

PREPARING FOR

CHRIST'S  
NEW NAME



BY

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## Preparing for Christ's New Name

- Are we prepared for Christ's Return?
- How will He return?
- When will He return?
- Where will He return?
- Will Christ's Name be different when He returns?

Compare your views with those held by a Christian and a Bahá'í as they study Scripture together.

Alex Gottdank, a middle school history and English teacher, was raised in a predominantly Jewish family. In high school, he became involved with a YMCA youth group and began attending Christian summer and winter camps. Moved by the spirit shown in these gatherings, Alex began to read the Bible cover to cover. This exposed him to the love, sacrifice, and teachings of Jesus Christ.

Consequently, he accepted Christ into his life and began sharing the Gospel with friends. This book relates a dialogue between Alex and one of those friends, Brian Wessel, a member of the Bahá'í Faith. It condenses a three-year discussion they had that focused primarily on the Scriptural issues of Christ's return. Alex hopes that the insights gained from this discussion will benefit both Christians and Bahá'ís and that a spirit of mutual respect and understanding will permeate their relations.

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## Notes

# **Chapter 1: Preparing for Christ's Return**

## **The Bible – the Standard of Truth**

I am grateful that the Bible guided me to the ultimate truth, that Jesus Christ is my Lord and Savior.

Unlike most Christians, however, I was born a Jew and investigated Christ's claim to be the Messiah by reading the Gospel from a Jewish perspective. In time I realized that Christ not only fulfilled Messianic prophecies, but more importantly, led a holy sinless life and sacrificed Himself so that I could have eternal life. Deeply humbled by this and transformed by His words and the depth of His love, compassion, and forgiveness, I wholeheartedly embraced Christ into my life.

I can now only imagine what would have happened if I had not relied solely on the Bible to guide me. I might have relied on Jewish interpretations of Scripture and rejected Christ. Fortunately, I did not.

Today the Bible remains the foundation of my life. Nothing brings me greater happiness than studying Scripture, especially with friends. This was certainly the case when I invited my friend Brian, a member of the Bahá'í Faith, to study Biblical passages with me after he expressed interest in Scriptural references to the return of Christ.

After he accepted the invitation, we began a study that was enriching and thought provoking and one that I am happy to share with you.

With this in mind, I now share the gist of our study, which focused initially on a Biblical verse that is often overlooked or unexplored. It concerns a prophecy where Christ foretells that He will return in a *new name*.

### **A New Name for Christ?**

Brian's interest in Scriptural references to the return of Christ centered on a passage from the Book of Revelation. We began our study focused on this passage.

Brian asked, "Alex, what do you think Christ means when He refers to His *new name* in the following passage?"

Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God ... and *I will write upon him* my new name. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.<sup>1</sup> (Revelation 3:12-13)

I responded, "Although I've read this passage before, I've never considered what Christ means by His *new name*. I suppose that if Christ were addressing non-Christians, it would be safe to assume that the *new name* Christ is referring to is His own name, Jesus Christ. However, since Christ was addressing Christians at Ephesus,

Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea, those already calling Him by the name Jesus Christ, the *new name* must have a different meaning.”

Consequently, I suggested that we look for an explanation in my study Bible. Unfortunately, it did not provide one. It did, however, list another reference to a *new name*, one from the Old Testament, which we decided to compare to this one with the hope that it might shed light on its meaning.

#### **Comparing New Name Prophecies**

The passage referred to was concerned with the Advent of the Messiah. It read:

... thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the LORD shall name. (Isaiah 62:2)

Even though we agreed that this *new name* was “Jesus,” we took time to read the New Testament verse that confirmed this. Turning to the cross-reference provided, we read:

... the angel of the Lord appeared [to Joseph]<sup>2</sup> ... saying ... thou shalt call his name JESUS: ... that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet [Isaiah], saying, Behold, a virgin shall ... bring forth a son, and they

shall call his name Emmanuel,<sup>3</sup> which being interpreted is, God with us. (Matthew 1:20-23)

From this passage we saw that the *new name* prophecy was fulfilled when the “angel of the Lord” called the child by the *new name* Jesus rather than by the old name prophesied for the Messiah, Emmanuel. Yet, it was also interesting that this passage still declared that Jesus fulfilled the Emmanuel prophecy, for although Jesus was not named Emmanuel, He was still Emmanuel, for He was “God with us.”

Brian then asked, “Alex, since the Emmanuel prophecy and the *new name* prophecy were fulfilled by a name different than Emmanuel, the name expected for the Messiah, do you think it might be possible for Christ’s name to be different when He returns?”

I answered, “I suppose it’s possible, but it sounds strange to me. Perhaps the *new name* simply means that when Christ returns He will have an additional name or title by which we address Him.”

He responded, “Perhaps, but I know of another prophecy similar to this one that makes me derive another possible conclusion.”

I asked, “Which prophecy are you talking about?”

He answered, “The prophecy of Elijah’s return.”

**Emmanuel and Elijah**

He continued, “Just as the Emmanuel prophecy was fulfilled by a name that did not match Emmanuel, the Elijah prophecy was fulfilled by a name that did not match Elijah.”

We then read the Elijah prophecy together:

Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD:  
(Malachi 4:5)

Brian added, “And we know Christ made it clear that John the Baptist fulfilled this prophecy as the second coming of Elijah because Christ said”:

Elias [Elijah] truly shall first come ... But I say unto you, That Elias is come already, and they knew him not ... Then the disciples understood that he spake unto them of John the Baptist. (Matthew 17:11-13)

“So with Christ equating John with Elijah, wouldn’t you say that John was like a *new name* for Elijah just as Jesus was a *new name* for Emmanuel?”

I responded, “In a sense, maybe.”

Brian continued, “Well to me it’s interesting that both prophecies are fulfilled not only by those bearing new names but also in the way in

which they were fulfilled. For example, the reason given in Scripture for John being Elijah was that John had come in the spirit of Elijah”:

... he [John] shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, ... (Luke 1:17)

“I find this significant because it appears to me that John’s coming in the spirit of Elijah is comparable to Jesus’ coming in the spirit of Emmanuel, which leads me to ask a compelling question.”

I asked, “What question is that?”

Brian replied, “If both the new name Jesus and the new name John fulfilled the prophecies of Emmanuel and Elijah because they came in the spirits of Emmanuel and Elijah, then could someone other than Jesus Christ, someone with a *new name*, be the return of Christ if that someone came in the spirit of Christ?”

**Christ is the only way to God**

I responded, “No, that would never happen. The Bible is clear that Christ is the only way to God. No one else can be Christ. Even Christ testifies to this when He says”:

I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me. (John 14:6)

“Peter also proclaims”:

Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved. (Acts 4:12)

Brian responded, “When Christ says, ‘I am the way,’ could He be referring to the Holy Spirit dwelling in Him?”

I asked him what he meant.

He said, “I believe the stories of Emmanuel and Elijah teach us that Scripture focuses on the spiritual reality of an individual. So when Christ says, ‘I am the way,’ I believe He is stating that His spiritual reality, the Holy Spirit, which dwells in Him, is the only way to God. It follows that if the Holy Spirit were to dwell in another, then the way to God would remain the same, through the Holy Spirit. In this way, someone other than Christ could be the return of Christ if he bore Christ’s Spirit<sup>4</sup> and came in a new name different than Jesus Christ.”

I countered, “You can’t actually think it would be possible for someone other than Christ to be the return of Christ?”

He replied, “If Jesus Christ can be a new name for Emmanuel, John the Baptist a new name for Elijah, and Christ Himself declare that He will return in a new name, then why not? In fact, not only do I believe



this, but I believe that just as in Christ's day the Holy Spirit appeared in one name, "Jesus Christ," in this day it has appeared in one name also, the one who bears Christ's *new name*, Bahá'u'lláh, the founder of the Bahá'í Faith."

**"Believe It Not"**

I was shocked – extremely concerned for Brian's soul. I asked, "Are you saying that this Bahá'u'lláh is the return of Christ!"

He answered, "Yes."

I responded, "How can you believe this knowing that Christ warns us that if anyone says":

Lo, here *is* Christ ... [you should] believe *it* not." (Matthew 24:23)

Brian responded, "I would also reject anyone who says, 'Lo, here is Christ,' but this is not what I am saying. I am saying 'Lo, here is the Spirit of Christ.'"

I stared at Brian in complete silence.

After a moment he said, "In other words, Bahá'u'lláh is the return of Christ because He is the return of the spirit of Christ in a *new name* –

the same way that John the Baptist was the return of the spirit of Elijah in a *new name*.”

I shook my head and said, “You got to be kidding me?”

He replied, “No I’m not, and I’d like to know if you would be willing to search Scripture to test Bahá’u’lláh’s claim.”

This I was willing and ready to do, certain that the Bible would quickly expose Bahá’u’lláh’s true identity and thereby save Brian’s soul.

### **Beware of False Prophets**

I was certain that Scripture would indicate that Bahá’u’lláh was a false prophet.

#### **The Spirit of anti-Christ**

I turned to the following passage. It distinguishes the spirit of the anti-Christ from the Spirit of God, and I read it to Brian.

BELOVED, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: And every spirit that confesseth not that

Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of anti-Christ, ... Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God. (1 John 4:1-3, 15)

I told Brian, “This passage conveys that the way to test a spirit is to see if it confesses that Christ came in the flesh and is the Son of God. If it does not, such a spirit is not ‘of God.’ Can you give me proof that Bahá’u’lláh met these criteria?”

Brian answered “The Bahá’í Writings clearly proclaim that Christ came in the flesh and is the Son of God.” He recited two passages that testify to this.

There could be no question that the physical body was born from the womb of Mary. But the reality of Christ, the Spirit of Christ, the perfections of Christ all came from heaven. (*The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 450)

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, [and] that the divine inspiration of the Gospel is fully recognized, ... (*The Promised Day is Come*, p. 109)

Brian asked, “How can Bahá’u’lláh be associated with the spirit of the anti-Christ when these passages testify that Christ came in the flesh and is the Son of God?”

I answered, “Although Bahá’u’lláh does not appear to be against Christ, I still view him as a false prophet.”

#### **A Wolf in Sheep’s Clothing**

I recited the words Christ used to explain the difference between true and false prophets.

Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits ... every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither *can* a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit ... Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them. (Matthew 7:15-20)

I told Brian that Bahá’u’lláh was a wolf in sheep’s clothing. Outwardly he appeared as a prophet, but inwardly his intention was to mislead and deceive sincere Christians.

Brian expressed, “You cannot label Bahá’u’lláh as false without investigating whether He did or did not manifest the fruits of the spirit.”

... the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. (Galatians 5:22-23)

He then offered a summary of Bahá'u'lláh's life, a summary which he believed showed that Bahá'u'lláh manifested these fruits.

### **Bahá'u'lláh's Life**

Brian explained that Bahá'u'lláh, who was born in Persia (Iran) in 1817, led a modest life, refusing to accept a ministerial position at the King's court in order to minister instead to the sick and lowly. By devoting his time and wealth to those in need and showering them with loving kindness and a joyful spirit, he became known as the "Father of the Poor" in his homeland.

Bahá'u'lláh was also persecuted for forty years for claiming to be God's Manifestation (Prophet),<sup>5</sup> enduring this persecution with meekness, resignation, and faith in God. This persecution included being imprisoned<sup>6</sup> and exiled from his native land, being tortured and poisoned, and being stripped of his land, home, and material possessions. Bahá'u'lláh could have avoided this suffering if he had only recanted his claim to be the Manifestation of God for this day. Instead, he remained steadfast in his convictions and not only accepted this persecution with dignity, but strove for peace and reconciliation with those who persecuted him.

Brian said, “Since Bahá’u’lláh manifested the ‘fruits of the spirit,’ and since only a ‘good tree’ can manifest them, Bahá’u’lláh must be a true Prophet.”

I remarked, “Just because a man is a decent human being, or stands up for his beliefs, does not make him a Prophet.”

Brian suggested that my skepticism would be dispelled if I investigated Bahá’u’lláh’s life in depth.

I doubted this and continued to question Bahá’u’lláh’s claim to be the return of the Spirit of Christ.

**Speaking by the Spirit of God**

I asked Brian, “Does Bahá’u’lláh acknowledge Jesus as ‘the Lord.’ If not, he is false, for only a person who speaks by the Holy Ghost can call Jesus ‘Lord.’”

Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and *that* no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.  
(1 Corinthians 12:3)

Brian replied: “Bahá’u’lláh describes Christ as ‘the Lord’ when He testifies that Jesus is the “Lord of the visible and invisible.”

Reflect how Jesus, the Spirit of God, was, notwithstanding His extreme meekness and perfect tender-heartedness, treated by His enemies. So fierce was the opposition which He, the Essence of Being and Lord of the visible and invisible, had to face, that He had nowhere to lay His head. He wandered continually from place to place deprived of a permanent abode. (*Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 57)

Although these words showed reverence for Christ, when I learned that Brian believed them to be the Word of God, I had proof that Bahá'u'lláh was false.

#### **Adding to the Word of God**

I explained that the Bible warns us that no one can add to the Word of God.

For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: (Revelation 22:18)

I said, “Since Bahá'u'lláh was adding to the Word of God, he was adding to ‘this book’ – the Bible – and must be false.”

Brian questioned, “Does this passage refer to the entire Bible or only to the Book of Revelation?”

I replied, “This passage comes at the end of the Bible and refers to anyone trying to add to the Bible, the Word of God.”

Brian replied, “Yes, this passage comes at the end of the Bible; however, are you aware that originally the twenty-seven books in the New Testament were separate books until they were compiled together at the Council of Nicea in A.D. 325? It was at that time that the Book of Revelation was placed after the other books.

Consequently, one might mistakenly believe this verse refers to the entire Bible rather than just the Book of Revelation. Since it does not, and since Bahá’u’lláh did not add to the Book of Revelation, this passage does not condemn Him to the plagues written within it.”

Despite this, I refused to regard Bahá’u’lláh’s words as inspired by God. I stated that Bahá’u’lláh was an imposter, for the signs associated with Christ’s return – including His appearance in clouds, the rapture, and the tribulation – had not taken place.

Brian believed, however, that these events had taken place and offered to show me how.

At that point I declined his offer, for it was obvious to me that Christ had not returned. I also did not want to give Brian further opportunity to twist the meaning of the Bible to meet his own beliefs. I simply



encouraged him to pray to Christ to save his soul, for this Bahá'u'lláh was misleading him. I then politely excused myself and left.

### **Judge All Things**

Throughout the next couple days, I found myself reflecting more and more on the Emmanuel and Elijah prophecies – that Jesus was Emmanuel even though His name was not Emmanuel and that John was Elijah even though his name was not Elijah. I began to wonder whether Christ's name could be different when He returned.

#### **A Spiritual Man**

I then prayed to Christ for guidance. He answered that I should open the Bible. As I did, Paul's words that describe the duty of a spiritual man stared up at me.

... the Spirit searcheth all things ... But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual judgeth all things ... (1 Corinthians 2:10, 14-15)

Paul conveys that a spiritual man seeks and judges all things to discern the truth; a natural man does not. I wondered, "What am I? Am I a spiritual man or a natural man?" Immediately my unwillingness to learn about my friend Brian's beliefs came to mind. I

wondered, “Does this make me a natural man?” Though I hesitated to admit it, it seemed so. I had judged Brian’s beliefs without giving him much of a chance to present them. I paused and took a deep breath. I realized what I needed to do. I resolved that I would contact Brian and ask him to present proof of his beliefs, but I would challenge him to do so strictly within a Biblical context. Either Brian could support Bahá’u’lláh’s claim using Scripture, or Bahá’u’lláh was false.

### **Brian Accepts the Challenge**

Brian was happy to hear from me and eagerly accepted the condition of study. In fact, he believed a close examination of Scripture would reveal that Christ fulfilled Messianic prophecy and Bahá’u’lláh fulfilled Biblical prophecy in similar ways. Consequently, he suggested that we begin by looking at the reasons the Jews rejected Christ so that we would not reject Bahá’u’lláh for similar reasons.

I saw no harm in this so long as the Bible remained the focus of study.

He assured me it would.

## **Chapter 2: Comparing Scriptural References to the First and Second Coming**

### **Why the Jews Rejected Christ**

Brian and I found an abundance of Biblical proof supporting Christ's claim to be the Messiah, and we agreed that the Jewish response to that proof was fascinating. The lowly disciples readily and quickly embraced Christ, while the religious leaders rejected Him. The irony was that if anyone should have recognized the Messiah, it should have been the religious leaders. Their view of Scripture, however, produced expectations that prevented them from recognizing that Christ was the Messiah. The three primary expectations they held were: that the Messiah would establish Himself as the King of Israel; that Elijah's return would herald the Advent of the Messiah; and that the Messiah would uphold the commandments of God.

#### **The King of Israel**

The Jewish expectation that the Messiah would be King of Israel is rooted in the covenant God made with David that his lineage and throne would endure forever.

My covenant I will not break ... I will not lie unto David.  
His seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun  
before me. (Psalm 89:34-36)<sup>7</sup>

So at the time of Christ, the Jews expected the coming of their King, who would overthrow their Roman oppressors and rule Israel from David's throne.

When Christ appeared but did not conquer the Romans or rule Israel in any discernible way, the Jews refused to believe that Christ sat on David's throne. They failed to see that Christ was not a temporal king ruling from a temporal throne but a spiritual king ruling from a spiritual throne. This was apparent in Christ's response to Pilate:

... Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. ... (John 18:37)

As the King of Truth, Christ sat on David's spiritual throne, the throne of truth. The Jews, however, did not accept this symbolic fulfillment of Scripture and so rejected Christ, even mocking Him while He was suffering upon the cross, saying:

... If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him. (Matthew 27:42)

### **Elijah Returns**

The Jews also expected that Elijah would return to herald the coming of the Lord.

Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD:  
(Malachi 4:5)

And since Elijah had been taken to heaven in a chariot of fire, they expected him to return the same way.

... as they [Elijah and Elisha] ... talked, ... *there appeared* a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven. (2 Kings 2:11)

No one expected Elijah to return as a baby in the womb of a woman, for Elijah had departed to heaven as a man. Therefore, since John the Baptist had appeared as a babe from Elisabeth's womb, rather than as a man on a heavenly chariot, the Jews refused to believe that he was Elijah.

Strangely, even John declared that he was not Elijah.

And this is the record of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, ... Art thou Elias [Elijah]? And he saith I am not ... (John 1:19-21)

This contradicted what Christ said of John. Christ testified that John was Elijah.

Jesus began to say unto the multitudes concerning John ...  
For this is *he*, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my  
messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way  
before thee. ... And if ye will receive *it*, this is Elias [Elijah]  
... (Matthew 11:7-10, 14)

Since the disciples did not understand why John denied he was Elijah while Christ affirmed he was, they asked Christ again why Elijah had not come. Christ responded:

Elias is come already, and they knew him not ... Then the  
disciples understood that he spake unto them of John the  
Baptist. (Matthew 17:12-13)

With this, the disciples accepted John as Elijah, finally perceiving that John was the return of Elijah in spirit rather than in body and name. The Jewish clergy, however, did not. They denied the symbolic fulfillment of this prophecy.

#### **Fulfilling the Law of God**

The Jews also expected the Messiah to uphold the commandments of God, for God had warned them never to change His Law.

... hearken, O Israel, unto the statutes and unto the  
judgments ... Ye shall not add unto the word which I  
command you, neither shall ye diminish *ought* from it, that

ye may keep the commandments of the LORD your God  
which I command you. (Deuteronomy 4:1-2)

It was not hard to imagine that the Jews strictly observed this passage out of a sense of commitment and devotion to God. It was also not hard to imagine that they expected the same devotion from the Messiah. They were angry then when Christ claimed to be the Messiah yet willingly broke and changed God's laws and judgments despite claiming to fulfill them:

Think not that I am come to destroy the law ... but to fulfill.  
(Matthew 5:17)

The Jewish religious leaders did not believe this, for in their minds Christ broke the law of the Sabbath Day and also changed: the law of divorce, the punishment for adultery, the law of circumcision, and the observance of dietary laws.

#### **The Law of the Sabbath Day**

The Law of the Sabbath Day asserts that:

Six days may work be done; but in the seventh *is* the sabbath of rest, holy to the LORD: whosoever doeth *any* work in the sabbath day, he shall surely be put to death.  
(Exodus 31:15)

The Pharisees were convinced that Christ had broken this law, for they condemned Him for allowing His disciples to pluck corn on the Sabbath.

... he went through the corn fields on the sabbath day; and his disciples began, as they went, to pluck the ears of corn. And the Pharisees said unto him, Behold, why do they on the sabbath day that which is not lawful? (Mark 2:23-24)

Christ replied:

The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath: Therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath. (Mark 2:27-28)

In other words, since the Sabbath was made so that man would commune with God, and since the disciples were communing with Christ, the Lord of the Sabbath, they were not breaking the spirit of the Sabbath. In contrast, the Jewish clergy, not perceiving Christ's station, and holding to a literal interpretation of Scripture, condemned Christ for allowing His disciples to break this sacred law.

#### **The Law of Divorce**

The Jews also observed the law of divorce, which reads:



When a man hath taken a wife, and ... found some uncleanness in her; then let him write her a bill of divorcement ... (Deuteronomy 24:1)

Jesus was accused of changing this law when He told His followers:

It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement: But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery ... (Matthew 5:31-32)

With this understanding, Brian and I perceived that Christ was not changing the law so much as redefining it. By defining that “uncleanness” meant fornication, Christ made it clear that divorce was approved of only when the spouse had committed the unclean act of fornication.

In contrast, the clergy believed Christ “diminished” or narrowed the meaning of God’s law; and since Christ’s interpretation was in conflict with their interpretation, they condemned Him.

#### **The Punishment for Adultery**

Committing adultery, according to Scripture, was a sin punishable by death.

If a man be found lying with a woman married to a husband, then ... ye shall stone them with stones that they die. (Deuteronomy 22:22-24)

Christ annulled this punishment when the Pharisees brought an adulteress before Him and asked Him what they should do with her.

... Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou? ... he ... said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her. ... And they ... being convicted by *their own* conscience, went out one by one, ... and Jesus ... said ... Woman, ... hath no man condemned thee? She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more. (John 8:4-11)

The law of God condemned this adulteress. Christ did not. God's law required that she be stoned, but Christ mercifully sought this woman's repentance. As a result, the Jewish religious leaders felt justified in rejecting Christ, for He failed to uphold the judgment associated with this law.

### **Circumcision**

God commands that males be circumcised as a sign of God's covenant with them.

Every man ... shall be circumcised ... and the uncircumcised man child whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised ... he hath broken my covenant. (Genesis 17:10,14)

Yet, the Apostle Paul says:

... if the uncircumcision keep the righteousness of the law, shall not his uncircumcision be counted for circumcision?  
... For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; ... But he *is* a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision *is* that of the heart, in the spirit, *and* not in the letter ... (Romans 2:26-29)

According to Paul, circumcision is an outward symbol for an inward reality. It has more to do with circumcising the heart from worldly desires than in cutting off one's foreskin. The religious leaders, however, failed to see that circumcision was more a matter of the spirit of the law than of the letter of the law.

#### **Dietary Laws**

The Jews also observed dietary laws, one of which reads:

... ye shall not eat ... the swine ... (Deuteronomy 14:7-8)

Christ changed this law.

Do ye not perceive, that whatsoever ... entereth into the man, *it* cannot defile him; ... but ... That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man. For ... out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts ... (Mark 7:18-21)

The clergy were not persuaded by Christ's spiritual understanding of this law. Instead, they condemned Him for changing it.

#### **God Can Change His Laws**

Brian and I agreed that the clergy overlooked that God's warning against changing His laws was directed at the Jews and not Himself. This became clear after we re-examined whom "ye" referred to in the fore mentioned verse.

Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish *ought* from it ... (Deuteronomy 4:2)

Since these Words are God's, God's reference to "ye" (you) does not include Himself. He does not admonish Himself to never change, add to, or abrogate His own Words; and, since Christ is of God, God was the One changing the law.

#### **Could the Pattern Repeat Itself?**

Brian and I concluded that although Christ did not fulfill Jewish beliefs and expectations regarding Scripture, He nevertheless fulfilled

Scripture in ways unexpected by the Jews and their religious leaders. Indeed, He fulfilled Scripture by conveying a deeper spiritual understanding of it than a literal interpretation offered.

Brian then asked whether this same condition might hold true for Christ's Second Coming: "Could Christ appear in a way that fulfilled Scripture but not in ways expected by generations of Christians and their religious leaders?"

I thought this unlikely but could not deny that in regard to the Messiah's Advent, my forefathers had thought the same thing. Still, I found it unimaginable that Christians would fail to recognize Christ when He returned.

In contrast, Brian believed that many Christians would fail to recognize Christ when He returned in large part because their clergy would reject Him for the same reasons the Jewish clergy had rejected Christ at His First Coming.

I asked him which Scriptural passages suggested this.

He stated that the "Parable of the Vineyard," among others, supported his view.

### **The Clergy's Role**

Brian and I turned to the “Parable of the Vineyard” to investigate whether Christian clergy would reject Christ at His Second Coming.

### **The Parable of the Vineyard**

Christ portrayed the actions of the clergy in this parable:

A certain man planted a vineyard, and let it forth to husbandmen, and went into a far country for a long time. And at the season he sent a servant to the husbandmen, that they should give him of the fruit of the vineyard: but the husbandmen beat him, and sent *him* away empty. And again he sent another servant: and they beat him also ... And again he sent a third: and they wounded him ... Then said the lord of the vineyard ... I will send my beloved son ... But when the husbandmen saw him, they reasoned ... let us kill him, that the inheritance may be ours ... What therefore shall the lord of the vineyard do unto them? He shall come and destroy these husbandmen, and shall give the vineyard to others. ... And the chief priests ... feared the people: for they perceived that he had spoken this parable against them. (Luke 20:9-19)

Brian and I agreed on the interpretation of most of this parable, but not all of it.

### **The Meaning of the Parable of the Vineyard**

We agreed that the “man” of the vineyard (God) had planted the “vineyard” (humanity) on earth to be tended by “husbandmen” (religious leaders). These religious leaders were charged with cultivating the love of God in the hearts of people until the “Lord of the Vineyard” returned to gather the “fruit” that had ripened (those hearts ripened with the love of God).

What happened instead was that the “husbandmen” sought ways to keep the inheritance of “fruit” (the hearts of people) for themselves. When God’s “servants” (Prophets) appeared to gather the fruit for God, the husbandmen would persecute these “servants” and send them away empty-handed. Ultimately, they even killed God’s “Son” (Christ) when He appeared.

We disagreed, however, on who would come and destroy these husbandmen and which husbandmen would be destroyed.

I believed that at His Second Coming, Christ, representing the “Lord of the Vineyard,” would destroy the power of the Jewish clergy.

In contrast, Brian believed that Bahá’u’lláh, representing the “Lord of the Vineyard,” had come and destroyed the authority of clerical institutions altogether when he established his new faith, the Bahá’í Faith, without clergy.

I responded, “How can you believe that the ‘Lord of the Vineyard’ would destroy the power of Christian clerics in addition to Jewish

ones when Christian clerics never persecuted Christ and are the very ones preparing Christians for Christ's Second Advent?"

Brian replied, "I think the Parable of the Vineyard is suggesting that every time a Prophet comes, He is rejected by the religious leaders of His day and that this pattern would repeat itself at the 'Lord of the Vineyard's' appearance. Specifically, I believe that many of the clergy of today reject Bahá'u'lláh for the same two reasons that clerics in past ages rejected other Prophets. Some reject God's Prophets out of a lack of true understanding while others reject them out of pride and a desire to maintain their own authority. Many of the former are devoted souls seeking God's will but, being attached to literal interpretations, are blinded to the truth of a new Prophet's claim and station. The latter, smaller in number, are more concerned with preserving their prestige, power, and wealth and so challenge the authority of God's Prophet when He appears. In either case, the clergy generally hinder people from recognizing the truth of God's Prophets. The same is true in this day, and for this reason Bahá'u'lláh established His faith without clergy."

I remarked, "Strange perspective, but can you back it up with other passages?"

#### **The Stars Falling from Heaven**

Brian pointed out that the destruction or downfall of the clergy described in the Parable of the Vineyard was also depicted as the stars that would fall from heaven at the time of the end.



Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: (Matthew 24:29)

He explained that just as stars illumine the night sky after the sun has set, the religious leaders (the stars in heaven) illumine this world after the spiritual sun has set (when a Prophet of God passes from this life after His ministry is complete). Their authority, however, disappears when the next Prophet (sun) appears, just as stars disappear when the physical sun rises with each new day.

He asked, “Does it make more sense that the ‘stars falling from heaven’ would be ‘physical stars’ or ‘clergy’ who would fall from their height of authority when Christ appeared in His *new name*?”

I stressed that God can do anything and could easily cause the stars to fall from heaven.

Brian agreed that God can do anything, but he believed that God repeatedly emphasized the underlying spirit of Scripture over its literal interpretation. He pointed out that the Apostle Paul emphasized this as well when he said that Christ had:

... made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life. (2 Corinthians 3:6)

Brian said, “Bahá’u’lláh’s appearance, then, as God’s Prophet, means that the clergy of this day no longer possess the spiritual authority they once had.”

I expressed the contrary, that Bahá’u’lláh, rather than the clergy, lacked spiritual authority and questioned, “If Bahá’u’lláh is true, why haven’t the signs of Christ’s return taken place?”

Brian reminded me that the Messiah’s Advent had taken place in ways unexpected by the people of Christ’s day. He asked, “Is it so strange to think that the same has happened again?”

I asked, “Are you saying that Christ’s return in the clouds, the rapture, and the tribulation have all occurred in ways unexpected by Christians?”

He answered, “Yes, but to explain this, let me first explain how the appearance of Christ and the appearance of Bahá’u’lláh were similar.”

I doubted he could draw any similarity.

## **Returning from Heaven**

Brian saw the appearance of Christ and the appearance of Bahá’u’lláh as similar in nature.

**Christ Came from Heaven**

He pointed out that Christ's first appearance was from heaven, for Christ said:

For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. (John 6:38)

He also pointed out that the Jews disputed this because Christ had come from Mary's womb.

... Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? how is it then that he saith, I came down from heaven? (John 6:42)

I agreed with Brian that the Jews failed to perceive that Christ's Spirit came from heaven, even though His body did not. What we did not agree on was Brian's view that Christ's Spirit had once again come down from heaven, returning in the womb of another woman.<sup>8</sup> I did not believe this because Scripture clearly indicates that Christ's return will be in clouds.

#### **Coming in Clouds**

Many passages describe Christ's return in clouds, including the following:

... they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. (Matthew 24:30)<sup>9</sup>

I also pointed out that Scripture indicates that since Christ departed to heaven in clouds, He would have to return from heaven in clouds.

... he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. ... this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven. (Acts 1:9-11)

I reasoned, “Since Bahá’u’lláh did not appear in clouds, he could not be the return of Christ.”

Brian conceded that Christ’s return had to take place in clouds, but he thought those clouds would be spiritual rather than physical, especially in light of the following verse.

And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. (Luke 21:34)

He questioned how anyone could be “unaware” of the day of Christ’s return if He returned in physical clouds, for if He returned in physical clouds, everyone would instantly see Him and be aware that He had returned.

I interjected, “But how could anyone be ‘unaware’ of Christ’s return when Scripture describes that all eyes will see Christ returning in the

clouds?”

Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him  
... (Revelation 1:7)

“Since Bahá’u’lláh was never seen in the clouds, he cannot be the return of Christ or Christ’s Spirit.”

Brian asked, “But does ‘seeing’ Christ’s return imply that one ‘recognizes’ Christ’s return?”

I replied, “Of course, how would it not?”

Brian responded, “Well consider that when Mary Magdalene and the disciples saw Christ after His resurrection, they initially did not recognize Him.”

... she turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus. (John 20:14)

Jesus stood on the shore: but the disciples knew not that it was Jesus. Then Jesus saith unto them, Children, have ye any meat? They answered him, No. And he said unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find. They cast ... and ... were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes. Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved saith unto Peter, It is the Lord. ... (John 21:4-7)

“So, when Mary Magdalene and the disciples first saw Christ, they did not immediately recognize Him. Consequently, I believe this same condition holds true with His return, only to a greater degree. Otherwise, how could we be ‘unaware’ of Christ’s return if all eyes will see Him returning in physical clouds? It would be impossible. Therefore, since Christ felt it necessary to warn us that some would be ‘unaware’ of His return, it must mean that He will not return in physical clouds and that people looking for Him to return in this way will actually miss His return. In fact, other prophecies support the view that many will be unaware of Christ’s return.”

I asked, “Which prophecies are you talking about?”

He responded, “The prophecies that indicate that Christ will return as a thief.”

### **Returning as a Thief**

Brian continued, “Christ warned us in half a dozen places that He will return as a thief, including the following”:

Be watchful ... If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee. (Revelation 3:2-3)

... if the goodman of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched, ... Be ye

therefore ready also: for the Son of man cometh at an hour when ye think not. (Luke 12:39-40)<sup>10</sup>

“Since Christ saw these prophetic warnings as necessary, He must have known that those who would fail to watch for Him as a thief would miss His return.”

I emphasized, “These passages are not warnings describing that we might miss Christ’s return but warnings to be *prepared* for Christ’s return. In other words, just as a thief comes suddenly and unexpectedly when people are not prepared for him, Christ will appear suddenly and unexpectedly when people are not prepared for His return.”

Brian acknowledged this but asked, “Doesn’t a thief also come quietly?” He paused for a moment and said, “And since he does, most people do not realize that a thief has come until he has both come and gone.”

I replied, “I suppose a thief does come quietly, but I’m not convinced that this is what Christ meant by coming as a thief. Besides, what do you mean by ‘spiritual clouds’ anyway, and why would Christ appear in them rather than in physical clouds?”

### **Spiritual Clouds**

Brian explained the meaning of spiritual clouds using an analogy, comparing physical clouds and their relationship to the physical sun

with spiritual clouds and their relationship to the spiritual sun, God. He said that the sun's rays provide for physical growth on earth, but dense clouds can prevent these rays from reaching the earth. In like manner, spiritual rays, God's message, emanate from God through His Prophets for the spiritual growth of humanity. Spiritual clouds, however, can prevent God's message from reaching humanity. In other words, anything that prevents one from recognizing God's Prophet, and thus God's Message, is a spiritual cloud, including:

1) when the Prophet appears lowly and with physical needs, He is mistaken for a common man (For example, when Christ did not manifest the signs of a king, His true station was *clouded* from the eyes of the Jewish people.);

2) when Scripture is fulfilled symbolically rather than literally (For example, the eyes of the Jews were *clouded* from recognizing that John the Baptist was the symbolic return of Elijah – one sign associated with the Messiah's Advent.);

3) when the Prophet changes laws, teachings, or rituals of a previous religion (For example, when Christ changed Old Testament laws, the changes were like *spiritual clouds* that prevented Jews from recognizing His true reality.);

4) and when illiterate souls are exalted over learned ones (For example, when Christ elevated the station of Peter and the other disciples, mere fishermen, over the learned



Pharisees and Sadducees, the Pharisees and Sadducees were veiled by a *cloud* of pride from recognizing their Lord Christ.).

He said, “In similar fashion, Bahá’u’lláh’s appearance in ways unexpected by Christians serves as the spiritual clouds Christians have to overcome to embrace Christ’s return. In essence, people have seen Bahá’u’lláh in spiritual clouds, but they don’t recognize Him or those clouds because they are looking for His appearance in physical clouds.”

I could hardly believe what I was hearing: Christ coming in spiritual rather than physical clouds!

Brian continued, “I believe Christ’s return as ‘a thief’ is more consistent with coming in spiritual clouds, for by coming in spiritual clouds Bahá’u’lláh not only came suddenly and unexpectedly but also quietly as any thief would come.” He asked, “What is more unexpected by Christians: Christ returning in physical clouds or Christ returning in spiritual clouds?”

I admitted that it would be more unexpected for Christ to return in spiritual clouds, but I was skeptical that this had happened.

Brian conceded that this would be difficult to believe without further proof, proof that he was eager to share.

## Prophetic Time

Brian suggested that one similarity between Christ and Bahá'u'lláh was that certain events related to each of their ministries took place in the years predicted by Scripture.

### The First Coming

The timing associated with an event of Christ's First Coming is predicted in the ninth chapter of the Book of Daniel. It foretells when the crucifixion would take place.

While studying this chapter, Brian and I found agreement on several points. We agreed that as a result of Jewish iniquity and unfaithfulness to God, God had destroyed Jerusalem.<sup>11</sup> Daniel, distraught over this, prayed to God to have mercy on Jerusalem. God's response turned Daniel's attention away from Jerusalem to something more significant: the event that would reconcile the Jews to God. This reconciliation – the wiping away of their past iniquity – would occur at the “cutting off” of the Messiah.

Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy. Know therefore ... *that* from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince *shall be*

seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: ... And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off ... And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease ... (Daniel 9:24-27)

Daniel was shown that seventy weeks would pass from the commandment to rebuild Jerusalem until the “cutting off” of the Messiah, the sign of their “reconciliation for iniquity.”<sup>12</sup>

We both believed that this “cutting off” referred to Christ’s crucifixion and that His crucifixion caused “the sacrifice and oblation to cease” since His sacrifice replaced the sacrificial lamb offered to God by the Jewish priests to redeem the sins of the Jewish people.

We also recognized that there were several commandments issued to rebuild Jerusalem, and that once we determined which of these was the starting point of this prophecy, we could add seventy weeks to that date to establish the time foretold for the “cutting off” of the Messiah.

#### **The Commandments to Rebuild Jerusalem**

The first commandment to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem was issued in 536 BC by King Cyrus.

Cyrus king of Persia ... made a proclamation ... saying ...  
The Lord God ... charged me to build him an house at  
Jerusalem ... (Ezra 1:1-2)

We noted that this decree went unfulfilled. Neither the city nor the temple was rebuilt.

In 519 BC, King Darius made a similar decree.

... let the governor ... and the elders of the Jews build this house of God in his place. ... I Darius have made a decree; let it be done with speed. (Ezra 6:7,12)

Only the temple was rebuilt. The city Jerusalem still lay in ruins.

In 457 BC King Artaxerxes made a decree to beautify the temple (by rebuilding Jerusalem around it).

I Artaxerxes the king, do make a decree ... to beautify the house of the Lord which is in Jerusalem. (Ezra 7:21,27)

At first it appeared this decree would also go unfulfilled; however, thirteen years after its announcement, Nehemiah, the Jewish cupbearer to King Artaxerxes requested that he be allowed to return to Judah to rebuild Jerusalem. Artaxerxes granted his request.

Then the king said unto me, For what dost thou make request? ... I said ... send me unto Judah, unto the city of my father's sepulchres, that I may build it. And the king said ... For how long shall thy journey be? ... So it pleased the king to send me ... (Nehemiah 2:4-6)

Nehemiah then returned to Judah and rebuilt Jerusalem. Brian and I agreed that by granting Nehemiah's request, Artaxerxes was in essence reaffirming his decree of 457 BC to beautify the house of the Lord by rebuilding Jerusalem around it.

We were now ready to calculate the time of the cutting off of the Messiah from the 457 BC date but realized that simply adding 70 weeks (roughly a year and four months) to the 457 BC date would place the crucifixion date at 455 BC. This of course made no sense. Christ was not crucified in 455 BC. We agreed, therefore, that understanding the Biblical basis of prophetic time was essential to calculating prophecy.

#### **Prophetic Time in the Bible**

The following passages indicate how prophetic time is calculated.

... I have appointed thee each day for a year. (Ezekiel 4:6)

After the number of the days in which ye searched the land,  
*even* forty days, each day for a year ... *even* forty years ...  
(Numbers 14:34)

Each day in these prophetic passages was converted to represent one prophetic year. Knowing this, we were able to calculate the timing of this prophecy.

#### **The Calculation of the Messiah's First Coming**

The calculation of the prophecy “from the going forth of the commandment to restore Jerusalem [from 457 BC] unto the Messiah [70 weeks later]” would then go as follows:

1. 70 weeks multiplied by 7 days in a week would be a total of 490 days.

2. Based on prophetic time: 490 days equals 490 years.

3. Unlike the number line, which contains the number zero, the timeline does not contain a year zero. The transition simply goes from 1 BC to 1 AD, resulting in only 456 ‘BC years’ from 457 BC to 1 AD. We therefore subtracted 456 BC years from 490 total years to set up the calculation.

4. 490 total years

-456 BC years

34 AD

This was an astounding prophecy. In 34 AD Christ would have been 33 years old and that was his age when crucified.

Year	3BC	2BC	1BC	1AD	2AD	3AD	4AD	5AD	...	31AD	32AD	33AD	34AD
Age of Christ				0	1	2	3	4		30	31	32	33

point zero  
NO YEAR ZERO

Without question this prophecy accurately foretold when the Messiah would be “cut off.”

We next turned to the timing of Christ’s Second Coming.

### **The Second Coming**

Brian said, “Scripture also indicates the time when one of the signs related to Christ’s return will take place.”

I believed he was wrong, for I pointed out, “No one except God knows when Christ will return.”

But of that day and hour knoweth no *man*, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only. (Mathew 24:36)

Brian replied, “Although it is true that only God knows the day and hour of Christ’s return, the year that marks a “sign” of His coming and “the end of the world” can still be determined. Christ referred to this year in response to the disciples’ question”:

... what *shall be* the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world? (Matthew 24:3)

“Among other signs, Christ said”:

When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation,  
spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, ...  
(Matthew 24:15)

Brian added, “Since Christ’s response guided the disciples to turn to the book of Daniel and consider the passage referring to the abomination of desolation, let’s look at it ourselves.”

#### **The Vision Concerning the Daily Sacrifice**

We found that Daniel associated “the abomination of desolation” with “the vision concerning the daily sacrifice” and with a period of 2,300 days.

How long *shall be* the vision *concerning* the daily *sacrifice*,  
and the transgression [abomination] of desolation, ... And  
he said unto me, Unto two thousand and three hundred  
days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed. ... Understand, O  
son of man: for at the time of the end shall be the vision.  
(Daniel 8:13-14, 17)

So the transgression of desolation would end after 2,300 days, corresponding with what Christ said was a sign of His coming and the end of the world. The key question, though, was “When was the starting point of these 2,300 days?”

Brian answered it by explaining how the “vision concerning the daily sacrifice” was interlinked with the “seventy weeks prophecy” we had



just finished studying.

#### **Linking the “Vision Concerning the Daily Sacrifice” to the “Seventy Weeks Prophecy”**

In chapter eight, the angel Gabriel tried explaining the “vision concerning the daily sacrifice” to Daniel, but Daniel did not understand it. So Gabriel brought it up again in chapter nine prior to describing the “matter” known as the “seventy weeks prophecy.”

O Daniel, I am now come forth to give thee skill and understanding. ... therefore understand the matter [the seventy weeks prophecy], and consider the vision [the vision of the daily sacrifice]. (Daniel 9:22-23)

Here Gabriel directs Daniel to “understand the matter” (the seventy weeks prophecy of chapter nine) first and then “consider the vision” (the vision of the daily sacrifice of chapter eight) second. Since the “seventy weeks prophecy” must be understood first to “consider the vision of the daily sacrifice,” and since the starting point of the “seventy weeks prophecy” began with the commandment to rebuild Jerusalem, it follows that “the vision concerning the daily sacrifice” is also linked to the commandment to rebuild Jerusalem. The beginning of the 2,300 days is also 457 BC.

#### **The Calculation of the Second Coming**

Following the same starting date of the commandment to rebuild Jerusalem in 457 BC and adding 2,300 days to it, the calculation is as

follows:

1. Based on prophetic time: 2,300 days equals 2,300 years.
2. Again, since there is no year “zero” in the transition from BC to AD, only 456 ‘BC years’ existed from 457 BC to 1 AD. Our calculation then was set up to subtract 456 BC years from 2,300 total years.
3. 2,300 total years

-456 BC years

1844 AD

According to Brian’s interpretation, the year 1844 marked the appearance of a “sign” indicating the Second Coming of Christ and the “end of the world.”

Brian shared that Bahá’u’lláh’s Faith began in that year when Bahá’u’lláh’s forerunner, the Báb, declared that he was preparing the way for a Prophet greater than himself. With a mission similar to John the Baptist, the Báb was a “sign” for the coming of Bahá’u’lláh just as John the Baptist was a sign for the coming of Christ.

I listened intently but argued that this interpretation could not be correct, for the signs of Christ’s return are associated with the “end of

the world,” and the world did not end in 1844.

### The End of the World

Brian understood my concern but explained that if we look at the original Greek text of the New Testament, we would see that two Greek words were used for the word “world”: *kosmos* and *aion*.<sup>13</sup> *Kosmos* stood for the physical world; *aion* meant era or age. Christ’s word for world in the phrase “end of the world” was consistently the word *aion* rather than *kosmos*. Consequently, when Christ refers to “the end of the world,” He is describing the end of an age or era. He does not mean the end of, or destruction of, the physical world. Those who retranslated the Greek text into the New King James Version recognized this distinction and replaced the phrase “end of the world” with the phrase “end of the age.” For example, in the King James Version, Christ says:

I am with you always, *even* unto the end of the world.  
(Matthew 28:20)

In the New King James Version, this verse was changed to reflect the Greek and now reads:

I am with you always, *even* to the end of the age. (Matthew 28:20)

I was silent for a moment. I wondered, “What does this mean: are we living in a new age; is this the age of Bahá’u’lláh?” I shook my head. I

didn't think so, but I could not deny that Brian's explanations were having some impact on me. Still, I questioned Brian, "If what you say is true, why hasn't Bahá'u'lláh cleansed the sanctuary?"

He replied, "Religion is the true sanctuary for humanity and by renewing religion with a message and teachings appropriate for humanity's capacity in this day, Bahá'u'lláh renewed and cleansed this sanctuary."

Brian asked, "Isn't it remarkable that events related to both Christ and Bahá'u'lláh's ministries have been fulfilled in the exact years predicted?"

I responded, "Your arguments are somewhat persuasive, but they would be more persuasive if the rapture and the tribulation had taken place."

### **The Rapture**

I explained to Brian that the rapture is vividly portrayed in the Bible. When Christ returns, Christians, both living and deceased, will be raised up and united with Christ in the air.

For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them

in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17)

I stressed that no rapture took place at the appearance of Bahá'u'lláh; therefore, he could not be the return of Christ.

### **The Dead in Christ**

Brian suggested another way of looking at this passage, having me consider the concept of death presented by Christ when He says:

Let the dead bury their dead: ... (Luke 9:60)

Brian asked, “Is Christ saying, let physically dead people bury physically dead people? No, He is saying, ‘Let those who are dead spiritually bury those who are dead physically.’ In essence, He equates death with spiritual death, not physical death. Consequently, the Jews who did not embrace Christ were considered spiritually dead, while those who accepted Him were spiritually alive, arisen from spiritual death.”

He continued, “I believe this same condition holds true with Christ’s return. Those who embrace Bahá'u'lláh as the return of Christ’s Spirit are resurrected or raptured into a new spiritual life, arisen from spiritual death, or in other words a grave of disbelief, to embrace Christ’s return.”

I replied, “That’s crazy. How can you equate the ‘dead in Christ’ with those who rise from a grave of disbelief rather than from earthly graves?”

Brian responded by turning my attention to what happened at the time of Christ’s crucifixion.

### **The Resurrected Saints**

Brian stated, “At Christ’s crucifixion, the following was recorded”:

Jesus ... yielded up the ghost. ... And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, And came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many. (Matthew 27:50-53)

He continued, “I do not believe that the saints who rose from these graves were rising out of physical graves, for if they were, historians would have recorded such an astonishing event. Instead, I believe it refers to Jews who rose from graves of ‘disbelief,’ ‘spiritual death’, and accepted Christ, becoming thereby the first saints of Christianity. Otherwise, if this happened literally, where did these saints go after they were resurrected? Did they live their lives and die again, or were they taken straight into heaven?”

I did not respond.

Brian continued, “I know that God can easily raise the dead out of earthly graves, but isn’t the underlying purpose of Scripture to produce faith in the hearts of men by raising souls from spiritual death? If so, the “dead in Christ” who rise out of their graves must be those who are dead spiritually yet respond to the trumpet blast that calls them to rise out of graves of disbelief and embrace Christ’s return.”

### **The Trumpet Blast**

I asked, “If all this is so, why haven’t I heard the trumpet blast?”

Brian replied, “But you have. Bahá’u’lláh’s voice represents the trumpet, for His voice announces His appearance.”

I questioned, “Don’t you think you’re stretching your interpretation? How can you equate Bahá’u’lláh’s voice to a trumpet?”

Brian responded, “Consider the words of Saint John the Divine who described Christ’s voice as a trumpet.”

I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet. (Revelation 1:10)

“If Christ’s voice can be likened to a trumpet, then the voice of the One Who is the return of Christ’s Spirit can be likened to a trumpet.”

I doubted that Bahá'u'lláh's voice could serve as the "trumpet" of God, but I began to ponder the possibility.

#### **The Dead in Christ Respond First**

I asked, "Tell me then, why would those 'dead in Christ' answer to the trumpet blast before those alive in Christ?"

He answered, "Well, those who are alive in Christ maintain expectations of Christ's return that those who are dead no longer maintain. As a result, the dead are more receptive to the manner in which Christ returns – in spiritual clouds. Therefore, they are the first to embrace Him when He does return."

I replied, "This makes no sense. I can't imagine that God would favor those who lost their faith over those who retained it."

Brian responded, "Consider the fact that at Christ's First Advent, Gentiles, undeterred by Scriptural expectations, embraced Christ's message in greater numbers than devout Jews. Also imagine this, 'What greater testimony can be given to a living Christian of Christ's return than to see the faith of wayward Christians rekindled by the 'Spirit of Christ' at His return?'"

I was unsure of what to think. Brian's views were strange and hard to believe, yet I knew that the symbolic interpretations presented by Christians in support of Christ's claim to be the Messiah seemed as strange to the Jews as these interpretations were to me. I began to



wonder whether Brian would describe the tribulation in such an extraordinary way.

## **The Tribulation**

I explained to Brian that chapters six through nineteen of the Book of Revelation describe a period of tribulation at the time of the end that will destroy much of the earth and its people. It will culminate in the final battle of history, Armageddon, when the forces of Satan will wage battle with the forces of Christ and be defeated. I asked Brian to relate how these events could have taken place.

### **The Meaning and Cause of Tribulation**

Brian responded that the tribulation does not signify signs of outward destruction as much as spiritual destruction. In other words, “tribulation” signifies the spiritual confusion that takes place in the world when those who seek spiritual truth do not know where to turn to find it. Quoting Bahá’u’lláh, Brian said:

What "oppression" [tribulation] is more grievous than that a soul seeking the truth, and wishing to attain unto the knowledge of God, should know not where to go for it and from whom to seek it? (*The Kitáb-i-Íqán: The Book of Certitude*, p. 31)

He elaborated by saying that tribulation occurs whenever religious leaders oppose God’s newest Revelation. He used the time of Christ as

an example. He maintained that at that time the Jewish clergy created tribulation, or spiritual confusion, when they tried to convince the Jews that Christ was an imposter. This confused the Jews to the point where most rejected the claims of Christ to be the Messiah.

Similarly, Christian clerics are responsible for tribulation in this day if they cause their flocks to turn away from Bahá'u'lláh.

### **The Authority to Interpret Scripture**

Brian further explained that the tribulation takes place because the clergy mistake their own interpretation of Scripture as authoritative, even though Scripture states that only God's Prophets possess authoritative interpretation.

We have also a more sure word of prophecy ... that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake *as they were* moved by the Holy Ghost. (2 Peter 1:19-21)

He explained that the clergy, who are men, do not have the right to claim authoritative interpretation of Scripture. In contrast, Bahá'u'lláh, as God's Manifestation and the return of the Spirit of Christ, has the authority to interpret Scripture in the same way that Christ did in His day. Consequently, He is able to explain the underlying meaning of Scriptural passages.

Brian gave an example of such an interpretation from the Book of Revelation. He said, “Unlike many Christian clergy who interpret the events of the tribulation and the battle of Armageddon as physical events, Bahá’u’lláh describes them as predominantly spiritual in nature. For instance, the disease, warfare, and famine depicted in the Book of Revelation are symbolic for and reflect the spiritual condition of humanity. In particular, the condition of famine results from humanity’s search for, yet failure to find, God’s spiritual food for today, God’s Word as revealed by Bahá’u’lláh. Those in this condition are thus characterized by a state of famine.” He asked, “Isn’t Bahá’u’lláh’s interpretation of famine similar to the description of famine offered by the Prophet Amos?”

Behold, the days come, saith the Lord GOD, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD: (Amos 8:11)

I acknowledged the similarity but wondered how Bahá’u’lláh could account for the Battle of Armageddon along these same lines.

Brian described that the Battle of Armageddon could be understood as a spiritual battle waged over the truth of Bahá’u’lláh’s claim to be the return of the Spirit of Christ. With such an understanding, one could see that those upholding Bahá’u’lláh’s claim today are upholding the Word of God just as early Christians upheld the claim of Christ to a disbelieving world.

## **A New Heaven and a New Earth**

Brian also said that Bahá'u'lláh conveys the meaning of the appearance of a new heaven and a new earth as depicted in the Book of Revelation.

AND I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away ... (Revelation 21:1)

He explained that the new heaven represents the new revelation from God, and that the new earth represents the hearts who embrace this new revelation, for in this earth the seed of faith is planted, watered, and cultivated by the heaven of God's Word. The same was true at Christ's First Coming. Heaven and earth had passed away, for the authority of the New Testament superseded the authority of the Old. Also, the seed of faith grew in the earth of human hearts that embraced Christ. Paul even proclaimed that with the coming of Christ a new creation appeared where old things had passed away.

Therefore if any man *be* in Christ, *he is* a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.  
(2 Corinthians 5:17)

Outwardly this was not apparent. All things on earth and in the physical heavens were not new, but those embracing God's Word, as revealed through Christ, understood this new spiritual reality.

Although I found Brian's views of Scripture compelling, I remained suspicious and continued to ask for additional proof that would

substantiate Bahá'u'lláh's claim.

## **Prophetic Places**

Brian believed that the Bible foretold not only the place of Christ's first appearance but of His second.

### **The First Coming**

Scripture foretells that the “ruler in Israel” will come from Bethlehem.

But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, *though* thou be little among the thousands of Judah, *yet* out of thee shall he come forth unto me *that is* to be ruler in Israel ... (Micah 5:2)

Brian and I agreed that although this prophecy directly points to Christ, it did not convince the Jews that He was their ruler.

### **The Second Coming**

Brian and I then looked at chapter seven of Micah. In the first eleven verses Micah laments about the waywardness of the people living in his day and their contempt for his faith in God. He tells them not to rejoice against him, for one day they will see “his Lord.”

... he [his Lord]<sup>14</sup> 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. Notwithstanding the land shall be desolate because of them that dwell therein, for the fruit of their doings. Feed thy people with thy rod, the flock of thine heritage, which dwell solitarily *in* the wood, in the midst of Carmel: let them feed *in* Bashan and Gilead, as in the days of old. According to the days of thy coming out of the land of Egypt will I shew unto him marvelous *things*. (Micah 7:12-15)

At first glance, I thought this passage referred to Christ, for He is my Lord. I quickly realized, however, that Christ did not come from Assyria – present day Iraq, Western Iran, and Eastern Syria.<sup>15</sup> So I asked Brian, “Did Bahá’u’lláh come from Assyria?”

Not only did Brian affirm that he had, but he shared the following description of how Bahá’u’lláh fulfilled this prophecy.

First, he described that in Persia in 1844, a man named the Báb started a new religion. The central purpose of the Báb’s religion was to prepare humanity for the advent of a Prophet greater than himself. When Bahá’u’lláh showed support for the Báb’s religion, he was imprisoned and later exiled from Persia to Baghdad, one of the main centers of the old Assyrian Empire. It was there that Bahá’u’lláh, in 1863, proclaimed that he was the one foretold by the Báb.

Subsequently, Bahá’u’lláh was exiled from Baghdad to the “fortified cities” of Constantinople and ‘Akká, cities fortified by a surrounding wall; and in ‘Akká he was placed in a prison “fortress” for two years.

Upon release, he traveled a short distance outside of ‘Akká to “the river” Na’mayn, where he revealed some Tablets.

Bahá’u’lláh’s exile also took him from “sea to sea,” traveling through the Black Sea on his way to Constantinople and through the Mediterranean Sea on his way to Akká.



**Bahá’u’lláh’s Exile**  
(Assyria 725 BC)

Bahá'u'lláh also passed from “mountain to mountain,” traveling from the Kurdistan Mountains in Northeastern Iraq to Mount Carmel in Israel.

Brian also maintained that it has always been the mission, or “heritage,” of the Prophets of God to transform the hearts of men from worldly desires to spiritual aspirations by feeding them with laws that would change “their doings” from debased fruit or deeds into righteous fruit or deeds. Bahá'u'lláh, true to his heritage, established a new book of laws, called the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, which served as the “rod” or strength of his faith that would make this spiritual transformation possible.

Lastly, just as Moses took forty years to lead the Jews “out of the land of Egypt,” Micah’s Lord would be shown “marvelous things” for this same duration. Remarkably, Bahá'u'lláh received divine revelation for exactly forty years – from 1852 to 1892 – and this revelation is preserved in over one hundred volumes.

Brian pointed out that just as Daniel had prophesied the timing of Christ’s crucifixion and return, Micah had prophesied the locations of both Christ’s First and Second Coming.

I responded that all this did seem more than a coincidence, but I still wanted to see more proof that supported Bahá'u'lláh’s claim.

## **The Lord of Hosts**



Brian asked me to consider whether Bahá'u'lláh, in addition to Christ, fit the description of the Lord of Hosts in the following prophecy.

For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of *his* government and peace *there shall be* no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this. (Isaiah 9:6-7)

I responded that Christ, not Bahá'u'lláh, is the Lord of Hosts and that this passage is read in honor of Him every Christmas.

Brian agreed that it refers to Christ, but asked, “Could it also refer to Bahá'u'lláh?”

I responded, “There’s no way. How could it refer to both of them?”

He reasoned that if both of them manifest the same Spirit, the titles that refer to one also refer to the other.

I disagreed, saying, “Only Christ fits this description. To prove this I suggest we determine who most closely exemplifies the titles mentioned in this prophecy.”

## The Throne of David

I began by reminding Brian that we had already determined that Christ rules from David's throne, and I pointed out that God gave David's throne to Jesus forever.

... the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever ... (Luke 1:32-33)

I asked, "If God gave David's throne to Christ forever, how could Bahá'u'lláh sit on David's throne?"

Brian replied, "He could do so only if He, like Christ, sits on David's spiritual throne of truth and authority. In other words, only if Bahá'u'lláh manifests the truth and authority of God for this new age, can it be said that He also sits on David's throne."

I asked, "And you think Bahá'u'lláh does?"

He answered, "Yes, Bahá'u'lláh proclaims so in His writings when He says":

The Most Great Law is come, and the Ancient Beauty ruleth upon the throne of David. (*The Promised Day is Come*, p. 76)

Verily, He hath appeared and hath unloosed His tongue to proclaim the Truth. (*Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 53)

I questioned, “But don’t you find it more convincing that Christ not only holds in His grasp the power of truth and authority spiritually, but physically as well, for He is a direct descendant of David? Bahá'u'lláh is not.”

Brian surprised me by stating that Bahá'u'lláh is in fact a descendent of David. He explained, “King Cyrus of Persia married Rahab, whose father, Salathiel, was a descendant of David (see Matthew 1:12); and since Bahá'u'lláh was a descendent of Rahab and King Cyrus through their son Sásán, He too was a descendant of David just as Jesus had been.”

Not having conclusively resolved who sat on the throne of David, we turned to another segment of this prophecy.

### **The Government Shall be upon His Shoulder**

I emphasized, “Christ has the government on His shoulders because it is He who proclaims that”:

... The kingdom of heaven is at hand. (Matthew 10:7)

“And that”:

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

“In so doing, He establishes His Kingdom in the hearts of all Christians.”

Brian responded, “I agree that the Kingdom is inwardly manifested in the hearts of all Christians, but Christ did not establish the Kingdom’s outward form at His First Coming”:

Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence. (John 18:36)

“Instead, Christ promised to establish His earthly Kingdom at His Second Coming”:

After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as *it is* in heaven. (Matthew 6:9-10)

Brian said, “Bahá’u’lláh, like Christ, established the Kingdom inwardly in the hearts of His followers, but He also gave it an outward form by creating the institutions for the international administration, or government, of His faith. This administration consists of Local Spiritual Assemblies elected in every locality where nine or more adult Bahá’ís reside. National Spiritual Assemblies conduct the affairs

of the Bahá'í Faith in their countries, and an internationally elected body, the Universal House of Justice, administers the worldwide affairs of the Bahá'í Faith from its seat on Mount Carmel in the Holy Land. These institutions, Bahá'u'lláh proclaimed, will serve as the foundation of the Kingdom of God on earth.”

I responded, “Bahá'u'lláh's government cannot be the Kingdom of God on earth, for Bahá'u'lláh's government can be observed, and Christ says”:

The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: (Luke 17:20)

Brian replied, “Isn't Christ referring here to the Kingdom of God within the hearts of believers which cannot be observed and is a spiritual reality? If so, those who observe ‘The Kingdom’ with outward eyes will not understand the spiritual reality of what they are observing, whether that spiritual reality is found in Christians of the First Coming or Christians of the Second Coming – Bahá'ís and their institutions.”

I had great difficulty believing that Bahá'u'lláh's government would serve as the foundation of the Kingdom of God on earth, yet once again, Brian's explanations gave me food for thought, for I could not dispute that he had come with some sort of government on his shoulders.

**The Prince of Peace**

When we turned attention to the Prince of Peace, I explained, “Christ is the Prince of Peace because Christ offers everlasting peace to anyone who accepts Him for He says”:

Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. ... (John 14:27)

Brian agreed that Christ is the “Prince of Peace” in this sense, but he reminded me that Christ also says:

Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division. (Luke 12:51)<sup>16</sup>

He continued, “Although Bahá’u’lláh’s message, like that of Christ, brought everlasting inner peace to those who embrace Him, in addition, Bahá’u’lláh promoted world peace by summoning the most powerful rulers in the world to hold a conference to adopt principles that would foster world unity, a unity that would make a lasting peace possible. Those principles included: eliminating all forms of racial and religious prejudice, establishing the equality of men and women, recognizing the harmony of science and religion, mandating universal education, and adopting a universal auxiliary language, to name but a few.”

## **Nineteenth Century Rulers**

Brian explained that among the rulers summoned by Bahá'u'lláh to convene this peace conference were Napoleon III of France, Kaiser Wilhelm of Germany, Czar Alexander II of Russia, Emperor Franz Joseph of Austria, Sultán 'Abdu'l-'Azíz of the Ottoman Empire, and Násiri'd-Dín Sháh of Persia.

Each of them, however, either disregarded Bahá'u'lláh's summons or outwardly persecuted him. As a result, Bahá'u'lláh prophesied that their kingdoms would fall and that dire calamities lay in store for the human race until it embraced the principles he laid out for peace.

I admit I found it remarkable to learn that after rejecting Bahá'u'lláh's summons, each of these royal kingdoms was overthrown or destroyed within one generation. Even the Russian throne, which had lasted 300 years, and the throne of Turkey, which had lasted 600 hundred years, fell soon after rejecting Bahá'u'lláh. I also learned that this was not the fate of one ruler addressed by Bahá'u'lláh. Queen Victoria of England was reported to have responded favorably to Bahá'u'lláh's summons, saying:

If this is of God, it will endure; if not, it can do no harm.

*(The Promised Day is Come, p. 65)*

Brian reported that in response to her open mindedness, to her support of a representative form of government, and to her prohibition against the trading of slaves, Bahá'u'lláh promised that Queen Victoria would enjoy a long reign, a reign that eventually lasted over sixty years.

Unlike the thrones of the rulers that rejected Bahá'u'lláh, the British throne still exists today.

Although I found Bahá'u'lláh's letters to the most powerful rulers of the nineteenth century interesting and could see that the principles Bahá'u'lláh taught would make a nice foundation for peace, I explained that many people had promoted peaceful ideas and yet were not the Prince of Peace.

Brian explained, however, that Isaiah's words gave another clue as to whom the Prince of Peace was, and that clue pointed to Bahá'u'lláh.

## **The King of Glory**

Brian reminded me that the description of the Prince of Peace in Isaiah 9:6 also describes Him as the Lord of Hosts in Isaiah 9:7. This is significant because the following passage also equates the Lord of Hosts with the King of glory.

Who is this King of glory? The LORD of hosts, he *is* the King of glory. Selah. (Psalms 24:10)

Consequently, the Prince of Peace is also the King of Glory. This is important because the name "Bahá'u'lláh" is actually a title meaning "the Glory of God."



Brian also drew attention to visions of the Glory of God reported by Ezekiel while he was in exile in Babylon.

... behold, the glory of the LORD stood there, as the glory which I saw by the river of Chebar ... (Ezekiel 3:23)

... and the visions *were* like the vision that I saw by the river Chebar ... And the glory of the LORD came into the house by the way of the gate whose prospect *is* toward the east. ... And I heard *him* speaking unto me out of the house; and the man stood by me. (Ezekiel 43:3-6)

Brian pointed out that these passages depict the glory of the Lord as a man who *stands* next to and *speaks* to Ezekiel. Equally important, Ezekiel's "visions of the Glory of the Lord were near the river Chebar, which happens to be right next to the place Bahá'u'lláh declared his mission over 2,000 years later."<sup>17</sup> In light of all this, he believed that Ezekiel's visions were in reference to Bahá'u'lláh.

He then mentioned that since Persia, the native land of Bahá'u'lláh, is east of the Holy Land, Bahá'u'lláh's involuntary exile from Persia brought him to the Holy Land from the east, fulfilling the last passage, and also echoing Christ's words:

For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. (Matthew 24:27)

Lastly, he believed the following passage referred to Bahá'u'lláh.

... the excellency of Carmel and Sharon, they shall see the glory of the LORD, *and* the excellency of our God. (Isaiah 35:2)

Brian said that Bahá'u'lláh was not only exiled to and imprisoned in the Holy Land, but upon his release, pitched his tent four times on Mount Carmel. It is in this place that the Bahá'í World Center stands today.

I was amazed at the number of references Brian believed referred to Bahá'u'lláh. We, however, had yet to study the titles the Mighty God and Everlasting Father, and I knew these titles proclaimed by Isaiah could not apply to Bahá'u'lláh.

### **The Mighty God and Everlasting Father**

When we turned attention to who the Mighty God and the Everlasting Father was, I stated that these titles could only refer to Christ.

### **Christ is God**

I stressed that the Gospel of John proclaims that Christ is the Word and the Word is God. It also declares that Christ and the Father are one and that those who have seen Christ have seen the Father.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God ... And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us ... (John 1:1, 14)

I and *my* Father are one. (John 10:30)

If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: ... he that hath seen me hath seen the Father ... (John 14:7-9)

These passages clearly point to Christ, not Bahá'u'lláh, as the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father.

### **The Distinction between God and Christ**

Brian agreed that Christ is God, but asked what I thought about the statements of Christ that imply that God is distinct from and greater than Christ.

No man hath seen God at any time. ... (1 John 4:12)

... the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me. (John 14:24)

... My God, my god, why hast thou forsaken me? (Matthew 27:46)

... I go unto the Father: for my Father is greater than I.  
(John 14:28)

Why callest thou me good? *there is none good but one, that is, God: ...* (Matthew 19:17)

I responded that these statements appear to contradict the previous ones unless one recognizes that Christ has two natures: that He is fully God and fully man. In other words, God, through His son Jesus, made Himself flesh to dwell among us. Although difficult to grasp, Christ and God are merely different aspects of the same being. While on earth, Christ's human nature may seem contrary to His heavenly one if a person does not comprehend the relationship that exists between Him and God.

## **The Mirror and the Sun**

Brian affirmed that Christ has two natures, but thought that an analogy regarding the sun and a mirror could express this dual nature more clearly.

He expressed, "If a mirror is directed toward the sun, one could say, 'I see two suns' (one in the sky and one in the mirror), yet in reality there is only one sun, the sun in the sky. In other words, the sun does not descend into the mirror, but its image or attribute of light descends into the mirror. Nevertheless, a person can call the sun in the mirror by the name 'sun' even though it is not the sun itself, for it still reflects the image of the sun."

He continued, “The same is true for the spiritual mirror, Christ, who perfectly reflects all the attributes of the spiritual sun, God. Yet although this perfect mirror is a reflection of God, it is not the essence of God Himself. The essence of God does not descend into the mirror. Instead, His attributes of love, kindness, power, wisdom, etc. are reflected in the mirror. Consequently, Christ can rightfully call Himself God, though He is not God’s essence. The Apostle Paul even describes Christ in this way when he says that Christ is”:

... the image of the invisible God ... (Colossians 1:15)

“Therefore, when Christ says, ‘I and my Father are one,’ He means that He is a reflection, or manifestation, of God’s attributes on earth, and, in this sense, He is fully divine - one in purpose, spirit, and qualities with God. But when He says, ‘Don’t call me good, only the Father in Heaven is good,’ He means that His essence is different than and apart from God’s essence.”

### **But Christ is fully God**

I followed Brian’s logic but replied, “The Apostle Paul testifies that Christ is fully God, meaning that He is fully God in essence.”

For in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.  
(Colossians 2:9)

I asked, “How can Christ be anything but God fully and completely in every sense of the word?”

Brian responded, “How can Christ be fully God in every sense of the word when the Bible is clear that God cannot dwell on the earth?”

But will God indeed dwell on the earth? behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have builded. (1 Kings 8:27)

“God would never dwell on the earth, yet Christ dwelt on the earth. Therefore, Christ is not the fullness of God in essence, but the fullness of God in purpose, spirit, and qualities.”

He continued, “To humanity Christ is God because all that we can ever know of God is found in Christ; but Christ is not God’s essence, for God is one.”

*I am* the Lord, and *there is* none else, *there is* no God beside me: ... (Isaiah 45:5)

... *there is* none other God but one. (1 Corinthians 8:4)

Have we not all one father? hath not one God created us?  
... (Malachi 2:10)

“To summarize, Christ is wholly God, but He is not the whole of God.<sup>18</sup> In like manner, Bahá'u'lláh holds a similar station.”

I responded, “Are you saying that Bahá'u'lláh is God?”

### **Bahá'u'lláh's Station**

Brian answered, “Just as Christ's words indicate that He *is* and *is not* God, Bahá'u'lláh's words indicate the same thing.” Bahá'u'lláh declared:

When I contemplate, O my God, the relationship that bindeth me to Thee, I am moved to proclaim to all created things ‘verily I am God!’; and when I consider my own self, lo, I find it coarser than clay! (*World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 113)

Brian said, “The analogy of the mirror and the sun suggests that Bahá'u'lláh is also a mirror of God that reflects God's attributes to humanity. As such, He too can claim to be God in purpose, spirit, and qualities, but not God in essence.”

### **Who is the Mighty God – the Everlasting Father?**

Brian said, “From the perspective of the qualities and spirit that Christ and Bahá'u'lláh manifest, it appears they are both embodiments of the titles the Mighty God and Everlasting Father. At the same time, I think

it's appropriate to note that Christ claims the title the 'Son of God' whereas Bahá'u'lláh claims the title 'the Father.' Bahá'u'lláh even addresses Christians, saying”:

This is the Father foretold by Isaiah, . . . Open your eyes, O concourse of bishops, that ye may behold your Lord seated upon the Throne of might and glory. (*The Summons of the Lord of Hosts*, p. 63)

O Bethlehem! ... Tell Me then: Do the sons recognize the Father, and acknowledge Him, or do they deny Him, even as the people aforetime denied Him (Jesus)?’ (*The Proclamation of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 96-97)

I was astounded by what I was hearing. “Was Bahá'u'lláh calling me to recognize him as the Father?”

Brian said, “Bahá'u'lláh's mission is like the mission of a father in the sense that He came to unify the diverse and antagonistic peoples of the world (all of whom are God's children) into one common Faith, undivided by sects or schism. Unlike Christianity which has divided into thousands of sects, the Bahá'í Faith remains one and undivided with followers coming from all racial, ethnic, and religious backgrounds.<sup>19</sup> He asked, “Who better than a father to bring all the earth's quarreling children together in unity?”

He asked, “In light of whom He claims to be, doesn't it seem that Bahá'u'lláh could be the Mighty God and the Everlasting Father



prophesied by Isaiah? Has He not come on the throne of David with the government on His shoulders and as the Prince of Peace and Glory of God? If so, he is the Lord of Hosts just as Christ was in His day. It could be no other way, for their Spirits are the same, and Bahá'u'lláh is the return of all the titles exemplified by Christ.”

### **A Time for Reflection**

I did not respond. I needed time to pray, reflect, and sort out my thoughts. I excused myself and returned home.

## Chapter 3: Seeking the Will of Christ

### Spiritual Eyes and Ears

At this time I found my emotions intensely mixed. My feelings lay somewhere between hope and fear. Simply put, I found it difficult to determine whether Bahá'u'lláh was Christ's Spirit returned or a blasphemous soul. On one hand, the evidence supporting his claim was reasoned and Biblically based; yet on the other, I never expected Christ to return in the manner suggested. In fact, I could not help but compare my predicament with the early Jews who struggled with Paul's Scriptural defense of Christ. Just as I never expected Christ to return in the manner Brian suggested, they never expected the Messiah to appear in the manner Paul suggested. Notably, Paul persuaded the Jews:

... concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses, and *out of the prophets* from morning till evening. (Acts 28:23)

And yet he said of them:

Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive: For the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed ... (Acts 28:26-27)

Of course, I recognized that the Jews failed to understand the deeper significance of Scripture because their attachment to literal interpretations led to expectations that Christ did not meet. I now wondered whether I was following in their footsteps, for I was aware that Bahá'u'lláh's explanations of Scripture were just as strange to me as Christ's explanations had been to the Jews. Were my literal interpretations preventing me from recognizing that Christ's Spirit had indeed returned?

### **Does a Literal Interpretation of Scripture Prevent Confusion?**

I used to think that God intended that His Word be taken literally so that confusion among Christians would be prevented. It now occurred to me that taking the Bible literally does not prevent confusion, for there are many Christians who take the Bible literally yet differ on their interpretations of it. This convinced me that indeed only God's Prophets can convey a true, authoritative interpretation of Scripture. Of course the question still remained as to whether Bahá'u'lláh was God's Prophet, but I was now beginning to think it possible.

But then I thought, "Perhaps I'm missing something. Perhaps Satan is so powerful that he is able to deceive those who love Christ with all their heart. Perhaps all that Brian is telling me is a way for Satan to confuse me and put me off guard."

At the same time I asked myself, "Didn't the Jews feel this same way about Christ?"

... the Pharisees ... said, This *fellow* doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils. (Matthew 12:24)

The Jews, especially the Pharisees, believed Christ's power came from the devil, but was Satan the source of Christ's words and miracles? No! Even though many of the Jews believed that Satan influenced Christ's words and interpretations, he did not. Any difficulty the Jews had about the claim of Christ to be the Messiah was simply caused by not recognizing that Christ spoke the truth; and only those with spiritual eyes and ears perceived this.

What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded (According as it is written, God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear;) unto this day. (Romans 11:7-8)

So I wondered, "If Christ's interpretations tested the Jews' understanding of Scripture, it might be possible that Bahá'u'lláh's interpretations are similar in nature."

I reflected on this for some time and then called Brian to discuss this thought with him.

## **God Tests His Servants**

I learned that Brian firmly believed that the reason much of Scripture is symbolic in nature is to test the sincerity of people who claim to seek the truth. He then shared the words of Bahá'u'lláh that address this theme:

Know verily that the purpose underlying all these symbolic terms and abstruse allusions, which emanate from the Revealers of God's holy Cause, hath been to test and prove the peoples of the world; that thereby the earth of the pure and illuminated hearts may be known from the perishable and barren soil. From time immemorial such hath been the way of God amidst His creatures, and to this testify the records of the sacred books. (*The Kitáb-i-Íqán: The Book of Certitude*, p. 49)

Brian said that those who investigate and accept Bahá'u'lláh are the same as those who accepted Christ the first time. In both cases, those who sincerely investigate their claims embrace their messages. Those who do not reject them.

I wasn't convinced that his point applied to Christians, but I acknowledged that my Jewish forebears were tested by God when Christ made His claims, and the majority failed this test. Their attachment to a literal understanding of Scripture prevented them from seeing Christ's true reality. In fact, as Christ said, they were unable to understand that new wine could not be placed in old bottles.

Neither do men put new wine into old bottles: else the bottles break, and the wine runneth out, and the bottles perish: but they put new wine into new bottles, and both are preserved. (Matthew 9:17)

I was now faced with determining whether this same condition exists today. I wondered, “Perhaps I am being tested by Bahá’u’lláh’s claim. Perhaps his teachings are the new wine for this day? To know for sure, I will have to read his writings and compare them to the words of Christ.”

### **The Sheep Hear the Shepherd’s Voice**

The first time I read the Gospel, I was moved. Christ’s Word had a powerful effect on me. It was as if I was a sheep attracted to my shepherd’s voice.

... and the sheep hear his voice: and ... follow him: for they know his voice. (John 10:3-4)

I now wondered if the same would be true of Bahá’u’lláh. Did he have the shepherd’s voice for today?

### **Glorifying Christ**

I began to read Bahá’u’lláh’s Writings and found myself moved by his words, especially the following, which are in tribute to Christ.

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. Through Him the leper recovered from the leprosy of perversity and ignorance. Through Him, the unchaste and wayward were healed. Through His power, born of Almighty God, the eyes of the blind were opened, and the soul of the sinner sanctified. ... We bear witness that through the power of the Word of God every leper was cleansed, every sickness was healed, every human infirmity was banished. He it is Who purified the world. Blessed is the man who, with a face beaming with light, hath turned towards Him. (*Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 85-86)

I was deeply moved by these words. Without question, they glorify Christ, testifying to His “quickenings power,” “resplendent Spirit,”

and the power to heal all sickness. They also affirm that those who turn to Him are “blessed.”

## **Bahá'u'lláh Defends Christ**

I was also moved by a story I read where Bahá'u'lláh defended Christ in front of a Muslim gathering. This gathering took place around the spiritual adviser to the Shah (King) of Persia, Mírzá Nazar ‘Alí Qazvíní. Mírzá Nazar ‘Alí began to expound on his own spiritual perfections, out of vainglory, to a group of state officials by saying:

“For example, let us say that at this very moment my servant comes and says that Jesus is standing at the door of the palace and wants permission to meet me. Because I have no further need, I do not see any desire in me for such an encounter.’

Those attending the gathering fell completely silent for a moment. Most, according to the custom of the flatterers of the time, began calling out, “Yes, yes indeed!” in confirmation of what he had said.

At that point Bahá'u'lláh was agitated by the imbecility of this remark about Jesus ... His annoyance publicly blazed forth, and he was unable to bear the affront ...



He said to Mírzá Nazar ‘Alí, “Sir, I have a question, if you will permit me to ask it.”

The mystic replied, “Please go ahead.”

Bahá’u’lláh proceeded: “In spite of all the affection in which the shah holds you, let us say that at this moment the chief executioner should come with ten of his henchmen and announce that the shah is asking for you. Examine your inner soul carefully. Would you be anxious or would you answer him with a completely calm heart, free of all fear?”

After a little contemplation, Mírzá Nazar ‘Alí responded, “The only fair thing to say is that I would be anxious in the extreme, and the courage to remain upright and calm would flee from me. Indeed, the very power of speech would disappear.”

Bahá’u’lláh said, “Given that this is the case, you cannot with the same lips make your former assertion.” (Mírzá Abú’l-Fadl, *Letters and Essays: 1886-1913*, p. 54)

For Mírzá Nazar ‘Alí to fear and respect the king but not his Lord was ludicrous. His disdainful remarks only proved his arrogance and irreverence. I was struck that Bahá’u’lláh would not let this slight go

uncontested, particularly because he risked ill will with the authorities to do so.

## **The Hidden Words of Bahá'u'lláh**

I subsequently read a small book of Bahá'u'lláh's entitled *The Hidden Words*. Bahá'u'lláh describes this book as the essence of religious instruction in brevity. I found within it the same spirit I associate with the Sermon on the Mount. Below are a few of its passages.

O SON OF SPIRIT! My first counsel is this: Possess a pure, kindly and radiant heart, that thine may be a sovereignty ancient, imperishable and everlasting.

O SON OF MAN! Breathe not the sins of others so long as thou art thyself a sinner.

O SON OF MAN! Thou dost wish for gold and I desire thy freedom from it. Thou thinkest thyself rich in its possession, and I recognize thy wealth in thy sanctity therefrom.

O SON OF SPIRIT! The best beloved of all things in My sight is Justice; turn not away therefrom if thou desirest Me, and neglect it not that I may confide in thee. By its aid thou shalt see with thine own eyes and not through the eyes

of others, and shalt know of thine own knowledge and not through the knowledge of thy neighbor.

I could not deny that these words reflected the Spirit of God, nor could I deny the beauty of the prayers revealed by Bahá'u'lláh. I was especially touched by this one.

O my God! O my God! Unite the hearts of Thy servants, and reveal to them Thy great purpose. May they follow Thy commandments and abide in Thy law. Help them, O God, in their endeavor, and grant them strength to serve Thee. O God! Leave them not to themselves, but guide their steps by the light of Thy knowledge, and cheer their hearts by Thy love. Verily, Thou art their Helper and their Lord. (*Bahá'í Prayers*, p. 206)

Although I found it hard to accept, it seemed that Bahá'u'lláh could be God's shepherd, yet I still had a major concern that had not been addressed. I contacted Brian to discuss Bahá'u'lláh's understanding of Christ's sacrificial atonement. Brian's explanation concerning this would carry great weight in my judgment of Bahá'u'lláh. I was eager to hear his thoughts.

### **Christ's Sacrificial Atonement**

At this point, I shared with Brian my ultimate concern. I told him, "A lot of what you have said has caused me to think deeply.

Nevertheless, I still believe that those who accept Bahá'u'lláh have lost salvation.”

I then pointedly asked Brian, “Are you saved?”

He responded, “Yes.”

I questioned, “How can that be? Only those who accept Christ as their Lord and Savior are saved.”

Brian assured me, “I accept that Christ is my Lord and Savior and died for my sins. In fact, I cannot be a Bahá'í without believing in Christ's sacrificial atonement.”

I replied, “But you also believe in Bahá'u'lláh, so how do you account for Peter's words which indicate that the only way to salvation is through Jesus Christ?”

Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved. (Acts 4:12)

### **Salvation's “Only” Way**

He replied, “I can best explain this by having us compare passages in the Old Testament with this passage from the New Testament. Are

you aware that in the Old Testament Scripture indicates that ‘only’ by God are we saved?”

TRULY my soul waiteth upon God: from him *cometh* my salvation. He only *is* my rock and my salvation; ... (Psalm 62:1-2)

“And Scripture says that God’s name is Jehovah.”

Behold, God *is* my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the LORD JEHOVAH is my strength and *my* song; he also is become my salvation. (Isaiah 12:2)

“When comparing these passages from the Old Testament with the one you quote from the New Testament, the question arises, ‘Who is the “only” source of our salvation, Jehovah or Jesus Christ?’”

I replied, “Isn’t it obvious – both of them because they are one and the same.”

Brian responded, “Although I agree with you, do you think that a Jew who only adheres to the Old Testament would?”

I reflected on this for a moment and then acknowledged, “I see the point you are trying to make. A Jew confronted with the claim that Christ is the ‘only’ name or ‘way’ to salvation might dismiss such a

belief saying, ‘Your claim is false, for Scripture states that salvation comes ‘only’ through the name JEHOVAH, our God.’”

Brian added, “That’s right, and if the Christian were to insist that Jesus Christ was another name for Jehovah, the Jew could say, ‘I take Scripture literally, and since Scripture states that God’s name is Jehovah and that salvation only comes through Jehovah, I conclude that Jesus Christ cannot be God nor the source of my salvation.’ Sadly, by taking this position a Jew would fail to recognize Christ, the very Messiah he longed for and expected.”

I responded, “I certainly now see how difficult it would have been for the Jews to recognize Christ if they held a literal understanding of Scripture.”

Brian responded, “Yes, by viewing Scripture literally, they failed to see that Christ and Jehovah are simply different names for the same spiritual reality. To be saved by the *new name* Jesus Christ was therefore the same as being saved by the old name Jehovah, since the inward reality or spirit of Christ and Jehovah are the same.”

### **A New Age – A New Name**

Brian then asked, “Do you remember how we discussed the concept that this is a new age.”

“Yes.”

Brian continued, “Well, if this is a new age, then all things are made new, even the name of Christ, the source of our salvation. In other words, I believe that the same relationship that exists between the names Jehovah and Christ extends to the *new name* Bahá’u’lláh in this day – that He too is one with God and Christ, bearing the same inward reality, the reality of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, accepting Him also brings salvation.”

I remarked, “Brian, I hear what you’re saying, but I still find it hard to believe that Christ and Bahá’u’lláh are one in spirit and that Bahá’u’lláh can bring salvation in this day.”

Brian concurred, “I agree that this is hard to believe; yet consider that the Jews still find it difficult to believe that Jesus Christ bears their salvation, yet He does.”

I responded, “But I know that Jesus bears their salvation; however, I still question whether the same can be said for Bahá’u’lláh.”

Brian responded, “Perhaps the following analogy will help you understand the relationship that exists between the name Christ and the name Bahá’u’lláh.”

## **The Names of Days**

He said, “Picture the earth as it rotates on its axis and revolves around the sun and how the sun’s rays are the source of life on earth. Now

from the perspective of someone standing on the earth, the sun's rays are given different names. The rays that reach the earth on Sunday are called Sunday, and those that reach the earth on Monday are called Monday.

“From the perspective of the sun, however, there is no separation of days, for the rays of the sun shine continuously. Sunday and Monday are therefore the same day. Hence there is no distinction between the reality of Sunday and the reality of Monday even though their names are different.

“Now, if someone living on earth were to insist that the rays of Monday are different than the rays of Sunday simply because the names of those days are different, he would be mistaken, for even though the names are different, one cannot say that the rays are different, since they are the same rays shining to earth continuously.

“In like manner, in a spiritual sense, God is like the sun and the Holy Spirit is like the spiritual rays of life emanating from that Sun. Now, from the perspective of humanity, the Sun's rays are given different names. The spiritual rays that reach mankind on Sunday are called Jesus Christ, and those that reach mankind on Monday are called Bahá'u'lláh.

“From the perspective of God, however, there is no separation or difference between Christ and Bahá'u'lláh. They both reflect the same spiritual rays of God, the Holy Spirit, continuously. Hence,



there is no distinction between the reality of Christ and the reality of Bahá'u'lláh, even though their names are different. So, if someone were to insist that the rays of Bahá'u'lláh are different than the rays of Christ simply because their names are different, he would be mistaken.

“Furthermore, if one rejects the salvation of Bahá'u'lláh because His name is not Jesus Christ, then Jews, following the same argument, might reject Christ because His name is not Jehovah. It is essential then to recognize that it is not the outward name that brings salvation; it is the Spirit associated with that name that brings salvation. So, the name Bahá'u'lláh is simply a *new name* for Jesus Christ just as Jesus Christ is a *new name* for both Jehovah and Emmanuel.

“In light of this explanation, we can see why Peter declared in his day that there was no other name for salvation than Jesus Christ, for in his day the name associated with God's Holy Spirit and Word to humanity was Jesus Christ. This did not mean, however, that in a new age that name could not be different.”

## **The Redemption of Christ Lasts Forever**

I replied, “I'm beginning to see how you think Bahá'u'lláh can bring salvation.”

Brian added, “Not only do I think this, but Bahá'u'lláh confirms that He sacrificed His life for our salvation.”

WE, verily, have come for your sakes, and have borne the misfortunes of the world for your salvation. Flee ye the One Who hath sacrificed His life that ye may be quickened. (*The Proclamation of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 92)

I responded, “Brian, if all this is true, why would Bahá'u'lláh have to sacrifice his life for our salvation when Christ's sacrifice has already redeemed our sins once and forever?”

So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many ...  
(Hebrews 9:28)

Brian replied, “I want to stress that I agree that Christ's sacrifice redeemed mankind's sins once and forever.”

I replied, “Well if you do, then either Bahá'u'lláh's sacrifices are unnecessary or you are negating Christ's sacrifice which was to last forever.”

Brian replied, “You make an interesting point, but please consider that the purpose of Christ's sacrifice went beyond His sacrificial atonement. In other words, the power of His sacrifice not only saves us from our sins but also causes souls unaware of this truth to take His claims seriously enough to investigate them. If He had been unwilling to endure pain, suffering, and death for us, we might not have been moved to examine His message. In this same way, Bahá'u'lláh's sacrifice is needed. Without sacrificing His life through

forty years of imprisonment, exile, torture, and tribulation, many would refuse to consider His claims. Bahá'u'lláh's sacrifice, therefore, does not negate or replace Christ's sacrifice. Instead, it merely shows that sacrifice always accompanies God's message, for the power of sacrifice attracts hearts to investigate God's Word."

I responded, "So Bahá'u'lláh's sacrifices don't negate Christ's sacrificial atonement at all?"

He stated, "That's correct. In addition, compare the purpose of their sacrifices. Christ sacrificed His life for our personal salvation, but He promised that His return would bring salvation to the world through His Kingdom. Bahá'u'lláh has brought that salvation, the Kingdom of God on earth, which grows stronger each day as more people embrace His message."

I was once again surprised by Brian's views, especially that Bahá'u'lláh's sacrifice in no way diminished the importance of Christ's sacrifice.

At that point I ended the discussion with Brian. I needed time to reflect on my relationship with Christ in the context of what I had learned.

### **My Personal Relationship with Christ**

My relationship with Christ is special. It is born out of recognition that He, the Son of God and the perfect sinless being, was sacrificed so that I may know God. It is He who brings peace and happiness to my soul. It is He who strengthens my faith in God. It is He who makes my life worth living. Therefore, I could never accept Bahá'u'lláh unless doing so enhanced my relationship with Christ; and that could only happen if Bahá'u'lláh was truly the return of Christ's Spirit. Knowing this, I pondered the following words of Bahá'u'lláh.

We, verily, have come for your sakes, and ... have opened unto you the gates of the Kingdom. Will ye bar the doors of your houses in My face? (*The Proclamation of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 92)

In response, I began to recall the prophecies that Bahá'u'lláh appeared to fulfill.

## **Prophecies Fulfilled**

Bahá'u'lláh's Faith began in 1844, marking what Bahá'ís believed to be the beginning of a new age. He came from heaven in spiritual clouds and as a thief in the night. He came from Assyria and from sea to sea and mountain to mountain to establish his Faith in the Holy land on Mount Carmel. He came with the government on his shoulders and sat on the Throne of David. He also came as the Prince

of Peace, the Glory of God, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, and the Lord of Hosts.

Bahá'u'lláh's voice served as the trumpet blast that caused the rapture, gave solace in tribulation, and established the New Heaven and the New Earth. He manifested the purpose, spirit, and qualities of God. He glorified Christ and acknowledged Christ's atonement for our sins. He also came in the heritage of the Prophets of God, bringing new laws for this day, and he met the criteria of a Prophet both in word and deed, suffering greatly for it.

Lastly, Bahá'u'lláh came in a *new name*, a name He warned Pope Pius IX in a letter not to reject.

O Pope! Rend the veils asunder. He Who is the Lord of Lords is come overshadowed with clouds ... He, verily, hath again come down from Heaven even as He came down from it the first time. Beware that thou dispute not with Him even as the Pharisees disputed with Him (Jesus) ... Beware lest any name debar thee from God, the Creator of earth and heaven ... Consider those who opposed the Son (Jesus), when He came unto them with sovereignty and power. How many the Pharisees who were waiting to behold Him, and were lamenting over their separation from Him! And yet, when the fragrance of His coming was wafted over them, and His beauty was unveiled, they turned aside from Him and disputed with Him ... None save a very few, who were destitute of any power amongst

men, turned towards His face. And yet, today, every man endowed with power and invested with sovereignty prideth himself on His Name! In like manner, consider how numerous, in these days, are the monks who, in My Name, have secluded themselves in their churches, and who, when the appointed time was fulfilled, and We unveiled Our beauty, knew Us not, though they call upon Me at eventide and at dawn. (*The Proclamation of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 83-84)

With all this in mind, I turned to Christ in prayer seeking from Him whether to accept Bahá'u'lláh or not.

My heart opened wide for Christ's response.

He answered: "Embrace Bahá'u'lláh wholeheartedly. Bahá'u'lláh is indeed the return of My Spirit in a 'new name', and you should dedicate your life to serving Him. In this way you will be serving Me."

And so I became a Bahá'í, embracing the return of Christ's Spirit in His *new name* Bahá'u'lláh.

### **The Hope Bahá'u'lláh Brings**

As a Bahá'í, I consider myself blessed. Not only do I have personal salvation, but I have the bounty to promote the salvation of the world,

knowing that Bahá'ís everywhere are doing the same with the promise of a brighter future for humanity.

Also, the depth of spiritual instruction revealed in Bahá'u'lláh's Writings is profound. Bahá'u'lláh explains in detail about the nature of the soul, death, and resurrection. He gives the healing remedy for the elimination of all forms of prejudice. He explains the path that will ensure peace in the world. He enlightens our interaction as human beings with the principles of consultation. Most importantly He brings us closer to God through revealed prayers and writings that lift our souls in joy and love for our Creator.

My relationship to Bahá'u'lláh has brought all this to me. I praise God that He has showered His bounties upon me.

### **Christian Brethren**

My dear Christian brothers and sisters, someone such as myself who recognizes the station of Bahá'u'lláh is faced with the challenge of sharing Bahá'u'lláh's message to a skeptical world. Where then does one start? To me, one begins by sharing enough evidence to warrant further consideration. In other words, I do not expect that an introductory book of this length will answer all the questions, concerns, and objections one may have concerning Bahá'u'lláh and His relation to Christ. At the same time, I hope that enough has been shared that demonstrates that Bahá'u'lláh's claim might be true. In fact, I believe enough has been shown to demonstrate that each of us

has a responsibility to Christ to investigate Bahá'u'lláh's claim with an open mind. It is my hope, then, that any questions you have will not be set aside. I am convinced that each question can be answered if you read Bahá'u'lláh's Writings for yourself. Of course this might be difficult, not unlike the challenge a Jew faces when confronted with the claim of Christ to be the Messiah. Christians know, though, the supreme rewards awaiting any Jew willing to investigate the Gospel of Christ. A Jew, however, would not, unless with an open mind and a heart of courage, he read the Gospel for himself. Likewise, a Christian cannot know the beauty or power of Bahá'u'lláh's words until he reads them.

## **Final Thoughts**

There was a time when Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob did not know the name Jehovah.

And I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob,  
by *the name* of God Almighty, but by my name JEHOVAH  
was I not known to them. (Exodus 6:3)

What a blessing it was for those who later came to know God's name as Jehovah.

Similarly, there was a time when the Jews did not know the *new name* of Emmanuel. What a blessing it was for those who came to know His *new name* as Jesus Christ.



Comparatively, are you not blessed in this day to know the *new name* of Christ?

I ask you to consider asking yourself, “Are my ears open? Has Christ’s Spirit, in the name Bahá’u’lláh, returned?” If you are unsure, ask Christ. He knows the answer and will guide you to the truth if you ask Him.

## **Conclusion**

I would like to convey my gratitude for having the opportunity to share my story with you. I leave you with Christ’s comforting words to guide you in your endeavors.

Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find;  
knock, and it shall be opened unto you: for every one that  
asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth: and to him  
that knocketh it shall be opened. (Matthew 7:7-8)

## Suggested Reading

The following books will further deepen one's understanding of the claims, proofs, and teachings of the founder of the Bahá'í Faith, Bahá'u'lláh.

*He Cometh with Clouds: a Bahá'í view of Christ's Return* by Gary L. Mathews explores the proofs of Bahá'u'lláh's claim to be the return of Christ, demonstrating not only how He fulfills Biblical prophecy but also how Bahá'u'lláh's own prophetic utterances have come true. It is published by George Ronald, 46 High Street, Kidlington, Oxford, OX5 2DN, England.

*The Proofs of Bahá'u'lláh's Mission* contains some of the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, His son, great grandson, and the Universal House of Justice. It is published by Palabra Publications, 3735 B Shares Place, Riviera Beach, Florida 33404. It is also available as a free download from:

<https://bahaiebooks.org/publications/theproofsofbahaulahsmission/>

These books can be purchased by calling the Bahá'í Distribution Service at: 800-999-9019. There are also many eBooks available for free from: <https://bahaiebooks.org/>

Of course, there are many other books worth reading. Any Bahá'í can direct you to a Bahá'í librarian who can lend or order additional books for you to read.

Please address any other questions you have to the Bahá'ís living in your area, or to request additional information call 1-800-22UNITE.

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I especially want to thank Brian Wessel for sharing his love for Bahá'u'lláh with me. For this I am eternally grateful. I simply cannot imagine my life deprived of the knowledge that the Spirit of Christ has returned.

Notwithstanding, this book might not have been written without the loving encouragement of Knight of Bahá'u'lláh Virginia Breaks, pioneer to the Caroline Islands in Micronesia from 1953 to 1993. It was Virginia who urged me to publish notes I had compiled on Biblical topics, and only after her passing did I envision how to reconstruct my notes in a book that told of my discovery of Bahá'u'lláh through Brian.

It might seem strange then to learn that this book took nearly seven years to write, although my goal was to write only an introductory work, I nevertheless had enough material to write a four hundred-page book. It was essential, therefore, to sift through the material until I was left with only the most important points. This was not easy, but with the help of my dear friend, Lee Nelson, the structure began to take shape. In fact, it was Lee who taught me how to write,

and this book not only reflects his technical and organizational expertise, but his radiant, joyful spirit and his intuitive insight. Even after his untimely passing shook me to the core, I continued to draw inspiration from the encouragement he showed me while still alive. I miss him dearly but feel blessed that he is a large part of what this book has become. He will certainly live on forever in my heart.

I would also like to thank the late Connie MacFarland for opening her home for Bahá'í firesides that allowed me to dive deeper into spiritual matters with her wonderful guest speaker Rick Schneider. It was also in her home that I was introduced to wonderful books written by Hand of the Cause of God William Sears, who I found also shared a deep love of Scripture.

Most importantly, I want to thank my entire family, but especially my mom, Marilyn, my dad, Sidney, and my brother Adam for not only their support of me as a writer but especially for their support and acceptance of me as a Bahá'í. I am grateful for and will always treasure that acceptance.

Lastly, to my friends in Yap, Palau, and the United States, who have waited earnestly to see this book completed, and those who graciously reviewed the manuscript and offered suggestions, I dedicate this book to all of you, and to all Christians everywhere who love our Lord Christ and await His return.





## Notes

[←1]

Biblical references are from the King James Version.

[←2]

Information in brackets has been added for clarity.

[←3]

See Isaiah 7:14.

[←4]

This means that Christ's spiritual attributes would return in a new individual rather than Christ, Himself, returning.

[←5]

“Manifestation” is a term Brian used to convey the sense that God’s law giving Messengers are perfect reflections and embodiments of the spirit and attributes of God.

[←6]

Bahá’u’lláh was not guilty of any crime. He was imprisoned for his beliefs, which the Persian government and religious authorities held as blasphemous. His first imprisonment was in a vermin infested dungeon three flights of stairs underground. No light penetrated its depths, and the worst criminals in Persia were incarcerated with him. All prisoners were tied to the ground with iron stocks, and a chain weighing a hundred and ten pounds was wrapped around his neck cutting deep through his skin to the bone. Bahá’u’lláh was also stoned twice and bastinadoed twice. To receive the bastinado meant that the soles of one’s feet were whipped until bloodied. These were only the first indignities heaped upon him over the next forty years of his life.

[←7]

See also 2 Samuel 7:12-17; 1 Chronicles 17:11-15; Psalm 2:6-9; Psalm 132:11-12; and Psalm 132:11-12.

[←8]

To Brian this means that Christ's spiritual attributes have returned in a new individual rather than Christ's individual soul having returned.

[←9]

See also Matthew 26:64, Mark 13:26, Revelation 14:14, Revelation 1:7, and Daniel 7:13.

[←10]

See also Matthew 24:42-44, 1 Thessalonians 5:2-4, Revelation 16:15, and II Peter 3:10.

[←11]

Jerusalem was destroyed by the Babylonians under Nebuchadnezzar in a series of invasions from 605 BC to 586 BC. At that time, the Jewish high class, leaders, and artisans were taken captive to Babylon. Then, in 539 BC, the Babylonians were conquered by King Cyrus of Persia. The Jews in captivity fell under his rule and hoped that they would be allowed to return to Judah to rebuild Jerusalem. Daniel, one of the Jewish exiles in captivity, was praying for this to take place.

[←12]

Daniel refers to seventy weeks in two ways. In the first he simply states, “Seventy weeks are determined . . . to finish the transgression.” In the second, he refers to the 70 weeks by adding seven weeks plus three score weeks plus two weeks plus one week. With the understanding that a score is equal to 20 and that three score equals sixty, we simply add  $7 + 60 + 2 + 1$  to arrive again at the number 70.

[←13]

*Thief in the Night*, p. 180.

[←14]

The word “he” in verse twelve refers to the word “Lord” from verses seven, nine, and ten.



[←15]

See the map on the next page.

[←16]

See also Matthew 10:34.

[←17]

*Thief in the Night*, p. 113.

[←18]

Similarly expressed by John Hick, *God and the Universe of Faiths*, p. 159.

According to the Britannica Yearbook 2002, Bahá'ís reside in 218 sovereign and non-sovereign countries worldwide. This is second only to Christianity, which has followers residing in 238 countries. Islam has followers in 204 countries; Judaism in 134 countries; Buddhism in 126 countries; and Hinduism in 114 countries.