

# **His New Name**

A Biblical Examination of the Claims of Bahá'u'lláh

by

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# His New Name

## PREFACE

More than twenty years ago, I was a Christian who discovered that Jesus Christ had returned exactly as He had promised, and that His new name is Bahá'u'lláh, the Glory of God.

I studied to be a minister of the Gospel, believing I had heard a call to that profession while in high school. While serving as an assistant pastor of a church during my junior year of pre-seminary college, I came to believe that I was unsuited to the needs of that calling. I did not reject my Christian Faith, I simply found I could not act as one of its ordained leaders because I had too many doubts about the quality of my own faith to advise others about theirs. I believed in God and in Jesus Christ, but my belief was not animated by that essential "spirit" that made it a living presence in my soul.

Several years later, as the result of an attempt to save my brother from a "Weird Eastern Cult" called the Bahá'í Faith, I found that animating spirit. The Bahá'ís were filled with it. As I remarked at that first encounter, they seemed to be the kind of people I'd always imagined the first Christians must have been.

But I couldn't allow myself to simply follow that emotional response and join them. I had to investigate the claim of it's Founder, Bahá'u'lláh, that He was the return of Jesus Christ. A daunting task made more intimidating by the fact that, despite my seemingly perfect background as a pre-seminary scholar, I was in fact inadequately prepared. In my college courses, I had primarily studied the writings of theologians and those who had studied the Bible, not the Bible itself. In only two classes was the Bible the primary required text, and there it was studied as literature, not as the Word of God. Small wonder I had found so little spirit in that dry, academic environment.

I read the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, and those of His Son and appointed successor, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, evaluating them the way I had been taught. Did they have the same majesty and power as the Bible? Could I find any flaws in the logic of the explanations offered? Uppermost in my mind, though, was the question, did these Writings sound like the Word of God? What I didn't do was study the Bible. I thought I already knew it pretty well and could therefore evaluate Bahá'u'lláh's claims and explanations without having to refer to it.

Now I realize how incredibly arrogant I had been, assuming that I knew how the Word of God should sound. As it happened, I based my decision on the fact that the Bahá'í explanations were far more logical and made a great deal more sense than those advanced by any theologian or biblical scholar I had read. In the end, it was the substance, not the style, that made my decision. I declared my faith in Bahá'u'lláh as the Promised One of all ages and religions, the Return of the Son in the Glory of the Father.

## His New Name

After twenty-plus years of studying the Bahá'í writings, I re-discovered a need to study the Bible, but this time as the Word of God. More and more Christians are expressing their curiosity about the Bahá'í Faith to me, but fearfully or in an accusatory manner. When I've tried to answer their concerns by using the Bahá'í Writings, they've rejected those answers out of hand.

After attending a class on the subject, I came to realize that I was not answering these Christians' most important, though often unspoken, question: Is Bahá'u'lláh a false prophet, the Antichrist, or the Devil? I respect that concern because I continue to share it, though in a somewhat different context, as a Bahá'í. I also realize that to expect a Christian to accept a possible Antichrist's or false prophet's words as valid proof of his own claims and/or explanations is utter folly. I wouldn't. Why should I expect that of others?

I have taken the concerns I have encountered most commonly and found their answers in the Bible. The quotations from the Bahá'í Writings are supplementary, showing the Bahá'í position on that particular subject.

This is not an exhaustive text. There are others with far better qualifications who have written extensively on this subject. This booklet was written to provide the Christians who express an interest or concern about the Bahá'í Faith with basic, simple answers to their most pressing questions, particularly about Bahá'u'lláh. It is my hope that those who read this will read the works of other authors on the subject. For that reason I have included a suggested reading list.

### SOME PRELIMINARIES

There are several of strange-sounding names to deal with when looking into the Bahá'í Faith. I will attempt to clarify them here, providing the English translation where appropriate.

Bahá'í (ba-HIGH) Follower of Baha, or Follower of the Glory. In essence, a Bahá'í is someone who is a follower of Bahá'u'lláh. In the Persian language an "i" at the end of the word usually means from or follower.

Bahá'u'lláh (ba-HA-oo-LAH) The Glory of God. The Prophet-Founder of the Bahá'í Faith, who Bahá'ís believe is the messenger of God foretold by Jesus Christ.

The Báb (bob) The Gate or Door. Bahá'u'lláh's Forerunner, and an independent messenger of God Who announced Bahá'u'lláh's coming.

'Abdu'l-Bahá (ab-DOOL-ba-HA) Servant of the Glory. First born son of Bahá'u'lláh, appointed in Bahá'u'lláh's will and testament as the Center of

## His New Name

His Covenant, the authorized interpreter of His Word, and the leader of the Bahá'í Faith.

Shoghi Effendi (SHO-gee ef-FEN-dee) grandson of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, appointed in 'Abdu'l-Bahá's will and testament as the Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith, a leadership position established by Bahá'u'lláh in His Writings. He was uniquely suited to the task of translating into English many of the Bahá'í Writings from their original Arabic and Persian sources because he was educated at Oxford and proficient in all three languages.

Before beginning, you should have a firm, clear understanding of the Bahá'í position on Christianity. Shoghi Effendi wrote:

As to the position of Christianity, let it be stated without any hesitation or equivocation, that its divine origin is unconditionally acknowledged, that the Sonship and Divinity of Jesus Christ are fearlessly asserted, that the divine inspiration of the Gospel is fully recognized, that the reality of the mystery of the Immaculacy of the Virgin Mary is confessed, and the primacy of Peter, the prince of the Apostles, is upheld and defended. The Founder of the Christian Faith is designated by Bahá'u'lláh as the "Spirit of God," is proclaimed as the One Who "appeared out of the breath of the Holy Ghost," and is even extolled as the "Essence of the Spirit." His mother is described as "that veiled and immortal, that most beauteous, countenance," and the station of her Son eulogized as a "station which hath been exalted above the imaginings of all that dwell on earth," whilst Peter is recognized as one whom God caused "the mysteries of wisdom and of utterance to flow out of his mouth." (*The Promised Day Is Come*, pp. 109-110)

### IS BAHÁ'U'LLÁH A FALSE PROPHET?

These are Jesus' warnings:

Beware of false prophets, men who come to you dressed up as sheep while underneath they are savage wolves. You will recognize them by the fruits they bear. Can grapes be picked from briars, or figs from thistles? In the same way, a good tree always yields good fruit, and a poor tree bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, or a poor tree good fruit. And when a tree does not yield good fruit it is cut down and burnt. That is why I say you will recognize them by their fruits. (Matthew 7:15-20 NEB)

## His New Name

Then, if any one says to you, “Look, here is the Messiah”, or, “There he is”, do not believe it. Impostors will come claiming to be messiahs or prophets, and they will produce great signs and wonders to mislead even God’s chosen, if such a thing were possible. (Matthew 24:23-24 NEB)

Note that Jesus gives us a way to recognize a false prophet. “You will recognize them by the fruits they bear.” What are the fruits of a true prophet? Paul tells us:

But the harvest of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, fidelity, gentleness, and self-control. (Galatians 5:22-23 NEB)

Another way to recognize false prophets is that they will “come to you dressed up as sheep while underneath they are savage wolves.” What is probably the most widely accepted analogy of Jesus and His followers? The Good Shepherd and his flock, based upon Christ’s parable. Might not Jesus be referring to the fact that the false prophets will represent themselves as members of His flock?

But Israel had false prophets as well as true; and you likewise will have false teachers among you. They will import disastrous heresies, disowning the very Master who bought them, and bringing swift disaster on their own heads. They will gain many adherents to their dissolute practices, through whom the true way will be brought into disrepute. In their greed for money they will trade on your credulity with sheer fabrications. (2 Peter 2:1-3 NEB)

Note, too, that these false prophets will “disown” the Master, denying Jesus. In other words, they must be Christians who renounce their Faith.

Did Bahá’u’lláh ever call himself a Christian?

Even though He repeatedly affirmed the station of Jesus as the Christ, nowhere in His Writings did He ever claim to be a Christian Himself. Therefore he could not have “disowned” Jesus and become a former Christian.

In the quote from Matthew 24 above, Jesus says, “impostors will come claiming to be messiahs or prophets, and they will produce great signs and wonders to mislead even God’s chosen.” Could Jesus have been talking about miracles? We will deal later with the whole issue of miracles as a proof of prophethood, but suffice it to say for now that Jesus Himself didn’t have much respect for miracles as a proof that someone is a prophet.

Does Bahá’u’lláh deny Jesus?

## His New Name

Know thou that when the Son of Man yielded up His breath to God, the whole creation wept with a great weeping. By sacrificing Himself, however, a fresh capacity was infused into all created things. Its evidences, as witnessed in all the peoples of the earth, are now manifest before thee. The deepest wisdom which the sages have uttered, the profoundest learning which any mind hath unfolded, the arts which the ablest hands have produced, the influence exerted by the most potent of rulers, are but manifestations of the quickening power released by His transcendent, His all-pervasive and resplendent Spirit. We testify that when He came into the world, He shed the splendor of His glory upon all created things ... He it is Who purified the world. Blessed is the man who, with a face beaming with light, hath turned towards Him. (Bahá'u'lláh, quoted in *The Promised Day Is Come*, p. 110)

One should always ask the question of anyone who wants our allegiance, “Are your fruits the ‘harvest of the spirit’ Paul describes in Galations?” What fruits have grown on Bahá'u'lláh's tree? Are they a “harvest of the spirit?”

All these were guided by the light of that Sun of divine Revelation, confessed and acknowledged His truth. Such was their faith, that most of them renounced their substance and kindred, and cleaved to the good-pleasure of the All-Glorious. They laid down their lives for their Well-Beloved, and surrendered their all in His path. Their breasts were made targets for the darts of the enemy, and their heads adorned the spears of the infidel. No land remained which did not drink the blood of these embodiments of detachment, and no sword that did not bruise their necks. Their deeds, alone, testify to the truth of their words. Doth not the testimony of these holy souls, who have so gloriously risen to offer up their lives for their Beloved that the whole world marveled at the manner of their sacrifice, suffice the people of this day? Is it not sufficient witness against the faithlessness of those who for a trifle betrayed their faith, who bartered away immortality for that which perisheth, who gave up the Kawthar [Abundance] of the divine Presence for salty springs, and whose one aim in life is to usurp the property of others? Even as thou dost witness how all of them have busied themselves with the vanities of the world, and have strayed far from Him Who is the Lord, the Most High. (*Kitáb-i-Íqán*, pp. 223-4, clarification added)

What are the Bahá'ís identified with most?

## His New Name

Peace. Racial unity. Moral rectitude. Being non-confrontational. Sometimes these qualities are held against them by those who wish to dismiss them and their efforts as inconsequential, calling them naive or idealists.

### IS BAHÁ'U'LLÁH THE ANTICHRIST?

The term Antichrist is used only four times in the Bible. Those passages are:

My children, this is the last hour! You were told that Antichrist was to come, and now many antichrists have appeared; which proves to us that this is indeed the last hour. (1 John 2:18 NEB)

Who is the liar? Who but he that denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is the Antichrist, for he denies both the Father and the Son.... (1 John 2:22 NEB)

This is how we may recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit which acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, and every spirit which does not thus acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is what is meant by 'Antichrist'; you have been told that he was to come, and here he is, in the world already! (1 John 4:2-3 NEB)

Many deceivers have gone out into the world, who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. These are the persons described as the Antichrist, the arch-deceiver. Beware of them, so that you may not lose all that we have worked for, but receive your reward in full. (2 John 7-8 NEB)

John says that the Antichrist was in the world at the time he wrote his letters: "... here he is, in the world already!" He also says there was more than one Antichrist: "... and now many antichrists have appeared".

True, there are several other biblical references, particularly in Revelations, that many claim are about the Antichrist. None of these references, however, uses the term Antichrist.

John clearly indicates that the antichrists were present among the Christians of his day. Though his letters strongly suggest that he expected the Second Coming to occur within his lifetime, as did most of the Apostles and early Christians; he is equally clear that it had not occurred by the time he wrote those letters.

John says, "Many deceivers have gone out into the world" and that, "These are the persons described as the Antichrist, the arch-deceiver."

## His New Name

Who were they deceiving? Christians. And if they were deceiving Christians, would not one of the best ways to do that be by claiming to be Christians themselves? Why?

If someone wants to deny the reality of Jesus Christ, wants to deny that Jesus ever lived on this earth, wants to deny that He was the Christ, and convince His followers that he is right; is he likely to claim to be a Christian, or something else? What would give his denials the greatest credence? Who is the Christian most likely to listen to and believe? Another Christian, or someone from a different faith, or even no faith at all?

Did Bahá'u'lláh claim to be a Christian? We've already stated He did not. On the contrary, He fearlessly asserted, until His own declaration as a Prophet of God, that He was a Babi (a follower of the Bab). Even after His declaration, He steadfastly maintained His identification as the Promised One of All Ages and Religions.

Did Bahá'u'lláh deny Jesus?

As we have seen in the quote above, He extolled Jesus as One Who “shed the splendor or His glory upon all created things” and “purified the world.” Further He states, “Blessed is the man who, with a face beaming with light, hath turned towards Him.” Can't call that much of a denial, can we?

Furthermore, not only did Bahá'u'lláh extol Jesus, He made it a requirement that His own followers accept and believe in Jesus. We should note that Bahá'u'lláh often refers to Jesus as the “Spirit of God” or the “Spirit” in His Writings.

Comotions shall seize all the people in that land, unless thou arisest to help this Cause, and followest Him Who is the Spirit of God (Jesus Christ) in this, the Straight Path. (*Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, p. 51)

### IS BAHÁ'U'LLÁH THE DEVIL?

Your father is the devil and you choose to carry out your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and is not rooted in the truth; there is no truth in him. When he tells a lie he is speaking his own language, for he is a liar and the father of lies. (Jesus answering the Pharisees, John 8:44 NEB)

According to Jesus, the Devil “is a liar and the father of lies.” If he can say whatever he wants to deceive us, then how can we know the truth? Jesus also gave us this measuring rod: “there is no truth in him.” If there is no truth in the Devil, he cannot tell the truth, not even to deceive us. He cannot claim to be a believer in Jesus. Neither can he admit that the Gospels are true.

## His New Name

We have already seen that Bahá'u'lláh has repeatedly and unequivocally stated his belief in Jesus as Christ, the Son of God, the Spirit of God.

Does Bahá'u'lláh affirm the truth of the Gospels?

We have also heard a number of the foolish of the earth assert that the genuine text of the heavenly Gospel doth not exist amongst the Christians, that it hath ascended unto heaven. How grievously they have erred! How oblivious of the fact that such a statement imputeth the gravest injustice and tyranny to a gracious and loving Providence! How could God, when once the Day-star of the beauty of Jesus had disappeared from the sight of His people, ... cause His holy Book, His most great testimony amongst His creatures, to disappear also? (*Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 89)

### WHY ARE THE SCRIPTURES SO DIFFICULT TO INTERPRET?

The first reason the scriptures are so difficult to interpret is given in Daniel:

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

I heard but did not understand, and so I said, "Sir, what will the issue of these things be?" He replied, "Go your way, Daniel, for the words are kept secret and sealed till the time of the end..." (Daniel 12:8-9 NEB)

Then I saw in the right hand of the One who sat on the Throne a scroll, with writing inside and out, and it was sealed up with seven seals. And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming in a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?" There was no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth able to open the scroll or to look inside it. I was in tears because no one was found who was worthy to open the scroll or to look inside it. (Revelations 5:1-4 NEB)

Peter gives us another reason:

But first note this: no one can interpret any prophecy of Scripture by himself. For it was not through any human whim that men

## His New Name

prophesied of old; men they were, but impelled by the Holy Spirit, they spoke the words of God. (2 Peter 1:20 NEB)

Paul gives us yet another reason:

O depth of wealth, wisdom, and knowledge in God! How unsearchable his judgements, how untraceable his ways! Who knows the Mind of God? Who has been his counselor? (Romans 11:33-34 NEB)

For our knowledge and our prophecy alike are partial, and the partial vanishes when wholeness comes. (I Corinthians 13:9 NEB)

Now we see only puzzling reflections in a mirror, but then we shall see face to face. My knowledge now is partial; then it will be whole, like God's knowledge of me. (I Corinthians 13:12 NEB)

Another reason suggested by Paul is that it is a test, a way of determining "those who have the Spirit."

... because we are interpreting spiritual truths to those who have the Spirit, we speak of these gifts of God in words found for us not by our human wisdom but by the Spirit. A man who is unspiritual refuses what belongs to the Spirit of God; it is folly to him; he cannot grasp it, because it needs to be judged in the light of the Spirit. (I Corinthians 2:13-14 NEB)

So pass no premature judgement; wait until the Lord comes. For he will bring to light what darkness hides, and disclose men's inward motives; then will be the time for each to receive from God such praise as he deserves. (I Corinthians 4:5 NEB)

And so he [Paul] does in all his other letters, wherever he speaks of this subject, though they contain some obscure passages, which the ignorant and unstable misinterpret to their own ruin, as they do the other scriptures.

But you, my friends, are forewarned. Take care, then not to let these unprincipled men seduce you with their errors; do not lose your own safe foothold. (2 Peter 3:16-17 NEB, clarification added)

For centuries a controversy has raged in Christianity over whether the scriptures are to be interpreted literally or spiritually (symbolically). Some of those in the literal camp claim that God wants us to understand the scriptures easily so he made them simple and literal, without

## His New Name

mysteries to solve, so no interpretation is necessary. In other words, what you see is what you get.

The question then is why was Daniel told to “keep the words secret and seal the book till the time of the end?” Why does Revelations refer to a scroll that is “sealed up with seven seals?” Why does Peter refer to “some obscure passages”, and why does he say, “no one can interpret any prophecy of Scripture by himself?”

And we will not even consider the problems two ordinary people can have when they are trying to communicate something in the same language, be that something an abstract concept like the meaning of life, or a concrete matter like where and when to meet for lunch.

Consider the following:

[Jesus said:] I am that living bread which has come down from heaven; if anyone eats of this bread he shall live for ever. Moreover, the bread which I will give is my own flesh; I give it for the life of the world.

This led to a fierce dispute among the Jews. “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?” they said. Jesus replied, “In truth, in very truth I tell you, unless you eat of the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood you can have no life in you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood possesses eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. My flesh is real food; my blood is real drink. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood dwells continually in me and I dwell in him. As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats me shall live because of me. This is the bread which came down from heaven; and it is not like the bread which our fathers ate: They are dead, but whoever eats this bread shall live for ever.” (John 6:51-58 NEB, clarification added)

Is Jesus really promoting cannibalism and vampirism? That is literally what he says. Eat my flesh and drink my blood. No literal interpreter of scripture has, to our knowledge, seriously advanced the belief that we must literally consume the actual flesh and drink the actual blood of the body of the Jesus who lived 2,000 years ago. Small wonder. It is an absurd idea. Not only because such a thing is physically impossible, but more importantly, because the very idea flies in the face of everything that we believe Jesus stood for. Neither have we heard of any who seriously claim that His followers attempted to literally carry out this injunction. It is universally accepted in Christendom that Jesus is speaking allegorically, using symbolism to make a point about a spiritual subject.

If there is any doubt about this, one has only to consider Jesus’ use of spiritual language at the Last Supper: He took the bread and said: “Take this and eat; this is my body.” Then He took a cup and said: “Drink from it, all of you. For this is my blood....”

## His New Name

There are many such instances of Jesus' use of spiritual language. To list them all would go far beyond the scope of this booklet. We will, however, look at some less obvious ones below.

At this point it might be helpful to consider the two-fold nature of Jesus Christ, and, by extension, His words.

Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. Then how can you say, "Show us the Father"? Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? I am not myself the source of the words I speak to you: it is the Father who dwells in me doing his own work. (John 14:9-10 NEB)

In truth, in very truth I tell you, he who has faith in me will do what I am doing; and he will do greater things still because I am going to the Father. (John 14:12 NEB)

How can Jesus be the Father and yet go to the Father? Taken literally, such a thing is impossible. But suppose Jesus is speaking spiritually? Suppose he is referring to his two-fold nature? One spiritual and the other material? Is this what Paul is referring to here?

... because we are interpreting spiritual truths to those who have the Spirit, we speak of these gifts of God in words found for us not by our human wisdom but by the Spirit. (1 Corinthians 2:13 NEB)

What does Bahá'u'lláh say about this?

We have already in the foregoing pages assigned two stations unto each of the Luminaries arising from the Daysprings of eternal holiness. One of these stations, the station of essential unity, We have already explained. "No distinction do We make between any of them." The other is the station of distinction, and pertaineth to the world of creation and to the limitations thereof. In this respect, each Manifestation of God hath a distinct individuality, a definitely prescribed mission, a predestined Revelation, and specially designated limitations. Each one of them is known by a different name, is characterized by a special attribute, fulfills a definite Mission, and is entrusted with a particular Revelation. (*Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 176)

And what does He say about understanding Jesus' words?

Briefly, in the sayings of Him Who is the Spirit (Jesus) unnumbered significances lie concealed. Unto many things did He refer, but as He found none possessed of a hearing ear or a seeing eye He chose

## His New Name

to conceal most of these things. (*Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, p. 148)

Know assuredly that just as thou firmly believest that the Word of God, exalted be His glory, endureth for ever, thou must, likewise, believe with undoubting faith that its meaning can never be exhausted. They who are its appointed interpreters, they whose hearts are the repositories of its secrets, are, however, the only ones who can comprehend its manifold wisdom.

Whoso, while reading the Sacred Scriptures, is tempted to choose therefrom whatever may suit him with which to challenge the authority of the Representative of God among men, is, indeed, as one dead, though to outward seeming he may walk and converse with his neighbors, and share with them their food and their drink. (*Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 175-6)

From these passages we can conclude that the scriptures, particularly those related to spiritual matters, are purposely inscrutable. Why? Because they were sealed by God until the time of the end when the Scion of David would unseal them and solve the mysteries. And because it is a test to separate those who have spiritual understanding from those who do not.

This, by the way, has been God's strategy throughout mankind's history. Winnowing the wheat from the chaff is the Old Testament way of putting it. Look back through the Bible. God always tested the faithful this way when He brought forth a new Prophet.

### **IF I HAVE JESUS, WHY DO I NEED BAHÁ'U'LLÁH?**

There are two reasons. One is that Christ said we must be watchful for His return.

But the Day of the Lord will come; it will come, unexpected as a thief.  
(2 Peter 3:10 NEB)

Keep awake then; for you never know the day or the hour. (Matthew 25:13 NEB)

Keep awake, then; for you do not know on what day your Lord is to come. Remember, if the householder had known at what time of night the burglar was coming, he would have kept awake and not have let his house be broken into. Hold yourselves ready, therefore, because the Son of Man will come at the time you least expect him.

## His New Name

Who is the trusty servant, the sensible man charged by his master to manage his household staff and issue their rations at the proper time? Happy that servant who is found at his task when his master comes! I tell you this: he will be put in charge of all his master's property. But if he is a bad servant and says to himself, "The master is a long time coming", and begins to bully the other servants and to eat and drink with his drunken friends, then the master will arrive on a day that servant does not expect, at a time he does not know, and will cut him in pieces. Thus he will find his place among the hypocrites, where there is wailing and grinding of teeth. (Matthew 24:42-51 NEB)

The second reason the person who has Jesus needs Bahá'u'lláh is that Bahá'u'lláh opens the seals and solves the mysteries. We refer you to Daniel and to Revelations and the seals put on the books and scrolls. They will only be unsealed at the time of the end. And when they are, the mysteries of the books and seals will be solved.

Now we come to the crux. Only the Prophet who comes at the time of the end can do this. How can Bahá'u'lláh make such a claim? Either he is deluded, a fool, a false prophet/antichrist/devil, or He really is the Return promised by Jesus.

But you ask, where are the signs of His coming? When did the stars fall from heaven? Where are the clouds with Jesus floating in them so that every eye can see him?

We have so far shown that Bahá'u'lláh is not a false prophet because he was not a former Christian and did not deny that Jesus Christ physically lived in the world. We have also shown that He was not an antichrist because He was not a Christian, and never denied that Jesus was a real, historical person. Neither is He the devil, because we have shown that the devil "has no truth in him" and therefore could not have spoken the truth about Jesus' existence, mission, Sonship, and Gospel as Bahá'u'lláh repeatedly did in his many Writings.

That leads us to the prophecies and the interpretation of them. We have shown the need to interpret the scriptures spiritually because they deal with spiritual matters and we, living in this material realm, have no direct, literal way of describing the spiritual realms of God.

Jesus told stories, His famous parables, to make certain spiritual concepts more understandable. He also used allegory extensively, such as in Matthew 24:42-51 quoted above, to make His points. Why then, when He is communicating such an essentially spiritual matter as His return, do we assume that He abandoned this method and began speaking in literal terms? Does it not make more sense to expect that He would have continued to use allegory, as He did throughout His ministry, to communicate one of His most essential spiritual messages?

## His New Name

Matthew 24 is the place where we find Jesus' own prophecies regarding His return. We have used several excerpts from it already to deal with previous issues. Now we shall look at those passages that deal directly with the time of the end and His return.

Jesus replied: "Take care that no one misleads you. For many will come claiming my name and saying, 'I am the Messiah'; and many will be misled by them." (Matthew 24:4-5 NEB)

How many have come in Jesus name, claiming to be Christians and Messiahs? How many have been misled? An important point that is often missed is that Jesus clearly indicates here that those who come claiming Jesus' name and to be the Messiah are not to be trusted. In addition, and most importantly, the book of Revelation clearly states that the Promised One will have a new name.

He who is victorious I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God; He shall never leave it. And I will write the name of my God upon him, and the name of the City of my God, that new Jerusalem which is coming down out of heaven from my God, and *my own new name*. Hear, you who have ears to hear, what the Spirit says to the churches! (Revelation 3:12-13 NEB, emphasis added)

This single point is of such overriding significance it can scarcely be over-emphasized. The One Who comes in fulfillment of Jesus Christ's promise to return will not call himself Jesus Christ. He will have a new name. If we are waiting for someone named Jesus Christ, we are waiting for the wrong person and we are waiting in vain.

Did Bahá'u'lláh come claiming Jesus' name, or as the older translations put it, "in His name"? No. We have already established that Bahá'u'lláh never claimed to be a Christian, and never used the name, Jesus Christ, as his own.

The time is coming when you will hear the noise of battle near at hand and the news of battles far away; see that you are not alarmed. Such things are bound to happen; but the end is still to come. For nation will make war upon nation, kingdom upon kingdom; there will be famines and earthquakes in many places. With all these things the birth-pangs of the new age begin. (Matthew 24:6-8 NEB)

Does any of this sound familiar? Doesn't this sound like the nightly news on television for as many years as one can remember? For how long have we humans been fighting with each other, nation against nation? A hundred years? Two hundred? Have we ever had even one day on which

## His New Name

mankind was not engaged in some kind of battle somewhere on the planet?

You will be handed over for punishment and execution; and men of all nations will hate you for your allegiance to me. Many will fall from the faith; they will betray one another and hate one another. Many false prophets will arise, and will mislead many; and as lawlessness spreads, men's love for one another will grow cold. But the man who holds out to the end will be saved. (Matthew 24:9-13 NEB)

More of the nightly news, but with a difference. Now the faithful are being betrayed, punished and executed. Are we not constantly informed about battles, some that have gone on for decades, between various branches of Christianity? Not to mention battles between various religions, such as Moslem and Jew, Moslem and Christian, Hindu and Christian. To be sure, these are primarily political battles that happen to line up along religious lines due to tribal and national history, but the point is, Christians, as well as those of other faiths, are being persecuted for their beliefs.

How about the Bahá'ís? Were they ever persecuted? Are they now?

Not only were they persecuted in Bahá'u'lláh's time, they still are today in the land of His birth, Iran. The United States government has repeatedly passed resolutions specifically condemning the treatment of the Bahá'ís in Iran and calling for an end to the persecution of them by imprisonment, torture, and execution. Lest anyone think that these persecutions do not have a religious basis; or that they are the just punishment of a rebellious, lawbreaking people, claiming religious persecution in order to justify their criminal acts, as the government of Iran asserts; one need only look at what is required of the persecuted to escape imprisonment, torture, and death. Even though they are accused of all sorts of heinous crimes, Iranian officials have stated to the press that if the Bahá'ís would just recant their Faith, they would be freed.

And this gospel of the Kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the earth as a testimony to all nations; and then the end will come. (Matthew 24:14 NEB)

This is self-explanatory. By the mid-1800's the Christian scholars of the time declared that the message and story of Christ had been introduced in every inhabited area of the planet.

It will be a time of great distress; there has never been such a time from the beginning of the world till now, and will never be again. If that time of troubles were not cut short, no living thing could

## His New Name

survive; but for the sake of God's chosen it will be cut short.  
(Matthew 24:21-22 NEB)

Has mankind ever known such a time as the present day? At no time in recorded history has there been such calamity on such a widespread scale. Yes, cultures and civilizations have fallen before, but not all at the same time. There is no place on this earth where the people do not lament the passing of their traditions and the degradation of their society. Fortunately, Jesus tells us that this tribulation will be cut short, "for the sake of God's chosen," so there is hope.

Like lightning from the east, flashing as far as the west, will be the coming of the Son of Man.

Wherever the corpse is, there the vultures will gather.

As soon as the distress of those days has passed, the sun will be darkened, the moon will not give her light, the stars will fall from the sky, the celestial powers will be shaken. Then will appear in heaven the sign that heralds the Son of Man. All the peoples of the world will make lamentation, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with great power and glory. With a trumpet blast he will send out his angels, and will gather his chosen from the four winds, from the farthest bounds of heaven on every side.

Learn a lesson from the fig-tree. When its tender shoots appear and are breaking into leaf, you know summer is near. In the same way, when you see all these things, you may know that the end is near [or that he is near], at the very door. I tell you this: the present generation will live to see it all. Heaven and earth will pass away; my words will never pass away.

But about that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, not even the Son; only the Father. (Matthew 24:28-36 NEB, alternate translation added from footnote)

Up to this point, Jesus has been remarkably straightforward and direct. Why? He has been describing events that will occur in the material world. He describes natural disasters, political upheavals, wars, and the actions of a mankind left to its own pitiful devices for managing its own affairs.

Now, he uses allegory, introducing it with the images of lightning and a corpse with vultures. Why? His subject has changed. He is now talking about spiritual events instead of worldly events. Events which cannot be described literally because we have no understanding or experience in the spiritual realm of God. It is farther beyond our ken than our existence is beyond the understanding of a virus or bacterium. Recall the words of Peter and of Paul:

## His New Name

But first note this: no one can interpret any prophecy of Scripture by himself. For it was not through any human whim that men prophesied of old; men they were, but impelled by the Holy Spirit, they spoke the words of God. (2 Peter 1:20 NEB)

O depth of wealth, wisdom, and knowledge in God! How unsearchable his judgements, how untraceable his ways! Who knows the Mind of God? Who has been his counselor? (Romans 11:33-34 NEB)

... because we are interpreting spiritual truths to those who have the Spirit, we speak of these gifts of God in words found for us not by our human wisdom but by the Spirit. A man who is unspiritual refuses what belongs to the Spirit of God; it is folly to him; he cannot grasp it, because it needs to be judged in the light of the Spirit. (I Corinthians 2:13-14 NEB)

We must look for the inner meaning of Jesus' words. It is patently obvious that, while the sun and moon are eclipsed on a regular basis, one star, much less all of them, falling on the Earth would be the end of the planet. Therefore the stars are not the stars we see at night, but something that resembles them symbolically. With our current knowledge of the world as a great, blue ball in space, we know that the only way Jesus could appear to all the peoples of the world is by orbiting the globe in a sort of celestial tour.

Jesus spoke to His Disciples in terms they could understand and from the perspective of their knowledge of the earth and the heavens. It might be helpful to remember that in Jesus' day the world was believed to be flat with a dome of stars stretched over it like an umbrella. This might explain why Jesus used the imagery of coming in the clouds and all the peoples of the world being able to see him.

This booklet, as we stated at the outset, is not intended to be an in depth discourse on the fulfillment of prophecy. We refer you to Michael Sours book, *The Prophecies of Jesus*, which discusses this chapter of Matthew, if you wish to pursue the topic in greater depth.

So if we must interpret these verses spiritually, how do we go about doing that? Who of us knows the mind of God? Only the One Who fulfills the prophecies can do it, according to Revelations.

Bahá'u'lláh claimed to be that person. Was He?

**HOW DO I KNOW BAHÁ'U'LLÁH WAS THE PROMISED ONE?**

## His New Name

To determine the validity of Bahá'u'lláh's claim to prophethood, we have to determine if He fulfilled the prophecies. Again, there are several books which deal with this subject in great depth, among them the classic, *Thief in the Night* by William Sears. What we will attempt to do here is give a brief summation of the evidence. The prophecies generally break down into three groups: When, Where, and Who.

The prophecies concerning when refer not only to the time of the end, but also to Jesus' own time. Daniel's prophecies are accepted by most Christian scholars as the ones which give the specific time frame.

“How long will the regular offering be suppressed, how long will impiety cause desolation, and both the Holy Place and the fairest of all lands be given over to the trodden down?” The answer came, “For two thousand three hundred evenings and mornings [days]; then the Holy Place shall emerge victorious.” (Daniel 8:13-14, clarification added)

He then gives a specific time for Jesus' first appearance.

Seventy weeks are marked out for your people and your holy city; then rebellion shall be stopped, sin brought to an end, iniquity expiated, everlasting right ushered in, vision and prophecy sealed, and the Most Holy Place anointed. Know then and understand: from the time that the word went forth that Jerusalem should be restored and rebuilt, seven weeks shall pass till the appearance of one anointed, a prince; then for sixty-two weeks it shall remain restored, rebuilt with streets and conduits. (Daniel 9:24-25 NEB)

It might be helpful to note that there was a messianic expectation in Jesus' time, largely because of this and a couple of other prophecies. It was the failure of the Jewish scholars and rabbis to correctly interpret these prophecies that caused them to reject Jesus. He did not fit their expectations, even though he came at the right time and fulfilled the prophecies that applied to Him. They were looking for a literal, material fulfillment. They wanted a temporal king who would literally conquer the world. What they got was a spiritual fulfillment which actually went far beyond their human, literal expectations.

Since a lengthy and detailed explanation of the counting of these prophetic years is beyond the scope of this booklet, we refer you to Hushidar Motlagh's *I Shall Come Again* and will try to summarize here. There is, however, one sticking point which deserves clarification here: modern scholarship's revision of the conventionally accepted dates of Jesus' birth and crucifixion. In chapter nine, Dr. Motlagh shows that the revision doesn't invalidate the timing of the prophecy relating to Jesus. Rather it confirms it with remarkable accuracy.

## His New Name

The starting date referred to by Daniel in 9:25 is generally acknowledged by Christian scholars to be the third decree by Artaxerxes in 457 BC. In Ezekiel 4:6 and Numbers 14:34 it is made clear that one day equals one year in prophetic writing, making the seven weeks plus sixty-two weeks (483 years) and the seventy weeks (490 years) come out to the time of Jesus' ministry and crucifixion.

I heard a holy one speaking and another holy one answering him, whoever he was. The one said, "For how long will the period of this vision last..." The answer came, "For two thousand three hundred evenings and mornings; then the Holy Place shall emerge victorious." (Daniel 8:13-14 NEB)

This prophecy refers to Christ's second coming. It starts from the same date, 457 B.C. There are 456 years to Christ's birth by the conventional dating system, and 456 from 2300 leaves 1844.

These years, 1843-44, were so accepted by Christians as the time of the Second Coming that people sold all their possessions and went into the hills to await their Lord. The Seventh Day Adventists were formed out of this expectation. In Germany, a group moved to the foot of Mount Carmel to await Him and carved "The Lord is Nigh" into the lintels over their front doors. When the Second Coming did not happen according to their expectations, scholars began re-examining their calculations, trying to explain why it hadn't happened, coming up with ever more far-fetched and irrational explanations. They referred to this period of time as the Great Disappointment. What they never did, though, was re-evaluate their interpretation of the signs of the Second Coming.

Eighteen forty-four, however, was the year that the Báb declared His mission as the Herald of "Him Whom God Will Make Manifest" [Bahá'u'lláh]. This, Bahá'u'lláh states, is the beginning of the Bahá'í Era.

So we have the time frame, what about the place? Where will he come from? Micah says this very clearly. (Here we must depart from our exclusive use of the New English Bible. Its translation is less clear than the King James version. We provide them both for your consideration.)

In that day also he shall come even to thee from Assyria, and from the fortified cities, and from the fortress even to the river, and from sea to sea, and from mountain to mountain. (Micah 7:12, KJV)

... a day when men will come seeking you from Assyria to Egypt and from Egypt to the Euphrates, from every sea and every mountain.... (Micah 7:12, NEB)

In either case it is clear that the Promised One will come from Assyria. Bahá'u'lláh was born in the province of Nur, Persia, (modern-day

## His New Name

Iran) which used to be a part of the ancient Assyrian Empire. As a prisoner of the Persian and Turkish governments, He was exiled to Baghdad, which is on the Euphrates River, then to the fortified city of Constantinople on the Black Sea, then Adrianople, and finally to another fortified city, Akka. In so doing He was taken from the Black Sea to the Mediterranean Sea and from the Sulaymán mountains of Persia to Mount Carmel in present day Israel.

Now we know when and we know where. All we need to know is who.

Then I saw in the right hand of the One who sat on the Throne a scroll, with writing inside and out, and it was sealed up with seven seals. And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming in a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?" There was no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth able to open the scroll or to look inside it. I was in tears because no one was found who was worthy to open the scroll or to look inside it. But one of the elders said to me: "Do not weep; for the Lion from the tribe of Judah, the Scion of David, has won the right to open the scroll and break its seals." (Revelations 5:1-5)

At that moment Michael shall appear, Michael the great captain, who stands guard over your fellow-countrymen; and there will be a time of distress such as has never been since they became a nation till that moment. But at that moment your people will be delivered, every one who is written in the book. (Daniel 12:1 NEB)

In Daniel 10:13 and 21, Michael is identified as the "angel prince of the kingdom of Persia." Also, both the King James and Revised Standard translations use "prince" instead of "captain." To resolve any lingering doubts about these designations, it should be remembered that not only in biblical, but modern times as well, princes are frequently captains or military leaders of similar rank. It is a traditional role for royal male heirs.

The prophecy in Revelation says "the Lion from the tribe of Judah, the Scion of David, has won the right to open the scroll and break its seals." Dr. David Ruhe, in his book *Robe of Light*, states that Bahá'u'lláh's ancestry could be traced back to the Sassanian dynasty of kings and to Abraham through his wife Katurah. Bahá'u'lláh's father was a nobleman of considerable promise in the court of the Shah (king) of Persia. A place was made at court for Bahá'u'lláh, which He refused, devoting Himself instead to humanitarian endeavors. After joining the Bábís (followers of the Báb), He was imprisoned and tortured, His wealth was stripped from Him, and He spent the last forty years of His life banished from His homeland.

## His New Name

It appears that Bahá'u'lláh fulfilled the prophecies for when, where and who. Now we then need to consider whether he meets the other proofs of prophethood.

### WHAT ARE THE PROOFS OF PROPHETHOOD?

Most of us have never asked what the proofs of prophethood are. We have probably thought about it in one way or another, though. How else would we be able to decide whether or not the claim to prophethood of this person or that is valid unless we draw up some kind of mental checklist? Often this checklist is a short, unconscious one which may consist of questions like this:

Do my parents believe in Him?

What does the rest of the world think?

Does my society agree that He is a prophet?

Does He fit my image of a prophet?

What does my clergyman say about this person who claims to be prophet?

When it comes to deciding which prophet to follow, most of us base our decision on what others tell us. Most often these other people have been our parents. Sometimes they might be a friend, or a teacher in school, or even a member of the clergy. We do this without ever taking the time to look at the original materials ourselves. Materials like the Bible or the writings or sayings of the person claiming to be a prophet. We rely on what religious authorities tell us, be they parents, clergy, or friends, because we assume that they know more than we do.

Make no mistake: the decision to follow a particular prophet is the single most important decision we can make in our lives. This is not something to be taken lightly. Neither is it something that we should allow others to decide for us.

Yet, to some extent, all of us have let someone else make that decision for us. Even those who come from non-religious homes have let their parents decide that they would follow no prophet. Most of the people I know decided to follow the second most widely spread religion in history (Christianity), because their parents were followers and they were raised that way. When they were introduced to the most widely spread religion (Bahá'í), many of them initially rejected it out of hand, due to ignorance and prejudice. It didn't sound familiar. It didn't sound like what they had been taught to look for. It was only after they decided, for whatever reasons, to look into it, that they finally evaluated it for themselves.

So on what do you base your decision if not on what your parents, clergy, or other authorities, who are supposed to know better than you,

## His New Name

have to say about it? Ultimately, whether you follow what you are told, or you find your own path, the decision is yours. Shouldn't you make it based upon your own investigation of the original sources of information, rather than what someone else says about it?

One of the first things that many people point to as proof of prophethood is the performance of miracles. Around this subject there is a great deal of controversy. We will simply look at what Jesus Himself thought of them, and how the people who were actually present when he performed them reacted. Then we will look at the Bahá'í viewpoint. [Note: The New English Bible uses the word, "sign," for miracle.]

The Pharisees and Sadducees came, and to test him they asked him to show them a sign from heaven. His answer was: "It is a wicked generation that asks for a sign; and the only sign that will be given it is the sign of Jonah." So he went off and left them. (Matthew 16:1-4 NEB) [The "sign of Jonah," his survival three days and nights in the "sea monster's" belly, is explained in Matthew 12:39.]

Jesus replied, "In very truth I know that you have not come looking for me because you saw signs, but because you ate the bread and your hunger was satisfied...." (John 6:26 NEB)

In spite of the many signs which Jesus had performed in their presence, they would not believe in him.... (John 12:37 NEB)

Jesus seems a little contemptuous of miracles, and with good reason. The people who actually saw the miracles were certainly not convinced they were standing in the presence of the Son of God.

What was Bahá'u'lláh's attitude toward them?

By My Self! Whoso hath in bygone ages asked Us to produce the signs of God, hath, no sooner We revealed them to him, repudiated God's truth. (*Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 132)

As a final point on the importance of miracles as a proof of prophethood, consider how well Moses' miracles were received, not only by the Egyptians, but also by the Jews. Both rejected Him outright, brushing aside His miracles as mere magic tricks. Even after Moses led them out of Egypt, the Jews didn't really respect Him as their Prophet so much as the political leader who'd managed to convince the Pharaoh that they were more trouble to keep than they were worth.

Remember too, that the Bible is replete with stories of many people who made no claim to prophethood yet performed miraculous feats. No less personages than the Disciples themselves were credited with healings and raisings from the dead. Miracles don't make the prophet.

## His New Name

Though we do not reject that they have occurred, we do find they make a very poor measure of the validity of someone's claim to prophethood.

Unfortunately, Jesus did not leave us a prophethood validation checklist. Neither did Peter, nor did Paul. There are lots of clues about when and where to expect a prophet, and a couple about who it might be. There is, however, only one clue about how to recognize one when he actually shows up: Know him by his fruits.

Up to this point we have looked at what the Bible says on a particular subject. On the subject of the proofs of prophethood, however, it is nearly silent. So we must take a different approach. Bahá'u'lláh did leave us a checklist. Granted, using Bahá'u'lláh's own checklist to determine whether He, Himself, measures up as a prophet is a very poor investigative method. But suppose we were to apply that checklist to Jesus? If we can put a check mark beside each point for Him, might that establish the reliability of the checklist? And, if it can be applied successfully to Jesus, then might it not also be a good measure against which to hold others who claim Prophethood?

This list is drawn from the *Kitáb-i-Íqán, The Book of Certitude*, written by Bahá'u'lláh to answer those who questioned His claims.

### **1. The Prophet is opposed, especially by the religious authorities.**

Why is it that the advent of every true Manifestation of God hath been accompanied by such strife and tumult, by such tyranny and upheaval? (*Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 12)

A corollary proof, suggested not only by Bahá'u'lláh, but by Jesus as well, is to examine the motives of those who oppose him, particularly those in positions of political and religious authority. Those motives, too, are proof, for they are most often self-serving ones. Did those in authority accept Jesus or try to quash Him? What were their motives? Were they a genuine fear that He was a false prophet, or were they the preservation of their position and power?

### **2. The Prophet always foretells, and gives the signs, of Another Who will come after Him.**

This notwithstanding the fact that all the Prophets of God, whenever made manifest unto the peoples of the world, have invariably foretold the coming of yet another Prophet after them, and have established such signs as would herald the advent of the future Dispensation. (*Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 13)

Did Jesus say another would come after Him? Yes. We recognize that Jesus, in the traditional Christian understanding, said He would

## His New Name

return, not someone else. But, as we have read in the Bible, He warned His disciples His return would be under a new name, that those who claimed His Name were false prophets. And we read in Revelations that He would have a new name. So the phrasing of this question is legitimate because He would appear, outwardly, to be someone else. Did Jesus give us signs to look for? Is that not the subject of Matthew 24?

### 3. **The world is enveloped by destruction and change.**

For this reason, in all chronicles and traditions reference hath been made unto these things, namely that iniquity shall cover the surface of the earth and darkness shall envelop mankind. (*Kitáb-i-Íqán* , pp. 31-32)

What happened to the Jews after Christ's death? What happened to the Roman Empire? What was the fate of the Christians for the next couple of centuries?

### 4. **The law of prayer is re-established and re-emphasized .**

The traditions establish the fact that in all Dispensations the law of prayer hath constituted a fundamental element of the Revelation of all the Prophets of God law the form and the manner of which hath been adapted to the varying requirements of every age. (*Kitáb-i-Íqán* , p. 39)

Did Jesus change the Jewish law of prayer? The best way to answer that, since Jesus did not specifically say, "This is the new Law of Prayer," is to look at how Christians pray, at what times and under what circumstances, and then look at the way observant Jews pray.

Did he emphasize the need to pray and give us a prayer to say?

### 5. **The Prophet faces constant persecution and rejection.**

Moreover, consider the hardships and the bitterness of the lives of those Revealers of the divine Beauty. Reflect, how single-handed and alone they faced the world and all its peoples, and promulgated the Law of God! No matter how severe the persecutions inflicted upon those holy, those precious, and tender Souls, they still remained, in the plenitude of their power, patient, and, despite their ascendancy, they suffered and endured. (*Kitáb-i-Íqán* , p. 45)

Was Jesus persecuted? Was He rejected by the majority of the population? Who clamored for Barabbas to be released instead of

## His New Name

Jesus? How did Jesus respond to this persecution? Was it with patience, or did He lash out in anger and frustration?

- 6. The Prophet is essentially uneducated in the schools of His time. He may have been taught to read and write, but has certainly not been given an advanced education.**

... how could such souls who have not been taught one letter, have seen no teacher, and entered no school, utter such words and display such knowledge as none can apprehend? Methinks they have been moulded from the clay of infinite knowledge, and kneaded with the water of divine wisdom. (*Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 46)

Was Jesus educated? We know He could read and write because He read the Torah in the synagogue, but did his education extend beyond that rudimentary level?

- 7. A star (Forerunner) will appear in both the visible and invisible heaven.**

By “heaven” is meant the visible heaven, inasmuch as when the hour draweth nigh on which the Day-star of the heaven of justice shall be made manifest, and the Ark of divine guidance shall sail upon the sea of glory, a star will appear in the heaven, heralding unto its people the advent of that most great light. In like manner, in the invisible heaven a star shall be made manifest who, unto the peoples of the earth, shall act as a harbinger of the break of that true and exalted Morn. These twofold signs, in the visible and the invisible heaven, have announced the Revelation of each of the Prophets of God, as is commonly believed. (*Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 62)

Was there a star at Jesus’ birth? Did He have someone who foretold His coming?

- 8. There is a Book of Divine Scripture.**

Wert thou to explore the sacred domain of truth, thou wilt find that all things are known only by the light of His recognition, that He hath ever been, and will continue for ever to be, known through Himself. And if thou dwellest in the land of testimony, content thyself with that which He, Himself, hath revealed: “Is it not enough for them that We have sent down unto Thee the Book?” (*Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 91)

Even though Jesus did not write it Himself, can any Christian deny that there is a divinely inspired record of His life and what He said?

## His New Name

### 9. The Prophet's own Self is a proof.

It behooveth us, therefore, to make the utmost endeavour, that, by God's invisible assistance, these dark veils, these clouds of Heavensent trials, may not hinder us from beholding the beauty of His shining Countenance, and that we may recognize Him only by His own Self. (*Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 75)

Was Jesus Himself Godly? Did he reflect the qualities that mankind has universally accepted as being Godlike?

### 10. A small group of people of high character are the first to recognize the Prophet, are scorned by the learned and wealthy for it, and testify through their deeds to the quality of their faith.

Amongst the proofs demonstrating the truth of this Revelation is this, that in every age and Dispensation, whenever the invisible Essence was revealed in the person of His Manifestation, certain souls, obscure and detached from all worldly entanglements, would seek illumination from the Sun of Prophethood and Moon of divine guidance, and would attain unto the divine Presence. For this reason, the divines of the age and those possessed of wealth, would scorn and scoff at these people. (*Kitáb-i-Íqán*, pp. 221-2)

Did Jesus gather about Him a group of people who accepted His call, and withstood the onslaught of persecution directed at them to teach His Word?

### 11. The Prophet's Words and Teachings have a transforming effect upon His Followers. "By His fruits shall ye know Him."

All these were guided by the light of that Sun of divine Revelation, confessed and acknowledged His truth. Such was their faith, that most of them renounced their substance and kindred, and cleaved to the good-pleasure of the All-Glorious. They laid down their lives for their Well-Beloved, and surrendered their all in His path. Their breasts were made targets for the darts of the enemy, and their heads adorned the spears of the infidel. No land remained which did not drink the blood of these embodiments of detachment, and no sword that did not bruise their necks. Their deeds, alone, testify to the truth of their words. Doth not the testimony of these holy souls, who have so gloriously risen to offer up their lives for their Beloved that the whole world marveled at the manner of their sacrifice, suffice the people of this day? Is it not sufficient witness against the

## His New Name

faithlessness of those who for a trifle betrayed their faith, who bartered away immortality for that which perisheth, who gave up the Kawthar of the divine Presence for salty springs, and whose one aim in life is to usurp the property of others? Even as thou dost witness how all of them have busied themselves with the vanities of the world, and have strayed far from Him Who is the Lord, the Most High. (*Kitab-i-iqan*, pp. 223-4)

What happened to Jesus' Disciples? Were their lives changed? How about His other followers, were their lives changed. Did they lead lives "the whole world marveled at?"

There can be little doubt that Jesus met these criteria. Did Bahá'u'lláh meet these same criteria?

1. He was opposed by the government and the religious authorities of His time.
2. He foretold of one who would come after him after the lapse of at least one thousand years.
3. The world has experienced and continues to experience widespread destruction and social decay on an unparalleled scale.
4. He made daily prayer an obligatory law and revealed specific prayers to be said, as well as hundreds of prayers for all kinds of needs and occasions.
5. He was rejected not only by the majority of the people of His day, but imprisoned and banished by the government solely on the basis of His claims to prophethood. These punishments were accepted without protest, though he did later condemn, in His Writings, the venal motivations and shortsightedness of those who persecuted Him.
6. He had only the most rudimentary education available in His time, even though he was a prince. Persian royalty were generally not educated beyond the basics. They relied on religious scholars and advisers to care for them and run the government.
7. In 1835, William Hersch and William Struve established the foundation for the systematic measurement of double-stars. In that same year Shaykh Ahmad and Siyyid Kazim (respected Persian Islamic scholars of the time) proclaimed that there would be two messengers of God for the Last Day, the Time of the End. [Note: Islam was as wrapped up in messianic expectations at this time as the Christians were.] In 1844, Sirius, one of the brightest stars in the heavens, was declared to be a double-star by the astronomer Bessel. That was the year the Báb

## His New Name

declared He was the Herald of “Him Whom God Would Make Manifest,” assigning the title, Bahá’u’lláh, which translates as the Glory of God, to His young follower, Prince Mirzá Husayn-‘Alíy Núrí. In 1862, Alvan Clark confirmed that Sirius was a double-star, just a few months before Bahá’u’lláh publicly declared his mission.

8. Bahá’u’lláh wrote hundreds of volumes of laws, treatises, answers to questions, prayers, meditations, and letters to people all over the world. His Son, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, added authoritative explanations and interpretations of His Father’s works. These original manuscripts, either in Their own handwriting or in the form of transcribed dictations, corrected and signed by Them, are preserved in the Bahá’í World Center. They form the authentic and authoritative scriptures of the Bahá’í Faith.
9. There is ample evidence from independent, non-Bahá’í sources of the excellent character of Bahá’u’lláh, even by His enemies. He was not condemned for His character, but for the threat those who opposed Him perceived Him to be to themselves and their position and power.
10. The Báb gathered nineteen disciples, one of whom was Bahá’u’lláh, and called them the Letters of the Living. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was the first to believe in Bahá’u’lláh, even before He publicly announced His mission and prophethood. Those Letters of the Living who survived the persecution of the Bábís accepted Bahá’u’lláh’s claim of prophethood and became His disciples. Several others joined Bahá’u’lláh after He publicly declared His prophethood. Most of them were killed, some shared His banishment and imprisonment, and others were sent out into the world to teach at great personal sacrifice.
11. Over 20,000 Bábís and Bahá’ís, men, women and children, including the Báb Himself, were tortured and killed in the early years of the Faith. But perhaps the most enduring testament to the effect Bahá’u’lláh has had on the lives of His followers is that former antagonists in racial, national, political, and religious conflicts now embrace each other as brothers, as members of one family. Others have changed the way they lived from indolence, self-serving gratification and immorality to service, sacrifice and moral rectitude.

So, does Bahá’u’lláh also qualify as a Prophet?

## SOME DOCTRINAL COMPARISONS

## His New Name

There are many Christian doctrines. They all have a basis in Scripture. This listing is not exhaustive, but representative. We provide both the biblical source and the Bahá'í Writings so you may compare them.

### Justification By Faith

Justification is defined in Nelson's *Three-in-One Bible Reference Companion* as: "God's accounting the guilty to be righteous and acceptable because of Christ's death."

This has been one of the thorniest subjects in religious history. As one will see when reading the biblical passages, it was a source of contention even in Jesus' day. In addition, after Jesus' ascension there was a conflict over the question of whether Gentiles could be saved or even be followers of Jesus. Paul was not an altogether popular figure in his day because he took Christianity to the Gentiles. Most of the early followers of Jesus, including all the Disciples, were Jewish, as was Paul himself, and there was a very strong feeling that Jesus came for the Jews and no one else, that the Gentiles were beyond hope.

Therefore take notice that this salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles; the Gentiles will listen. (Acts 28:28 NEB)

On another front there was also the question, addressed by James, as to whether being a believer excused a person from living a righteous life. Down through time, being a believer has been used to excuse a great deal of sinful living, not only in Christian history, but in all religious history.

In point of fact there is no conflict between Paul and James. Paul says that we are justified by our faith in Jesus Christ through the grace of God. His discourse in Romans addresses the question of whether Gentiles, who have not followed the Jewish laws, and therefore not been righteous according to the reckoning of the Jews, can be justified, regardless of whether they accept Jesus or not. James' discourse addresses one's behavior after one has faith, saying that one's deeds must prove his faith. This is a position with which Paul is in complete agreement. His many exhortations throughout his letters to live a pure and righteous life are proof of that.

For all alike have sinned, and are deprived of the divine splendour, and all are justified by God's free grace alone, through his act of liberation in the person of Christ Jesus. For God designed him to be the means of expiating sin by his sacrificial death, effective through faith. God meant by this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had overlooked the sins of the past to demonstrate his justice now in the present, showing that he is

## His New Name

himself just and also justifies any man who puts his faith in Jesus. (Romans 3:23-26 NEB)

Then what are we to say? That Gentiles, who made no effort after righteousness, nevertheless achieved it, a righteousness based on faith; whereas Israel made great efforts after a law of righteousness, but never attained to it. Why was this? Because their efforts were not based on faith, but (as they supposed) on deeds. (Romans 9:30-32 NEB)

My brothers, what use is it for a man to say he has faith when he does nothing to show it. Can that faith save him? Suppose a brother or a sister is in rags with not enough food for the day, and one of you says, "Good luck to you, keep yourselves warm, and have plenty to eat", but does nothing to supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that? So with faith; if it does not lead to action, it is in itself a lifeless thing.

But someone may object: "Here is one who claims to have faith and another who points to his deeds." To which I reply: "Prove to me that this faith you speak of is real though not accomplished by deeds, and by my deeds I will prove to you my faith." You have faith enough to believe that there is one God. Excellent! The devils have faith like that, and it makes them tremble. But can you not see, you quibbler, that faith divorced from deeds is barren? (James 2:14-20 NEB)

We are cognizant of thy righteous deeds, though they shall avail thee nothing, for the whole object of such righteousness is but recognition of God, thy Lord, and undoubted faith in the Words revealed by Him. (*Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 133)

He should not wish for others that which he doth not wish for himself, nor promise that which he doth not fulfill. With all his heart he should avoid fellowship with evil-doers, and pray for the remission of their sins. He should forgive the sinful, and never despise his low estate, for none knoweth what his own end shall be. How often hath a sinner attained, at the hour of death, to the essence of faith, and, quaffing the immortal draught, hath taken his flight unto the Concourse on high! And how often hath a devout believer, at the hour of his soul's ascension, been so changed as to fall into the nethermost fire! (*Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh* p.266)

O SON OF BEING! Bring thyself to account each day ere thou art summoned to a reckoning; for death, unheralded, shall come upon

## His New Name

thee and thou shalt be called to give account for thy deeds.  
(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Hidden Words*, Arabic #31)

O SON OF DUST! Verily I say unto thee: Of all men the most negligent is he that disputeth idly and seeketh to advance himself over his brother. Say, O brethren! Let deeds, not words, be your adorning. (Bahá'u'lláh, *The Hidden Words*, Persian #5)

O CHILDREN OF ADAM! Holy words and pure and goodly deeds ascend unto the heaven of celestial glory. Strive that your deeds may be cleansed from the dust of self and hypocrisy and find favor at the court of glory; for ere long the assayers of mankind shall, in the holy presence of the Adored One, accept naught but absolute virtue and deeds of stainless purity. This is the day-star of wisdom and of divine mystery that hath shone above the horizon of the divine will. Blessed are they that turn thereunto. (Bahá'u'lláh, *The Hidden Words*, Persian #69)

O SON OF MY HANDMAID! Guidance hath ever been given by words, and now it is given by deeds. Every one must show forth deeds that are pure and holy, for words are the property of all alike, whereas such deeds as these belong only to Our loved ones. Strive then with heart and soul to distinguish yourselves by your deeds. In this wise We counsel you in this holy and resplendent tablet. (Bahá'u'lláh, *The Hidden Words*, Persian #76)

### The Concept of the Trinity

The concept of the trinity is based upon the following sources. It does not appear as an actual doctrine or concept as we know it in the Bible. It is the way men have tried to conceptualize something that is beyond their comprehension—the relationship between God and His Prophets. Jesus Himself never makes reference to the concept except in the most indirect manner.

And the word you hear is not mine: it is the word of the Father who sent me. I have told you all this while I am still here with you; but your Advocate, the Holy Spirit whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything, and will call to mind all that I have told you. (Jesus to His Disciples, John 14:24-6 NEB)

But when your Advocate has come, whom I will send you from the Father—the Spirit of truth that issues from the Father—he will bear witness to me. (Jesus to His Disciples, John 15:26 NEB)

## His New Name

... but when the term was completed, God sent his own Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to purchase freedom for the subjects of the law, in order that we might attain the status of sons.

To prove that you are sons, God has sent into our hearts the Spirit of his Son, crying “Abba! Father!” (Galations 4:4-6 NEB)

‘Abdu’l-Bahá gives an excellent, authoritative explanation of the Bahá’í position on the concept of the Trinity.

So the Reality of Christ was a clear and polished mirror of the greatest purity and fineness. The Sun of Reality, the Essence of Divinity, reflected itself in this mirror and manifested its light and heat in it; but from the exaltation of its holiness, and the heaven of its sanctity, the Sun did not descend to dwell and abide in the mirror.

No, it continues to subsist in its exaltation and sublimity, while appearing and becoming manifest in the mirror in beauty and perfection.

Now if we say that we have seen the Sun in two mirrors one the Christ and one the Holy Spirit that is to say, that we have seen three Suns, one in heaven and the two others on the earth, we speak truly. And if we say that there is one Sun, and it is pure singleness, and has no partner and equal, we again speak truly.

The epitome of the discourse is that the Reality of Christ was a clear mirror, and the Sun of Reality that is to say, the Essence of Oneness, with its infinite perfections and attributes became visible in the mirror. The meaning is not that the Sun, which is the Essence of the Divinity, became divided and multiplied for the Sun is one but it appeared in the mirror. This is why Christ said, “The Father is in the Son,” meaning that the Sun is visible and manifest in this mirror.

The Holy Spirit is the Bounty of God which becomes visible and evident in the Reality of Christ. The Sonship station is the heart of Christ, and the Holy Spirit is the station of the spirit of Christ. Hence it has become certain and proved that the Essence of Divinity is absolutely unique and has no equal, no likeness, no equivalent. (*Some Answered Questions*, p. 114)

### Saved By Grace, Not Works

Nelson’s *Three-in-One Bible Reference Companion* defines Grace as: “Unmerited favor; mercy; compassion.”

## His New Name

In just the same way at the present time a “remnant” has come into being, selected by the grace of God. But if it is by grace, then it does not rest on deeds done, or grace would cease to be grace. (Romans 11:5-6 NEB)

No, we believe that it is by the grace of the Lord Jesus that we are saved, and so are they. (Acts 15:11 NEB)

Out of his full store we have all received grace upon grace; for while the Law was given through Moses, grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. (John 1:16-17 NEB)

The tie of servitude established between the worshiper and the adored One, between the creature and the Creator, should in itself be regarded as a token of His gracious favor unto men, and not as an indication of any merit they may possess. To this testifieth every true and discerning believer. (*Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 193-4)

### Forgiveness of Sins

For in Christ our release is secured and our sins are forgiven through the shedding of his blood. Therein lies the richness of God's free grace lavished upon us, imparting full wisdom and insight. (Ephesians 1:7-8 NEB)

Thou [Bahá'u'lláh] art indeed the One Who forgiveth the sins of all mankind. (*Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 4, clarification added)

Return ye to God and repent, that He through His grace, may have mercy upon you, may wash away your sins and forgive your trespasses. (*Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 130)

### Salvation

For it is by his grace you are saved, through trusting him; it is not by your own doing. It is God's gift, not a reward for work done. There is nothing for anyone to boast of. For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to devote ourselves to the good deeds for which God has designed us. (Ephesians 2:8-10 NEB)

## His New Name

Blessed is the man that hath acknowledged his belief in God and His signs, and recognized that “He shall not be asked of His doings.”

... Such is the teaching which God bestoweth on you, a teaching that will deliver you from all manner of doubt and perplexity, and enable you to attain salvation in both this world and in the next. (*Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 5)

The beginning of all things is the knowledge of God, and the end of all things is strict observance of whatsoever hath been sent down from the empyrean [the abode of God and the angels; paradise] of Divine Will... (*Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 5, clarification added)

### **Atonement**

(Physical Death or Suffering as a Ransom for Sin)

In his own person he carried our sins to the gibbet, so that we might cease to live in sin and begin to live for righteousness. (1 Peter 2:24 NEB)

For Christ died [some witnesses read suffered] for our sins once and for all. He, the just, suffered for the unjust, to bring us to God. (1 Peter 3:18 NEB, alternate translation added from footnote)

We, verily, have come for your sakes, and have borne the misfortunes of the world for your salvation. (*Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 10)

He, in truth, hath offered up His life as a ransom for the redemption of the world. (*Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 315)

### **WHAT ABOUT... ?**

We conclude with some brief answers to doctrinal questions, taken from both the Bible and the Bahá'í Writings.

#### **Are Bahá'ís condemned?**

## His New Name

The man who puts his faith in him does not come under judgement; but the unbeliever has already been judged in that he has not given his allegiance to God's only Son. (John 3:18 NEB)

No. Bahá'ís are not condemned because they believe in Jesus Christ.

### **Are Bahá'ís saved?**

Put your trust in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved.... (Acts 16:31 NEB)

Though it might at first appear that the Bahá'ís have not "put [their] trust in the Lord Jesus," they have. They believe in Jesus. They believe that He has returned in the Glory of the Father. They have put their trust in Him under His new name, Bahá'u'lláh.

### **Are Bahá'ís righteous?**

My children, do not be misled: it is the man who does right who is righteous, as God is righteous.... (I John 3:7 NEB)

This rectitude of conduct, with its implications of justice, equity, truthfulness, honesty, fair-mindedness, reliability, and trustworthiness, must distinguish every phase of the life of the Bahá'í community. "The companions of God," Bahá'u'lláh Himself has declared, "are, in this day, the lump that must leaven the peoples of the world. They must show forth such trustworthiness, such truthfulness and perseverance, such deeds and character that all mankind may profit by their example." "I swear by Him Who is the Most Great Ocean!" He again affirms, "Within the very breath of such souls as are pure and sanctified far-reaching potentialities are hidden. So great are these potentialities that they exercise their influence upon all created things." (Shoghi Effendi, *The Advent of Divine Justice*, p. 23)

### **Does God abide in Bahá'ís?**

... and if a man acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwells in him and he dwells in God. (I John 4:15 NEB)

As we have shown repeatedly, Bahá'ís believe that Jesus is the Son of God.

# His New Name

## THE LAST WORD

It is our hope that this booklet will encourage you to investigate the Bahá'í Faith further by reading the Bible, as well as the Bahá'í Writings. Our purpose has not been to convert you, but to share with you the idea that Jesus returned, as he said he would, and that His new name is Bahá'u'lláh.

## SUGGESTED READING

Bahá'u'lláh. *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*. 2nd ed. Wilmette, IL: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1976.

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William Sears. *Thief in the Night, The Strange Case of the Missing Millennium*. Oxford, England: George Ronald, 1961.

Michael Sours. *The Prophecies of Jesus*. Oxford, England: Oneworld Publications Ltd., 1991.

Hushidar Motlagh. *I Shall Come Again*. Mt. Pleasant, MI: Global Perspective, 1992.

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and of course, any version of the Holy Bible you happen to prefer.