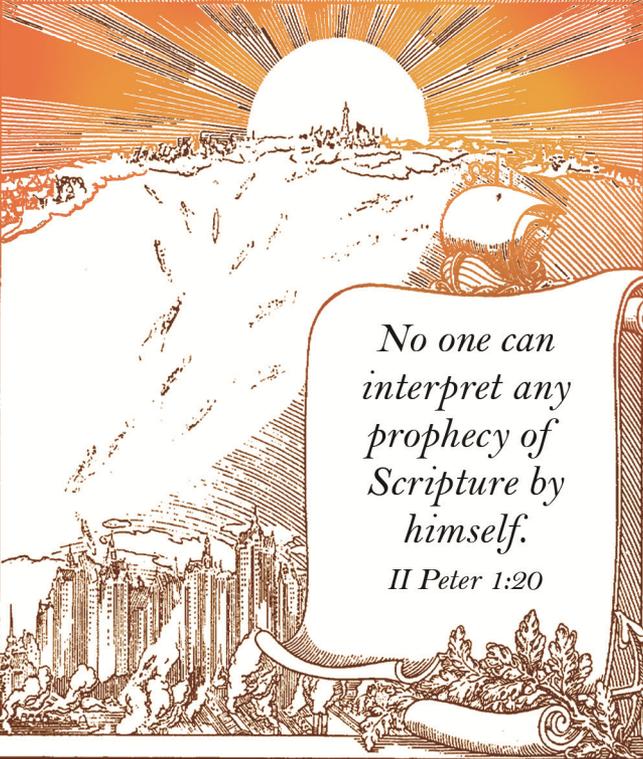


*Mysteries of the Bible*



*No one can  
interpret any  
prophecy of  
Scripture by  
himself.*

*II Peter 1:20*

*Judge nothing...wait until the  
Lord comes. He will bring to  
light what is hidden in darkness.*

*I Cor: 4:5*

# **Mysteries of the Bible**

**Who Can Bring Them  
to Light?**

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## ***Mysteries of the Bible***

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# **Who Has the Right to Interpret the Bible?**

## *Conflicting Schools of Interpretation*

A Christian leader was recently asked on national television about the significance and meaning of Christ's directive that, "Ye shall know them by their fruits." He was asked if the truth of a religion should be judged simply by that standard, by the good fruits a Messenger or Prophet produces. He said, "We cannot accept a religion simply because it produces good fruits. Its theology must also be correct." What he implied was this: to be credible, it is not sufficient for a Redeemer to produce an abundance of good fruits as an evidence of His Claim. He must also present a theology or an interpretation that the "mainstream" Christians or that particular leader will consider correct!

This raises a serious question. How can anyone claim to have the correct theology, when we know that every human being is fallible, and that there are so many schools of interpretation?

Dr. Robert Lightner, a distinguished and highly respected Christian scholar and professor of systematic theology at Dallas Theological Seminary, has written a book to promote reconciliation among supporters of various schools of prophecy within orthodox Christianity. His book—*The Last Day Handbook*—does not address the differences between Catholics and Protestants, or between unorthodox denominations within the Protestant church, but only between evangelicals, the ones who "embrace the historic orthodox Christian faith."

For those who do not have time to study countless books of prophecy, it may be revealing to know the attitudes of distinguished theologians, who by their education specialize in interpreting the Word of God, and by their position wield enormous power over the spiritual lives of millions of believers. Dr. Lightner writes:

The fact is that soon after the apostles passed from the earthly scene, differences developed over end times. The battle has raged among evangelicals at least since the third century... For the most part, theologians, educators, authors, and preachers are the ones wielding the weapons...

How goes the battle? The furor over the future is a battle of words, but behind the fighting words there are attitudes and feelings that reflect some deep seated differences.

When strong differences are expressed, each side inevitably accuses the other of being unfair and of misrepresentation...<sup>1</sup>

It is understandable that objections will be raised by opposing sides of an issue. Honest differences will always exist as long as there are two people around. But differences and disagreements develop into open warfare when slander of people and views, unsupportable accusations, judgments of motives, name calling, and insinuations are used against those with whom we differ. When this happens, Christian principles are discarded and carnality rules the day. The works of the flesh, not the fruit of the Spirit, are manifest, and honest differences on an issue such as eschatology cannot be expressed without the smell of gunfire and below-the-belt blows...Adherents of each of the views of future events are guilty of unfairness. All the bullets have not been fired from the guns of one particular side.<sup>2</sup>

The question is this: if theologians are at war, what are the laymen supposed to believe? How can they decide who is right and who is wrong? Is it wise to leave one's eternal destiny in the hands of the people who assume the positions of leadership, but are as confused as everyone else? Is it prudent to let people, who are subject to every human weakness, decide what others are supposed to believe?

There are various systems of theology, with various subsystems in each system, and various shades of opinion among the supporters of each subsystem! In his book, Dr. Lightner introduces the following nine systems or schools of interpretation:

- Amillennialism
- Posttribulationism
- Postmillennialism
- Pretribulationism
- Premillennialism
- Antidispensationalism
- Midtribulationism
- Dispensationalism<sup>3</sup>
- Partial Rapturism

What is the basis of the differences in the various systems of interpretation concerning the end-time prophecies? The core of all the differences lies in this principle: which prophecies are literal, which prophecies are symbolic. That is all! Some schools lean toward the literal, others toward the symbolic, and still others take a middle position. Almost every difference in interpretation can be traced to the literal-symbolic question. If that could be resolved, almost all the differences between various schools of interpretation within Christianity and between Bahá'í and Christian interpretations would be resolved.

As Dr. Lightner writes:

All evangelicals do use the literal method for their understanding of most of the Bible, but some...think it best to use a less than literal hermeneutic [the art or science of interpretation] with much unfulfilled prophecy. It is at this point that the evangelical world is divided over things to come and this is what puts prophecy in the middle of the debate.<sup>4</sup>

It is astounding how one principle of interpretation can separate so many people; how one difference of viewpoint can exert so much impact on the spiritual life of humankind. Is not the diversity of opinion among experts an evidence that deciphering prophecy requires more wisdom than human beings can acquire? Should not this observation instill humility in every believer, in every Bible teacher and scholar?

Dr. Lightner then asks this question: Why is there such a diversity of interpretation among the various schools of interpretation? Why do the interpreters of prophecy differ in their views so passionately? In response, he offers fourteen reasons. Consider the following:

- Not knowing, yet failing to admit ignorance.
- Overestimating or exaggerating the passages that support one's views.
- Misrepresenting the facts.
- Acting selfishly for personal gain.
- Being stubborn in one's views.<sup>5</sup>

The faults described by Dr. Lightner reminds us of human weaknesses. They show how the forces of emotions can subdue and defeat the forces of reason. It was those same forces that caused the people of Israel to deny their Lord. It is those same weaknesses that have caused wars throughout the ages.

Even among conservative Christians, who are literalists and ultraliteralists, there is a wide variety of views about the Second Advent. Christian scholar William Cox asks: "Since all conservative men use essentially the same method of interpreting Scripture, then how is it that they end up with such divergent views on the millennium? Does the Bible...actually give five completely different accounts of the millennium?"<sup>6</sup> He then responds by saying that the conflicting accounts of the end-time prophecies result from this problem: the highly literal-minded interpreters use certain passages of the Scripture "in order to justify [their] preconceived unscriptural presuppositions."<sup>7</sup> Is this not exactly what the Pharisees did?

- They were highly literal-minded.
- They interpreted their prophecies to fit their expectations.

William Cox then criticizes the extreme literalism prevalent among many Christians. He asks the interpreters of the Word of God to learn from the examples of history:

It is indeed a dangerous thing for anyone to wax hyperliteral—especially in dealing with highly figurative language found in some parts of the Bible.

Hyperliteralism is the same interpretation given to certain passages from the Old Testament by the Pharisees of Jesus' day. It was this method of interpretation that, humanly speaking, kept them from recognizing the Christ as the Hope of Israel. Hyperliteralism kept them from seeing that the unfulfilled promises of the Old Testament were...fulfilled through the Christian church. Rabbinism [Rabbinical teachings and traditions] is still with us today, in modern garb.

The non-believing Jews expected their Messiah to appear and to set up a kingdom. And this belief was based on the Scriptures. However, their hyperliteral interpretation of the Old Testament blinded their eyes to the genuine kingdom and kept them from recognizing the real king. The Messiah did come into the world, and he did establish his kingdom; or, rather he manifested a new phase of the on-going eternal kingdom of God.

The Jews expected a warrior-type Messiah who would inflict vengeance on their enemies and place Jews in chosen places of leadership. To their dismay Jesus did not Come into Jerusalem on a white charger, but rather he entered the city on a lowly donkey. And he went about as a physician—healing even Gentiles! And he taught them to love their enemies and to do good to those who hated them. Away with such a “messiah!” This cannot be the Messiah of our Talmud...Indeed. Mr. Pharisee, you are correct. Jesus was not the “messiah” of the Talmud. But he was, and is, the Messiah predicted in the language (oftentimes figurative language) of the Old Testament. And, while his kingdom was a disappointment to hyperliteral interpreters of the Old Testament, it was indeed the fulfillment of the kingdom predicted therein.<sup>8</sup>

The most valuable part of an orange is its juice, not its skin. Christ was offering the juice, the Pharisees were worrying about the skin. That type of thinking is common to all ages and in all circles. “A minister was saying that God knows what is best for us. We are like flowers. ‘You know roses grow best in sunlight, but fuchsias

require shade to grow.’ he said. A woman came up to him bubbling over with praise. ‘Pastor, that was just a wonderful sermon. I never could figure out just what was wrong with my fuchsias!’“

### ***Why is the Literal View so Popular?***

- Human beings are used to literal language. People do not say, “If you do this, you will never die.” or “I will raise you up.” or “If you drink this you will never thirst.” They tend to translate the prophetic symbols into their common everyday language. People tend to think on their own level, just as a child thinks like a child.
- Thinking in literal terms is easier. It requires less effort and less imagination.
- Literal thinking glamorizes one’s desired Redeemer. People love to be associated with someone powerful, who comes and destroys all evil in an instant. It is hard to brag about a poor, suffering Savior.
- Literal language takes the responsibility away from the believer and gives it to God. It sends this message, “I don’t have to do anything. I do not have to ‘watch’ or look for Him. He will make Himself known to me by his supernatural powers. My only responsibility is to wait and be patient.”
- Literal thinking favors the religious leaders. It allows them to stay in power.
- Literal interpretation of prophecies gives people a sense of superiority over the unbelievers and the skeptics. They can daydream about the day when they will suddenly be lifted or raptured to heaven, while the skeptics watch in disbelief, remorse, grief, and anger at their own foolishness and lack of faith. People would like their last words to their nonbelieving friends and relatives to be “I told you so! Now it is too late!”

As we can see, everything is stacked in favor of literal thinking. No wonder so many people feel so proud of being literalists. It gives them a sense of security, superiority, and power.

In religion, literal-mindedness is the most contagious and dangerous disease. The desire to see one's hero become victorious over his bitter and mocking enemies is so tempting and so strong that even Peter, perhaps Christ's greatest disciple, fell into that trap. He was among the most spiritual, most devoted, and wisest of people who have ever lived. If that was not the case, Christ would not have called him the rock, the foundation of His church. Note the supreme honors Christ bestowed on him:

“But what about you?” he asked. “Who do you say I am?” Simon Peter answered, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Jesus replied, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven. And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.”

Matthew 16:15-19

Yet in spite of all these honors, in spite of all his spiritual gifts, Peter could not free himself from the tempting trap of triumph. He was unwilling to see His Master suffer. He refused to believe Christ's repeated warnings that suffering and death, not victory, was in store for Him. His attachment to wishful thinking and his desire for worldly victory was so strong that he rebuked his own Master. That attachment and attitude angered Christ to such an extent that He called him by a word worthy of the meanest and lowest human beings. He called him Satan:

From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life. Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. “Never, Lord!” he said. “This shall never happen to you!” Jesus turned and said to Peter, “Out of my sight, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men.”

Matthew 16:21-23

Can you think of an insult worse than being called Satan? Yet this was the name by which the Master called one of His most beloved disciples. Peter, “the rock of the church” turned into “a stumbling block” because he shifted his thinking from God’s standards to human standards. He was unable to detach himself from what his ancestors had believed for centuries: “Our Messiah will come with great glory to liberate us and lift us to power and prosperity” just as many Christians think today. This one lesson alone should awaken all literal-minded interpreters of the Word of God from the centuries-old dreams of triumph. It should set them free from the easiest and most tempting trap to fall into: quick and painless victory.

The use of such a strong term by Christ, especially about a most beloved disciple, shows how dangerous it is to be attached to human desires, which always revolve around earthly gains and glories. The bridge to this desire is always created and sustained by a literal understanding of spiritual truths. Yet this dangerous and contagious disease continues, on a vast scale, among the followers of all faiths.

### *The Awesome Powers of Tradition*

Have you ever tried to look through someone else’s glasses that did not suit your eyes? That is what happens when we use human standards to understand the Scriptures, when we try to see through human lens instead of God’s. And what we see is always distorted by what we wish to see. The problem is that we gradually get used to the distortion. Eventually the distortion were accepted and recognized as reality and reality as distortion. This is why Bahá’u’lláh and the Báb ask us again and again to put aside what we have, to detach ourselves from the accumulated distortions of centuries:

Cast away that which ye possess, and, on the wings of detachment, soar beyond all created things. Thus biddeth you the Lord of creation, the movement of Whose Pen hath revolutionized the soul of mankind.<sup>9</sup>

Bahá’u’lláh

Can anything be added to a glass filled to the top? If we start with all kinds of assumptions and suppositions, which we regard as the truth, then how can we find any space for new knowledge?

...empty thyself of all learning, that thou mayest partake of My knowledge; and sanctify thyself from riches, that thou mayest obtain a lasting share from the ocean of My eternal wealth. Blind thine eyes, that is, to all save My beauty; stop thine ears to all save My word; empty thyself of all learning save the knowledge of Me; that with a clear vision, a pure heart and an attentive ear thou mayest enter the court of My holiness.<sup>10</sup>

Bahá'u'lláh

When we are continually exposed to certain beliefs for years and decades, we become so accustomed to them that they appear to us not as *a* truth but as *the* truth. Dr. Lightner's analysis of the root causes of divisiveness among the leaders of the orthodox Christian faith returns us to reality, reminds us of our vulnerability, and of the weaknesses that always find a way of hiding behind the facade of conformity, convenience, tradition, and popularity. We all like to believe that we are right. Yet we suffer from many hidden weaknesses, that can undermine our assumptions of rightness. Awareness of our weaknesses is essential; it instills humility in our soul.

What people believe almost always is what they have been told. What would be your beliefs if all your life you were told that Christ will come like a thief in the night, and that you must always search for the news of His coming? You would be quite watchful and curious. You would not instantly dismiss the news of the coming of the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh. But since theologians have always reminded you of the heavenly descent of Christ, you are now less open, less curious, and less watchful. You do not believe you have a responsibility to search for your Master. In your heart you say, "*He* will search for me. All I need to do is to go to my church and hear what my pastor says. If anyone knows, he will be the one." This belief takes all your initiative away from you, and leaves everything in the hand of your pastor. He in turn looks up to other pastors, to the famous and respectable religious leaders, and to the professors of theology with expertise in Hebrew and Greek and a long list of publications.

Just as we become attached to our material possessions, so do we become attached to our spiritual possessions. The longer the period of possession, the stronger our attachment. Our sentiment for the past is sometimes so strong that gradually our old possessions become precious antiques. A church had a difficult problem. An old man refused to listen to any translation of the Bible except the King James Version. As he put it, “If the King James Version was good enough for St. Paul, it’s good enough for me.”

Take any question that does not involve symbolism or mystery and you will see a vast difference of views among the interpreters. When it comes to the meaning of prophecies, the difference increases even more, because prophecies often involve symbolism.

An excellent source that demonstrates this wide diversity of interpretation among theologians is *The Second Coming Bible Commentary* by Christian scholar William Biederwolf. It is a 728-page reference packed with dizzying facts on how various schools of theology on both sides of the Atlantic have interpreted the biblical prophecies. It is a summary of hundreds of volumes of interpretation, the result of 10 years of continuous study by its author. I have read it with great care for personal study, especially when I was working on my six volumes of prophecies about the Bahá’í Faith.

### ***Does a Redeemer Come to Confirm Our Interpretation?***

Is it wise to reject a religion that produces an abundance of good fruits and fulfills hundreds of literal prophecies, because its theology differs from one’s own? Is it reasonable to ignore the countless evidences of divine power in Bahá’u’lláh because His biblical interpretation varies from that of the “orthodox” interpretation, from the views of professors of theology, or certain doctrines of one’s own denomination?

Without the light of knowledge shed by the Báb and Bahá’u’lláh, one can quickly get lost in the vast tangle of theological thoughts

and theories produced and accumulated over 2,000 years by countless interpreters.

In the realm of religion it is hard to find any ‘rhymes or reasons.’ “A mother was very busy getting her four children dressed. Her three-year-old son walked into the kitchen with tears in his eyes and two mismatched socks in his hand. ‘What’s wrong?’ his mother asked. He looked at her and said, ‘Mom, I can’t find any socks that rhyme.’”

When we examine the main reason behind why many Christians reject Bahá’u’lláh, we find this: ***His biblical interpretation does not conform to theirs!*** If those who ignore or deny Bahá’u’lláh’s call set aside that one expectation and assumption, they will behold such divine power and such glory and splendor in His life and teachings as to be dumbfounded. Consider the analogy Bahá’u’lláh uses. He states that a veil as small as an eyelid conceals the splendors of the sun. That little eyelid, in this case, is this enormous assumption: my own or the “mainstream” or “orthodox” interpretation of prophecies is correct. Can any scientist—whether in the social or the physical sciences—start with that assumption? Religion is perhaps the most subjective of all fields of knowledge. How then can we then make an exception about religion?

Please pause and ponder this point in your heart as long as you like, until you can see the fallacy of reasoning when people start with that assumption, and treat the most challenging and most critical question in their lives so casually and unreasonably. How can anyone who starts with the assumption of “I am absolutely right!” and “There is no other solution!” be open-minded, and therefore be able to find the truth?

We offered a free copy of *I Shall Come Again* to all religious leaders in our community. Only one of them responded to our offer. Why did they ignore our offer of a free book on proofs of Bahá’u’lláh’s Revelation? The main reason was this: they knew they were right. Why should they waste their precious lives studying falsehood? They were happy with the truth in their possession, so why should they take a risk? To them, it does not matter what fruits Bahá’u’lláh has produced, what prophecies He has fulfilled, and what other wonders He has accomplished. The

only thing that matters to them is this: have their favorite—and unearthly—theories of how Christ returns been fulfilled? Anyone who deviates from their theories is not worth investigating.

### ***Forbidden to Depend on Human Interpretation***

Christians who deny Bahá'u'lláh, because He does not agree with their interpretation of the Bible, ignore the very words of the Bible. For they are told:

But first note this: ***no one can interpret any prophecy of Scripture by himself.*** II Peter 1:20

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 [emphasis added throughout]. I Corinthians 4:5

Who has true knowledge of “what is hidden”?

***Every hidden thing hath been brought to light by virtue of the Will of the Supreme Ordainer...***<sup>11</sup> Bahá'u'lláh

I testify that, through Thy Revelation, ***the things hidden in the Books of God have been revealed***, and that whatsoever hath been recorded by Thy Messengers in the sacred Scriptures hath been fulfilled.<sup>12</sup> Bahá'u'lláh

Through His potency ***everything that hath***, from time immemorial, ***been veiled and hidden, is now revealed.***<sup>13</sup> Bahá'u'lláh

God keeps many secrets, especially about prophecies:

...the words are kept secret and sealed till the time of the end. Daniel 12:9

Who can remove the seal of secrecy except God Himself?

Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll? But no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth could open the scroll or even look inside it. ***I wept and wept*** because no one was found who was worthy to open the scroll or look inside. Revelation 5:2,4

The secrets are so well guarded that neither the residents of the earth nor of heaven could decode them. And they are so sacred that no one—neither on earth nor in heaven—was worthy even to glance at them. Yet thousands of Bible teachers and interpreters claim to have decoded them, to have discovered their true meaning.

Why did John weep? Because of the lack of spiritual capacity in people. The crying is specially justified when those people, who should acknowledge their ignorance before God with utter humility and contrition, claim to know the secrets—secrets so well guarded that even the heavenly hosts could not decipher them.

Dr. Lightner offers this insight to all seekers of the true meaning of prophecy:

If the Bible were as clear in its teaching of the details and order of events for the future as it is on what a man must do to be born again, there would be less room for different views on the subject. But God in His wisdom has not seen fit to present all truth in the same way and to the same extent. He has chosen to give us some things in broad outline, with less emphasis upon the specific details. We need to respect the silence of God as much as we do His spoken word.<sup>14</sup>

How can we respect God’s silence on the specifics in prophecy? By being humble and open-minded, by heeding His warning that we do not have the wisdom to “bring to light what is hidden in darkness,” and that the wisdom of revealing the hidden words of God is given only to the One who comes in the name of the Lord.

The one who has the wisdom and the right to interpret the Word of God has come. He declares to be the Lord, the desired One of all nations, and He supports His claim by conclusive evidence: *by fulfilling every prophecy, either literally or symbolically.*

### ***Only the Lord Knows***

Just as it is taught in the Gospel, Bahá’u’lláh declares that only *He* knows the true interpretation of prophecies, for His knowledge is not from Himself but from God, that His interpretation should not

be judged by human standards, but rather human standards should be judged by His, for His Word is the Word of God:

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

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

We have decreed, O people, that the highest and last end of all learning be the recognition of Him Who is the Object of all knowledge; and yet, behold how ye have allowed your learning to shut you out, as by a veil, from Him Who is the Dayspring of this Light, through Whom every hidden thing hath been revealed.<sup>15</sup>

Bahá'u'lláh

The Báb declares the same message:

Were all the peoples of the world to testify unto a thing and were He to testify unto another, His testimony will be regarded as God's testimony, while aught else but Him hath been and will ever be as naught; for it is through His might that a thing assumeth existence.<sup>16</sup>

The Báb

...His revealed Word is the Balance.<sup>17</sup>

The Báb

Bahá'u'lláh has brought the light that reveals the inner meaning of all mysteries, He has shed light on "every hidden thing." Yet most people allow human judgment and human standards to veil their vision, to prevent them from seeing the light of true knowledge.

The only difference between Bahá'u'lláh's and Christians' interpretation of prophecies is this: Christians, as a whole, take virtually all the prophecies literally, Bahá'u'lláh states that some of them are symbolic. ***That is the only difference.*** Those who deny Bahá'u'lláh do not look at the hundreds of literal prophecies He

*has* fulfilled. They simply stop looking at those prophecies because they notice that He has not fulfilled some of their favorite ones—such as coming from heaven, raising the dead, or rapturing the believers—in the way *they* interpret them: literally. Please note the following statement, because *it sheds the most illuminating and brilliant light on your path of the search for truth*: If you wish to test Bahá'u'lláh by the Word of the Bible *you have only one right*: to see that *all* prophecies about Him have been fulfilled *either* literally *or* symbolically. No human being, other than the One who speaks the Word of God, *has the right or the wisdom to know which is which*. *Do you believe you have the wisdom to know? Do you know anyone who does?*

### *Comparing the First Advent with the Second*

Let us now test this reasoning by applying it to the First Advent of Christ. Hebrew prophecies pointed to two seemingly opposite signs. On the one hand, they referred to the coming of a powerful and liberating king like David, and on the other, to the coming of a suffering servant. Christian scholars are unanimous in relating these sets of prophecies to the Advent of Christ:

| <i>Suffering Servant</i>   | <i>Liberating King</i>   |
|--|--|
| <p><i>He was despised and rejected</i> by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces, he was despised, and we esteemed him not.</p> | <p>I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, one of your own sons...<i>I will establish his throne forever</i>. I will be his father, and he will be my son...I will set him over my house and my kingdom forever; his throne will be established forever.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">I Chronicles 17:11-14</p> <p>But you Bethlehem...out of you will come for me one who <i>will be ruler over Israel</i>...</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Micah 5:2</p> |

In response to those who objected to Christ by saying that He had not fulfilled the prophecies, that He was not a king, Christ simply said that, “My kingdom does not belong to this world” (John 18:36). He showed that He was a spiritual king, not an earthly one, and that the prophecies about the coming of a liberating king were all symbolic, that His earthly glory would become manifest later:

How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory? Christ (Luke 24:25-26)

Did the Jewish theologians accept His interpretation? Of course not. Why not? Because *they started with the assumption that they were right, that they knew what the prophecies meant*. What credentials did they have for their claims? None. What credentials did Christ have? He fulfilled every prophecy *either* literally *or* symbolically. And He claimed to speak only the Word of God, exactly as Bahá'u'lláh does. Let us now put this reasoning to the test once again, but this time about the Second Advent. Look at these two sets of prophecies about the return of Christ:

| <i>Coming Like a Thief</i>   | <i>Shining Like the Sun</i>   |
|--|---|
| <p>Wake up...I will come like a thief.<br/>Christ (Rev. 3:2-3)</p> <p>It will be good for those servants whose master finds them watching when he comes. Christ (Luke 12:37)</p> <p>...don't let him find you sleeping.<br/>Christ (Mark 13:36)</p> <p>The day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night... I Thessalonians 5:2</p> <p>Unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time. Hebrews 9:28</p> | <p>They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory.<br/>Christ (Matt. 24:31)</p> |

Obviously these prophecies seem to be opposite to one another. A person cannot come both like a thief in the night, and appear in the sky for all to observe. Do we need any warning to stay awake and

watch for someone who comes from the sky? What about someone who comes secretly? Do the sun and the moon appear only to those who look for them or do they appear to everyone?

Let us see if we can reconcile the apparent contradiction.

Bahá'u'lláh states that He has come from *the heaven of divine revelation* and that *we must see His great glory with our inner eyes, with our hearts*, and that anyone who looks at Him with an unclouded eye can see His great glory and power as he can see the sun. His interpretation indicates that, in this case, both heaven and seeing are symbolic. They point to the spiritual world, not the physical. Everyone who has an inner eye can readily see the resplendent light and glory of the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh descending like two brilliant Suns from the heaven of the new Revelation.

Bahá'u'lláh also offers this statement:

He, verily, hath again come down from heaven, even as He came down from it the first time. Beware lest ye dispute that which He proclaimeth, even as the people before you disputed His utterances. Thus instructeth you the True One, could ye but perceive it.<sup>18</sup>

What does Bahá'u'lláh mean by saying to Christians: “as the people before you disputed His utterance?” It seems He means the Pharisees who argued with Him when He came in the Spirit of Christ; when Bahá'u'lláh, the Glory of God, appeared under the name of Jesus Christ. How did the Pharisees argue at that time?

**Christ:** I have come from heaven... (John 6:38)

**Pharisees:** Surely this is Jesus son of Joseph; we know his father and mother. How can he now say, “I have come down from heaven”? (John 6:42)

What an amazing similarity between the Pharisees of yesterday who argued with Christ and literal-minded Christians of today who argue with Bahá'u'lláh! The exact same objection that was raised 2,000 years ago is being raised today.

Heard ye not the saying of Jesus, the Spirit of God, “I go away, and come again unto you”? Wherefore, then, did ye fail, when He did come again unto you in the clouds of heaven, to draw

nigh unto Him, that ye might behold His face, and be of them  
that attained His Presence?<sup>19</sup>

Bahá'u'lláh

### ***Metaphors in Prophecies***

The Bible is a rich reservoir of symbols, metaphors, parables, similes, and allegories. As Christian scholar, Herbert Lockyer notes:

Scripture is rich in symbolism... The Eastern mind has ever been pictorial, and as the Bible is an Eastern book, it is but natural that it should abound in figurative language.<sup>20</sup>

Jesus often spoke in metaphoric or spiritual language:

I have told you these things in parables (veiled language, allegories, dark saying). Christ (John 16:25 Amplified Bible)

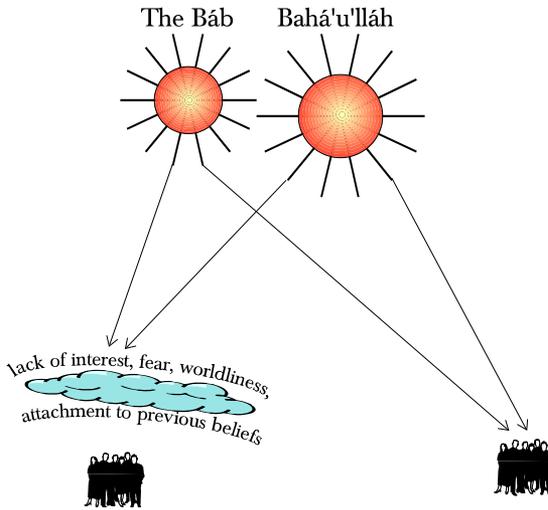
We are asked to discern the Word of God spiritually because He often speaks in that language:

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

The following diagram offers a portrait of God's metaphoric or spiritual language:

The heaven of divine Revelation  
from which the Word of God descends



***The eyes that can see will not be  
clouded, and the ears that can  
hear will listen...      Isaiah 32:2***

The physical world is a shadow of the spiritual. Both have heavens (religions), suns (divine Messengers), stars (religious leaders who shine but lose their light when the new Sun rises), clouds (illusions, superstitions, and impurities), rain (God's bounties and blessings), earth (the receiver of blessings—the human heart), water (spiritual life), sea (masses of people), city of God (spiritual civilization), storms (tests and trials), darkness (lack of faith), and cycles (the rise and decline of religions).

When the spiritual world is polluted, God makes “all things new.” He renews the earth and the heaven.

The inner eye is blocked from seeing the light by clouds: lack of desire, emotional attachment to one's beliefs, conformity, dependency on religious leaders, and fear of the unfamiliar.

Spiritual and physical worlds also have seeds (the Word of God), tree (God’s Messengers), fruits (what the Messengers produce), weeds (people who grow in God’s garden but do not belong there), stone (unreceptive and unyielding hearts), sand (unreliable foundation), salt (the true believers who are not corrupted), bread (the Word of God), water (spiritual life), blood (life-giving force), dove (innocent), snake (tricky, tempting, wise), dog (mean people), adulterous (disloyal), clothes (spiritual attributes), wing (divine assistance), bride (religion), Bridegroom (divine Messengers), and children (pure, humble, and innocent).

Some of these symbols may have many specific meanings. Consider the similarities between a tree and a divine Messenger:

***The Tree***

***The Messenger***

Gardener plants the tree.

God sends the Messenger.

Gardener protects and nourishes the tree.

God protects and reveals His Word to the Messenger.

A tree faces many dangers.

The Messenger faces cruel crowds.

A good tree bears good fruits, while a bad tree bears bad fruits.

The true prophet brings good teachings, while the false prophet brings bad teachings.

A tree grows little by little.

A Messenger starts with a few supporters. Their number grows little by little.

A healthy tree thrives, a sick tree dies.

The influence of the true Messenger endures, that of a false one dies.

A tree receives rain from heaven.

The Messenger receives blessings from God.

A tree receives support from the earth.

The Messenger receives support from people.

### *The Tree*

A gardener renews the tree by planting its seed.

The new tree may be planted in a different place and look different, but it is the same tree.

### *The Messenger*

God renews the message of a religion by sending a new Messenger.

God's Messengers may come from different places and look different, but they reveal the same truth.

## ***Who Knows Which Prophecies are Literal, Which Prophecies are Symbolic?***

Let us *see* who has the authority to judge if *heaven*, *eye*, and *seeing* are symbolic or literal.\* “Let us reason together, saith the Lord” (Isaiah 1:18). God gave us the power of reasoning and He wants us to use it. Religion should not be an exception. If we set reason aside, all we have are illusions and emotions. In that case, no belief is inherently right or wrong. The only standard is how a person feels about an issue. If it feels right to join a cult, then a cult is as good as any other belief system. That is how most people live: by emotions, illusions, and assumptions. But God wants us to use the magnificent gift of the mind He has given us:

Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. I Peter 3:15

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. This gift giveth man the power to discern the truth in all things, leadeth him to that which is right, and helpeth him to discover the secrets of creation.<sup>21</sup> Bahá'u'lláh

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\* If you wish to know the reasons why such seemingly opposite signs are given, see *I Shall Come Again*.

To continue our reasoning, let us compare the credentials of the greatest theologians in history with those of Christ and Bahá'u'lláh. What authority has God given to that theologian, other than declaring that “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23)? Can any theologian be exempt from sinning, from being wrong, from falling short of the glory of God? Obviously not!

Now let us look at Bahá'u'lláh's credentials. First, He claims to be the Glory of God and to speak only the Word of God exactly as Christ did. And in support of His claim He fulfills over 1,800 prophecies, some of them *literally*, others *symbolically*. Many of those 1,800 prophecies are literal. (See *I Shall Come Again, Lord of Lords*, and *King of Kings*.) Those three volumes demonstrate the literal fulfillment of countless biblical prophecies by the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh. Then who is more credible? The theologian who has no evidence for inerrancy, and no proof that he speaks the truth other than just making an assumption, or Bahá'u'lláh who not only fulfills hundreds of literal prophecies, but also produces an abundance of the most wonderful and magnificent fruits?

Who then is more credible? The one who is told that he *has no right* to cling to a given, private interpretation, and that he must wait for the Lord to “bring to light what darkness hides,” or the One who claims to *be* the Lord and as evidence of His divine mission clarifies and harmonizes all the prophecies of the past? (For an evidence of this, see *The Book of Certitude* by Bahá'u'lláh.)

The difference between the position of Bahá'u'lláh and the greatest theologian in history is like the difference between the sun in all its splendor and a flickering candle. Once again, “Let us reason together, saith the Lord.” Who would you trust? Whose interpretation would you accept? In whose hand would you entrust your eternal destiny? In the hands of a theologian who is as fallible as you are, or in the hands of the Glory of God who fulfills every prophecy that has ever been uttered, either literally or symbolically, and, in addition, fulfills every other proofs that the Bible refers to, such as sacrificing His worldly comforts, suffering

in the path of God with submission and gratitude, and producing the most abundant and heavenly fruits in His vast vineyard?

The preceding explanation or reasoning resolves every objection that Christians may raise against Bahá'u'lláh. Only **He** fulfills the prophecies, only **He** is the Glory of God, only **He** has the authority to interpret the Word of God, and only **He** is qualified to bring to light the mysteries of the scriptures. ***No one else can make that claim.***

### ***No One Is Authorized to Interpret the Prophecies Except the Lord***

In our interpretation of prophecy, we must abide by the will of God. If we disregard the following two verses, we have been untrue to our beliefs:

But first note this: no one can interpret any prophecy of  
Scripture by Himself. II Peter 1:20

Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time; ***wait till the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness***  
and will expose the motives of men's hearts. I Corinthians 4:5

What is "hidden in darkness"? Anything about which believers differ, any truth of which they may be ignorant, any question that has led to the creation of over 20,000 denominations in Christianity. The realm of "darkness" definitely encompasses the meaning of prophecies. Statements such as the following are not made about any issue except prophecies:

But you, Daniel, keep the words secret and seal the book till the time of the end. Many will be at their wits' end, and punishment will be heavy. Daniel 12:4

In the same book that Christ promises that "every eye will see Him" (Rev. 1:7), He also gives this advice to those who want to see Him:

***I advise you to buy from Me...ointment for your eyes so that you may see.*** ***Christ (Rev. 3:18)***

We all have some spots on our eyes. To see clearly, we need to see a physician: “I’ve been seeing spots in front of my eyes.” “Have you seen a doctor?” “No, just spots.”

You may look and look, *but you will never see.* Acts 28:26

How can a person look and look but fail to see? Only when his eyes are veiled. The people of Israel looked at Christ, the bright Sun of Truth. Did they see any light? Did they discover any truth? Looking comes from the eyes, seeing from the heart. The veil that enfolds the heart can be as thick and immovable as a mountain.

Then who knows the meaning of “seeing”?

*Blessed* the ear that hath heard and the tongue that hath borne witness and *the eye that hath seen and recognized the Lord* Himself, in His great glory and majesty, invested with grandeur and dominion.<sup>22</sup> Bahá’u’lláh

Consider this verse:

Then He opened their mind so they could understand the Scriptures. Luke 24:45

Who were the ones whose minds had to be opened? Who were the ones who needed help to understand the Scriptures? The most enlightened people of their time, the best of the best, the beloved disciples of Jesus. *They* were the ones in need of help. And *who* was the One who opened their minds? Their Lord and Master, Christ Himself.

Even after His resurrection, Jesus continued to help His disciples understand His Word. As Christian scholar, Herbert Lockyer writes:

After His Resurrection, meeting His disciples, He began by interpreting the Scriptures to them, and then went on to “unseal the barred doors of their perceptions...”<sup>23</sup>

If that was the state of the wisest and most enlightened people, then who can declare, “I know, my interpretation of prophecies is correct!”?

People could see and read “the face of the sky,” but they could not recognize the face of their Redeemer with all His glory and splendor:

When it is evening you say, “It will be fair weather, for the sky is red”; and in the morning, “It will be foul weather today, for the sky is red and threatening.” Hypocrites! You know how to discern the face of the sky, but you cannot discern the signs of the times.

Christ (Matt. 16:2-3 NKJ)

### ***Prophecies Are Clothed in Mysteries***

Perhaps as much as 90 percent of prophecies are clothed with allegories, symbols, and metaphors. That is why we find a greater diversity of views about prophecies than about any other topic. A man asked a priest about the meaning of the *Book of Revelation*. In response, the priest said: “It’s like a display of fireworks! If you try to understand how they work you miss the beauty of the show. Don’t try to understand the book of Revelation. Just enjoy the exotic imagery and be satisfied with that!”<sup>24</sup>

In general, few subjects remain outside the realm of “darkness.” The two subjects that do are moral values such as, loving God and His creatures, and the inerrancy and perfection of Christ: that His Word was indeed the Word of God and not His own fabrication, and that He moved and lived by the Will of the One who sent Him. Aside from these two subjects and certain historical facts, it is difficult to find any question whose true meaning is not, to some extent or another, clouded or concealed in “darkness.” Diversity of views about Christ and Christianity is so widespread that some secular scholars doubt that Christ even existed! We find many Christian authors who present evidence simply to prove that Christ was for real, and not a fictitious figure.

It does not matter how “obvious” the meaning of a prophecy appears to a person. Human beings can be wrong even about the most “obvious.” If you were a Jew at the time of Jesus and were well aware of the prophecies, could you think of anything more

obvious than receiving a liberating king who, after centuries of gloom and misery, would bring you glory and honor and make you triumphant over your oppressors and enemies? If you knew that prophecies clearly stated that the promised Messiah would be like king David, would you have any reason to doubt their literal meaning, would you have any inclination to accept the symbolic interpretation of a poor homeless man from Nazareth? This example alone must humble our soul, must make us realize how wrong human beings can be, not only then but always.

Aside from the meaning of the coming of a king, let us examine one more example from the Hebrew prophecies, an example whose meaning “was hidden in darkness” for the Jews and was brought to light by Jesus. According to Hebrew Scriptures, Elijah was seen by people to ascend to heaven (II Kings 2:11-12), and was expected to return later to earth, just like Jesus. There is a remarkable similarity between their ascension and return. Both are reported to have been seen to go to heaven, and both are promised to come back.

God kept His promise and sent Elijah back. But who was Elijah the second time? It was John the Baptist:

*John is the destined **Elijah**, if you will but accept it. If you have ears, then hear.*

Christ (Matt. 11:15)

See also Matt. 17:10-13

What connection is there between Elijah and John the Baptist? Elijah ascended to heaven. Did John descend from heaven? No, he did not. Did his name return? No, it did not. God could have inspired John’s parents to call Him Elijah. Why didn’t He? It would be more reasonable, according to human standards, to bring someone back by the same *name*, if not in the same *way*. Did Elijah’s body return? We have no way of knowing. There were and are no pictures to compare. It is reasonable to assume that the body did not return either. Then what was it that returned? Fortunately, in this case, we have the Word of Jesus, who brought to light what was “hidden in darkness.” He said that it was *the spiritual powers* of Elijah that had returned. That is the only thing that really matters.

He [John the Baptist] will go before him [Jesus] as forerunner,  
possessed by *the spirit and power of Elijah*... Luke 1:17

Is there any significance to the body other than carrying out true  
essence, our soul?

I declare to you, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the  
kingdom of God... I Corinthians 15:50

If Jesus had called Peter to be the return of Elijah, would we deny  
His judgment? Of course not, because *we* are not the authority; *He*  
was.

Since the Jews did not have the benefit of this example as we do,  
they could have argued with Jesus, and they did. How could Jesus  
prove to them that He was right, other than saying that *He* was the  
Lord, the One who knew the mysteries, the One who could bring to  
light what was hidden in darkness, that only *He* had fulfilled some  
300 prophecies *either* symbolically *or* literally.

### *The Lessons of History*

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!<sup>25</sup> Bahá'u'lláh

You always resist the Holy Spirit! Was there ever a prophet  
your fathers did not persecute? Acts 7:51-52

Consider this conversation between Christ and some people who  
loved to win an argument more than everlasting life. It is recorded  
in John 8:12-29. The New International Version presents it under  
the title: The Validity of Jesus' Testimony. Please note the way  
Christ reasons with the crowd:

**Jesus:** I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will  
never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.

**Pharisees:** Here you are, appearing as your own witness; your  
testimony is not valid.

**Jesus:** Even if I testify on my own behalf, my testimony is  
valid, for I know where I came from and where I am

going. But you have no idea where I come from or where I am going. You judge by human standards; I pass judgment on no one. But if I do judge, my decisions are right, because I am not alone. 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 one who sent me--the Father.

**Pharisees:** Where is your father?

**Jesus:** You do not know me or my Father. If you knew me, you would know my Father also. I am going away, and you will look for me, and you will die in your sin. Where I go, you cannot come.

**Pharisees asked each other:** Will he kill himself? Is that why he says, ‘Where I go, you cannot come’?

**Jesus:** You are from below; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world. I told you that you would die in your sins; if you do not believe that I am the one I claim to be, you will indeed die in your sins.

**Pharisees:** Who are you, anyway?

**Jesus:** Just what I have been claiming all along. I have much to say in judgment of you. But he who sent me is reliable, and what I have heard from him I tell the world...When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know who I am and that I do nothing on my own but speak just what the Father has taught me. The one who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone, for I always do what pleases him.

What evidence did Christ present to prove His station?

- He declared Himself again and again as the authority.
- He stated that His authority came from God.
- He warned the argumentative Pharisees with, “You will die in your sins.”
- He told them that they were judging by human standards.

What were the Pharisees like and how did they respond?

- They were literal-minded. They could not understand the symbolic messages Jesus uttered.
- They were also closed-minded. They were sure they were right. It did not matter what Jesus said; they were ready to reject it.

Other than a few words of warning, the strongest appeal Jesus used was the authority that God had given Him. We find the same appeal repeated thousands of times in Bahá'í Scriptures. From Bahá'u'lláh:

Thy Lord, verily, is a witness unto what I say.<sup>26</sup>

God, verily, is a sufficient witness!<sup>27</sup>

O peoples of the earth! God, the Eternal Truth, is My witness...<sup>28</sup>

To this He Who is the Lord of all creation beareth Me witness.<sup>29</sup>

Thy Lord beareth witness unto that which I declare.<sup>30</sup>

From the Báb:

I swear by Him Who hath called Me into being, I can discover no trace of sinfulness in Myself, nor have I followed aught but the Truth; and unto Me God is sufficient witness.<sup>31</sup>

Verily this is the true Faith of God, and sufficient witness are God and such as are endowed with the knowledge of the Book.<sup>32</sup>

...I have no control over what profiteth Me or harmeth Me, but as My Lord pleaseth. Indeed God is Self-Sufficient and He, My Lord, standeth supreme over all things.<sup>33</sup>

History is the best teacher. Let us listen to the rest of the conversation between Christ and the Pharisees:

**Jesus:** If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.

**Pharisees:** We are Abraham's descendants and have never been slaves of anyone. How can you say that we shall be set free?

**Jesus:** I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin. Now a slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever. So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed. I know you are Abraham's descendants. Yet you are ready to kill me, because you have no room for my word. I am telling you what I have seen in the Father's presence, and you do what you have heard from your father.

**Pharisees:** Abraham is our father.

**Jesus:** If you were Abraham's children then you would do the things Abraham did. As it is, you are determined to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God. Abraham did not do such things. You are doing the things your own father does.

**Pharisees:** We are not illegitimate children. The only Father we have is God himself.

**Jesus:** If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and now am here. I have not come on my own; but He sent me. Why is my language not clear to you? Because you are unable to hear what I say...Can any of you prove me guilty of sin? If I am telling the truth, why don't you believe me? He who belongs to God hears what God says. The reason you do not hear is that you do not belong to God.

**Pharisees:** Aren't we right in saying that you are a Samaritan and demon-possessed?

**Jesus:** I am not possessed by a demon, 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 a man keeps my word, he will never see death.

**Pharisees:** Now we know that you are demon-possessed! Abraham died and so did the prophets, yet you say that

if a man 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?

**Jesus:** If I glorify myself, my glory means nothing. My Father, whom you claim as your God, is the one who glorifies me. Though you do not know Him, I know Him. If I said I did not, I would be a liar like you, but I do know Him and keep His word. Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day; he saw it and was glad.

**Pharisees:** You are not yet fifty years old, and you have seen Abraham!

**Jesus:** I tell you the truth, before Abraham was born, I am!  
At this, they picked up stones to stone him.

Jesus fulfilled all the prophecies that pertained to Him. Then why was He crucified? Because His explanation of mysteries did not conform to mainstream or orthodox interpretation. Because He showed that ***some prophecies had inner meanings***. That was the only reason for which He was crucified. If He had come as a liberating king, almost every Jew would have bowed before Him and glorified Him. Only the insane among the Israelites may have denied Him.

History is once again repeating itself. Christians can deny, and some of them do deny, Bahá'u'lláh, for ***the exact same reason***. They act ***as if they know the mysteries***, as if they know how Bahá'u'lláh must fulfill the prophecies: literally. They act as if for them nothing lies hidden in the domain of darkness. How can any reasonable person make such an assumption?

The literal-minded Jews could have found hundreds of reasons for denying Christ. The return of Elijah was only one. They did not need any other reason to call Christ an impostor. Therefore, if it is your heart's desire to ignore or deny Bahá'u'lláh, you can do it with no effort. In fact, if you look hard enough, you can find countless reasons. As it is said, "Prove it against my will, and I will believe the same still." If a person closes his heart and mind, he can find countless "reasons" not only for denying Bahá'u'lláh but also Christ, and even God Himself. That is the wonder of being a

human being. That is a source of richness and adventure in human life.

## *Humility, the Key to the Kingdom of Heaven*

Observe the diversity of human beings. See the differences in taste and temperament. They exist only because God gave us the freedom of choice, the freedom even to deny Him, the freedom even to torture and to kill the Ones dearest to Him: His Messengers and Redeemers.

As “in Him [Christ] lie hidden all the mighty untapped treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Col. 2:3), so do they in Bahá’u’lláh, the Glory of God. Once again we come to the critical role humility plays in our relationship with God. Can a person who starts with the assumption of “I am right!” without studying the evidence to the contrary, be humble?

Every soul that walketh humbly with its God, in this Day, and cleaveth unto Him, shall find itself invested with the honor and glory of all goodly names and stations.<sup>34</sup> Bahá’u’lláh

O SON OF MAN!

Humble thyself before Me, that I may graciously visit thee.<sup>35</sup>  
...Wert thou to speed through the immensity of space and traverse the expanse of heaven, yet thou wouldst find no rest save in submission to Our command and humbleness before Our Face.<sup>36</sup> Bahá’u’lláh

Who is guided to the gate of knowledge and understanding?

He shall save the humble person. Job 22:29

He guides the humble in what is right and teaches them his way. Psalms 25:9

...when you realize your worthlessness before the Lord, he will lift you up... James 4:10

## *Comparing the Divine and the Human Authority*

Who then knows the correct meaning of the prophecies? If all the theologians, religious leaders, and scholars who have lived and will ever live put their knowledge and wisdom together, it will be like a drop compared to Bahá'u'lláh's, for He speaks not His own word, but the Word of God. Ponder the authority with which Bahá'u'lláh challenges the religious leaders:

O ye leaders of religion! Who is the man amongst you that can rival Me in vision or insight? Where is he to be found that dareth to claim to be My equal in utterance or wisdom? No, by My Lord, the All-Merciful! All on the earth shall pass away; and this is the face of your Lord, the Almighty, the Well-Beloved.<sup>37</sup>

The Báb offers the same challenge:

His age is no more than twenty-five years, yet His glory is such as none of the learned among the people...can rival...<sup>38</sup>

The divine voice has presented the same challenge before:

Who is like me? Who is my equal? What shepherd [religious leader] can stand his ground before me? Jeremiah 49:19

The following table shows graphically who is qualified to “bring to light what lies hidden in darkness” (I Cor. 4:5):

| <i>Thousands of Theologians</i>  | <i>The Báb and<br/>Bahá'u'lláh</i>  |
|--|---|
| Their Qualifications:  | Their Qualifications:   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• extensive knowledge of Hebrew and Greek</li><li>• having taken or taught numerous courses in all facets of theology in the best seminary schools</li><li>• doctoral and postdoctoral</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• fulfillment of over 1,800 biblical prophecies <i>some</i> literally, <i>others</i> symbolically</li><li>• creation of the most abundant and heavenly “fruits”</li><li>• establishment of a new spiritual civilization</li></ul> |

## *Thousands of Theologians*

- degrees from the most prestigious universities
- numerous publications on New Testament and Old Testament prophecies
- established names and popularity among many nations
- pioneering research in numerous eschatological studies

## *The Báb and Bahá'u'lláh*

- speaking with divine authority in the name of the Lord
- enduring every conceivable pain and suffering and sacrificing their all for their claim
- withstanding thousands of powerful enemies without any support
- showing absolutely no fear of any human being
- glorifying God and trusting Him at all times
- loving and praying for their enemies
- revealing thousands of pages of the most marvelous Scriptures without any pause
- seeking no worldly glories and honors
- disclosing the mysteries of past scriptures without taking a single course in theology, Greek, or Hebrew, without even going to school!

We can repeat a similar table about Christ with perhaps these exceptions: first, according to Christian scholars, there are about six times as many prophecies about the Second Advent as there are about the First (1,800 versus 300); and second, very little of what Christ revealed was recorded. Other than these, we find no difference between what John the Baptist and Christ accomplished, and what the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh accomplished.

People of high status sometimes leave us with the impression of being perfect, almost infallible. Quietly observing while her minister father penned his next sermon, a little girl's curiosity finally got the best of her. "Is God telling you what to put in your sermon, Daddy?" she asked. "Yes, of course," he answered. Still puzzled, she asked another question: "Then why do you keep changing it?"

Everyone has the potential to recognize the face of God. But potential entangled in attachment, tradition, personal desires, and fantasies remains a bonds slave. God veils His glory, so that only the spiritually receptive souls, only those with keen insight, only those who sincerely strive can pierce the veil:

I swear by God, were We to lift the veil, ye would be  
dumbfounded.<sup>39</sup>

Bahá'u'lláh

To anyone who "transgresses his limits," such as claiming to be the authority for the Word of God, Bahá'u'lláh declares:

O SON OF MAN!

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.<sup>40</sup>

If you have any unresolved questions about the prophecies, pray for insight, review this book once again, and ponder the evidence it presents. Think about the past. The people who rejected and crucified Christ did not have the slightest idea of what they were doing, except this: they knew they were right. Think about those people. They went to their synagogues; they worshipped God; they helped the poor; and they loved their children. Yet they were adamant in denying their Redeemer, the One they claimed they would know the moment they saw Him, the One they were sure they would accept and adore. If such a grand illusion happened to those people, could it not happen to Christians of today? Are they protected from misjudgment any more than the Jews were? Could this not happen to anyone?

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