



***The Role of
Religious Leaders
in the Destiny
of Humankind***

Religious Leaders:

**The “False Prophets” of
Our Time, and the Prime
Source of Prejudice in
Our Global Village**

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Religious Leaders

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The Destructive Role of Religious Leaders in Our Age

In that day...O My people, your leaders will cause you to err,
and confuse the course of your path. Isaiah 3:7, 12 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

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.* Bahá'u'lláh

Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's
clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. By their fruit
you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from
thornbushes, or figs from thistles? Likewise every good tree
bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree
cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit.
Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown
into the fire. Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them.
Matthew 7:14-20 NIV

* *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 15.

The Source of Prejudice

Until recently most of our attention was drawn to the consequences of racial prejudice, especially in the United States. The world remained unaware of a far more serious problem until a group known as Al-Qaida attacked the Twin Towers in New York City. That event marked a new chapter in world history. It revealed the dreadful consequences of a far more serious disease lurking in the heart of humankind: religious prejudice. Who is responsible for initiating and spreading this deeply-rooted prejudice? Who fans the flames of this world engulfing fire? This book points to religious leaders as its prime source and breeding ground.

Most believers trust their religious leaders and follow them faithfully as their guides to heaven and everlasting happiness, without being aware of the perilous consequences of this ancient and deeply entrenched tradition.

The time has come for the followers of all faiths to question this unjustified and perilous practice. The time has come to examine the divisive role of these leaders, to see objectively what they are doing. The time has come to look more closely at who they are, how they have behaved in the past, and what strategies they use to keep their followers divided and uninformed.

To do justice to this issue, volumes must be written by various scholars—sociologists, psychologists, historians, and the enlightened leaders of all faiths. For a small minority of them, such as Hans Küng*, have been sounding the alarm, but to no avail.

I have already covered this topic in several volumes in several ways. To portray a fuller profile of the role the religious have

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played in the destiny of humankind, I have brought some of those materials together in this volume, with some added information.

This book is addressed to the followers of all faiths. It is a wake-up call to all believers that the time of dependency has passed; the age of maturity and independence has arrived. Do we really need someone to lead us to God? Depending on someone else to lead us to heaven because he has taken a few courses in theology makes as much sense as submitting to a psychologist because he has taken a few courses in psychology! Our relationship with God is spiritual. It does not rest on a mind filled with facts. It rests on the purity of heart:

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

Christ (Matt. 5:8)

Knowing Hebrew, Greek, or Arabic; memorizing a holy book; and wearing a robe, do not make a person holy. Each individual is responsible before God and must choose his everlasting destiny through his own endeavors, his own independent search for truth, rather than through conformity to the beliefs and dictates of self-selected authority figures with a certificate in theology. The records of history prove beyond any doubt that such a practice is as unsafe as driving in a busy highway with closed eyes!

The Light of Unity

The Purpose of the one true God, exalted by 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. That the divers communions of the earth, and the manifold systems of religious belief, should never be allowed to foster the feelings of animosity among men, is, in this Day, of the essence of the Faith of God and His Religion. These principles and laws, these firmly-established and mighty systems, have proceeded from one Source, and are the rays of one Light. That they differ one from another is to be attributed to the varying requirements of the ages in which they were promulgated.

Gird up the loins of your endeavor...that haply the tumult of religious dissension and strife that agitateth the peoples of the earth may be stilled, that every trace of it may be completely obliterated. For the love of God, and them that serve Him, arise to aid this most sublime and momentous Revelation. Religious fanaticism and hatred are a world-devouring fire, whose violence none can quench. The Hand of Divine power can, alone, deliver mankind from this desolating affliction....¹

Bahá'u'lláh

I

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 book 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 the facts presented in this book. 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...¹
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.² 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.³ Bahá'u'lláh

Unfortunately, the majority of religious leaders fail to live up to the 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:

But in that day... O my people, your guides lead you astray; they turn you from the path. The Lord takes his place in court; he rises to judge the people. The Lord enters into judgment against the elders and leaders of his people: “It is you who have ruined my vineyard; the plunder from the poor is in your houses. What do you mean by crushing my people and grinding the faces of the poor?” declares the Lord, the Lord Almighty.

Isaiah 3:7, 12-15 NIV

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.
Christ (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.⁴

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.⁵ Bahá'u'lláh

This warning applies especially to religious leaders:

Alas for the world that such causes of stumbling arise! Come they must, but woe betide the man through whom they come!
Christ (Matt. 18:7 NEB)

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***

***By their fruit you will recognize them.
Christ (Matt. 7:20 NIV)***

<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		—

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.⁶

Bahá'u'lláh

“Authorities” Who are in Complete Disagreement

In this age, the world has changed and continues to change at a rapid pace. This change requires an equal change in our thinking and the way we relate to each other. Have the religious teachers taken any steps in this direction? The following example demonstrates their role in this age. Suppose you are sick, but cannot find a hospital. While searching, you see five people on the sidewalk. You approach them, hoping that at least one of them can show you the way. But when you ask for help, each of them gives you a different set of directions. In desperation, you ask: “Has anyone of you visited this hospital?” every one of them says “No!” And when you ask: “Then how do you know the address?” They all say: “My father told me so.”

At that point, a fight breaks out between the bystanders. Each of them is looking at the others and shouting: “Your father is a liar!” By now you are not only confused but saddened by the animosity you have caused. You say to yourself: “I wish I had never asked for directions!”

Does not this example demonstrate the role of religious leaders in our time? If you asked five leaders from different religions: “How can I get to heaven?” would not each of them give you a different set of directions? And who told them where “heaven” was? Who else but their fathers and mothers?

Despite such a state of utter confusion and contradiction, most people fail to ask this simple question: “Why should I give the most precious gift God has given me—my freedom to choose my everlasting destiny—to someone else? Why should I not make this most vital choice on my own—through my own enquiry, my own independent investigation of truth? Why should I let someone else lead me to heaven? Did not God give me a mind for this very purpose? When I walk or travel, do I close my eyes and let someone else lead me? Why then should I close my “spiritual eye” and allow a stranger take me where he thinks I should go?”

What predictions have the Scriptures made about these leaders? What does the very the Bible they teach, declare about those in charge of the spiritual destiny of the 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 is 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 different directions!

2

The First Shall Be Last

Christ (Matt. 20:16)

This chapter shows:

- That conforming to the judgment of religious leaders is unsafe and unreasonable, for they have always discouraged the people from recognizing God's Messengers and Saviors.
- That instead of being the first to acknowledge the truth, they have been the last.
- That theology serves as a barrier to the recognition of truth.
- That according to Jesus' prediction, the religious leaders (who served as the guiding stars in Christendom) would at the time of His advent lose their light, moving from the first position to the last.

Religious Leaders as "False Prophets"

To protect Christians from denying Him in His Second Advent, Jesus offered the most clear and emphatic instructions. In His well-known discourse on "knowing a tree by its fruits," He singled out the religious leaders as the clouds that would conceal His glory.

In His statement, Jesus did not use the words "religious leaders." But a careful study of His statement shows clearly that by "false prophets" He means Christian leaders who abuse Christianity for their selfish interests. The Bible uses the word "prophet" in two ways in a unique way:

- ***"Prophet": The One who brings a Message from God.***

- ***“False prophet”*: the one who prevents the people from heeding the Message of God.**

It is ironic that in all ages the very same people who are called “false prophets” have applied that title to “true Prophets,” the Ones sent by God to guide people to His presence. The following statement of Jesus teaches us basically two lessons:

- How we can recognize a “true Prophet.”
- How we can recognize “false prophets.”

Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? Likewise every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them.

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. Many will say to me on that day, “Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?” Then I will tell them plainly, “I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!”

Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash. Christ (Matt. 7:15-27 NIV)

The words of Jesus are indeed prophetic, for they describe with precision the plight of the religious leaders in our time. These are the main points of His message:

- Jesus begins by warning us of false prophets, and then goes on to identify them by their hypocrisy, namely the wide gap between what they preach and practice, between their smooth glowing faces and their harsh, unfeeling hearts. Examples of such false prophets abound in our time. Some of them claim that God Himself speaks to them. Others pretend to possess miraculous healing powers. They have turned religion into a business. Many simple-minded people put their trust—and resources—in their hands. These pretenders are so polished, so perfect on the outside as to deceive anyone who stands off guard, “even the elect, if this is possible.”
- After giving His warnings and introducing the signs of falsehood, Jesus goes on to identify the touchstone by which truth can be distinguished from deception. The touchstone He designates is the “fruits.” Anyone can say “I am a good tree.” The only way we can be sure is to taste the fruit.
- After this, Jesus goes back again to false prophets by exposing them still further. He singles out those who use His name (our Lord Jesus) to win favors, to prove their sincerity and faith, or as a panacea to all problems. Verbalizing the name, He says, does not entitle a believer to the kingdom of heaven. What can grant him such an honor is obedience to divine commandments (among them knowing a tree by its fruit, refusing to submit to blind faith). He also identifies as prophets of falsehood those who preoccupy themselves with demons, miracles, and the making of predictions. These, too, He intimates, will be unable to enter the heavenly kingdom.
- Finally, Jesus assures those who use the divine standards (namely knowing a tree by its fruits) of a secure destiny, comparing them to a man who builds his house on rocks. Such believers stand secure, for they trusted God’s standards of truth. As to those who disregarded the divine counsels,

their future is uncertain, for they built their house on sand, they depended on that which is undependable—their own desires.

Let us now identify some of the prevailing religious practices that fulfill Jesus' prophetic words on false prophets. Let us see what most religious leaders have done and are doing to religion:

- Their teachings revolve around dogmas and traditions. They find a few Scriptural passages, interpret them in a special way, and then claim to have the only version of truth. Such a practice has led to the creation of thousands of denominations in Christianity. Instead of using religion to unify, they have used it to divide.
- Their life is full of hypocrisy. They tell the people what they like to hear.
- The fruit of their endeavors is the spread of fanaticism, blind faith and conformity, the dependence on the miraculous, the abdication of reason, the rejection of the fundamental facts of science, the adoption of cultish practices, the raising of the Demon to the rank of a power-sharer with God, the calling of Satan (or Devil) the chief mischief maker—a man-made pawn who must carry much of the blame for the evils of humanity, the misfortunes of mankind.
- As Jesus states, they also engage in prophesying. They derive from the Scriptures any prediction that suits their fantasies. They make successive forecasts about wars, conquests, economic disasters, emergence of new nations, and the end of the world, all on the basis of obscure and far-fetched Scriptural references.
- They claim to know the meaning of symbolic words, even though they are unable to comprehend the literal, even though they have been forbidden to make such assertions (I Cor. 4:5; II Peter 1:20-21). They know in their heart their own weaknesses and fallibility, yet to others they portray infallibility and supremacy. Seldom do they say “I can't understand this passage or this prophecy.”

- At the end of His instructions, Jesus refers also to those who hear His words but do not put them to practice, who read that they should test these leaders by their fruits, yet they ignore the instructions. We find abundant evidence in our time pointing to the fulfillment of Jesus' words. Today, we find many leaders whose primary interest is in witnessing miracles. Instead of teaching their followers to test the fruits of the new Messenger, they teach them to ask: why did He not come from the sky? Why did we not hear His shout? Why didn't the stars fall? Why didn't the dead rise? Where is the new Jerusalem that must descend from the sky? What about the trumpet the Savior must sound? Where are the new earth and new heaven? Why aren't the wicked destroyed? Why hasn't the world come to an end?

The preceding are the signs of false prophets—leaders who shape religion to suit their own fantasies, who use the people's trust for the conquest of their own selfish ends, who determine in advance by their own standards what the truth is and then reject what fails to fit the preconceived pattern.

To conclude, “good fruits” can never be used as a means of deception. For it is impossible for a false prophet to produce good fruits, even as it is impossible for a bad tree to produce good fruits. What the false prophets can use as a means of deception is “performing great signs and miracles,” for that *is* possible:

For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect—if that were possible.

Matthew 24:24 NIV

Therefore those who look for “great signs and miracles” can be deceived; those who look for fruits can never be deceived.

Concern for signs or miracles is contrary to the clear instructions of Jesus. Those who seek miracles instead of good fruits, as Jesus indicates, are building the future house of their destiny on sand, namely their own fantasies, and so they can in no way recognize the truth. In the day of judgment, they will hear these words spoken to them:

Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’

Matthew 7:23 NEB

When Jesus specified “fruits” as the standards by which truth should be judged, He had full knowledge that His instructions would not be heeded. Therefore He prefaced His instructions with these words:

Enter by the narrow gate. The gate is wide that leads to perdition, there is plenty of room on the road, and many go that way; but the gate that leads to life is small and the road is narrow, and those who find it are few.

Matthew 7:13-14 NEB

The masses of people find security in numbers: “A billion believers cannot be wrong.” Yet Jesus teaches just the opposite: from those who confess faith only a few will find the gate to spiritual life.

To complete His instructions, Jesus prefaced the preceding words with still other instructions:

Ask, and you will receive; seek, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened. For everyone who asks receives, he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.

Matthew 7:7-8 NEB

See also verses 9-11

In the preceding words Jesus encourages His followers to search for truth. If we fail to search, how can we find the “fruit?” And if we fail to taste the fruit, how can we know it is good or bad?

Conformity a Common Practice

For men hang upon the words of the priest and seek knowledge and instruction from him.

Malachi 2:7 NEB

We find many who refuse to investigate the news of the advent of a new Messenger from God because they prefer to submit the reign of their spiritual destiny to custodians of faith—the religious leaders and theologians. To them, the burden of the freedom of

choice seems too heavy to bear. Such seekers curb their thirst for truth by imitating and conforming.

After all, it comes so natural to most of us to think that we should let the leaders lead, and “to reason” in this way: “There are so many theologians, so many learned men of fame whose knowledge of the Scriptures transcends mine. If there is any truth to the new Revelation from God, why haven’t *they* recognized it? There *must* be a reason.”

The Masses of Religious Leaders Non-receptive

As Bahá’u’lláh states repeatedly throughout *The Book of Certitude*, the religious leaders have always been in the forefront of the rejecting masses, the first to deny the divine Manifestations and to encourage their followers to follow likewise their example of denial.

We read in the Scriptures again and again about “the chief priests” who with the help of other leaders constantly tried to trick Jesus, mock Him, accuse Him, insult Him, put Him to death, do anything to stop His growing influence in the hearts of the pure:

The chief priests and the teachers of the law [of Moses] heard this and began looking for a way to kill him [Jesus], for they feared him, because the whole crowd was amazed at his teaching.

Mark 11:18 NIV

But the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowd...to have Jesus executed.

Matthew 27:20 NIV

“Woe to you experts in the law [of Moses], because you have taken away the key to knowledge. You yourselves have not entered, and you have hindered those who were entering.”

When Jesus left there, the Pharisees and the teachers of the law began to oppose him fiercely and to besiege him with questions, waiting to catch him in something he might say. Luke 11:52-54 NIV

Jesus Himself knew that the chief priests and the like would prove to be His chief adversaries:

‘The Son of Man has to undergo great sufferings, and to be rejected by the elders, chief priests, and doctors of the law...’

Luke 9:22 NEB

The obstacles posed by the religious leaders of our time and the ultimate victory of divine Will are both predicted in the Old Testament:

Men wander about like sheep in distress for lack of a shepherd. My anger is turned against the shepherds, and I will visit with punishment the leaders of the flock.

Zechariah 10:2-3 NEB

And again:

I am against the shepherds and will demand my sheep from them...I will rescue my sheep from their jaws, and they shall feed on them no more...I will bring them out from every nation, gather them in from other lands, and lead them home to their own soil. I will graze them on the mountains of Israel, by her streams and in all her green fields.

Ezekiel 34:10, 13 NEB

Bahá'u'lláh's words harmonize well with the words of the Scriptures:

O ye that are foolish, yet have a name to be wise!

Wherefore do ye wear the guise of shepherds, when inwardly ye have become wolves, intent upon My flock? Ye are even as the star, which riseth ere the dawn, and which, though it seem radiant and luminous, leadeth the wayfarers of My city astray into the paths of perdition.¹

Lack of receptivity on the part of religious leaders constitutes a most common theme in the Scriptures, yet strangely it escapes us. Here are further references: John 11:47-48; Matt. 27:12,41; 15:14; 5:20; 23:27-36; Luke 7:30; 19:47-48; 20:19,45-47; 15:2-3; 10:21,25; Acts 3:6-7; Jer. 25:34-38; 26:11; 2:8; Hos. 4:4-10; Mal. 1:6-7,10-12; 2:1-4; Qur'án 67:33.

Historical Evidence

Let us now examine the records of history. Who were the Apostles of Jesus? Who were the first to recognize Him and believe in Him? The religious leaders, the so called “chief priests and elders” with

their many preconceived notions of the Scriptures? Or the simple but open-minded seekers guided by reason and a conscience sensitive and thirsting for truth? Did the early disciples—“the simple fisher folk of Galilee” —recognize Jesus because His interpretation of the symbols harmonized with theirs? Or did they recognize Him because of His mighty Words, His supreme detachment from the world, and His absolute devotion to His teachings? Did the early disciples recognize Jesus *because* of their religious leaders or *in spite of them*?

Annas and Caiaphas were the foremost religious leaders of their day. They had attained the highest rank among the Jews in the days of Jesus. How did they respond to their Messiah whose advent they had anticipated, and the signs of whose coming they had studied extensively and preached repeatedly in their synagogues? “Caiaphas declared that it would be better for Jesus to die than the nation be destroyed.”²

Bahá'u'lláh writes:

Consider the Dispensation of Jesus Christ. Behold, how all the learned men of that generation, though eagerly anticipating the coming of the Promised One, have nevertheless denied Him. Both Annas, the most learned among the divines of His day, and Caiaphas, the high priest, denounced Him and pronounced the sentence of His death.³

Why Are the Religious Leaders Non-receptive?

Why are the religious leaders more likely to reject than accept the new Revelations from God? Many reasons are involved. Here are a few.

- First, they are too sure of their discernment, seeing themselves in the forefront of knowledge, the first in the ranks of the faithful, and the first to adore the truth. Yet this very attitude, as prophesied in the Scriptures, stands in their way of knowing the truth, becomes their stumbling block. This is why the Voice of Prophecy predicts that the first shall be the last (Matt. 20:1-16; Mark 10:31). Further, we are told

that no one can enter the Kingdom of Heaven unless he becomes like little children—humble, pure, and inquisitive.

- Second, the religious leaders are handicapped in still another way. Since their livelihood depends on their position, and their position on being faithful to the established beliefs, the acceptance of the new Revelation brings them face to face with sacrifices they are unprepared to make:

They feed on the sin of my people and relish their wickedness.

Hosea 4:8 NIV

- Third, because religious leaders are so deeply engrossed in traditional dogmas and doctrines (markedly reinforced during their schooling), they lose—gradually and unwittingly—the freedom of their soul to seek new vistas of truth, to gaze at the unfamiliar with wonder and curiosity, with openness and detachment from preconceived notions.
- Fourth, they are too busy with their work to be able to leave their secure surroundings, to pass beyond traditional bounds of knowledge. Experience indicates that their knowledge of other Faith is exceedingly meager, with much of what they know consisting of misconceptions, acquired from unreliable or biased sources.
- Fifth, to begin with, they rate high on conservatism; otherwise they could not fit into the established pattern.

Human Knowledge an Obstacle

Knowledge is of two kinds: one arises from a superficial accumulation of specific facts, the other springs from the understanding of fundamental principles; one nourishes on fanaticism, dogmatism, imitation, egotism, and blind faith; the other thrives on openness, objectivity, reason, flexibility, and humility; one reflects the letter of the law; the other the spirit of the law. All the Manifestations condemn the first, but exalt the latter. Here is how the Scriptures describe the dogmatic knowledge:

Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.

II Timothy 3:7

A new translation of the same verse:

Always learning but never able to acknowledge the truth. NIV

And again:

But it is not for any man to bring a charge, it is not for him to prove a case; the quarrel with you, false priest, is mine...My people are ruined for lack of knowledge; your own countrymen are brought to ruin. You have rejected knowledge, and I will reject you from serving me as priest. You have forgotten the teaching of God...

Hosea 4:4, 6 NEB

Diametrically opposed to dogmatic knowledge is divine Knowledge, a discernment bestowed upon the pure:

At that time Jesus spoke these words: 'I thank thee, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for hiding these things from the learned and wise, and revealing them to the simple. Yes, Father, such was thy choice.'

Matthew 11:25-26 NEB

Also Luke 10:21

In the following passage, Bahá'u'lláh clearly describes and distinguishes between the divine Knowledge and the Satanic knowledge:

Know verily that Knowledge is of two kinds: Divine and Satanic. The one welleteth out from the fountain of divine inspiration; the other is but a reflection of vain and obscure thoughts. The source of the former is God Himself; the motive-force of the latter the whisperings of selfish desire. The one is guided by the principle: "Fear ye God; God will teach you;" the other is but a confirmation of the truth: "Knowledge is the most grievous veil between man and his Creator." The former bringeth forth the fruit of patience, of longing desire, of true understanding, and love; whilst the latter can yield naught but arrogance, vainglory and conceit.⁴

Whenever the Bible refers to the rejecting crowds, it mentions their hearts, their eyes, and their ears (John 12: 39-40); never their brains. In recognizing a new Savior, lack of scholarship does not

pose a problem, it is always lack of spiritual discernment and purity that veil the Truth. The following prophecy has been revealed specifically for our age, for it refers not only to the requirements of recognition but also to the Object of recognition—“the King of Glory,” “the Lord of Hosts,” titles, assigned to the Promised One of our age, and assumed by Bahá’u’lláh.

Who may go up the mountain of the Lord? * And who may stand in his holy place? ***He who has clean hands and a pure heart***, who has not set his mind on falsehood, and has not committed perjury. He shall receive a blessing from the Lord, and justice from God his savior. Such is the fortune of those who seek him, who seek the face of the God of Jacob.

...Lift up your heads, you gates, lift them up, you everlasting doors, that the king of glory may come in. Who then is the king of glory? The king of glory is the Lord of Hosts.

Psalms 23:3-6, 9-10 NEB

Nowhere in the Bible do we find any reference to rank, position, or proficiency in theology as a requirement for recognizing the Truth; nowhere are we told to follow the example of scholars, the verdict of theologians.

In the following passage Jesus clearly states that knowing the truth is a matter of heart, that if the seeker wishes to succeed in his search for Truth, he must simply harmonize his will with the divine Will. He makes no mention of learning or theology:

Jesus answered them, and said, My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me. If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.

John 7:16-17

Theology is for the most part man-made. It is full of complexities and contradictions. Divine Knowledge is simple, rational, and consistent, in fact, so simple as to be understood even by children:

O Father...thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.

Matthew 11:25

* Mount Carmel is known as the mountain of the Lord. Bahá’u’lláh sometimes pitched His tent on the slopes of Mount Carmel.

In *The Book of Certitude* Bahá'u'lláh quotes these passages from the Islamic Scriptures:

Knowledge is one point, which the foolish have multiplied.⁵

Knowledge is a light which God casteth into the heart of whomsoever He willeth.⁶

The fact is that theologians have always disagreed, and will always disagree, in interpreting even the most fundamental facts of the Scriptures. (This is why no religion has remained immune to the divisions and schisms caused by religious leaders.) Then, which school of theology, and which group of the interpreters should we choose to follow, and what constitutes the minimum criterion or requirement for being recognized a theologian? Is the knowledge of Hebrew and Greek both essential? What about degrees and publications?

What is the ultimate purpose of knowledge? To guide us to the **Object** of Knowledge, namely the divine Manifestations. Bahá'u'lláh writes:

We have decreed, O people, that the highest and last end of all learning be the recognition of Him Who is the Object of all knowledge; and yet, behold how ye have allowed your learning to shut you out, as by a veil, from Him Who is the Day Spring of this Light, through Whom every hidden thing hath been revealed. Could ye but discover the source whence the splendor of this utterance is diffused, ye would cast away the peoples of the world and all that they possess, and would draw nigh unto this most blessed Seat of glory.⁷

Following the Masses, an Unsafe Guide

If it is unreasonable to place our spiritual destiny in the hands of theologians or religious leaders, what about the masses of people? Can millions and millions fail to recognize the truth, misjudge the divine Savior? First, they can fail because the prophecies predict that they will. The Scriptures indicate that our promised Redeemer will once again be rejected (Luke 17:25-30; John 16:11). This can

happen only if the *masses* reject Him, for the majority prevails. Otherwise if the majority recognized Him, how could He be rejected?

Second, we are told that those who succeed in finding the Gate of the Kingdom are few in number (Luke 13:24; Matt. 7:13-14). Again such prophecies suggest that not only the masses *can* be wrong in their judgment of the divine Truth, but that they *will* be wrong. Consequently immediate acceptance or recognition of the new Revelation would only serve to disprove its validity,

The fallacy of following the masses is quite evident. We follow the elusive majority, yet we are part of the majority who in turn follow us!

According to the divine Plan, everyone stands accountable to God for his acts or the choices he makes, and consequently in his testing of the divine Manifestation, he should refrain from relying on any one—his friends, pastor, priest, or parents—save his own pure conscience, a conscience dedicated to truth and fully dependent on divine Guidance. For the Scriptures warn:

So then everyone of us shall give account of himself to God.

Romans 14:12

I will call you to account for your doings.

Ezekiel 6:3 NEB

Therefore, if someone tries to excuse himself before the court of divine Judgment by saying: “I failed to search because I trusted the judgment of the majority, or I denied because of my friends, parents, or pastor, or I did not take the Claim seriously because I followed the example of the leaders.” Such an excuse will be utterly unacceptable. Bahá’u’lláh writes:

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.⁸

The Complacency of Religious Leaders

We see violent acts from certain religious leaders, such as the minister who burned the Qur'án in public. The media gave him much attention, which led to demonstrations in several Islamic countries and the death of a number of UN workers in Afghanistan. This was an extreme and exceptional act. How did Christian leaders respond to this violent act from one of their own? Their response was total silence! They said nothing and did nothing! There was not a single report of protest from any Christian leaders anywhere in the world! What that particular member did was not surprising—he acted according to his nature. What tens of thousands of other Christian leaders did not do was not simply surprising—it was shocking!

Christian leaders should have organized demonstrations in virtually every country to condemn this violet and irresponsible act. By their demonstration, not only they could have prevented the death of those innocent people, but spread much good will toward Muslims throughout the world. The positive consequences of their demonstrations would have been enormous. They could have taught this simple but essential lesson: In this global village we must respect one another; we are one people living in one planet. The first and most essential step toward peace and harmony is to learn to respect one another despite our differences. How can we practice freedom of conscience if we condemn each others' beliefs?

What those thousands of Christian leaders failed to do was also an evidence of their role in society. They perceive themselves as the custodians of their church, not promoters of peace and good-will. They regard those outside their denominations as their competitors.

Consider also these examples:

- When the news of the abuse of thousands of children by the priests over many decades and the report of the cover-up of those abuses by the church leaders as well as their sense of complacency toward these violent acts were revealed by the

news media—church leaders remained completely silent. They did not step out to condemn those violators.

- When thousands of Muslims were being massacred in former Czechoslovakia, Christian leaders failed to condemn this barbarous act.
- Take racial prejudice. We should be ashamed to even think about this kind of prejudice, let alone practice it! Where and when can we see this prejudice practiced to its fullest? In the United States, we can see it most visible on Sunday mornings in the churches!

The Shallow Foundation of Theological Theories

The word “theology” means “the knowledge of God.” This knowledge has been shaped, reshaped, and abused throughout all ages for selfish ends. Truth is pure light. This light has been clouded and concealed by religious leaders of all faiths. How do religious leaders of various religions and denominations discredit each other? Christian theologians are creators of their own theology, just as the Jews and Muslims are. This is how they advance and support their argument: They start with a false assumption—a handful of sands—then they raise mountains of theology on those sands—mountains that can be swept away by a sing wave.

Suppose we start with the assumption that the earth is motionless. Imagine how many other false assumptions we can derive from that one assumption? Never have I seen any theologian raise this most critical question: Are they infallible in their interpretation of Christian doctrines? If they are:

- Where is any reference from the Bible that they are? There is none.
- Why are there thousands of Christian denominations? Do they not read the same Bible? What then divides them? There is hardly any doctrine about which they fully agree.

Sometimes the theologians attack each other. Consider this example:

Mr. Reese does not seem to have made up his mind whether those whom he attacks so tenaciously are fools, or only knaves [untrustworthy]; his language indeed frequently suggests that they are both!...They prefer “any rubbish to the true and obvious explanation” of a passage...They are not God-fearing readers of the Bible but “theorists”...“They” are “misguided and misleading teachers.” And indeed, “Paul informs us that they were *false* teachers who taught thus.”⁹

What resources do most Christians use to gain information about “other religions”? Books written by Christians against those religions. One of the most popular books, orthodox Christians read to learn about religions and denominations other than their own is *The Kingdom of Cults* (703 pages). Let us see what it says about the Bahá’í Faith:

There is very little indeed that a true Christian can have in common with the Bahá’í Faith...There can be no ground for fellowship with the Bahá’í Faith, which is, at its very core, anti-Christian theology.¹⁰

A similar attitude is expressed by another theologian about Islam:

There is no other religion like Islam in its specific and total denial of the major truth claims of Christianity. It disagrees with a vengeance.¹¹

Similarly, the lies Muslim theologians promote about the Bahá’í Faith are so outrageous, so extreme, they are beyond belief. The Islamic government of Iran offers much support to authors who would write books to discredit the Bahá’í Faith.

A degree in theology entitles the religious leaders to discredit each other with confidence!

The Rabbi to his Jewish followers:

How lucky you are to be God’s chosen people!

The pastor to his Christian

How lucky you are to have washed

followers:	your sins in blood of Jesus!
The Imám to his Muslim followers:	How lucky you are to believe in God's last words to human beings!

The First Shall be Last

After examining the record of history and the words of the Scriptures, the fallacy of placing one's faith and future destiny in the hands of others becomes distinctly clear.

Yet in spite of all the warnings, many continue to pursue—though unknowingly—such a perilous path. They do so because it seems deceptively logical, yet history, logic, and the Scriptures all stand against it, all point to the contrary.

Certainly the intent of the Scriptures is not to discredit *all* religious leaders, neither is the intent of the new Revelation. The primary message given to us is that the religious leaders occupy a position of highest honor, provided their acts and attitudes conform to their confession. If they fail to seek the truth with open mind, if “their religion is but a precept of men, learnt by rote” (Isa. 29:13), they will become fallen stars, moving from the first position to the last, even as they did at the time of the first advent (Mark 10:31). They are the bright stars of knowledge, provided they acknowledge the Source of their sustenance. If they fail, they will lose their radiance and luster:

The wisdom of their wise men shall vanish and the discernment of the discerning shall be lost. Isaiah 29:14 NEB

So the last will be first, and the first will be last. Christ (Matt. 20:16 NIV)

True Leaders Will Shine as the Stars of Heaven

What has been said about the religious leaders should in no way detract from the exalted position of learning or the learned. Both the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh raise knowledge to the crest of honor:

Man's glory lieth in his knowledge.¹² The Báb

Knowledge is as wings to man's life, and a ladder for his ascent.¹³

Bahá'u'lláh

Similarly, the Bahá'í Scriptures bestow much honor upon the learned and the leaders, provided they refuse to allow their learning or their position of power veil their vision of truth. If they turn to the new Light "they will shine like the stars of heaven," otherwise they will remain veiled in the dark:

The wise leaders shall shine like the bright vault of heaven, and those who have guided the people in the true path shall be like the stars for ever and ever.

Daniel 12:3 NEB

Bahá'u'lláh writes:

O concourse of bishops! Ye are the stars of the heaven of My knowledge. My mercy desireth not that ye should fall upon the earth. My justice, however, declareth: "This is that which the Son (Jesus) hath decreed." And whatsoever hath proceeded out of His blameless, His truth-speaking, trustworthy mouth, can never be altered.¹⁴

In the preceding passage Bahá'u'lláh refers to the words of Jesus (Son) that at His coming the stars shall fall. Thus the fallen stars are those leaders who refuse to acknowledge the new Messenger. When the Sun rises the stars become invisible.

Great is the blessedness of that divine [religious leader] that hath not allowed knowledge to become a veil between him and the One Who is the Object of all knowledge, and who, when the Self-Subsisting appeared, hath turned with a beaming face towards Him. He, in truth, is numbered with the learned. The inmates of Paradise seek the blessing of his breath, and his lamp sheddeth its radiance over all who are in heaven and on earth. He, verily, is numbered with the inheritors of the Prophets. He that beholdeth him hath, verily, beheld the True One, and he that turneth towards him hath, verily, turned towards God, the Almighty, the All-Wise.¹⁵

3

My Dialogue With Several Christian Theologians

This chapter presents actual examples to show how the religious leaders practice inattention, how they refuse to take any step beyond the borders of their “imagined and misleading map.” It presents a record of the author’s conversation with several Christian theologians.

People—whether they are Jews, Christians, or Muslims—trust their religious leaders. The following dialogues with several educated Christians will give you an inside look into the mindset of those who receive the support of about two billion Christians, who believe they can be “saved” only if they follow what their leaders tell them. Let us begin with my dialogue with a doctoral student of theology.

Sometime ago a family friend, Elizabeth, spoke about a relative, named Tom, who was working on his doctorate in theology. She described Tom as having both an open and sharp mind. Elizabeth suggested that I should call him and tell him about Bahá’u’lláh and send him a copy of *I Shall Come Again*. To prepare Tom for the dialogue, Elizabeth told him that I would call.

I am always curious and would like to know how people respond to an invitation or a challenge. One evening I called Tom and asked if he had heard about the Bahá’í Faith. He said he had studied the topic only in an introductory course during his undergraduate years, and talked briefly with a few Bahá’ís. Then I referred to *I Shall Come Again*—which covers biblical prophecies about the

advent of Bahá'u'lláh—and asked if he wanted to receive a free copy. He said he was quite busy with his studies and had no time to read anything beyond what his professors required. He then indicated that he was quite happy with his beliefs because he had serious problems earlier and since he had fully accepted Jesus, he had lived an abundant life. He seemed quite friendly and displayed no sign of impatience. So I decided to challenge him a little, and perhaps disturb his peace! The following is a paraphrase of the exchange of ideas between us, written immediately after our conversation:

- Me: Did you know that Bahá'u'lláh has fulfilled the biblical prophecies about the Second Advent?
- Tom: That is typical of those who make such claims. They take some prophecies and apply them to themselves.
- Me: Can you give me an example?
- Tom: Louis Farrakhan believes Jesus and Elijah are the same person. He believes he is Elijah.
- Me: I agree; people abuse prophecies. The only way to know is to investigate each claim.
- Tom: We already know how Christ will come. We have accumulated an abundance of evidence about the way He will return. We have 2,000 years of interpretation. We know Christ has not come again.
- Me: You base your faith on fallible interpreters. Do you realize that the Gospel gives the right of interpretation only to the Lord? Do you realize we are told:

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

I Cor. 4:5

- Tom: Some prophecies are clear. They do not need any interpretation. For instance, we are told in plain language that

the same Jesus will come again. Is Bahá'u'lláh the same person who came as Jesus?

- Me: Bahá'u'lláh did not have the body of Jesus, but manifested the Spirit of God, the same Spirit that appeared in Jesus. Did not Jesus say:

The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing.

John 6:63 NIV

Do you realize that your literal interpretation of prophecies is based on tradition? The Pharisees did the same. They followed their ancestral beliefs and denied Jesus.

- Tom: Pharisees **had** to deny Jesus, because prophecies predicted that they would.

At this point, I heard the alarm signal! I recognized that I could find no way to Tom's heart. First, even if the Pharisees **had** to deny Jesus, they were still wrong. And second, the Pharisees did not **have** to deny Jesus. Why would God force a person to deny His Messenger and then punish him for doing so? Why would Jesus force a few ignorant people to engage in a horrible act and then condemn them for doing it? I did not raise any one of these questions. To do so would have turned the friendly dialogue into a stressful argument. I respected his decision to keep his heart closed.

His response demonstrates how the desire to win overcomes the simple rules of reason; it shows how a passionate need for protecting one's belief subdues the rational powers. Tom showed no thirst for learning about Bahá'u'lláh. I was not looking for a victory, and stopped at the right moment. Why would anyone force his way into a locked house, unless he is a burglar? Why give a glass of water to someone who is not thirsty:

The wise are they that speak not unless they obtain a hearing, even as the cup-bearer, who proffereth not his cup till he findeth a seeker, and the lover who crieth not out from the depths of his heart until he gazeth upon the beauty of his beloved. Wherefore sow the seeds of wisdom and knowledge in the pure soil of the heart...¹

Bahá'u'lláh

God has given each soul the right to protect and preserve his or her spiritual possessions. But I have to admit that at times like this, it is so tempting to go on. The desire to break the lock is ever-present, the need for winning feels almost as natural as breathing.

The attempts made by certain believers to break this lock by force has immensely damaged and even destroyed the dignity of religion. What would happen to the price of gold if people went around, knocked on doors, got the householders out of their bed, and asked them, and even argued with them, that they must accept free chunks of gold?

Any time we engage in a debate or argument about religion, we are violating God's principle of freedom, we are dragging a person into His Kingdom. Our Creator has taught us again and again that He does not want reluctant guests in His banquet. The only responsibility we have is to invite and inform. Resistance to an invitation must be met instantly by submission, silence, and acknowledgment of the principle of freedom. When a person argues, as I think Tom began to do, he is sending a clear signal that I do not want your gift.

We must show unqualified respect to all those who say, "No!" to God's invitation to His heavenly banquet. Because they are exercising the right of freedom that God gave them. Respecting them is respecting God, and disrespecting them is disrespecting God, the original Designer. The beauty of divine Drama comes from diversity.

Tom asked no question about Bahá'u'lláh except to say, "Is He the same person as Jesus?" And if I had said yes, he could ask, "Did he have holes in his body?" And if I had said yes, he could ask, "How many holes were there?" And if I had said the right number, he could ask, "Were they all in the right place?" And if I had said yes, he could ask, "Are there pictures to prove it?" And if I had said yes, he could ask, "Is there any evidence that the pictures are authentic?" And if I had said yes, he could ask, "Did he have the same height and weight as Jesus?" And if I had said yes, he could ask, "Did he have the same skin color?" And if I had said yes, he could ask, "Are there x-rays to show that some of his joints were

separated?” And if I had said yes, he could ask, “Did He speak Hebrew, Greek, or Aramaic as He did in ancient times? And if I had said yes, he could say, “Is there any recording of his voice?” And if I had said yes, he could say, “Your answers are all too good to be true, and they are!”

As this example demonstrates, where there is *a will*, there will always be *a way* to deny any truth, no matter how evident it may be. Tom knew he was right and no evidence, no proof, no testimonial could convince him otherwise. How would he respond, if he confronted the same Jesus who came 2,000 years ago exactly as He appeared then? Would he repeat the same arguments the Pharisees pursued?

A prophecy often quoted by Christian scholars about the *first* advent of Christ indicates that *all of Messiah’s bones will be “out of joint”* (Psalms 22:12). I could have asked him if he has any evidence to prove this. Did crucifixion make *all* Jesus’ bones to be disjointed? Another frequently quoted prophecy (Isaiah 53:10) about the *first* advent declares that Messiah will be “pierced for our transgression” and then it states that “*He will see His offspring.*” I could have asked him, “Who was Jesus’ offspring?”

To continue the discussion, I felt, was a waste of time and money. This was a long-distance call! When he said, “The Pharisees *had* to deny Jesus,” I gently changed the subject. Our conversation ended on a friendly note. I saw Tom anxious to be well prepared for his course and university tests, but not for a test that would determine the course of his eternal destiny. How perfectly St. Paul predicted Tom’s response:

They are the kind...who are...always learning but never able to acknowledge the truth. *II Timothy 3:6-7*

Theology students must master an enormous amount of detailed information about biblical studies, and ancient and modern languages. As we noted, Tom said he could not read about Bahá’u’lláh because of his enormous studies. He was learning German and two ancient languages. Notice how Bahá’u’lláh

describes his status and that of today's many Bible students and scholars:

They cleave to *the obscure intricacies of knowledge*, when He, Who is the Object of all knowledge, shineth as the sun. They see the sun with their own eyes, and yet question that brilliant Orb as to the proof of its light.² Bahá'u'lláh

Who were the scribes? According to Christian scholar F.F. Bruce, they were “the acknowledged students and teachers of the law.” In a way, ancient scribes can be compared to today's Bible scholars and professors who teach at seminary schools. According to *Unger's Bible Dictionary*:

The higher the law rose in the estimation of the people, the more did its study and exposition become an independent business; and an independent class of “biblical scholars or scribes,” [who] were the *real teachers* of the people...³

How did the scribes respond to Jesus? Did their knowledge of the law of God serve as a beam of light to lead them to truth or as a veil of darkness to deprive them of truth? According to *Harper's Bible Dictionary*:

The scribes, like the Pharisees with whom their name is often linked in the N.T., were opposed to Jesus (Matt. 7:29), because he sometimes cut across their ancient traditions and exposed their unwarranted claims to prestige. Scribes played a conspicuous role in bringing about his Crucifixion (Mark 14:43, 15:1; Luke 23:10), though a few of them believed in his teaching (Matt. 8:19).⁴

Once again we can clearly see that there is no link whatsoever between being a scholar and being a truth lover. Yet most people have throughout all ages delegated their spiritual responsibility to their leaders who are taught by religious scholars at institutions of higher learning. They assume that if someone knows Greek and Hebrew and has taken numerous courses in seminary schools or has taught at institutions of higher learning, he is the one who must lead them.

Suppose you are a sophomore at college. You are taking an introductory course in biology. At the end of the semester your teacher tells you that you should look forward to your next instructor, who will offer an advanced course in biology. Then he adds, “Trust this teacher. He is quite knowledgeable.” Let us assume you register for this advanced course and go to the class and wait for the instructor. Now suppose suddenly a man enters the classroom and starts teaching. How should you respond? Should you start by saying, “You are not the instructor?” Or should you listen to him for a while to see if he sounds like one? Is not rejecting him without listening to him an unreasonable act? And yet according to our experience in Mt. Pleasant, where I live, Christian leaders refused to request a free book about the biblical prophecies fulfilled by Bahá’u’lláh. Out of more than fifty, only one pastor asked for a copy* and another called to say that he already knew that we were wrong, and that he did not need a book as further evidence.

Concerning the new instructor, should the students cling to their ideas about how he should look, or should they listen to him? Should they not give him a hearing? Why then are the religious scholars and students not examining the evidence Bahá’u’lláh presents? Why are they closing their hearts and minds? Why are they walking out of the classroom? How can a student test an instructor without listening to him? Are the students not asked by their previous instructor to refrain from making any judgment about difficult issues?

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

I Corinthians 4:5 NIV

Why are the students not listening to those instructions? Why are they telling the instructor that he is wrong before even listening to

* As a result of a telephone call made later, I learned that he had not read the book. Most likely he had thrown it away.

him? Why are they assuming that they already have the answer to difficult questions?

The story of Bahá'u'lláh is so astounding, the biblical evidence for His divine origin is so compelling that every seminary school should offer at least one course about Him. I wonder if Bahá'u'lláh is even mentioned in those schools. Students are kept within the confine of Christian theology. It is assumed nothing else is worth studying.

What the majority of people believe comes from their pastors and priests. And what the majority of pastors and priests believe comes from what their professors at seminary school taught them. Those professors are the true shakers and shapers of Christian's beliefs. They are highly respected as the authority on what the Bible means. As a rule, these scholars are financially supported by a given denomination. Does it make sense to undermine the institution that feeds you? Safety—the second most significant human need—lies in preserving the status quo rather than risking for the unknown. This is why it is so difficult to make a change. The system is closed. Many people mistake “scholarship” for love for truth. They are entirely different. There are some theology professors who are in heart agnostics and atheists!

Whether Christians realize it or not, most of their beliefs come from scholars and university professors. That is where they originate and trickle down to others. Is it prudent to put the most important decision of one's life—the one that determines one's eternal destiny—mainly in the hands of professors at seminary schools?

Does knowing, loving, and “seeing” God require a Ph.D. (Doctor of Philosophy), or a P.H. (a Pure Heart)?

Does knowing the truth require a D.TH. (Doctor of Theology) or D.T. (Detachment from Traditions)?

You have a fine way of setting aside the commands of God in order to observe your own traditions! *Christ (Mark 7:9)*

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. *Christ (Matt. 5:8)*



Let me now cite another personal experience to show you what is going on in theological schools in the United States, where ministers are trained. When I was in Dallas, I decided to visit a famous seminary college. I wanted to offer to the library and to the professors a few books that would give the students and the faculty a new outlook on prophecies. They were three large books I have written to show that all prophecies of the Second Advent have been fulfilled by the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh.*

First I went to the library, offered the books to the librarian and asked if he would accept them. He said, "Come back couple of hours later and I will let you know." When I returned, he said "No, these books do not serve our needs."

Then I decided to offer the books to the professors. While walking through a building, looking for their offices, a security guard asked me why I had entered the building. When I told him my purpose, he said: "You cannot do this. You must have permission." I said, "Please show me the office of the dean, where I can get permission."

When I entered the dean's office, greeted him, and told him that I wanted to offer some books to the professors, he looked at me with much suspicion, as if I was a thief, and firmly said: "I do not give you such a permission!" When I asked why? He said, "I must guard them!" I could not believe what I heard. Why would professors of theology need to be guarded against new ideas? They must be the *vanguards of knowledge*, not *be guarded against knowledge*.

I wanted to start a dialogue with him. But his facial expression showed that he had no desire to talk to me. He saw me as an invader or a robber who had come to take away his precious faith. I found his response amusing. I do my best to be humble, but in this case I felt somewhat powerful! I was standing in front of someone

* *I Shall Come Again*, 522 pages; *Lord of Lords*, 634 pages; *King of Kings*, 510 pages.

in charge of professors of theology in a famous Christian college, and he was afraid of me! What a blessing it was!

By speaking very gently and humbly with him, I enticed him to ask me questions. I had a deep desire to get into a conversation with him. I had never met a dean of a prestigious seminary. I wanted to find out why he was so afraid of me. To calm him down, I softened my voice and tried to speak in the gentlest language. I tried to humble myself as a child—displaying emotions the exact opposite to his emotions. My approach seemed to be working. He began to talk. I wanted him to ask me questions, and he did. The first question he asked was: “What happened to your Prophet?” I knew why he asked this question. I said “He died, and was buried.” He was happy to hear my response. He immediately followed: “But Jesus is in heaven, next to God!” I gently responded: “But according to Bible teachings, bodily resurrection could not have taken place.” He was quite sure of his beliefs and was ready for the challenge. I had entered his dearest territory. By now he was emotionally involved, because bodily resurrection was the very foundation of his faith. Because many Christian theologians declare: “Christianity stands or falls by resurrection.” To prove my point, I proceeded to remind him of the following quotations from the New Testament, which he had read many times and knew them by heart.

- The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing.
- Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. I Corinthians 15:50 NIV
- There are also heavenly bodies and there are earthly bodies...So will it be with the resurrection of the dead...it is raised [as] a spiritual body. I Corinthians 15: 40-44 NIV
- In His human body He [Jesus] was put to death, but He was made alive in the spirit. I Peter 3:18 NEB

After reminding him of the previous verses, I added: “All these quotations point to a spiritual resurrection. Further according to NT Jesus sits at the right hand of God. We know God is Spirit. Would

it not be strange if Jesus sat with His body next to God, who is a Spirit?”

Furthermore, would it be dignified for Jesus to have a body in heaven? For human body has many weaknesses and needs. It must be fed and washed. It needs haircut. It gets tired and needs rest. It gets sick and needs treatment. If Jesus took His physical body to heaven, He would be subject to all these weaknesses and needs. Do we not then belittle Jesus by attributing physical weaknesses and needs to Him? Since you believe that Jesus is God (the trinity), is it dignified for God to take a shower? Is it not then reasonable to believe, as the Bible teaches us that the body returns to dust and the spirit to God?

The dust returns to the ground it came from, and the spirit returns to God who gave it. Ecclesiastes 12:7 NIV

Is it not also reasonable to believe that instead of repairing His broken body, God gave Jesus a *spiritual* body?

The dean had never heard anyone reason with him both from his scriptures and the rules of reason. By now he was probably saying to himself: “What a mistake I made to get into a conversation with this stranger, this lost soul! What if he takes away my faith—my precious love for Jesus?” But it was too late! The damage had been done! He had to spend many hours to restore his deflated ego and his precious faith that had stood not on who Jesus was—His glorious Spirit—but on a missing body.

I concluded my discussion by saying: “Is it then not reasonable to think that, according to the expression used by St. Paul, God gave Jesus a *spiritual body*? That is the body that endures. Why would Jesus need a perishable body in heaven? What purpose would it serve Him? This concept also explains what Jesus’ disciples noted and described: That Jesus passed through physical barriers.”

He listened to my explanations with a puzzled expression on his face. He could not refute my reasonable explanation—one that connected all pieces of the puzzle. He was being pulled in opposite directions. He wanted to prove me wrong, but he felt totally powerless. What a sight it was!

I was destroying the very foundation of his beliefs with his own beliefs, with verses from his own Scriptures. He was paying a heavy price for allowing me to talk. He had never heard such a response before. Physical resurrection was his greatest weapon of superiority over all other religions. Within a span of just a few minutes, he had lost that weapon. He was puzzled, but powerless. The verses I quoted mystified him. He had never connected them. At the beginning of our conversation he was a mountain on fire. Those few verses, made visible in a new light, quenched that fire.

By now his ego was completely deflated. I did not need to stay longer. I said good-bye and left his office.

What can we learn from this encounter? That the one who trains the pastors fails to obey the most reasonable instructions from his Redeemer—the One he worships! ***He refuses to pay any attention to the news of His coming!*** He refuses to practice the most emphatic and repeated instruction and commandment from his Master, such as:

Be always on the watch!

Christ (Luke 21:36 NIV)

I will come upon you as a thief.

Christ (Rev. 3:3 NKJ)

Unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time.

Hebrews 9:28 NIV

Not only he refused to pay attention, he succeeded in preventing me from sharing this urgent Message with the professors under his “guard!” After all, he saw himself as their shepherd. The librarian did the same: He guarded the students—the future ministers—from gaining a new perspective on prophecies!

Those in positions of power have always feared the light of knowledge and tried to keep people in ignorance:

The Jews had decided that anyone who acknowledged that Jesus was the Christ would be put out of the synagogue. John 9:22 NIV

Professors of theology must spread the knowledge of God. They must be open to new ideas. How can three books in a library hurt anyone? The ones I met practiced the exact opposite of what they were asked to do. They made these verses to come true:

My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being priest for Me; because you have forgotten the law of your God...I will change their glory into shame. Hosea 4:6-7 NKJ

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

I thank thee, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for hiding these things [the truth] from the learned and wise, and revealing them to the simple. Yes, Father, such was your choice.

Christ (Matt. 11:25-26 NEB)

Let me now share with you the story of my last few hours in that seminary. By now, it was 3:00 p.m. I said to myself: “Why not meet the president of the seminary? I stepped into his office and told his secretary that I had come to offer him a few books. Fortunately, he was free and allowed me to see him. He was a young man, very courteous and kind. He received me warmly and asked me several questions. In response, I quoted many Biblical verses to support my message. He listened with interest and did not challenge me on anything I said. He simply wanted to know who I was and what was my mission.

I reminded him that the Jews misunderstood the prophecies and asked him: “What makes Christians to think that they have more insight than they did?” He listened and offered no response.

He warmly accepted the three volumes for his own library and promised to examine them and invite me later to return to the seminary for a dialogue with a few professors who specialized in religions other than Christianity and Judaism.

I waited a few weeks for his call, but the promised invitation never came. When I was in Dallas a year later, I called his secretary and asked for a second visit, but he declined to meet me.

My experience in this seminary is one isolated incident and should not be generalized to all religious leaders and teachers.

Nevertheless, it gives us a glimpse of the mindset of those who are in charge of the spiritual destiny of humankind.

This was all about a Christian seminary. What about Muslim seminaries? What would happen if I entered a Muslim seminary? I do not know, but I would love to know! It would be a great adventure! Many Christians do not know that the Sunni branch of Islám, just like Christians, expect the return of Jesus, whom they call: *The Spirit of God*.

Sometime ago, Dr. Lou Meyer—a Catholic priest—made a “teaching trip” throughout the United States to spread the news of the Second Coming. We had the honor of having him in our home as a guest for a few days. His talk centered on the reasons he had recognized Bahá’u’lláh as the return of Christ. When I asked him about the response of other priests to the news of the advent of Bahá’u’lláh, he said that some of his old friends and teachers listened, out of courtesy, to the news, but showed no interest. The director of a large seminary school in the United States asked him for this favor: “***Talk about any subject you want, but say nothing about the return of Christ to any one of the seminary students at the university!***” Such a request is astonishing. Why should the future religious leaders remain ignorant of this most magnificent news? Is this the meaning of “***seek and ye shall find***”? Why should the future religious leaders live in ignorance of the very reason for which they live, and of the very purpose for which they go to seminary school?

I entreat Thee, O Thou Who art my Companion and my Best-Beloved, to lift the veil that hath come in between Thee and Thy servants, that they may recognize Thee with Thine own eye and rid themselves of all attachment to any one but Thee. Thou art, verily, the Almighty, the Ever-Forgiving, the Most Compassionate.⁵

Bahá’u’lláh

4

A Grave Warning from Jesus to Religious Leaders and Teachers

Those in Charge of the Master's Household

Those in the position of leadership—the Pope, bishops, pastors, priests, theology professors, Sunday school teachers, and board members—have an awesome responsibility. It is their prime duty to prepare Christians for the Second Coming of Jesus. What should they teach them, and how should they prepare them? In one of His parables about those in charge of His Household—the Church—Jesus designates the most splendid rewards and honors for leaders who fulfill this mission, and the most severe punishment for those who fail to do so. Despite its prime significance, seldom church leaders refer to the parable or make any effort to ponder its meaning and implications. Let us do exactly what they fail to do.

What is the purpose of a parable? To make abstract concepts more memorable and real by casting them into the mold of stories. Before examining Jesus' parable, it is helpful to review the special expressions He chose to convey His Message:

• Servant in charge of servants	Religious leaders and teachers
• The Master	Jesus
• The household	The church

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offering food at the proper time 	Offering the knowledge of the Second Advent near the time of the return of the Master
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The wicked servant 	The church leaders who fail to prepare Christians for the return of Jesus
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The servant who drinks with the drunkards 	Leaders who fail to be watchful and awake, who remain spiritually drunk
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The place of weeping and gnashing of teeth 	The place of deep sorrow and anger: hell

Before stating the parable, Jesus offers several warnings such as:

As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man... Therefore keep watch... Christ (Matt 24:37, 42 NIV)

Jesus then offers this parable as a warning to church leaders:

So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him. Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom the master has put in charge of the servants in his household to give them their food at the proper time? It will be good for that servant whose master finds him doing so when he returns. I tell you the truth, he will put him in charge of all his possessions.

But suppose that servant is wicked and says to himself, “My master is staying away a long time,” and he then begins to beat his fellow servants and to eat and drink with drunkards. The master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he is not aware of. He will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Christ (Matt. 24:44-51 NIV)

Let us review the parable once again—this time with the meaning of the codes added in brackets:

Who then is the faithful and wise servant [Christian leader], whom the master [Jesus] has put in charge of the servants in his household [the church] to give them [Christians] their food [knowledge of the Second Advent] at the proper time [when the Advent is near]? It will be good for that servant [the church leader] whose master finds him doing so when he returns. I tell you the truth, he will put him in charge of all his possessions [bestows on him the greatest honors and blessings].

But suppose that servant [church leader] is wicked [irresponsible in fulfilling his mission] and says to himself, “My master is staying away a long time” [says again and again that the Master will come later, although He may have already come], and he then begins to beat his fellow servants [abuse Christians; take advantage of them] and to eat and drink with drunkards [enjoy the worldly life, but remain spiritually drunk, unaware, and complacent]. The master of that servant [the negligent church leader] will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he is not aware of [just like a thief]. He will cut him to pieces [a metaphor pointing to the most severe punishment] and assign him a place with the hypocrites [those who simply claim to be believers], where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth [deep grief and anger at one’s negligence; a metaphor for “hell”]. Christ (Matt. 24:44-51 NIV)

Despite its profound message, many religious teachers and scholars simply choose to say nothing about this parable. For instance, *The NIV Study Bible* makes no statement about it. Does not even identify the audience to whom it is addressed—scholars and teachers like those who prepared *The NIV Study Bible*!

What does this parable teach us? Unless we pay close attention to its contents, unless we “watch” carefully, we cannot discern Jesus’ intention. To explore its purpose, we must begin with this question: Why would Jesus impose such a severe punishment—hell—on those who fail to prepare the believers for His Return? The grave punishment—everlasting presence in hell—points to the gravest negligence. The negligence must be far more serious and consequential than simply failing to talk about the promise of the

Second Advent. Would it be fair to send someone for ever to hell just because he fails to talk about the Second Advent?

To find an answer to this question, we should first look at what church leaders are doing or not doing. They can be classified into three groups:

- Catholic leaders who say virtually nothing about the Second Advent.
- Protestant Evangelical leaders who place this topic at the center of their teachings.
- Other protestant leaders who refer to this promise from time to time.

Let us see what Evangelicals are teaching. The core message in their teaching is this: “Jesus may come at any time. Be ready! He will come to take the “true” Christians to heaven to be with Him forever (the rapture) and leave the rest of people—nonbelievers and hypocrite Christians—to die in misery on earth.” Here is the critical question for them: How can simply having this knowledge prepare Christians for their Lord? What difference will it make if they know or do not know this? How can writing books and explaining the meaning of prophecies—all centered on the coming of Jesus from the sky—prepare Christians for their Redeemer? How can hoping and waiting make a person worthy of everlasting residence in paradise in the presence of the Lord?

Further, what will be the destiny of Catholic and Protestant leaders who completely ignore the promise of the Second Advent? Will they all be sent to hell? Is this fair?

No, the severe punishment destined for those who fail to prepare Christians for the Second Advent points to something far more serious than talking or not talking about the Second Advent. It must be a deed that would cause the church leaders to commit the gravest act, the greatest sin imaginable. What action would deserve the punishment of hell? What else but the denial of Jesus? Only denying Him—and calling Him a deceiver—would justify the grave punishment of hell. But how can church leaders deny their Lord? Only if He returned contrary to their expectation. Only if He

encountered Christians who, like the Jews who expected a king as powerful as King David. Only if He returned “like a thief” as a lowly Man just as He did the first time—only **then** would Christian leaders dare to deny Him. And only **then** would they deserve the awful and everlasting punishment of going to hell.

We should note that just as happened in the first Advent, the religious leaders may be the first to deny their Redeemer. Jewish religious leaders were “the first” in rank among the believers, but they chose to become “the last.” According to *The Zondervan Bible Dictionary*:

Jesus offered the Kingdom to Israel, for they were its proper heirs...but the religious leaders, followed by most of the people, not only refused to enter its blessings but tried to prevent others from entering (Matt. 23:13). Nevertheless, many tax-collectors [who occupied a low position in people’s eyes] and harlots did enter the Kingdom (Matt. 21:31).¹

Did the knowledge of the first Advent help the Jewish leaders to recognize their Redeemer? Will history repeat itself once again? The way people behave does not change from age to age. This may be the reason, Jesus said:

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

We should note that the denial of religious leaders has grave consequences because the example of their denial impacts their followers. The denial of one leader may lead to the denial of hundreds, thousands, or even millions of Christians. Consider the Pope. How many millions of Catholics trust him and follow his example?

If Annas and Caiaphas, the most prominent Jewish leaders had acknowledged Jesus, the Jews would most likely have respected their verdict. But they rose against their Redeemer. They said that is better if a Man dies than a whole nation.

What then should the church leaders teach and how should they prepare the believers? They should teach them about **both** possibilities—Jesus from the sky **and** as a thief. What harm can

come from doing so? None! What will they risk if they fail? The consequence may be a wholesale denial of Jesus, just as happened the first time. Because His coming was contrary to what people expected.

What should Christian authorities expect if they fail in their duty? What is in store for them if they choose to be unfair in their judgment and mislead millions of their followers? The brief parable presented in this chapter should be printed and posted on a wall in every church and seminary as a reminder to all church leaders, teachers, and scholars.

Church leaders should read it every day and ponder its implications. Their everlasting destiny is at stake. Nowhere in the Bible do we find such an expression of deep anger: “***He will cut him to pieces.***”

So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him. Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom the master has put in charge of the servants in his household to give them their food at the proper time? It will be good for that servant whose master finds him doing so when he returns. I tell you the truth, he will put him in charge of all his possessions.

But suppose that servant is wicked and says to himself, “My master is staying away a long time,” and he then begins to beat his fellow servants and to eat and drink with drunkards. The master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he is not aware of. ***He will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*** Christ (Matt. 24:44-51 NIV)

Simply telling the believers to hope and wait for their Lord is no preparation. Simply advancing new theories about the meaning of specific prophecies is no preparation. There is even a war of words between literal-minded interpreters of prophecies. Many believers are confused. If the experts cannot agree, what should be expected from others?

These interpreters, however, agree on one point. They all believe that Jesus will come from the sky. If that happens, those leaders have no choice. Either they will remain on earth to suffer, or will be taken to heaven. Only if Jesus comes like a thief, as He did the first time, will those leaders have a choice to deny Him. And only *then* would they deserve the punishment of hell.

Jesus offered many clues to awaken the church leaders, yet they fail to “watch,” to pay any attention to those clues, because they contradict one of their assumptions: that Jesus will come from the sky, and not as a thief. That one assumption, just like a patch of dark cloud, has concealed the glory of the Lord:

He was robed in a cloud...his face was like the sun...

Revelation 10:1 NIV

This book is a call to church leaders to rise above that patch of cloud. Let us pray that history will not repeat itself. Let us pray that the believers will pass through the clouds of literal thinking to behold “the light of the world.”²

Let us pray that church leaders will be able to break through the prison wall of letters. Let us pray that they will recognize the beauty and harmony of the life-giving powers of spirit and the deadly dangers of seeing just the letters of prophecies:

The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life. *II Corinthians 3:6*

Let us pray that they will recognize that failing to rise above the clouds will be a deed as grievous as denying their Lord!

Whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven.

Christ (Matt. 10:22 NKJ)

5

The Knowledge of God

*My People Perish
for Want of Knowledge*

Hosea 4:6

In this age, few people devote any time to their spiritual health and well-being. If they feel depressed or anxious, they go to a doctor or a drugstore. If the depressed and anxious people took away 1/10th or even 1/20th of the time they devote to their biological needs, and devoted it to their spiritual needs, they would be surprised by a sense of peace and calm, they may have never experienced. The need for antidepressants would diminish perhaps by 99 percent. A state of calm and peace would embrace the heart of humankind.

But alas, it is almost impossible to convince the skeptical peoples of our time that it is indeed possible to experience an enduring sense of peace in this chaotic world by immersing one's soul in the knowledge of God.

The blame for widespread skepticism and confusion falls first and foremost on religious leaders—whatever their beliefs—leaders who for selfish reasons are spreading misinformation to hundreds of millions of people. Their impact on the hearts and minds of their followers is beyond estimation. Their most potent weapon in dividing the world is theology. They have turned the knowledge of God into a confusing and contradicting puzzle that no one can resolve. They are as confused as their followers who trust them and follow them without question. Like gloomy clouds, these leaders have concealed the light of true knowledge from the peoples of the

world. To succeed in their divisive ideologies, they have appealed to people's lowest motives.

They should serve as the first and foremost source of enlightenment, yet they have become the first and foremost source of confusion and misinformation.

Until the followers of all religions are convinced that in this age of knowledge, they should not depend on their religious leaders for spiritual guidance, the world will remain in a state of chaos and confusion; the pain and suffering inflicted on humankind by these leaders, will continue to grow and afflict the body of humankind even as cancerous cells. Unless this hidden and epidemic disease is not diagnosed and treated, the state of the spiritual health of humankind will continue to grow more desperate. As long as the true role of these leaders remain unknown to their followers, unless these clouds of confusion are not scattered, people will continue to live in spiritual darkness. The followers of great religions will continue to see each other as enemies rather than members of one united family. As long as people regard their religious leaders as the stars of guidance who will lead them to heaven, the state of spiritual poverty will continue to grow worse.

www.TheKnowledgeOfGod.com provides a ray of hope to all seekers and lovers of knowledge. It is designed to reach and communicate with peoples of all religions. It is hoped that like a wind, it will scatter the clouds of misinformation and allow the sun to shine on all sincere seekers of truth—whatever their beliefs. If we all give up our dependency on our leaders, we will find a universe of knowledge in common. Gaining true knowledge is the first step toward world peace and harmony. This website is established to rescue the believers from dependency on their religious leaders.

6

The Lessons of History

What does history teach us about religious leaders? It teaches us that they have been a source of much pain and suffering to the human race. At the time of the coming of God's new Messengers and Teachers, perhaps the best service they can render is to help their followers recognize them. But they have always played just an opposite role:

Not one Prophet of God was made manifest Who did not fall a victim to the relentless hate, to the denunciation, denial, and execration of the clerics of His day!¹ Bahá'u'lláh

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.² Bahá'u'lláh

The following statements from Jesus were addressed to Jewish religious leaders (known as teachers of the law of Moses) and their fanatic followers (known as Pharisees). They reveal in graphic language the role of religious leaders in all ages:

Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You shut the kingdom of heaven in men's faces. You yourselves do not enter, nor will you let those enter who are trying to... Woe to you, blind guides! You say, "If anyone swears by the temple, it means nothing; but if anyone swears by the gold of the temple, he is bound by his oath." You blind fools! Which

is greater: the gold, or the temple that makes the gold sacred?...Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence...Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of dead men's bones and everything unclean. In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness. Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You build tombs for the prophets and decorate the graves of the righteous. And you say, "If we had lived in the days of our forefathers, we would not have taken part with them in shedding the blood of the prophets." Matthew 23:13-30 NIV

What else does history teach us about religious leaders? It teaches us that they have stood behind, and encouraged, all religious wars. In this age of knowledge and enlightenment, they are continuing to keep their followers in darkness. They are continuing to spread misinformation about "other religions." They know that only in darkness of ignorance, can they succeed, can they prove their superiority to competing religious leaders. The books published against "other religions" are quite popular. Millions are sold every year. This prophecy is addressed specifically to the religious leaders of our time:

On that day...O My people, your leaders will cause you to err,
and confuse the course of your path. Isaiah 3:7, 12 AB

By preventing their followers from the light of knowledge, from recognizing the common foundation of all religions, religious leaders and teachers have divided and are continuing to divide the world into islands of prejudice and superiority. Surely there are exceptions—a small minority of leaders who serve as true models of nobility. These leaders shine as bright stars, and deserve the highest praise. But the great majority of them have served and continue to serve as divisive, rather than unifying forces—as promoters of prejudice rather than harmony and peace.

7

Priesthood: the Obsolete Profession

How did the profession of priesthood emerge? There is no statement from any one of the great Messengers that a group of people should make their living by reading their Scriptures for them. Helping people to learn about God should be voluntary. Any true believer should be proud of performing such a noble deed for its own sake, and not for the sake of being paid.

There was a time when most people were uneducated; they did not have a chance to attend even elementary school. At that time, religious teachers could serve a purpose. People needed someone to tell them what was in their Scriptures. Do the educated people of our time have this need? Do they need to pay someone to tell them what Moses or Jesus, or Muhammad said?

Can religious leaders serve any purpose in the new world? Do we still need someone to teach us the truth, to tell us what to believe? Only children have such a need. This sense of dependency has grave consequences. It gives people the false impression that they are not in charge of their spiritual destiny, that they must submit God's most precious gift—their spiritual freedom—to someone else simply because he has taken a few courses in theology.

No, there is no place in our world for religious leaders any more. The Scriptures predict clearly that in this age God will remove their robe of leadership and authority. They are warned in clear language that the time of their retirement has finally arrived. They should begin to prepare themselves for a new profession, otherwise, they will have to “cry and wail.”

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

This is what the Sovereign Lord says: I am against the shepherds and will hold them accountable for my flock. I will remove them from tending the flock so that the shepherds can no longer feed themselves. I will rescue my flock from their mouths, and it will no longer be food for them. Ezekiel 34:10

To these leaders who “esteem themselves the best of all creatures and have been regarded as the vilest by Him Who is the Truth,” who “occupy the seats of knowledge and learning, and who have named ignorance knowledge, and called oppression justice,” and who, “worship no God but their own desire, who bear allegiance to naught but gold, who are wrapt in the densest veils of learning, and who, enmeshed by its obscurities, are lost in the wilds of error”—to these Bahá’u’lláh has chosen to address these words: “O concourse of divines! Ye shall not henceforward behold yourselves possessed of any power, inasmuch as We have seized it from you, and destined it for such as have believed in God, the One, the All-Powerful, the Almighty, the Unconstrained.”¹ Shoghi Effendi

Yes, the time has come for the leaders of all religions to retire, to exchange their delicate silk robes for working clothes and become one of the common people. Doing so is in their best interest, because:

In the sight of God, these common people are infinitely superior and exalted above their religious leaders who have turned away from the one true God.² Bahá’u’lláh

This is the most stressful age in history. People are sorely confused. They do not know where to find comfort. They do not know who is their true shepherd, who they can trust:

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

O YE THAT ARE FOOLISH, YET HAVE A NAME TO BE WISE!

Wherefore do ye wear the guise of shepherds, when inwardly ye have become wolves, intent upon My flock? Ye are even as the star, which riseth ere the dawn, and which, though it seem radiant and luminous, leadeth the wayfarers of My city astray into the paths of perdition.³

Bahá'u'lláh

As stated, religious leaders and teachers should serve as models of purity and nobility. Are they living up to the standards? Numerous law-suits against priests, who have abused thousands of children all over the world, are only a visible symptom of a deep and widespread spiritual disease among these “models of virtues.” What about protestant leaders? Studies indicate that they too, like their counterparts, fail to live up to the standards, that they are not as saintly as they may appear. By their own admission, they score high on sexual temptations and addiction to pornography.

A recent television program showed that many ministers are moving toward atheism, that they have doubts about God and disbelieve some of the doctrines they preach every week.

To hold their position, the leaders must remain popular. How can they do this? By telling their followers—just like politicians—what they would like to hear. Note how clearly St. Paul predicted both the state of religious teachers and those who listen to them:

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

8

Religious Leaders of Islam

There are references in the Qur'án and the Bahá'í Scriptures specifically addressed to Muslim religious leaders. The following statement attributed to Muhammad is quoted in many authoritative references. You can also find it on the internet:

There will come a time for my people when there will remain nothing of the Qur'án except its outward form and nothing of Islam except its name...The religious leaders of that day will be the most evil under heaven. They will manifest evil behavior, and its consequences will return unto them.¹

The Qur'án also refers to the decline of the faith among Muslims and several times describes a dialog between the religious leaders and their followers while they are in hell. Muslims who have blindly followed their religious leaders, after passing away, will discover to their utter astonishment that while on earth, they had been misled by those leaders. Now they are extremely angry. They had trusted their leaders and had hoped that they would lead them to heaven. Now the opposite has come true. They are angry at themselves for being so simple-minded and ignorant to have believed the lies their leaders told them:

On the day when their [the followers'] faces are transformed in the fire, they will say: "If only we had obeyed God and the Messenger." They [the followers] will then say: "Our Lord! Verily we obeyed our leaders and our chiefs and they led us astray. Our Lord! Give them [the leaders] double torment and curse them with a mighty curse!

Qur'án 33:66-68

The leaders will disown their followers. When they will see the torment, their relation with each other will be severed. The followers will say: “If only we could go back, we would disown them [the leaders] as they are now disowning us.” Thus, God will show them that their deeds are a source of regret for them. And they will never come out of the Fire. Qur’án 2:166-167

The religious leaders will tell their followers:

So, we led you astray, as we ourselves were misled.” Therefore, they [the leaders and followers] are on that Day partners in torment. Qur’án 37:32-33
See also 28:62-66; 29:25; 37:27-30; 41:29; 6:94; 16:25

This verse from the Qur’án points to the sorry state of Muslims in this age:

The Messenger says: “O my Lord, my people [Muslims] shy away from this Qur’án.” Qur’án 25:30

Another translation:

The Messenger says: “O Lord, my followers have taken [regarded] this Qur’án as a book to be shunned.”

Who are in charge of teaching the Qur’án? Who but religious leaders? They tell people what they should believe. They are the ones most accountable before God.

Let us now take a look at the events of our time, especially at 9/11—when the twin towers were attacked. Muslim religious leaders should have, without the slightest hesitation, condemned this act in the harshest words. They should have called their followers to engage in a demonstration so vast, the world has ever known—demonstration against such a wholesale slaughter of innocent people. They did nothing! They held their peace! How amazing!

A few references from Bahá’í Scriptures addressed to religious leaders of Islam:

O concourse of divines [religious leaders]! Because of you the people were abased, and the banner of Islam was hauled down, and its mighty throne subverted. Every time a man of

discernment hath sought to hold fast unto that which would exalt Islam, ye raised a clamor, and thereby was he deterred from achieving his purpose, while the land remained fallen in clear ruin.² Bahá'u'lláh

This glory shall be turned into the most abject abasement, and this pomp and might converted into the most complete subjugation. Their palaces will be transformed into prisons, and the course of their ascendant star terminate in the depths of the pit. Laughter and merriment will vanish, nay more, the voice of their weeping will be raised... Even as the snow, they will melt away in the July sun.³ 'Abdu'l-Bahá

O concourse of Persian divines! In My name ye have seized the reins of men, and occupy the seats of honor by reason of your relation to Me. When I revealed Myself, however, ye turned aside, and committed what hath caused the tears of such as have recognized Me to flow. Erelong will all that ye possess perish, and your glory be turned into the most wretched abasement, and ye shall behold the punishment for what ye have wrought, as decreed by God, the Ordainer, the All-Wise.⁴ Bahá'u'lláh

O heedless one! Rely not on thy glory, and thy power. Thou art even as the last trace of sunlight upon the mountain-top. Soon will it fade away as decreed by God, the All-Possessing, the Most High. Thy glory and the glory of such as are like thee have been taken away, and this verily is what hath been ordained by the One with Whom is the Mother Tablet.⁵

From Bahá'u'lláh to a religious leader in Iran

Liberating humankind from bondage to their religious leaders—whatever their religion—is a great leap forward toward peace and harmony among diverse peoples and nations of the world—nations who lived apart for thousands of years, but have suddenly become next door neighbors.

If the learned and worldly-wise men of this age were to allow mankind to inhale the fragrance of fellowship and love, every understanding heart would apprehend the meaning of true liberty, and discover the secret of undisturbed peace and absolute composure.⁶ Bahá'u'lláh

9

Excerpts from Bahá'í Scriptures

Such objections and differences have persisted in every age and century. The people have always busied themselves with such specious discourses, vainly protesting: “Wherefore hath not this or that sign appeared?” Such ills befell them only because they have clung to the ways of the divines of the age in which they lived, and blindly imitated them in accepting or denying these Essences of Detachment, these holy and divine Beings. These leaders, owing to their immersion in selfish desires, and their pursuit of transitory and sordid things, have regarded these divine Luminaries as being opposed to the standards of their knowledge and understanding, and the opponents of their ways and judgments. As they have literally interpreted the Word of God, and the sayings and traditions of the Letters of Unity, and expounded them according to their own deficient understanding, they have therefore deprived themselves and all their people of the bountiful showers of the grace and mercies of God.¹

Bahá'u'lláh

Such deeds and words have been solely instigated by leaders of religion, they that worship no God but their own desire, who bear allegiance to naught but gold, who are wrapt in the densest veils of learning, and who, enmeshed by its obscurities, are lost in the wilds of error.²

Bahá'u'lláh

...in the sight of God, these common people are infinitely superior and exalted above their religious leaders who have turned away from the one true God.³

Bahá'u'lláh

For what reason do they refuse to embrace the Truth, and allow certain traditions, the significance of which they have failed to grasp, to withhold them from the recognition of the Revelation of God and His Beauty, and to cause them to dwell in the infernal abyss? Such things are to be attributed to naught but the faithlessness of the divines [religious leaders] and doctors of the age. Of these, Sádiq, son of Muhammad, hath said: “The religious doctors of that age shall be the most wicked of the divines beneath the shadow of heaven. Out of them hath mischief proceeded, and unto them it shall return.”⁴ Bahá’u’lláh

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. By their sanction and authority, every Prophet of God hath drunk from the chalice of sacrifice, and winged His flight unto the heights of glory. What unspeakable cruelties they that have occupied the seats of authority and learning have inflicted upon the true Monarchs of the world, those Gems of divine virtue! Content with a transitory dominion, they have deprived themselves of an everlasting sovereignty. Thus, their eyes beheld not the light of the countenance of the Well-Beloved, nor did their ears hearken unto the sweet melodies of the Bird of Desire. For this reason, in all sacred books mention hath been made of the divines of every age.⁵ Bahá’u’lláh

The first to turn away from Us have been the world's spiritual leaders in this age—they that call upon Us in the daytime and in the night season and mention My Name while resting on their lofty thrones. However, when I revealed Myself unto men they rose against Me in such wise that even the stones groaned and lamented bitterly.⁶ Bahá’u’lláh

...the reins of every community have fallen into the grasp of foolish leaders, who lead after their own whims and desire. On their tongue the mention of God hath become an empty name; in their midst His holy Word a dead letter. Such is the sway of

their desires, that the lamp of conscience and reason hath been quenched in their hearts...⁷ Bahá'u'lláh

From two ranks amongst men... power hath been seized: kings and ecclesiastics.⁸ Bahá'u'lláh

O concourse of divines! Fling away idle fancies and imaginings, and turn, then, towards the Horizon of Certitude. I swear by God! All that ye possess will profit you not, neither all the treasures of the earth, nor the leadership ye have usurped. Fear God, and be not of the lost ones... Say: O concourse of divines! Lay aside all your veils and coverings. Give ear unto that whereunto calleth you the Most Sublime Pen, in this wondrous Day... The world is laden with dust, by reason of your vain imaginings, and the hearts of such as enjoy near access to God are troubled because of your cruelty. Fear God, and be of them that judge equitably.⁹ Bahá'u'lláh

Respect ye the divines and learned amongst you, they whose conduct accords with their professions, who transgress not the bounds which God hath fixed, whose judgments are in conformity with His behests as revealed in His Book. Know ye that they are the lamps of guidance unto them that are in the heavens and on the earth. They who disregard and neglect the divines and learned that live amongst them—these have truly changed the favor with which God hath favored them.¹⁰ Bahá'u'lláh

Those divines... 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. The guidance of men hath, at all times, been and is dependent upon these blessed souls.

The divine whose conduct is upright, and the sage who is just, are as the spirit unto the body of the world. Well is it with that divine whose head is attired with the crown of justice, and whose temple is adorned with the ornament of equity.

The divine who hath seized and quaffed the most holy Wine, in the name of the sovereign Ordainer, is as an eye unto the world.

Well is it with them who obey him, and call him to remembrance.

Great is the blessedness of that divine that hath not allowed knowledge to become a veil between him and the One Who is the Object of all knowledge, and who, when the Self-Subsisting appeared, hath turned with a beaming face towards Him. He, in truth, is numbered with the learned. The inmates of Paradise seek the blessing of his breath, and his lamp sheddeth its radiance over all who are in heaven and on earth. He, verily, is numbered with the inheritors of the Prophets. He that beholdeth him hath, verily, beheld the True One, and he that turneth towards him hath, verily, turned towards God, the Almighty, the All-Wise.¹¹

Bahá'u'lláh

O ye the dawning-places of knowledge! Beware that ye suffer not yourselves to become changed, for as ye change, most men will, likewise, change. This, verily, is an injustice unto yourselves and unto others....Ye are even as a spring. If it be changed, so will the streams that branch out from it be changed. Fear God, and be numbered with the godly. In like manner, if the heart of man be corrupted, his limbs will also be corrupted. And similarly, if the root of a tree be corrupted, its branches, and its offshoots, and its leaves, and its fruits, will be corrupted.¹²

Bahá'u'lláh

10

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!¹ ‘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...?² 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.³

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.⁴

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.⁵

Bahá'u'lláh

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