

The Knowledge of God



TheKnowledgeofGod.com

A gift from *Unity in Diversity*,
a nonprofit organization, to all
those: “Seeking the truth, and wishing
to attain unto *the knowledge of God.*”

The Knowledge of God

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



***A small book written to inspire and
awaken all those who are too busy
to ask: “What am I living for?”***

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The Knowledge of God

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***Dedicated to
A caring and generous Creator who
has made us a mirror of His own Self
and granted us the glory and the honor
of knowing and loving Him***

***God created man in His own image...
Genesis 1:27***

***For thou hast made man a little lower
than the angels, and hast crowned him
with glory and honor. Psalms 8:5***

***The kingdom of God is within you.
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need of God; the kingdom of Heaven is
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***The source of all learning is the knowl-
edge of God, exalted be His Glory.
Bahá'u'lláh***

***Let him who glories glory in this: that
he understands and knows Me.
Jeremiah 9:24 NKJ***

The Knowledge of God

The Lord looks down from heaven on the sons of men to see if there are any who understand, any who seek God.

Psalms 14:2 NIV

Two Unique Versions of a Single Concept

This book and its sequel—*The Spiritual Design of Creation*—offer you a chance to enjoy the everlasting fruits of these promises and blessings:

Blessed are they who...seek Him with all their heart.

Psalms 119:2 NIV

Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete.

John 16:24

...thou shalt seek the Lord thy God, thou shalt find Him, if thou seek Him with all thy heart and with all thy soul.

Deuteronomy 4:29

And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart.

Jeremiah 29:13 NKJ

This book is written in two versions on two different levels. Please choose the version that suits your time and taste:

- This version—*The Knowledge of God*—is the briefest. It is written for the busiest readers. Its prime purpose is to *motivate* and *inspire*.

- The second version—*The Spiritual Design of Creation*—covers many other concepts, not included in this volume. Its prime purpose is to *prove* and *inform*.

You can choose to read both versions or read either one of them. Each version is unique, yet they both have a common purpose. They are written to enhance the fulfillment of these prophecies:

For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea. *Habakkuk 2:14*

This version blends the spiritual teachings of a recognized book, *the Bible*, with a rather unknown book, *The Hidden Words of Bahá'u'lláh* to show their harmony and strengthen their impact. The second version includes much scientific evidence for the existence of God and the afterlife. It is especially suited to the young and educated who are skeptical, but trust the fruits of science.

Printed copies of both versions will become available later. Please share with us your comments and questions:

info@TheKnowledgeofGod.com.

I

The True Knowledge of God

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

The source of all learning is *the knowledge of God*, exalted be His Glory.¹ Bahá'u'lláh

How blest are those who *know their need of God*; the kingdom of Heaven is theirs. Christ (Matt. 5:3 NEB)

The supreme cause for creating the world and all that is therein is for man *to know God*.² Bahá'u'lláh

Many seekers thirst for true knowledge of God, but in this crowded and confusing age, they do not know where to find it:

Men will stagger from sea to sea and wander from north to east, searching for *the word of the Lord*, but they will not find it. Amos 8:12 NIV

This small book is a gift and a guide for all those who are searching for the knowledge of God, but do not know where to look:

What “*oppression*” is more grievous than that a soul seeking the truth, and wishing to attain unto *the knowledge of God*, should know not where to go for it and from whom to seek it? For opinions have sorely differed, and the ways unto the attainment of God have multiplied.³ Bahá'u'lláh



If you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding, and if you...search for it as for hidden treasure, then you will ...find ***the knowledge of God***. Proverbs 2:3-5 NIV

All praise and glory be to God Who...hath singled out for His special favor the pure, the gem-like reality of man, and invested it with a unique capacity of ***knowing Him and of reflecting the greatness of His glory***.⁴ Bahá'u'lláh

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

Let him that glorieth glory in this: that he understandeth and knoweth Me. Jeremiah 9:24

O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee...
Christ (John 17:25)

The physical world mirrors forth the spiritual. Just as clouds conceal the splendor of the sun, so do the clouds of misconception and misinformation obscure the Glory of God. It is the purpose of this book and its sequel to disperse those clouds. Only then can we witness the transforming power of ***the Knowledge of God*** in human life and the fulfillment of this prophecy:

Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.
Christ (Matt. 6:10)

We have the freedom to define who we are and to decide who we would like to become. The possibilities are endless. Some people choose to live and die in their eggshell. The light of knowledge threatens their security.

Others act and live as if they are chickens. They spend all their lives running and picking grains. Their minds, their hopes and

happiness are centered on their nest. As long as they have plenty of grains around them and a secure shelter, they feel satisfied. If they would only attempt to leave the ground, if they could only experience the ecstasy of flying, they would never feel satisfied with staying in their small enclosure. They would see their secure nest as a trap.

Others know instinctively that they are eagles, with wings to fly. They descend to the earth for food and rest, but they feel entrapped until they are airborne again. A sense of awareness of God's presence in their soul, and His love and longing to lift them beyond their worldly desires, empower them to rise, to join the ranks of the eagles, to fly through the heavens, and become immortal.

Those who hope in the Lord...will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.

Isaiah 40:31 NIV

Ye are even as the bird which soareth, with the full force of its mighty wings and with complete and joyous confidence, through the immensity of the heavens, until, impelled to satisfy its hunger, it turneth longingly to the water and clay of the earth below it, and, having been entrapped in the mesh of its desire, findeth itself impotent to resume its flight to the realms whence it came. Powerless to shake off the burden weighing on its sullied wings, that bird, hitherto an inmate of the heavens, is now forced to seek a dwelling-place upon the dust.⁶

Bahá'u'lláh

Let Your Jewels Shine

This small book rests on this premise: We are spiritual beings created and designed in the most splendid Image, for a profound purpose—to grow and advance spiritually by remaining in touch with our Designer. Our welfare and our destiny depend on

harmonizing our life with what He has planned and has in store for us. Unless we accept and submit to His plan, we cannot manifest our full potential, nor can we enjoy the blessings in store for us. Instead of blooming into a beautiful flower, we will live and die as a seed, without fulfilling our mission—the very reason we came into this world.

If our bond with our Creator and Designer is intimate and strong, then everything will fall in place; if not, everything will break down and fall apart.

Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature? So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? Therefore do not worry, saying, “What shall we eat?” or “What shall we drink?” or “What shall we wear?”... ***But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.***

Christ (Matt. 6:25-33 NKJ)

Today the critical bond between God and mankind is being stretched to the limits. It is near breaking point. If this trend is allowed to continue—as the evidence indicates that it will—human life will gradually decline to a state of utter desperation. Mere struggle for survival will become the norm—the law of the land. Life will become extremely stressful; human suffering will continue to mount and eventually reach unbearable proportions.

It will be a time of great distress. Christ (Matt. 24:21 NEB)

Our Creator designed us after His splendid Image—as perfect as possible. He shared with us everything present in His Kingdom:

The kingdom of God is within you. Christ (Luke 17:21 NIV)

He granted us countless blessings, among them, the greatest and the most glorious is the supreme honor of knowing and loving Him. No gift, no blessing can ever come close to this honor. All the treasures of the earth compared to this gift count as nothing. Yet many people live and die without any awareness of the presence of such priceless jewels in their soul. They are rich beyond measure! Yet they live and die in abject poverty.

As a token of His generosity, the supreme Designer crowned our soul with many other precious jewels. As we can discover within the heart of the earth many precious gems such as, rubies, diamonds, and sapphires to adorn our bodies; so can we discover within the human heart, spiritual gems such as self-awareness, intelligence, imagination, understanding, creativity, freedom of choice, and the twin gifts of learning and loving. The prime purpose of all these gifts is to help us know and love our Creator—by choice, and not by force. We can use these gifts to renew our soul, to tame our ego, and choose the honor of being in the presence of our Creator, or use them for pursuing worldly desires, and face the unpleasant consequence of separation from the Source of all pleasures and perfections. We are spiritually rich and blessed beyond measure. Seldom do we take the time to count our many blessings. Imagine life without the joy of learning and loving! Imagine life without hope and purpose!

I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly. John 10:10 NKJ

We are designed to live an abundant life full of joy and peace. But the spiritual Jewels within our soul cannot shine and show their splendor unless they come into the presence of our supreme Designer. If they stay beyond spiritual spheres, they lose their light. They become invisible in the darkness of remoteness from the glory of God.

To glow with joy and hope, we must take a step away from our overconfident and persistent ego to let His light shine on the

jewels we already own—precious gems that have always been present in our soul, that always wish and hope for a chance to manifest their beauty and splendor.

The purpose of the one true God, exalted be His glory, hath been to bring forth the Mystic Gems out of the mine of man...⁷
Bahá'u'lláh

Our purpose in life is to grow and become more spiritual, to live for the joy of learning and loving rather than exchanging our precious lives for worldly gains and pleasures. But how can we transform our own soul and society? Does simply knowing or believing that something is true make it *come* true? Does simply believing in unity and equality make us united and equal? Suppose you said: “I believe this is a wonderful orange seed.” Will your belief make the seed to grow and produce oranges? No, to manifest its potential, a seed needs nourishment—tender loving care.

The fruit of knowing God is loving God. How can we not love the One who cherishes the purest and noblest love for us? As our knowledge of God grows, so will our love for Him.

For every one of you his paramount duty is to choose for himself that on which no other may infringe and none usurp from him. Such a thing—and to this the Almighty is My witness—is the love of God, could ye but perceive it.⁸
Bahá'u'lláh

Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.
Christ (Matt. 6:19-21 NIV)

O God, you are my God, earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you, my body longs for you...your love is better than life...
Psalms 63:1, 3 NIV

*Better is one day in your courts than a thousand elsewhere
...For the Lord God is a sun and shield; the Lord bestows
favor and honor; no good thing does he withhold from
those whose walk is blameless. O Lord Almighty, blessed is
the man who trusts in you.* *Psalms 84:10-12 NIV*

*I will praise you, O Lord, with all my heart; I will tell of all
your wonders. I will be glad and rejoice in you; I will sing
praise to your name, O Most High.* *Psalms 9:1-2 NIV*

This book demonstrates that the seed of human happiness can grow, blossom, and produce luscious fruits only if it is planted for the love of God and cultivated in the light of His knowledge. His love is so splendid, His knowledge so infinite, they can provide the seed of our soul with everything it needs to flourish and become a fruitful tree. What more can we expect?

Gaining a Glimpse of the Forest

One of the most instructive expressions in English language reminds us to “walk away from the trees to see the forest.” That is precisely what *the knowledge of God* does.

Much pain and suffering comes not from what happens to us, but from what we *allow* to happen to us. Our attitude is the looking glass through which we see and judge the events of our life.

The knowledge of God serves a similar purpose. It is the binocular that extends our vision from here and now to eternity. It dissolves the little drop of our identity—the “I” and the “me”—in the infinite ocean of God’s creation. Apart or away from that ocean, we become a lonely drop, and live and act as if *we are* that ocean!

Our connection to God transforms our perception of reality. It infuses the little drop of our ego with this message: “Sure you are facing this tragedy or trouble, but turn your eyes heavenward. Look beyond the rain and the drifting clouds. The sun

never stops shining. There is more to life than meets the eye. For now, be patient—and accept and even cherish—the inevitable. There is a reason for everything that happens, even if you do not know that reason.”

How often we have wished for something which did not come true. And then later we thanked God that it did not! Thus as the expression implies, we tend to see only the trees. The knowledge of God elevates our perspective and allows us to gain a glimpse of the forest. That change of view makes all the difference. It dissolves the disappointments of daily living in the vast ocean of the knowledge of our everlasting and splendid destiny. It adds a new dimension to our life—a deep sense of meaning and purpose. We can survive without having access to that dimension, but at a heavy cost: failing to enjoy a life of abundance, as destined for us by our Creator.

Few people have been as intimately bound with the spiritual dimension of life and experienced its blessings and wonders as did King David:

Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth. Worship the Lord with gladness; come before Him with joyful songs. Know that the Lord is God. It is He who made us, and we are His; we are His people, the sheep of His pasture. Enter His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise; give thanks to Him and praise His name. For the Lord is good and His love endures forever; His faithfulness continues through all generations.

Psalms 100:1-5 NIV

Come, let us sing for joy to the Lord...Let us come before him with thanksgiving and extol him with music and song. For the Lord is the great God, the great King above all gods. In his hand are the depths of the earth, and the mountain peaks belong to him. The sea is his, for he made it, and his hands formed the dry land. Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the Lord our Maker; for he is our God and we are the people of his pasture, the

flock under his care. Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts...

Psalms 95:1-8 NIV

Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise him, my Savior and my God.

Psalms 42:5-6 NIV

You have made known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.

Psalms 16:11 NIV

O my God! O my God! Unite the hearts of Thy servants, and reveal to them Thy great purpose. May they follow Thy commandments and abide in Thy law. Help them, O God, in their endeavor, and grant them strength to serve Thee. O God! Leave them not to themselves, but guide their steps by the light of Thy knowledge, and cheer their hearts by Thy love. Verily, Thou art their Helper and their Lord.⁹

Bahá'u'lláh

2

Blessed are Those Who are Invited

Christ (Rev. 19:9 NIV)

You are Invited to the Banquet of Heaven

...many, I tell you, will try to enter[the Banquet] and will not be able to.
Christ (Luke 13:24 NIV)

If you have never fallen in love with God or have fallen out of love, you are in the majority—one of those who have made these predictions come true:

The love of most will grow cold...
Christ (Matt. 24:12 NIV)

When the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?
Christ (Luke 18:8 NIV)

If you have a desire to ignite or reignite the flame of love in your heart, this book is written for you. As the following statement indicates, if you place God first in your life, then everything else will take care of itself. This is a promise from the One who made us:

Set your mind upon His Kingdom, and all the rest will come to you as well.
Christ (Luke 12:31 NEB)

What are we? A body with a soul, or a soul with a body? Our body has no relation to us—to who we are. It is like clothing of our soul. It belongs to the earth and returns to the earth:

I have created all things from dust, and to dust will I return them again.¹⁰

Bahá'u'lláh

No, we are not bodies made of cells. We are souls housed in a body for a short time and for a great purpose. No, we are not here to accumulate wealth. We are spiritual images of our Designer who allows us to live on earth for a little while. He will then take us back to Himself:

Behold, all souls are mine...

Ezekiel 18:4

Then shall the dust return to the earth...and the spirit shall return unto God.

Ecclesiastes 12:7

Why then did God place us on earth? For this reason: to give us a chance to choose Him—to know Him and fall in love with Him just as He is in love with us. True love can come only by choice, not by force—and it is complete only when it is mutual. Can any honor equal this: To be in mutual love with the One who created the universe? Can we ever appreciate or understand this favor from our Creator? If we fail to embrace this unmatched honor and favor with gratitude, with utter joy and ecstasy, we have lived in absolute spiritual poverty—we have lived without knowing what true living is really like. Without living in mutual love with our Creator, life has no meaning, nor purpose. Without embracing His love, our life is an utter failure, even if we own all the treasures of the earth.

But before we can love God, we must ***know Him***. How can we love someone we do not know? This book and its sequel—***The Spiritual Design of Creation***—are written, first and foremost to help us know God according to His own Word as recorded in the sacred Scriptures.

True love can come only from true knowledge. The seed of love can grow and survive only in a fertile and pure ground, not in confusing and divisive theologies that have caused widespread spiritual poverty throughout the world.

Who are assumed to be reliable authorities on God? Who else but religious leaders! For thousands of years they have held the reigns

of authority in their grasp. What grade should they receive for their achievements? Have they played a positive or a negative role in the destiny of mankind? Have they promoted peace or war? Have they promoted harmony or prejudice? Have they united or divided the world? Are they in agreement concerning human life and destiny? Who divided Christianity into thousands of denominations? According to the 2003 World Christian Database, there are about 37,000 different denominations in Christianity.¹¹ Who are the sources of religious prejudice? What do the religious leaders have in common? They disagree on just about everything except this: “My version of truth is the only one that saves your soul and leads you to heaven!”

Where do people, including religious leaders, gain their knowledge of truth? Two sources stand out:

- What their parents have told them to be the truth.
- What their particular priest, minister, rabbi, or mulla tells them.

It is extremely sad that in this age of enlightenment, people continue to believe, just like children, what they are told to believe!

The spread of misinformation about God is the main reason many people, including religious leaders, are losing their faith and moving toward atheism. Many of those leaders admit that they have doubts about their beliefs but, to make a living, they must continue to support and promote whatever those in higher positions—their bosses—dictate. Can we find a core of knowledge about God common to all religions? Yes, it is the prime purpose of this book and its sequel to go beyond denominations and the lines that have separated the great religions. Only by rising above the narrow perspective of divisive theologies can we see the light of truth. Our best guide to true knowledge is the gift of reason bestowed upon us by our Creator. We use this guide in discovering the mysteries of the universe. Should we not use it also in our attempt to discover the mysteries of the One who created the universe?

This book offers many quotations from sacred Scriptures to bring us face to face with our Creator, to hear the Voice of the One who made us, owns us, and takes us back to Himself.

This book is also an invitation to all those who wish to become fit for the Banquet of Heaven while they have a chance, before they have reached the end of their journey, before their eternal destiny has been sealed.

Another honor our Creator has bestowed upon us is this: He has granted us the freedom, the authority, and the ability to write the script of our lives. In effect, He has declared: "Here is paper and here is a pen. Decide your destiny, write it down, and go for it!" Yet so many people ignore this most splendid gift, this most glorious honor. They allow the winds of chance to take them wherever it may. What a tragedy! What a loss!

The door of knowledge is open to anyone:

Behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it...

Christ (Rev. 3:8)

How regrettable indeed that man should debar himself from the fruits of the tree of wisdom while his days and hours pass swiftly away. Please God, the hand of divine power may safeguard all mankind and direct their steps towards the horizon of true understanding.¹²

Bahá'u'lláh

For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?

Christ (Matt. 16:26 NKJ)

This book is aimed both at the heart and the mind. It is an awakening call to activate the "spiritual gene" that our Creator has concealed in our soul for Himself. It is an aid and a reminder to all those who have discovered this gene and sense a deep yearning to bring it to life, but are too busy to take time for their soul.

Our knowledge of God comes mostly from the sacred Scriptures. Should we ignore the most vital source of this knowledge? What do the Scriptures teach us about God and about what matters most in our lives? They ask us to place God first in our lives:

Seek ye first the Kingdom of God.

Christ (Luke 12:31)

The spirit alone gives life; the flesh is of no avail.

Christ (John 6:63 NEB)

Without a strong bond with our Creator, we are like a car without a steering wheel. We can move, but we cannot advance toward our divine destiny. The attractions and pressures of daily living are so powerful, many people fail to take this first step: to center their lives and destiny on an intimate relationship with God. This small book is written to help them fulfill their mission—the purpose for which they have been created—and to remind them of the grave consequence of failing to accomplish this mission.

Our Creator constantly calls us to “the eternal” but only a few heed and respond to His call:

O SON OF THE SUPREME!

To the eternal I call thee, yet thou dost seek that which perisheth. What hath made thee turn away from Our desire and seek thine own?¹³

Bahá'u'lláh

I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other!

Christ (Rev. 3:15 NIV)

Only a few have as yet quaffed from this peerless, this soft-flowing grace of the Ancient King. These occupy the loftiest mansions of Paradise, and are firmly established upon the seats of authority.¹⁴

Bahá'u'lláh

How can we “seek” and become worthy of “the Kingdom of God”? The first step in our everlasting journey toward our Creator starts with these questions: Why am I here? What is my prime purpose in life? And how can I attain that purpose?

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.¹⁵

Bahá'u'lláh

The supreme cause for creating the world and all that is therein is for man to know God.¹⁶

Bahá'u'lláh

*Know thou that, according to what thy Lord, the Lord of all men, hath decreed in His Book, the favors vouchsafed by Him unto mankind have been, and will ever remain, limitless in their range. First and foremost among these favors, which the Almighty hath conferred upon man, is the gift of understanding. His purpose in conferring such a gift is none other except to enable His creature to know and recognize the one true God—exalted be His glory. 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.*¹⁷ Bahá'u'lláh

*The world passeth away, and that which is everlasting is the love of God.*¹⁸ Bahá'u'lláh

God is the light of the world. Without His love, we live in darkness:

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. Christ (Matt. 22:37-38 NKJ)
Also Luke 10:27

*The most beloved of people before God are...those who have surpassed others in their love for God, exalted be His glory.*¹⁹ Bahá'u'lláh

As planned by our Designer, human life on earth is the “stage of preparation” for a journey that will never end. Never again will this opportunity be granted to us. Never again will there be a springtime in our lives. Any failure to plant *the Seed of our Destiny* in the due season—during our brief life at this most critical stage—will prove extremely costly, on a scale unimaginable.

Beware lest the transitory things of human life withhold you from turning unto God...²⁰ Even as the swiftness of lightning your days shall pass...²¹ Bahá'u'lláh

Set not your affections on mortal sovereignty and rejoice not therein. Ye are even as the unwary bird that with full confidence warbleth upon the bough; till of a sudden the

fowler Death throws it upon the dust, and the melody, the form and the color are gone, leaving not a trace.²²

Bahá'u'lláh

Our prime purpose on earth is to prepare our soul for the Kingdom of God and the Banquet of Heaven—a Banquet so splendid that is beyond description. How do we prepare ourselves for a splendid banquet on earth? We buy and wear the most elegant clothing we can afford. We seek the help of the best barber or hair dresser; we bathe our body and make it fragrant with an expensive perfume. We spare no effort to look and smell our best. Finally we stand before a mirror for a last look to make sure we appear as perfect as possible. Only then do we feel we are ready to depart. We do all this and more for a banquet that lasts only a few hours. What then should we do for a Banquet that will last for all eternity! Even a hundred billion years compared to eternity counts as nothing! What then is required to become worthy of the honor of living in such a Kingdom and attending such a Banquet? Can anyone imagine the magnitude of such an honor?

What is the next step in our journey toward “knowing and loving” our Creator? It is recognizing that mere confession is not a ticket to that Kingdom. Noble deeds are an absolute requirement:

Not everyone who says to me, “Lord, Lord,” will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.
Christ (Matt. 7:21 NIV)

Living a life crowned with noble deeds requires great effort. Only a few are willing to do so. Only a few arise to meet the challenge of dressing up for the occasion—to be a guest of honor in this great Banquet of God. And only a few receive the honor of being chosen:

For many are invited, but few are chosen.

Christ (Matt. 22:14 NIV)

Those who fail to meet the essential requirement of nobility and purity, will face, and should expect, only closed doors:

Many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able to.

Christ (Luke 13:24 NIV)

The City of God is pure and perfect. Only those with clean robes are allowed to enter, only **they** have the right to partake of “the tree of life,” only **they** will be truly alive:

Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city.

Christ (Revelation 22:14 NIV)

To be human is to be negligent. Imagine the number of people who neglect their health and their safety, who fail to be kind to their body—which has little tolerance and a low threshold for pain! How much more are they likely to neglect their soul—who is patient, long suffering, and forbearing!

At all times I am near unto thee, but thou art ever far from Me. Imperishable glory I have chosen for thee, yet boundless shame thou hast chosen for thyself. While there is yet time, return, and lose not thy chance.²³

Bahá'u'lláh

Our age is presenting us with the most demanding challenges. Few people have the time or take the time for their soul—their spiritual health. Struggle for survival for some, and greed for others, leave little time for thinking about the very purpose they have been created. Mankind as a whole is moving away from God—toward atheism:

At that time many will turn away from the faith...the love of most will grow cold...

Christ (Matt. 24:10, 12 NIV)

The vitality of men's belief in God is dying out in every land...²⁴

Bahá'u'lláh

Such shall be its plight, that to disclose it now would not be meet and seemly.²⁵

Bahá'u'lláh

It will be a time of great distress; there has never been such a time...

Christ (Matt. 24:21 NEB)

Nations will stand helpless, not knowing which way to turn...

Christ (Luke 21:25 NEB)

For most people, loving the “world” comes before loving the One who made the world:

O SON OF MAN!

*Upon the tree of effulgent glory I have hung for thee the choicest fruits, wherefore hast thou turned away and contented thyself with that which is less good? Return then unto that which is better for thee in the realm on high.*²⁶

Bahá'u'lláh

Strong incentives and warnings are needed to awaken the negligent, the sleeping, and the struggling peoples of our time. This book is written for this very reason. It is written as an aid to those who neglect their soul, who live and die without ever asking the first and most urgent question in their lives: “Why am I living?” The deeper the sleep and negligence, the louder the call must be!

O SON OF MAN!

*Many a day hath passed over thee whilst thou hast busied thyself with thy fancies and idle imaginings. How long art thou to slumber on thy bed? Lift up thy head from slumber, for the Sun hath risen to the zenith, haply it may shine upon thee with the light of beauty.*²⁷

Bahá'u'lláh

O CHILDREN OF VAINGLORY!

*For a fleeting sovereignty ye have abandoned My imperishable dominion, and have adorned yourselves with the gay livery of the world and made of it your boast. By My beauty! All will I gather beneath the one-colored covering of the dust and efface all these diverse colors save them that choose My own, and that is purging from every color.*²⁸

Bahá'u'lláh

Night hath succeeded day, and day hath succeeded night, and the hours and moments of your lives have come and gone, and yet none of you hath, for one instant, consented to detach himself from that which perisheth. Bestir yourselves, that the brief moments that are still yours may not

*be dissipated and lost. Even as the swiftness of lightning your days shall pass, and your bodies shall be laid to rest beneath a canopy of dust. What can ye then achieve? How can ye atone for your past failure?*²⁹ Bahá'u'lláh

Most people fail to recognize the enormous and everlasting consequences of neglecting their spiritual destiny. It is in their best interest to know those consequences while they still have a chance. If they could gain just a glimpse of the enormity of their losses and become aware of their everlasting regrets for failing to plant *the Seed of their Destiny* in the due season, they would not hesitate even for one moment to place the pursuit of their spiritual mission—the very reason they are living—first and foremost in their lives.

Many fail to realize that our brief life on earth is by far the most critical stage of our everlasting journey toward God. If we fail to act during this brief moment, our Creator warns, we will for ever lose this opportunity:

O MY SERVANT!

*Free thyself from the fetters of this world, and loose thy soul from the prison of self. Seize thy chance, for it will come to thee no more.*³⁰ Bahá'u'lláh

*Live then the days of thy life, that are less than a fleeting moment, with thy mind stainless, thy heart unsullied, thy thoughts pure, and thy nature sanctified, so that, free and content, thou mayest put away this mortal frame, and repair unto the mystic paradise and abide in the eternal kingdom for evermore.*³¹ Bahá'u'lláh

O CHILDREN OF NEGLIGENCE!

*Set not your affections on mortal sovereignty and rejoice not therein. Ye are even as the unwary bird that with full confidence warbleth upon the bough; till of a sudden the fowler Death throws it upon the dust, and the melody, the form and the color are gone, leaving not a trace. Wherefore take heed, O bondslaves of desire!*³² Bahá'u'lláh

The honor of knowing and loving God is being forgotten. Many fail to realize that this supreme honor is bestowed only on those who desire it, deserve it, and seek it with ***all their heart and soul***:

...thou shalt seek the Lord thy God, thou shalt find Him, if thou seek Him with all thy heart and with all thy soul.

Deuteronomy 4:29

And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart.

Jeremiah 29:13 NKJ

If you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding, and search for it as for hidden treasure, then you will...find the knowledge of God.

Proverbs 2:3-5 NIV

Blessed are [those] who...seek Him with the whole heart.

Psalms 119:1-2 NKJ

Some people think that by believing in God, they will do God a favor! They think like a person who says “If I stay indoors, it will be bad for the sun!” Such individuals do not realize that the exact opposite of what they think is true. Being allowed to know and love God is a favor beyond description. It is by far the greatest, the most glorious, and the most splendid honor that Heaven may bestow on humans.

Such is the station ordained for the true believer that if to an extent smaller than a needle’s eye the glory of that station were to be unveiled to mankind, every beholder would be consumed away in his longing to attain it. For this reason it hath been decreed that in this earthly life the full measure of the glory of his own station should remain concealed from the eyes of such a believer.³³ *Bahá’u’lláh*

People feel proud to be in the presence of a world leader—a king, a queen or a president of a country. Yet they fail to recognize that they can choose to be in the presence of the One who can create countless queens, kings, and presidents in an instant. Why do those world leaders pay attention to us? To receive our support

to stay in power. What about the One who made us? Does He also need us in order to stay in power?

*Worldly friends, seeking their own good, appear to love one the other, whereas the true Friend hath loved and doth love you for your own sakes; indeed He hath suffered for your guidance countless afflictions. Be not disloyal to such a Friend, nay rather hasten unto Him.*³⁴ Bahá'u'lláh

What then will be “the spiritual state” of those who ignore or refuse to seek God during their earthly life?

*[They will] be made aware of the good things that have escaped them, and shall bemoan their plight, and shall humble themselves before God. They shall continue doing so after the separation of their souls from their bodies.*³⁵ Bahá'u'lláh

*This mortal life is sure to perish; its pleasures are bound to fade away and ere long ye shall return unto God, distressed with pangs of remorse, for presently ye shall be roused from your slumber, and ye shall soon find yourselves in the presence of God and will be asked of your doings.*³⁶ The Báb

Many people also fail to realize that the choice between God and human beings is mutual. We must set the cycle of choosing in motion, but the final choice is up to our Creator:

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

...no one can come to Me unless it has been granted to him by My Father.
Christ (John 6:65 NKJ)

You [disciples] did not choose Me, but I chose you [to] bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain.
Christ (John 15:16 NKJ)

Whoever has my commands and obeys them...I...will... show Myself to him.
Christ (John 14:21 NIV)

What is the standard for being among the chosen ones? Is it *believing in God*, or is it *knowing God* and manifesting that

knowledge through noble deeds? An unfounded assumption prevalent among many people—believers and nonbelievers alike—is this: “**believing in God**” and “**knowing God**” are synonymous. This is a misconception with grave consequences. It has tarnished the honor of knowing and loving God. No, they are not the same. They differ even as day and night. Belief in God has little value unless it is enlightened with true knowledge, which always culminates in love and noble deeds.

How can we trust and love someone we do not know? Does simply believing that we have a neighbor make us trust and love our neighbor? Believing without knowing is walking in total darkness. It may even be unsafe. All the damage inflicted on religion throughout all ages has come from believers who “believed” in God, or they thought they did, but had no **knowledge** of God.

The failure to recognize the difference between “**believing in God**” and “**knowing and loving God**” has been extremely costly to the dignity and honor of true faith. It has given the atheists and agnostics throughout all ages the perfect weapon against God. To know and love God and to be a hypocrite are the exact opposites. It is impossible to love God and hate people. It is impossible to love God and deceive or mistreat His creatures—even an ant! True love is universal, not judgmental. It does not discriminate:

He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous...Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Christ (Matt. 5:45, 48 NIV)

Our Creator is our model for perfection. But can we ever **attain** perfection? We can attain **relative**, but not absolute, perfection. Perfection on the human level means becoming the best we can be. It means manifesting our potential—the jewels hidden in our soul:

*The Purpose of the one true God, exalted be His glory, in revealing Himself unto men is to lay bare those gems that lie hidden within the mine of their true and inmost selves.*³⁷

Bahá'u'lláh

Unless we manifest the hidden gems within our soul, we are not truly alive:

I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly. Christ (John 10:10 NKJ)

We cannot attain perfection. It is human to slip and fall. But our love for God and trust in His love for us, gives us the courage and the strength to arise and carry the torch. What matters are our motives. **Knowledge of God** purifies our motives. It punctures our inflated ego—the voice within us that says: “I know and I know that I know. Don’t tell me otherwise!” It removes the mask of hypocrisy that obscures the purity of our soul that prevents it from being transparent.

The failure to appreciate and embrace the greatest honor that heaven may bestow on humans—an intimate relationship with our Creator—is a loss beyond human understanding. Only after departure from this life will we recognize the enormous consequences of such a loss—our failure to attain the very purpose for which we came into this world. The combined consequences of all our shortcomings and failures in our earthly life, compared to this one failure, count even as a mere drop to a vast ocean.

What makes the consequence of this failure and this loss so enormous is the immensity of time it will endure. We are assured that the human soul will last as long as our Creator lasts. Even a long life—a hundred years—compared to eternity counts only as **one passing moment**. And yet that **one passing moment** determines the eternity that follows it! This piece of the puzzle of human life and destiny is so critical, so consequential that it should awaken, warn, and inspire every sleeping soul to arise and rush forward—without any hesitation toward fulfilling his divine destiny, toward manifesting the precious gems in his

soul. Why would anyone endowed with wisdom risk his eternal destiny for the sake of *one passing moment*? Why would anyone exchange the honor of everlasting life in the presence of God for the perishable and short-lived pleasures of this life?

What is the price of *ignoring* God's presence in our lives? What is His standard of judgment?

For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you.
Christ (Luke 6:38 NKJ)

*God will verily do unto them that which they themselves are doing...*³⁸
Bahá'u'lláh

This world is the “womb” of spiritual life. Just as a baby must grow and become fit for life on earth, so must the human soul grow and become fit for life in heaven.

Perhaps the most potent words found in the sacred Scriptures are: *heaven and hell*. Believers throughout all ages have failed to know what these terms represent. Is “hell” a place where evil people are burned forever? A close study of sacred Scriptures indicates that those two words—heaven and hell—are simply metaphors for the state of the soul in its relation to God: heaven implies nearness to God, and hell remoteness from His Presence.

The state of our physical health before and after birth offers perhaps the best picture of the state of our spiritual health before and after death. Being in heaven means being spiritually healthy: living in a state of joy and happiness; being in hell means being spiritually sick: living in a state of misery. Heaven implies having access and being able to enjoy all the blessings God has created for human beings; and hell implies being deprived of those blessings. “The fire” implies the soul's burning desire to be in the presence of God—the very source of life, joy, and happiness.

Can anyone imagine an honor equal to being in the presence of God for all eternity?

For the highest and most excelling grace bestowed upon men is the grace of “attaining unto the Presence of God” and of His recognition, which has been promised unto all people. This is the utmost degree of grace vouchsafed unto man by the All-Bountiful, the Ancient of Days, and the fullness of His absolute bounty upon His creatures.³⁹

Bahá'u'lláh

Imagine life without the gift of sight and hearing. Imagine also living for countless ages without these gifts. This example is, however, “relative”—since each individual must face his own unique handicaps, or his own unique “hell.” No two individuals are, or will ever, be alike.

We are told that in the spiritual world there are many grades or levels of life, which correspond to the many levels of nobility—or lack of it—that we find in this world. Even suffering from one handicap can be painful—a heavy burden to bear. Why, then, take any chances? Why choose to be miserable because of a little negligence? Why not submit “the ego” to the forces of humility? Why lose the one opportunity our Creator has given us?

As long as it is day, we must do the work of Him who sent Me. Night is coming, when no one can work.

Christ (John 9:4 NIV)

Seize thy chance, for it will come to thee no more.⁴⁰

Bahá'u'lláh

Seek the Lord while he may be found.

Isaiah 55:6

Seize, O friends, the chance which this Day offereth you, and deprive not yourselves...of His grace.⁴¹

Bahá'u'lláh

At the point of death, our everlasting destiny is determined by:

- Our relationship with God
- The purity and nobility of our soul, and
- The quality of the life we have lived.

During the brief span of our lives, we must make every effort to advance in all these arenas. For at the moment of death, our destiny is permanently sealed. Surely we will be able to advance, but it will be within limitations. If a seed fails to grow in due season, it must face and endure irreparable losses later.

We are only passengers passing through and have no choice but to accept and submit to our Maker's plan and verdict. We have no choice but to submit to the One who is the supreme Designer and Ruler of the universe. No one can deviate or escape from His Design—from what He has planned. We have no haven save in Him!

Behold! all souls are Mine... *Ezekiel 18:4*

Then...the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.
Ecclesiastes 12:7

Soon ye shall return to Us, and We will let you know what ye have done! *Qur'án 10:24*

For unto God shall be the final gathering. *Qur'án 35:19*

All men have proceeded from God and unto Him shall all return.⁴² *The Báb*

Verily, we are God's, and to Him shall we return.⁴³
Bahá'u'lláh

Yes, our life, sooner or later, ends. All that remains of us is our soul. That is what we are, what we take with us, and will be ours for all eternity. What then is the value of a soul without the glory of God, without the knowledge and love of its Creator? This question was answered long ago. It holds true for now and forever:

For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? *Christ (Matt. 16:26 NKJ)*

What Jesus means is this: “What is the value of a seed that in due season—this life—had a chance to bear beautiful flowers and luscious fruits, but never did, nor ever will?” Yes, without anchoring our soul in God, we are like a tiny seed at the mercy

of mighty winds. Only in our knowledge of God can we grow roots and become fruitful trees. Only through Him can we manifest our potential for beauty and greatness, only through Him can we unveil His glorious Image hidden deep in our soul.

O SON OF BEING!

With the hands of power I made thee and with the fingers of strength I created thee; and within thee have I placed the essence of My light. Be thou content with it and seek naught else, for My work is perfect and My command is binding. Question it not, nor have a doubt thereof.⁴⁴

Bahá'u'lláh

O SON OF SPIRIT!

I created thee rich, why dost thou bring thyself down to poverty? Noble I made thee, wherewith dost thou abase thyself? Out of the essence of knowledge I gave thee being, why seekest thou enlightenment from anyone beside Me? Out of the clay of love I molded thee, how dost thou busy thyself with another? Turn thy sight unto thyself, that thou mayest find Me standing within thee, mighty, powerful and self-subsisting.⁴⁵

Bahá'u'lláh

Upon the inmost reality of each and every created thing He hath shed the light of one of His names, and made it a recipient of the glory of one of His attributes. Upon the reality of man, however, He hath focused the radiance of all of His names and attributes, and made it a mirror of His own Self. Alone of all created things man hath been singled out for so great a favor, so enduring a bounty.⁴⁶ *Bahá'u'lláh*

Those who center their efforts on their worldly life at the expense of their spiritual life, are unaware of the grave injustice they inflict on their own soul. If they knew the enormous and everlasting losses they must face in the next kingdom, they would place everything on hold, make any sacrifice, exert any effort, until they have discovered the most glorious Gem of joy and peace lying deep in their soul, until they have found and cherished the One who, as Bahá'u'lláh declares, is "***the most manifest of the***

manifest, and the most hidden of the hidden⁴⁷—the great Spirit who is both the Source and Purpose of their lives—the One who is so close to them, and yet they are so far from Him!

What then will be the spiritual state of those who embrace their Creator with gratitude versus those who ignore His presence in their soul? Compare our relationship with God with our relationship with each other. Suppose you wish to celebrate a special day in your life. Who would you include in your guest list? Would you include strangers—people who do not know you? Would you include those who don't care for you? What about those who know you, but keep ignoring you and pretending that you don't even exist? If you do not want such "unfit guests" at your banquet, why should God? Why should God accept as guests of honor in His most glorious Mansions in heaven—people who enjoyed His blessings all the days of their lives, but lived and acted as if the generous Host didn't even exist? No, it would not be in keeping with God's justice to allow such souls to enter those Mansions:

...many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.

Christ (Luke 13:24)

The following words of Jesus may be harsh, and should not be taken literally. They simply show us in symbolic and graphic language the serious consequences of being unprepared for God's "many Mansions in heaven." They express the divine justice imposed on those who have failed to "dress up" and be fit for His heavenly Kingdom.

But when the King came in to see the guests, he saw a man there who did not have on a wedding garment. So He said to him, "Friend, how did you come in here without a wedding garment?" And he was speechless. Then the King said to the servants, "Bind him hand and foot, take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." For many are called, but few are chosen.

Christ (Matt. 22:11-14 NKJ)

Perhaps the most touching, beautiful, and instructive of all the parables Jesus spoke is the one about the Banquet of Heaven. Through this parable, He teaches us the ultimate destiny of those who ignore their Creator or refuse to know Him, while they have a chance—during their earthly life. This brief parable contains a universe of knowledge. Read it many times and ponder its mysteries and meanings.*

At that time the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the Bridegroom. Five of them were foolish and five were wise. The foolish ones took their lamps but did not take any oil with them. The wise, however, took oil in jars along with their lamps. The Bridegroom was a long time in coming, and they all became drowsy and fell asleep.

At midnight the cry rang out: "Here's the Bridegroom! Come out to meet Him!" Then all the virgins woke up and trimmed their lamps. The foolish ones said to the wise, "Give us some of your oil; our lamps are going out." "No," they replied, "there may not be enough for both us and you. Instead, go to those who sell oil and buy some for yourselves." But while they were on their way to buy the oil, the Bridegroom arrived. The virgins who were ready went in with Him to the wedding Banquet. And the door was shut. Later the others also came. "Sir! Sir!" they said. "Open the door for us!" But He replied, "I tell you the truth, I don't know you." Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour.

Christ (Matt. 1-13 NIV)

God has given us the right to ignore Him, reject Him, and even rise against Him. But it is essential to know the consequences of each of those choices. God is both benevolent and just. We must *count* on His justice, but can only *hope* for His mercy. God's attributes of "forgiveness" has been used by religious leaders to

* "Oil" stands for *wisdom*—the source of light, which can guide us to our divine destiny.

attract new converts. They use this concept to present an easy and short path to heaven. They tell people that if they simply say “I believe...” all their sins will be forgiven! This, of course, is a great bargain, especially for those who have a long list of sins on their record! Such leaders use God’s forgiveness almost as an invitation to disobey God. A man was stealing a bicycle. A friend asked: Why? He said: “After taking the bicycle, I will ask for forgiveness!”

Abuses of this concept and many others have diminished the dignity and honor of believing. They have made it cheap, have turned it into a market place where believers can bargain with God—exchange a few words for long-lasting benefits.

To be negligent in practicing ethical principles—because we know God is forgiving—is an act of self-deception. The one who truly knows God perceives good deed as its own reward, and unseemly deed as its own punishment. Knowledge of God makes the performance of a good deed in itself enjoyable and inviting, and the performance of a bad deed in itself unpleasant and even impossible. To the one who loves God, being dishonest, deceptive, or unloving is painful. To love God and hate people is a contradiction, because we all belong to God.

Knowledge of God removes from the human heart all temptations to do wrong. The one who truly knows God is well aware that he cannot hide his thoughts from the All-Knowing. His sense of shame prevents him from engaging in an unseemly deed or thought, even as his sense of shame would prevent him from appearing naked in a crowd.

There are some spiritually primitive people, however, who cannot rise to this level: loving simply for the sake of loving. What can possibly protect such people from doing wrong? What can motivate them to take their spiritual life seriously? Only their awareness of divine justice. Only that thought can touch and transform their hearts. Only their fear of the loss of a precious Jewel can inspire and motivate them to rise to the occasion. Only verses such as these can reach and touch them:

Whoever is ashamed of Me and My words...of him the Son of Man also will be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father.
Christ (Mark 8:38)

O SON OF BEING!

Love Me, that I may love thee. If thou lovest Me not, My love can in no wise reach thee. Know this, O servant.⁴⁸

Bahá'u'lláh

The Lord is with you when you are with him. If you seek him, He will be found by you, but if you forsake Him, He will forsake you.
II Chronicles 15:2 NIV

Our Creator will allow us to be a guest of honor in His heavenly Kingdom only if we invite Him and even implore Him to be a guest of honor in our soul in His earthly Kingdom. How then can we please God and become worthy of His incomparable favors and blessings? How can we become a permanent guest in His celestial Banquet?

Knowing God is not merely an intellectual experience. It is not only a matter of convincing the mind, but also of touching and transforming the heart. Philosophers have focused on proving or disproving God. They have turned this concept into a game of chess, where each player has one purpose: to defeat the other player. Religious leaders have taken a different direction: they have removed God out of reason. They have looked down on science and scientists and have practiced and promoted believing without thinking. Both of these extremes have caused many sincere and reasonable people to remain confused, unable to get to the heart of the question.

Proving God and believing in God is only a small segment of knowing God. Harmony between faith, reason, and science is absolutely essential. Science is an expression of God's mind. They cannot contradict each other. Convincing the mind is only one step toward the ultimate goal of knowing and loving God.

Knowing God is not a journey on a straight and smooth path, but one through many mountains and valleys. It is the most

challenging and rewarding experience in human life. It is an achievement and honor that overshadows any other.

Overcoming the obstacles that stand in our way requires determination, deep desire, and persistent efforts. Can anyone attain physical fitness without effort? Establishing an intimate relationship with God requires spiritual fitness. Unless an individual is willing to do his best to meet the spiritual requirements, he will be unable to establish such a relationship. Let us once again review some of those requirements:

- Making a commitment to abide by this counsel:

Seek ye first the Kingdom of God... Christ (Matt. 6:33)

We must determine to devote some time every day to the first and foremost purpose in our life: Learning to nourish the seed of the knowledge and love of God in our soul.

- Facing God with pure motives and absolute sincerity. Noble deeds are the clearest evidence of our purity and sincerity. Would God reveal His glory to a soul afflicted with selfishness, prejudice, greed, lust, hypocrisy, and deception? Would God invite impure souls into His supremely pure and splendid Mansions in heaven?

Ye shall seek Me, and find Me, when ye shall search for Me with all your heart. Jeremiah 29:13

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

Christ (Matt. 5:8)

- Persistent praying and pleading with God to become worthy of the honor of being an invited guest.

We should with tearful eyes, fervently and repeatedly, implore Him to grant us the favor of that grace.⁴⁹

Bahá'u'lláh

Therefore let everyone who is godly pray to you while you may be found...

Psalms 32:6 NIV

The Lord is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth. *Psalms 145:18 NIV*

- Standing in utter humility before God. Pride, like clouds, conceals the face of God from us. Looking down on others—including nonbelievers—is an evidence of pride. Only God is the true judge. All judgment must be left to Him. True love knows no boundaries.

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

The Lord sustains the humble... *Psalms 147:6 NIV*

For he who is least among you all—he is the greatest
Christ (Luke 9:48 NIV)

- Pursuing a life of service to humankind. Good deeds are a clear evidence of one's sincerity and nobility. They attract divine blessings.

Faith without works is dead. *James 2:26*

- Persistently seeking knowledge. We must continue to ask questions until no question is left unanswered.

...through knowledge shall the just be delivered.
Proverbs 11:9

Perhaps the best way to know God is to examine a few models—people who demonstrate the knowledge of God through their noble deeds. These models show us the limits of human potential for nobility. They demonstrate how far we can rise.

While traveling in Florida, I met a lady who told me the following story. She said that her husband was a physician who practiced his profession in the city of Hamadan in Iran. After the revolution, her husband was arrested, and tortured because he belonged to a religious minority: the Bahá'í Faith. He was a most wonderful person, dedicated to the welfare of his patients. While in prison, he was tortured severely in an attempt to force him to deny his

beliefs, but he refused to submit to the tyrants. As a result of his refusal, he was killed, not with a gun but in a most brutal way.

The news of his death and of eight other Bahá'ís shook the residents of the city. Thousands of people gathered in the streets to demonstrate and protest against this violent crime. Some people of courage addressed the crowd; they mourned his death, and shared their memories of his deep love for his patients. After giving a detailed account of that day, the lady then added: "I heard from strangers of his acts of kindness that I had never heard before. My husband kept his acts of kindness private. A pharmacist testified that not only would my husband treat poor patients for free, but he would call and ask him not to charge them for the medicine. He would pay the cost himself."

What could have inspired this doctor to withstand those tyrants? What could have empowered him to endure severe torment and eventually pay by his life to prove a principle? Yes, they took his life, but not his soul nor his dignity. Who can give a human being such courage, commitment, determination, and power? Who can elevate a human being to such a level of dedication and self-sacrifice?

This brief story demonstrates a profound principle: The absolute contrast between *blind* faith and *enlightened* faith. Those who committed this crime engaged in this atrocity supposedly to please God! They believed in and obeyed the god that they had created in their own distorted mind and used that imagined figure as a cover to commit a serious crime.

The doctor, on the other hand, did not simply *believe* in God. He was gifted with the *knowledge* of God. He demonstrated his knowledge through courage and sacrifice. His example demonstrates the highest level of human potential for nobility.

The torturers simply believed that they believed in God. But they had absolutely no knowledge of God. They were mere robots controlled by their religious leaders.

We are all unique and must overcome the unique obstacles each of us faces. What matters is to make a commitment to move forward. Anyone who does his best, who sincerely strives to practice the preceding six principles, becomes worthy of the honor of becoming intimate with God and a permanent guest in His Kingdom. Here once again is a brief summary of those principles:

- Placing God first in our lives.
- Learning about God. Seeking the knowledge of God
- Purifying our soul from that which is unseemly.
- Praying persistently. Seeking the divine blessings.
- Destroying our ego. Standing with utter humility before God.
- Never losing a chance to perform good deeds.

God is just, and considers the obstacles each of us must overcome to reach our destination. What matters is *what we do with what we have*:

From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded...

Christ (Luke 12:48 NKJ)

To conclude: Just as the sun continues to shine—and faces no loss if we remain indoors—so does God. By failing to accomplish the very reason we have come to this world—*knowing and loving our Creator*—we waste a divine investment greater than the universe. For each of us represents the greatest investment God could possibly make.

O SON OF SPIRIT!

*My claim on thee is great, it cannot be forgotten. My grace to thee is plenteous, it cannot be veiled. My love has made in thee its home, it cannot be concealed. My light is manifest to thee, it cannot be obscured.*⁵⁰

Bahá'u'lláh

Could God create a being greater than a reflection of His own Self?

So God created man in His own image... Genesis 1:27

For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honor. Psalms 8:5

The kingdom of God is within you. Christ (Luke 17:21)

Without the light of God in our soul, we are like a shining and beautiful piece of diamond that is kept concealed forever in a dark closet! Only His love can make us shine. Only through Him can we become worthy. His love is the only reason we have come to this world and must be the only reason that we live.

O SON OF THE WONDROUS VISION!

***I have breathed within thee a breath of My own Spirit, that thou mayest be My lover. Why hast thou forsaken Me and sought a beloved other than Me?*⁵¹ Bahá'u'lláh**

O SON OF BEING!

***Thy Paradise is My love; thy heavenly home, reunion with Me. Enter therein and tarry not. This is that which hath been destined for thee in Our kingdom above and Our exalted dominion.*⁵² Bahá'u'lláh**

***Know thou that nothing profiteth a soul save the love of the All-Merciful...*⁵³ 'Abdu'l-Bahá**

Our Creator offers us much help and many clues to awaken us to the splendors of our divine destiny. He “stands at the door” and invites us to step out of the closet. He is even willing to come inside to lead us out of the darkness, but He will not come unless invited:

Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in...

Christ (Revelation 3:20 NKJ)

What is the prime obstacle that prevents us from “opening the door” and stepping out of the closet to witness the splendors of

God's glory and grandeur? That obstacle is our ego! In most of us, this ego is as hard, as proud, and as mighty as a towering mountain. It is the first and foremost barrier to our spiritual growth. The message it sends is this: "I know, and I know that I know!" It is our ego, which prevents us from being open to new ideas, which keeps insisting that: "I know everything I need to know!" It is our ego that makes us favor everything that fits into our established beliefs and reject anything that fails to fit:

Every way of a man is right in his own eyes...

Proverbs 21:2 NKJ

All the ways of a man are pure in his own eyes...

Proverbs 16:2 NKJ

It is the forces of ego that keep the world divided and in disarray. It is the forces of ego that keep the followers of major religions in disagreement. But God in His Wisdom has created an adversary that can undermine the security and power of this tyrant. That adversary is called: humility. Our Creator has allowed us to inflate our ego, to make it as vast as the heaven and as big as a mountain. But He has also given us the potential to shatter and reduce that mountain to mere dust. Only by standing before God, like a child, and cherishing and expressing the deep longing within our soul for knowing the reason we have come into this world and an awareness of the everlasting consequences of failing to nourish *the Seed of our Destiny* during this first moment in eternity, can we remove the veils that prevent us from knowing who we are and what matters most in life. Only by removing the mask of the ego can we change our perception and perspective of God from "*the most hidden of the hidden*" to "*the most visible of the visible*."

Ignoring or rejecting God is an evidence of ingratitude on a scale unimaginable. It is like rejecting or ignoring a loving parent. Suppose your mother traveled a long distance to see you. When she knocked, you opened the door, and said: "Who are you? I don't know you! I don't have a mother!" How would she feel? God is both our mother and father. He is the One who gave us

the gift of life for a purpose and has a plan for each of us. Like loving parents, He wants the best for us, but He would not force us to accept His plan. He did not create us as slaves. He granted us the honor of choosing, knowing, and loving Him. He only invites us:

The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life.
Revelation 22:17 NIV

What will be our sense of shame after we depart from this life only to discover that we have ignored the One who created us from sheer love and was so kind and generous to us, as to share His own Self, His own Image with us?

"For the mountains shall depart and the hills be removed, but My kindness shall not depart from you..." says the Lord.
Isaiah 54:10 NKJ

Among the "defense strategies" human beings use to deny the most certain event in their lives—their own death—is to focus on the present and to forget the future. The Sacred Scriptures try to break this dam of denial, but the forces against it are so powerful that few people take notice:

Man is like a breath; his days are like a passing shadow.
Psalms 144:4 NKJ

Remember your Creator before the silver cord is snapped and the golden bowl is broken...
Ecclesiastes 12:6

O FRIENDS!

Abandon not the everlasting beauty for a beauty that must die, and set not your affections on this mortal world of dust.⁵⁴
Bahá'u'lláh

O MY SERVANT!

Abandon not for that which perisheth an everlasting dominion, and cast not away celestial sovereignty for a worldly desire. This is the river of everlasting life that hath

*flowed from the well-spring of the pen of the merciful; well is it with them that drink!*⁵⁵

Bahá'u'lláh

*Live then the days of thy life, that are less than a fleeting moment, with thy mind stainless, thy heart unsullied, thy thoughts pure, and thy nature sanctified, so that, free and content, thou mayest put away this mortal frame, and repair unto the mystic paradise and abide in the eternal kingdom for evermore.*⁵⁶

Bahá'u'lláh

O MY SERVANT!

*Free thyself from the fetters of this world, and loose thy soul from the prison of self. Seize thy chance, for it will come to thee no more.*⁵⁷

Bahá'u'lláh

O SON OF MY HANDMAID!

*Didst thou behold immortal sovereignty, thou wouldst strive to pass from this fleeting world. But to conceal the one from thee and to reveal the other is a mystery which none but the pure in heart can comprehend.*⁵⁸

Bahá'u'lláh

O OFFSPRING OF DUST!

*Be not content with the ease of a passing day, and deprive not thyself of everlasting rest. Barter not the garden of eternal delight for the dust-heap of a mortal world. Up from thy prison ascend unto the glorious meads above, and from thy mortal cage wing thy flight unto the paradise of the Placeless.*⁵⁹

Bahá'u'lláh

*As to those that have tasted of the fruit of man's earthly existence, which is the recognition of the one true God, exalted be His glory, their life hereafter is such as We are unable to describe. The knowledge thereof is with God, alone, the Lord of all worlds.*⁶⁰

Bahá'u'lláh



Next Volume

The Spiritual Design of Creation

We make thousands of decisions during the course of our life. How can we make sound decisions? Only by making “informed decisions,” only by considering the many sides or shades of an issue. How can we do this? Only by tapping into a reservoir of knowledge far, far beyond what we already have. That is the precise purpose of the sequel to this book: *The Spiritual Design of Creation*. It offers the most essential information you need to make an informed decision concerning the course of your everlasting destiny. Can any decision compare with this?

The information offered in that volume meets the following standards:

- Rational thinking or reasoning in regard to every concept presented.
- Scientific findings whenever relevant or possible.
- Scriptural evidence, whenever relevant or possible.

If a concept fails to satisfy the preceding standards, it must be rejected or at least considered questionable. What more can be expected?

In *The Spiritual Design of Creation*, you will find convincing answers to virtually all questions and objections that people regularly raise against God. A printed version of this book will become available. For further information please visit this website: www.GlobalPerspective.org.

A Final Appeal

**The Time is Short!
The Decision Critical!
The Consequence Everlasting!
One Chance
Infinite Possibilities!**



To everything there is a reason, a time for every purpose under heaven...

Ecclesiastes 3:1

While daylight lasts we must carry on the work of him who sent me; night comes, when no one can work.

John 9:4 NEB

Seize thy chance, for it will come to thee no more.⁶¹

Bahá'u'lláh

3

Choosing Your Destiny Before You Have Lost the Chance

Many people fail to realize that in this life they are on a serious mission, that they have only a short time to make the most critical choice in their lives: to choose their everlasting destiny. Instead of paying close attention to that choice, they spend their precious lives playing with a few toys, without knowing that a marvelous race is going on all around them and they are out of it. It is a race to fulfill the very purpose of their lives before they have lost the chance. They are so busy, so rushed, they do not take the time to measure their enormous losses, to notice how fast they are losing ground.

Some people instinctively know that they need to be in this race: toward their divine destiny. They recognize that there is a grand purpose in their lives—a purpose that can guide them and move them forward. But they do not know where to look. They often take the clue from the people around them. They notice the masses and masses of people who are constantly running and rushing without getting anywhere, without reaching a destination. They assume that all those people must know something that they do not know. So they join the race with everyone else—a race for making more, saving more, and spending more! But after running for some time, they discover what they instinctively knew: that the "pot of gold" always stays one step ahead of them; that they are running in a circle, and keep ending up where they started.

Sometimes they dream of leaving the circle, only to find that it does not let them. They feel like a passenger in a plane, fastened by a seatbelt, high in the sky. So they stay in the race and keep

running until they cannot run anymore. Then what do they find at the end of their journey, at the end of the race? Sickness and symptoms of senility.

They find themselves near the end of their journey without ever reaching any destination. Then they begin to think about their past, about their unfulfilled dreams, about the value of all the toys that they have collected. If they are perceptive, they may suddenly wake up as from a dream. They may realize that they have been running for no purpose, that the material gains they have struggled to accumulate were of no real value, and that they have wasted the most precious gift given to them: their freedom to choose their destiny. They discover that after all the running, they are still at the starting point of the race, where they were sixty or seventy years ago. They learn that they have labored without achieving any enduring purpose, and now they are exhausted and defeated! What a tragedy! They were born in ignorance, they lived in ignorance, and now they must die in ignorance.

Now they begin the next stage of their journey. They suddenly behold a "new dawn" from a new horizon. They see that "the veil" of secrecy is lifted. They begin to view everything in the light of a new knowledge—a light they have never seen before.

"The dawn" is the moment of their departure from this life to the next. At that moment they will realize what they have missed, and they will begin to mourn their colossal and irretrievable losses. They will know that death was not the end of their journey, but a sign post along the way. They will recognize that the "circular race" was useless. It looked real, but it was only a mirage. It did not help them get anywhere. They will discover that all the toys they gathered were as trustworthy as the sandcastles children make on the seashore, which a few waves suddenly wash away. They will understand that the real race was for God and toward God, not to accumulate gold. They will discover that death—the point of departure from their earthly life—did not end the race; the race will and must continue for

all eternity. They will know that during their earthly life they made no progress toward their goal. They will see a long journey ahead of them, and will wonder how they can ever reach their far away destination.

“But if the race toward fulfilling one’s spiritual mission will continue,” one may ask, “why worry about it here? Why not wait for death, and then begin the race?”

Consider this analogy. Suppose you are traveling, and your first destination is 100 million light years away, and you only have ten days to reach it. As a gesture of kindness, you are given a spacecraft that can travel ten million light years a day. You have a choice to use this spacecraft or to ignore it. Every day that you fail to use it, you fail to travel a distance of ten million light years. The critical point is this: whatever distance you fail to travel here, you will have to walk in the hereafter. Once you leave the earth, never again will that spacecraft be offered to you.

Imagine the magnitude of your anger, despair, and sense of loss, when you learn the consequences of your failure to have taken advantage of the incredible opportunity you were given: to travel even faster than the speed of light.

This analogy clearly demonstrates the critical significance and purpose of our earthly life. Here we have the freedom to become the most noble or the most evil human being, the most saintly or the most sinister. What we make of ourselves determines our distance from our divine destination. If we fail to be in the race for God and for goodness in this life, at death we will discover that we are still at "ground zero."

Imagine your sense of frustration and despair when you realize that you could have covered that astronomical distance—100 million light years—within the span of your earthly life. Now instead of sixty or seventy years you have "eternity" ahead of you. It will take you countless ages and eons to cover what you could have covered in just a few years. Now you find yourself so far away from your destination that you do not even want to

think about it. Imagine your sense of utter loss when you realize that because of just a little negligence, you lost the most glorious gift that Heaven may bestow upon humans: the freedom to choose your divine destiny. Imagine your sense of anger when you compare your position with those who took full advantage of the opportunities given to them during those first critical years on this earth.

Yes, those "astronomical days" is the time we spend here. They are the span of our earthly lives. That span is short and often painful. It passes away as swiftly as the wind. If we waste it, our losses are astronomical. It will take countless ages and eons to regain them. The spacecraft we are offered—our freedom to choose our divine destiny—is precious beyond anyone's imagination. But we only have it for a short while. If we fail to take advantage of it here, then we have to walk all the way to our destination for ages and ages to come. Faced with that possibility, would any reasonable person take a chance?

How amazing, how incredible! The enormity of the losses that can come from a little negligence! Who is willing to face that loss?

In terms of distance, all the efforts we make for our physical comfort count only as an inch—that is how little they will ultimately count. What about the efforts we make for finding the purpose of our lives and choosing our destiny? They can be measured only in light years. That is the magnitude of its colossal significance and consequence. In human language, there is no word to describe it. Human imagination is powerless to conceive it. Every other choice has limited consequence, except this one. The consequences of this choice endure for all eternity. What more needs to be said?

***Seize, O friends, the chance which this Day offereth you,
and deprive not yourselves...of His grace.***⁶² *Bahá'u'lláh*

To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven...a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted...
Ecclesiastes 3:1-2

Behold, now is the day of salvation! II Corinthians 6:2

*Free thyself from the veils of idle fancies and enter into My court, that thou mayest be fit for everlasting life and worthy to meet Me.*⁶³
Bahá'u'lláh

*As to those that have tasted of the fruit of man's earthly existence, which is the recognition of the one true God, exalted be His glory, their life hereafter is such as We are unable to describe. The knowledge thereof is with God, alone, the Lord of all worlds.*⁶⁴
Bahá'u'lláh

*Seize the time, therefore, ere the glory of the divine spring-time hath spent itself...This is My counsel unto thee and unto the beloved of God. Whosoever wisheth, let him turn thereunto; whosoever wisheth, let him turn away.*⁶⁵
Bahá'u'lláh

The Only Movie I Will Ever Make

My life on earth is my private, personal movie, where I am the writer, the director, and the actor. I am given one chance to make only one movie. Let it then be my best—one that will win many Oscars. This is the movie I will see millions of times for all eternity. This is the movie that will determine my everlasting destiny. I will regret seeing its flaws and rejoice witnessing its pleasant scenes, where I have manifested love toward others and demonstrated wisdom in my decisions. I will be the best critic of my movie while I have a chance, before my precious days have come to an end, before I have seen these words on the screen: ***The End!***

Every life that comes to an end is a book of lessons and warnings—lessons to be learned—warnings to be heeded. The most

critical lesson I can learn from each finished book is this: Do not let the world—its glamour—distract your attention from your goal: knowing and loving God and expressing that love to others. Let your book of life be as pure and radiant as the light. Let there be no ill-feelings toward others. Let the pages of your life be filled with service.

Every day speak to your soul and say: I do not like to face and feel the shame that comes from seeing blank pages in the book of my life. My joy, my glory, and my honor will come from witnessing these jewels on the crown of my everlasting life:

- ✱ *Knowing, loving, and trusting God.*
- ✱ *Possessing a pure, radiant heart.*
- ✱ *Being generous.*
- ✱ *Serving others to the point of self-sacrifice.*
- ✱ *Being detached from everything and everyone except God.*

The Role of Religious Leaders in Human History

In that day...O My people, your leaders will cause you to err, and confuse the course of your path. Isaiah 3: 7, 17 AB

Therefore the people wander like sheep oppressed for lack of a shepherd. My anger burns against the shepherds, and I will punish the leaders; for the Lord Almighty will care for his flock... Zechariah 10:2-3 NIV

4

Religious Leaders:

The Prime Source of Misinformation Concerning “the Knowledge of God”

This topic is presented specifically for the believers of all faiths who depend on their religious leaders for spiritual guidance. If they face a new path to knowledge, they rush to their rabbi, priest, pastor, or mulla to tell them what to do.

This chapter shows that depending on one’s religious leaders for spiritual guidance is unwise and unjustified. Religious wars have been waged in all ages by believers who have blindly followed what their trusted leaders told them. In this advanced age of knowledge, spiritual slavery is still an epidemic disease with grave consequences.

If you are an independent thinker, you will not benefit from this chapter. Its contents will, however, help you gain more insight into something you already know.

Ours is the age of the decline of faith:

When the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?

Christ (Luke 18:8 NIV)

*The vitality of men’s belief in God is dying out in every land...*⁶⁶

Bahá’u’lláh

It is essential to explore the reasons behind the rapid decline of faith during the last two centuries. To find a remedy, we must

first discover the cause. Unless we detect the source of the disease, there is little if any hope for recovery. Let us therefore get to the root of this epidemic disease.

Who are in charge of the spiritual life of people? Who must guide them and strengthen their faith? Who, but religious leaders? Are they not paid for this very reason? They hold much power within their grasp. They are assumed and expected to be saintly beyond reproach. They are also assumed to be experts in the knowledge of their sacred Scriptures. They reign in their synagogues, churches, or mosques like kings. They enjoy the respect of their followers and are regarded by them as their guiding stars to heaven—the paradise of everlasting joy and peace—rather than to the never-ending fire. Who would question such guiding star?

Despite their enormous influence in the affairs of the world—socio-economic, political, and spiritual—seldom have they been scrutinized. Seldom if ever have they been placed on trial. Let us do exactly what others have failed to do. The failure to do so is extremely costly to the spiritual welfare of all peoples and nations. Unless countless millions of believers are liberated from spiritual slavery, the world cannot find peace.

What is the first and foremost role of religious leaders? It is to serve as models of virtues. By their noble deeds they must demonstrate the transforming powers of faith. They must show how faith can elevate the spiritual life of their followers. They should be shining examples of self-sacrifice and love for peoples of all faiths. They should also be open to new knowledge, to scientific discoveries, no matter where they may lead them.

Have they lived up to these standards? Have they respected scientific discoveries that could undermine their dogmatic thinking and beliefs? Have they also spread good-will among nations, especially between their followers and those of other faiths?

Unfortunately, most of them have failed to live up to any one of these standards. In fact, they have set an opposite example. Instead of crowning the spiritual life of mankind with honor, they have inflicted shame on this most glorious gift that heaven may bestow on humans.

In this age of science and enlightenment, they still take the metaphoric story of Adam and Eve literally! They still insist that God made Eve out of a rib removed from Adam! They are still refusing to look into the telescope—as they did during the time of Galileo and Copernicus—to witness the awesome design of creation both in the universe without and the universe within—the spiritual design of creation. They have failed to acknowledge the divine origin of all the great religions. Instead of promoting unity and finding harmony between their faith and other faiths, they have tried to find and exaggerate minor differences. They have been a divisive force in the destiny of mankind.

It is evident that religious leaders are not identical. Some of them shine as brightly as the stars of heaven. Such leaders, who are a small minority, deserve the highest praise:

Know ye that they are the lamps of guidance unto them that are in the heavens and on the earth.⁶⁷ *Bahá'u'lláh*

Those divines [religious leaders]...who are truly adorned with the ornament of knowledge and of a goodly character are, verily, as a head to the body of the world, and as eyes to the nations.⁶⁸ *Bahá'u'lláh*

Unfortunately, the majority of religious leaders fail to live up to expected standards. Among those I have known, seldom have I found one who is open to new ideas, no matter how reasonable. Seldom have I found one who would reject the concept of “exclusive salvation” (“we are the only ones saved!”) a doctrine that has fueled religious prejudice in all ages.

The very Scriptures that these leaders preach, predict their misleading role in this crowded and confusing age:

In that day...O My people, your leaders will cause you to err, and confuse the course of your path. Isaiah 3: 7, 17 AB

Therefore the people wander like sheep oppressed for lack of a shepherd. My anger burns against the shepherds, and I will punish the leaders; for the Lord Almighty will care for his flock... Zechariah 10:2-3 NIV

For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. II Timothy 4:3-4 NIV

But many who are first will be last, and many who are last will be first. Christ (Matt. 19:30 NIV)

Note what Jesus said to the religious leaders of His age:

How terrible it will be for you teachers of religious law ...Hypocrites! For you won't let others to enter the Kingdom of Heaven, and you won't go in yourselves.

Christ (Matt. 23:13 NLT)

Woe to you, blind guides!...Woe to you, teachers of the [Mosaic] law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence.

Matthew 23: 16, 17, 25 NIV

You study the scriptures diligently, supposing that...you have eternal life, yet although their testimony points to me, you refuse to come to me for that life.

Christ (John 5:39-40 NEB)

What about the religious leaders of Jewish Faith?

My people are being destroyed because they don't know me. It is all your fault, you priests, for you yourselves refuse to know me...The more priests there are, the more they sin against me. They have exchanged the glory of God for the disgrace of idols.

Hosea 4:6-7 NLT

What do Islamic Scriptures say about the religious leaders of our time? Here is one reference quoted widely in Islamic resources and also by Bahá'u'lláh:

The religious leaders of that age will be the most evil beneath the shadow of heaven. Mischief from them will proceed and unto them shall it return.⁶⁹

Religious leaders should have been the first to acknowledge the divine origin of great Messengers. Have they fulfilled this role? Once again, they have played just the opposite role:

Leaders of religion, in every age, have hindered their people from attaining the shores of eternal salvation, inasmuch as they held the reins of authority in their mighty grasp. Some for the lust of leadership, others through want of knowledge and understanding, have been the cause of the deprivation of the people.⁷⁰ *Bahá'u'lláh*

The door to the knowledge of God is open to everyone:

Behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it... *Christ (Rev. 3:8)*

Religious leaders have kept this door closed and pretend to have the key.

The extreme and persistent prejudice and narrow-mindedness displayed by those who should serve as models of true faith and shining examples of love and tolerance has been the prime cause of the decline of faith in our time—especially among the young and educated. The demeanor of religious leaders has diminished the honor of believing. If they are the best examples of true faith, who would want to have faith?

The news of sexual scandals committed by some religious leaders in the west, and the promotion of violence by others in the east, have further stained the honor of being an example for those in desperate need of an example. Instead of sending child abusers—who have engaged in serious crimes—to prison, church officials have simply transferred them to other cities to find new victims

to abuse! Is this what religion is all about? Christian authorities have paid billions of dollars in lawsuits in several countries.

When we went to school, we were graded. Grades gave us an objective assessment. Let us now grade the religious leaders to see more objectively where they stand. Please feel free to disagree with any grade assigned here to them. Minor disagreements can be expected, but they will not change the total picture. If you strongly disagree with any grade, please let me know your reason. Perhaps we can reach a consensus concerning this critical issue.

Positive and Negative Impacts of Religious Leaders on the World

<i>The Functions Religious Leaders Should Serve</i>	<i>Positive</i>	<i>Negative</i>
1. Promoting harmony between followers of various religions		—
2. Serving as shining examples of nobility for others—for both believers and nonbelievers.		—
3. Promoting unity between denominations within their own religion		—
4. Using reason and evidence as the standard of truth rather than tradition		—
5. Respecting scientific studies		—
6. Preventing division of religion into denominations and sects		—
7. Emphasizing spiritual values over theological doctrines		—

<i>The Functions Religious Leaders Should Serve</i>	<i>Positive</i>	<i>Negative</i>
8. Working for racial equality and elimination of prejudice		—
9. Helping the poor	+	
10. Influencing the law-makers to reduce taxes for the poor and middle classes		—
11. Serving as peace-makers among nations		—
12. Preventing religious wars and violence		—
13. Welcoming and acknowledging the new Messengers from God		—
Total Score	+ 1	— 12

These grades demonstrate the extremely negative impact that religious leaders have had on the spiritual health of the world. Their grades are the opposite of what they should be.

Suppose you wanted to fly and you discovered that your pilot had received failing grades **12** out of **13** times. Would you board his plane and allow him to take you to your destination? Suppose you were a principal and wanted to employ a teacher. Would you offer that job to a candidate with a grade point average of “**-12**”? Why then do billions of people, without knowing, leave their spiritual life and destiny in the hands of incompetent and unqualified teachers? As long as believers depend on their religious leaders, the world will remain in darkness. War, violence, conflict, prejudice, and misery will continue to afflict the world. The time has come to liberate mankind from spiritual slavery. How long will the followers remain asleep?

*Lift up thy head from slumber, for the Sun hath risen to the zenith, haply it may shine upon thee with the light of beauty.*⁷¹

Bahá'u'lláh

What predictions have the Scriptures made about these leaders? What does the very Bible they teach, declare about those in charge of the spiritual destiny of mankind—the so-called “shepherds of the flock”?

At that time...Hear the cry of the shepherds, the wailing of the leaders of the flock, for the Lord is destroying their pasture.
Jeremiah 25:33, 36 NIV

Weep and wail, you shepherds; roll in the dust, you leaders of the flock. For your time to be slaughtered has come; you will fall and be shattered like fine pottery. The shepherds will have nowhere to flee, the leaders of the flock no place to escape.
Jeremiah 25: 34-35 NIV

See also Ezekiel 34:10

The appointed time predicted by the Prophets has now come! Should the believers continue to depend on these narrow-minded leaders as their guides to heaven? The spiritual destiny of mankind is too precious to be left in the hands of mostly dogmatic thinkers who are centuries behind their time.

This book and its sequel are written to raise the status of faith above the blind conformity promoted by most religious leaders who have taken charge and presented themselves as the true models of faith and as trustworthy custodians of truth. What do these religious leaders have in common? Each of them is convinced that only the believers on his side are worthy of God’s “many mansions in heaven,” and that others are “unsaved and lost” and therefore “fit for the fire!” This belief alone has alienated millions of enlightened thinkers from God. It is like asking GPS (global positioning system) for direction to a given destination and getting four or five opposite directions!

Do religious leaders have a monopoly over the truth? This book and its sequel are written to show that they do not, and that there is indeed a viable alternative. The facts presented in the next volume—***The Spiritual Design of Creation***—demonstrate that true faith can stand on both reason and scientific discoveries, that one truth cannot contradict another, that there is an absolute

harmony between faith and reason, and between the spiritual teachings of all great religions.

It is my ardent wish that the facts presented in this book will reignite the flame of faith in all lovers of truth, especially in young and educated people who have been exposed to the fruits of science and must face this painful choice: either deny their faith, or deny the voice of reason within their soul.

The Gateway to Heaven: An Open and Receptive Heart

But the seed on good soil stands for those with a noble and good heart, who hear the word, retain it, and by persevering produce a crop.
Christ (Luke 8:15 NIV)

Why don't religious leaders gather together and resolve their differences? Why have the peoples of the world remained spiritually divided, even hostile toward each other, for thousands of years? Why can't even Christian denominations come together and work together? Because of this ingrained tradition and assumption: ***the religion or the denomination of one's parents is the only one to accept and follow.*** This assumption is accepted and faithfully followed by the followers of all religions and denominations, and even by agnostics and atheists. Isn't it amazing that people build their spiritual life on a mere assumption or tradition? Isn't it amazing that instead of choosing, they let chance determine their beliefs?

Suppose the line of your present beliefs can be traced to an atheist or agnostic who lived a thousand years ago. Suppose one day a Christian had told him to accept Jesus Christ as his Savior, and he had said, "Yes." Is there any reason for thinking that your ancestor's conversion to Christianity, a thousand years ago, should determine what you should believe today? Suppose your ancestor had said "No" to the Christian who invited him, and that his line of denial had continued down to you. Should you

also follow that line, and then pass it to your descendents? Can you think of any reason why your particular culture or parents should forever determine your spiritual life?

We should honor our ancestors. But does this mean that we should also put them in charge of our destiny? Should we let them decide what we must believe today? No logical, scriptural, or historical reason supports this tradition.

Most, perhaps all, of the obstacles to unity, peace, and harmony can be traced to conformity. They can be traced to beliefs that have been accepted, not as a result of independent and impartial inquiry, but rather as a consequence of emotional attachment or convenience—an unwillingness to take the time to investigate the truth, to make an effort to gather the facts before making a choice.

*It is evident that prejudices arising from adherence to religious forms and imitation of ancestral beliefs have hindered the progress of humanity thousands of years. How many wars and battles have been fought, how much division, discord and hatred have been caused by this form of prejudice!*⁷²

‘Abdu’l-Bahá

The age of dependency has passed; the time of maturity and independence has arrived:

*He hath endowed every soul with the capacity to recognize the signs of God. How could He, otherwise, have fulfilled His testimony unto men...?*⁷³

Bahá’u’lláh



I have perfected in every one of you My creation, so that the excellence of My handiwork may be fully revealed unto men. It follows, therefore, that every man hath been, and will continue to be, able of himself to appreciate the Beauty of God, the Glorified. Had he not been endowed with such a capacity, how could he be called to account for his failure? If, in the Day when all the peoples of the earth will be gathered together, any man should, whilst standing in the

*presence of God, be asked: "Wherefore hast thou disbelieved in My Beauty and turned away from My Self," and if such a man should reply and say: "Inasmuch as all men have erred, and none hath been found willing to turn his face to the Truth, I, too, following their example, have grievously failed to recognize the Beauty of the Eternal," such a plea will, assuredly, be rejected. For the faith of no man can be conditioned by any one except himself.*⁷⁴

Bahá'u'lláh



*Purge your sight, that ye may perceive its glory with your own eyes, and depend not on the sight of any one except your self, for God hath never burdened any soul beyond its power. Thus hath it been sent down unto the Prophets and Messengers of old, and been recorded in all the Scriptures.*⁷⁵

Bahá'u'lláh



Darkness hath encompassed every land, O my God...I beseech Thee, by Thy Most Great Name, to raise in every city a new creation that shall turn towards Thee, and shall remember Thee amidst Thy servants, and shall unfurl by virtue of their utterances and wisdom the ensigns of Thy victory, and shall detach themselves from all created things.

*Potent art Thou to do Thy pleasure. No God is there but Thee, the Most Powerful, He Whose help is implored by all men.*⁷⁶

Bahá'u'lláh

*Please send your questions and comments to: info@TheKnowledgeofGod.com. Printed copies of this book and the next volume—*The Spiritual Design of Creation*—will soon become available. Please check this Website: www.globalperspective.org*

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