friend, the heart is the dwelling of eternal mysteries, make it not the home of fleeting fancies...⁶³ Bahá’u’lláh

...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.⁶⁴ Bahá’u’lláh

...they that thirst for the wine of certitude, must cleanse themselves of all that is earthly—their ears from idle talk, their minds from vain imaginings...⁶⁵ Bahá’u’lláh

Conquering the Self

Thine heart is My treasury, allow not the treacherous hand of self to rob thee of the pearls which I have treasured therein.⁶⁶ Bahá’u’lláh

Concern yourselves with the things that benefit mankind, and not with your corrupt and selfish desires.⁶⁷ Bahá’u’lláh

The candle of thine heart is lighted by the hand of My power, quench it not with the contrary winds of self and passion.⁶⁸ Bahá’u’lláh

...no veil is greater than egotism and no matter how thin that covering may be, yet it will finally veil man entirely and

prevent him from receiving a portion from the eternal bounty.⁶⁹
‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Purifying the Heart

The pure heart is the one that is entirely cut away from self.⁷⁰
‘Abdu’l-Bahá

We must make the soil of our hearts receptive and fertile by tilling in order that the rain of divine mercy may refresh them and bring forth roses and hyacinths.⁷¹ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

The more pure and sanctified the heart of man becomes, the nearer it draws to God...⁷² ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

...the heart is the throne, in which the Revelation of God the All-Merciful is centered... “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.”⁷³ Bahá’u’lláh

Adorning One’s Self With Noble Deeds and Attributes

Be fair to yourselves and to others, that the evidence of justice may be revealed, through your deeds, among Our faithful servants.⁷⁴ Bahá’u’lláh

Be ye a refuge to the fearful; bring ye rest and peace to the disturbed...be a healing medicine for those who suffer pain...⁷⁵
‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Be fair in thy judgment, and guarded in thy speech.⁷⁶ Bahá’u’lláh

O ye loved ones of God! Drink your fill from the well-spring of wisdom, and soar ye into the atmosphere of wisdom, and speak forth with wisdom and eloquence.⁷⁷ Bahá’u’lláh

Truthfulness is the foundation of all the virtues of the world of humanity. Without truthfulness, progress and success in all of the worlds of God are impossible for a soul. When this holy

attribute is established in man, all the divine qualities will also become realized.⁷⁸ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Be worthy of the trust of thy neighbor, and look upon him with a bright and friendly face. Be a treasure to the poor, an admonisher to the rich, an answerer to the cry of the needy, a preserver of the sanctity of thy pledge...⁷⁹ Bahá’u’lláh

Appreciating Divine Blessings

A dewdrop out of the fathomless ocean of My mercy I have shed upon the peoples of the world...⁸⁰ Bahá’u’lláh

This most great, this fathomless and surging Ocean is near, astonishingly near, unto you. Behold it is closer to you than your life-vein! Swift as the twinkling of an eye ye can, if ye but wish it, reach and partake of this imperishable favor, this God-given grace, this incorruptible gift, this most potent and unspeakably glorious bounty.⁸¹

Bahá’u’lláh

Living in Harmony With Others

Living by the Law of Love

Blessed is he who prefers his brother before himself.⁸² Bahá'u'lláh

A thought of hatred must be destroyed by a more powerful
thought of love.⁸³ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Think ye of love and good fellowship as the delights of heaven,
think ye of hostility and hatred as the torments of hell.⁸⁴
‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Love the creatures for the sake of God and not for themselves.
You will never become angry or impatient if you love them for
the sake of God.⁸⁵ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Love is the source of all the bestowals of God. Until love takes
possession of the heart, no other divine bounty can be revealed
in it.⁸⁶ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Seeing the Best in Others

Never speak disparagingly of others, but praise without
distinction.⁸⁷ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Thus it is incumbent upon us, when we direct our gaze toward
other people, to see where they excel, not where they fail.⁸⁸
‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Should any heap his blame upon you, praise ye him; should he offer you a deadly poison, give him the choicest honey in exchange...should he be thorns, be ye his roses...⁸⁹ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Following the Golden Rule

...choose thou for thy neighbor that which thou choosest for thyself.⁹⁰ Bahá’u’lláh

Ascribe not to any soul that which thou wouldst not have ascribed to thee...⁹¹ Bahá’u’lláh

Beware lest ye prefer yourselves above your neighbors.⁹² Bahá’u’lláh

Being Just

Say: Observe equity in your judgment; ye men of understanding heart! He that is unjust in his judgment is destitute of the characteristics that distinguish man’s station.⁹³ Bahá’u’lláh

Be vigilant, that ye may not do injustice to any one, be it to the extent of a grain of mustard seed. Tread ye the path of justice, for this, verily, is the straight path.⁹⁴ Bahá’u’lláh

Forgiving

If ye become aware of a sin committed by another, conceal it, that God may conceal your own sin.⁹⁵ Bahá’u’lláh

...forgive the sinful, and never despair his low estate, for none knoweth what his own end shall be.⁹⁶ Bahá’u’lláh

...let your adorning be forgiveness and mercy...⁹⁷ Bahá’u’lláh

Being Generous

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.⁹⁸

Bahá'u'lláh

Be ye trustworthy on earth, and withhold not from the poor the things given unto you by God through His grace. He, verily, will bestow upon you the double of what ye possess.⁹⁹ Bahá'u'lláh

...well is it with the rich who bestow their riches on the needy and prefer them before themselves.¹⁰⁰

Bahá'u'lláh

Admonishing and Guiding Others

Show forbearance and benevolence and love to one another. 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 goodwill. Help him to see and recognize the truth, without esteeming yourself to be, in the least, superior to him, or to be possessed of greater endowments.¹⁰¹

Bahá'u'lláh

...it is in no wise permissible for one to belittle the thought of another, nay, he must with moderation set forth the truth...¹⁰²

‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Being Courteous

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.¹⁰³

Bahá'u'lláh

Being Humble

Be unjust to no man, and show all meekness to all men.¹⁰⁴
Bahá'u'lláh

...take ye good heed not to be reckoned among those of the past
who were invested with knowledge, yet by reason of their
learning waxed proud before God...¹⁰⁵ The Báb

Not Saddening Others

Beware lest ye offend any heart, lest ye speak against anyone in
his absence, lest ye estrange yourselves from the servants of
God.¹⁰⁶ ‘Abdu'l-Bahá

Beware lest ye harm any soul, or make any heart to sorrow; lest
ye wound any man with your words, be he known to you or a
stranger, be he friend or foe. Pray ye for all; ask ye that all be
blessed, all be forgiven...Beware, beware, lest ye offend the
feelings of another, even though he be an evil-doer, and he wish
you ill.¹⁰⁷ ‘Abdu'l-Bahá

Avoiding Animosity

If any differences arise amongst you, behold Me standing
before your face, and overlook the faults of one another for My
name's sake...¹⁰⁸ Bahá'u'lláh

Illumine and hallow your hearts; let them not be profaned by the
thorns of hate or the thistles of malice.¹⁰⁹ Bahá'u'lláh

Blessed are such as hold fast to the cord of kindness and
tender mercy and are free from animosity and hatred.¹¹⁰
Bahá'u'lláh

Not Finding Faults

If the fire of self overcome you, remember your own faults and not the faults of My creatures, inasmuch as every one of you knoweth his own self better than he knoweth others.¹¹¹ Bahá'u'lláh

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; and wish not the abasement of anyone, that thine own abasement be not exposed.¹¹² Bahá'u'lláh

Honoring One's Parents

Beware lest ye commit that which would sadden the hearts of your fathers and mothers. Follow ye the path of Truth which indeed is a straight path. Should anyone give you a choice between the opportunity to render a service to Me and a service to them, choose ye to serve them, and let such service be a path leading you to Me.¹¹³ Bahá'u'lláh

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110. *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 36.
111. *The Hidden Words of Bahá'u'lláh* (Persian), no. 66.
112. *The Hidden Words of Bahá'u'lláh* (Persian), no. 44.
113. *The Compilation of Compilations*, Volume I, p. 387.