

## Foreword

I was raised in a Christian home where I first attended a Methodist Church, later a Presbyterian church where I was baptized, and then, after marrying a Lutheran, I continued my semi-regular church attendance in Lutheran churches. I believed in the oneness of the Christian Church—but it was more like one God, one church (the one I was attending), one hour (on Sunday), and one dollar. There were times when I felt the spiritual side of Christianity, but they were usually limited to a few sermons, communion, and special times when I prayed to God for assistance. While miracles occurred in the Bible, I believed in Jesus Christ for other reasons and my faith in Jesus Christ and God never wavered.

However, I had a vague sense that something was missing, and there were “apparent contradictions” between the Old and New Testaments that perplexed me. Notable among those apparent contradictions were the following words from Deuteronomy in the Old Testament and from the Gospel of Matthew in The New Testament:

Deuteronomy 19:21 *And thine eye shall not pity; but life shall go for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot.*

Matthew 5:43-45 *Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.*

My perplexities were usually just below my conscious level, but they were all cleared up when I learned about the Baha’i Faith and the concept of “progressive revelation.” I truly had an “aha!” moment. It was a revelation to understand that there was a truly simple and logical explanation to the quandary that was lurking in the background of my beliefs.

Christian services and sermons encouraged me to be a better person and somewhat vaguely discussed “going to heaven”; but they did little to help me to develop my spirituality. Coming to believe that Baha’u’llah was the latest *Manifestation of God* to appear on Earth and becoming a Baha’i both broadened and deepened my outlook on religion. I learned that the purpose of religion focuses on the development and advancement of both individuals and civilization as we move toward peace and prosperity for all mankind. And in order to achieve that ordained goal, God periodically sends another Manifestation of Himself to Earth to teach and lead us to that preordained achievement of establishing “*God’s Kingdom on earth as it is in Heaven.*”

After listening to prominent Baha’is and holding discussions and deliberations, I came to understand that the following three reasons explain why I have always believed in Jesus Christ:

- Because of the way that He lived His life
- Because of His teachings
- Because of the way that He influenced the lives of others

And I believe that Baha’u’llah is God’s most recent Manifestation and the return of Jesus Christ for the same three reasons:

- Because of the way that Baha’u’llah lived His life
- Because of Baha’u’llah’s teachings
- Because of the way that Baha’u’llah influenced the lives of others

Every time I learned a little more about progressive revelation, I found myself wanting to dig deeper and deeper into its operation and significance. All these elements entered into my mind as I started this study. I decided to reread Baha’i holy writings, the holy writings of other faiths, and the history of mankind to explore the relationship between religion and the advancement of unity and civilization down through the ages.

Having grown up and matured in Christian churches, I appreciated the importance of Jesus Christ’s teaching for the individual. However, I was relatively ignorant of the importance of Jesus Christ’s teaching for society in general, and as a result, when I started my personal research and investigation, it took me some time and effort to begin to understand and internalize the importance of religion as a means to develop a long line of ever-improving societies that will eventually provide peace and prosperity for everyone.

It was during the latter part of that process that I decided that I would like to write a book that might help other people to understand and appreciate, what for me, was a new purpose of religion. At this point, I feel the need to provide a small caveat. First of all, this is not a definitive defense of the Baha’i Faith. Instead, I view this book more as an essay,

albeit a long essay, that tries to explain “how” and “why” human and humankind have progressed down through the ages. To meet this objective I have used Baha’i holy writings to interpret and come to a better understanding of important events which I found in history books almost exclusively written by non-Baha’i historians. Obviously, others may disagree with my judgments and the conclusions that I have drawn.

Two final points.

My search for knowledge and a better understanding about where this world is going is not over. I have added an Epilogue, which includes links to a Website which is entitled “What Comes After Nations? It is my hope that a lot of you will want to continue this discussion in ‘chat rooms’ where you can contact me and others with your comments and suggestions.

And, I realize, because of the subject matter, that this essay may be difficult for some to read without becoming emotional. If at all possible, please read as much as you can, skim the rest, fast forward where applicable, and rejoin us in the Epilogue.

I hope that you will find the experience of reading this essay as interesting and fascinating as I have had in writing it; and by the way, throughout all the text, all underlining is mine.

Bon voyage!