

ANALYZING BAHÁ'Í BELIEFS

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DEDICATION

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*TO DEEP THINKERS
AND
TRUTH SEEKERS EVERYWHERE*

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The First Amendment of the United States Constitution was ratified in 1791 and granted every American the “free exercise” of religion. Included with free exercise are the right for every American to choose or not choose to participate in a particular religion and to believe what he or she wants about the metaphysical questions of existence. Additionally, and of equal importance, the First Amendment also guarantees freedom of speech.

The purpose of this text is not to stymie or limit either of these two guaranteed freedoms; but to show that within congenial analysis, the various claims of religions can be honestly and objectively examined. Religious tolerance means every religion should be a granted fair and courteous treatment. It does not necessarily mean each religion is equally true or beneficial.

This study is based on comparing the Bahá’í World Faith with the foundational beliefs of the historic orthodox Christian Faith as found in the Old and New Testaments of the Bible. We are not including the claims and positions of the postmodern Jesus Seminar, more liberal Christian authors, or the Mormon and Jehovah’s Witness movements, which are considered outside the purview of historic Christianity.

There are four levels of doctrinal priority within the Christian Gospel: Essentials, Cardinals, Tertiaries, and Peripherals. For the purpose of this analysis just the Essential, Cardinal and Tertiary doctrines will be used for comparison. The scholarship outlined by Professor Craig Hawkins (www.collegeoftheology.com/essentials-of-the-christian-faith/) and expounded on by R.A. Torrey in 1909 in *Christian Fundamentals* define the Christian presuppositions used in this study.

Essential Doctrines:

- 1) Salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Jesus Christ alone;
- 2) Jesus’ vicarious atonement for sin;
- 3) The bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead;
- 4) The unique deity and humanity of Jesus Christ (He is fully God and fully human, having two complete natures);
- 5) The Trinity: within the nature of the One True God there are three Persons (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) who are co-equal, co-eternal and of identical nature, substance or essence.

Cardinal Doctrines:

- 1) Inspiration and inerrancy of Scripture;
- 2) Second Coming of Jesus Christ;
- 3) Virgin Birth of Jesus;
- 4) Church;
- 5) Nature of Sin.

Tertiary Doctrines:

- 1) Hell;
- 2) Eschatology;
- 3) Church government.

Historically, various Christian denominations have agreed on the Essential doctrines. The earliest church councils were used to clarify and solidify such doctrines. Lutheran theologian Peter Meiderlin, aka Rupertus Meldenius (A.D. 1582–1651) proposed the tone for Christian doctrinal discussion: “In essentials *unity*, in non-essentials *liberty*, and in all things *charity*.” When Bahá’ís say there are currently 23,000 Christian sects all teaching different things we must, therefore, disagree (see Appendix 3).

The goal of this study is to show the Bahá’í World Faith has the right to claim religiously whatever it wishes under the First Amendment. Even so, its assertions in regard to a relationship with historic orthodox Christianity are erroneous. Bahá’í claims are based on faulty liberal positions, heretical offshoots, redefinition of terms, and some apparent intentional duplicity.

At a cursory glance, the Bahá'í World Faith (hereafter BWF) appears to be the panacea for all the ills affecting today's world. On the surface, it offers an ostensibly perfect model of a universal, tolerant, inclusive, pluralistic, unprejudiced, religious and legislative organization. Its appeal is to the collective brotherhood of all people, professing an harmonious unity in all of mankind's spheres of endeavor: political, legal, governmental, financial, religious/spiritual, educational, racial, sexual, and social. The BWF espouses a One World Order creed culminating in the establishment of God's Kingdom on earth under its totalitarian management and control.

The BWF claims all the major world religions come directly from God and in their purest foundational forms agree on major theological tenets, only varying on the social/cultural needs of humankind at a particular point in its evolutionary development, stated as: "... if one [religion] is true all are true." And since the BWF is the newest it must, therefore, be more comprehensive and accurate than all of its predecessors.

Initially, the BWF seems to be the ideal egalitarian archetype for man's future: tolerant, unbiased, non-violent, peace-loving, open-minded, and inclusive, but upon closer examination, it is the opposite: closed-minded, exclusivistic, condescending and intolerant. As is typical in many of its teachings, the BWF professes total functional equality of the genders, yet *membership is confined to men* in its highest governing body, the Universal House of Justice in Haifa, Israel (9 men; 0 women) with clear indications there will not be any women elected in the future.

The 1800s saw a roll call of religions arise as detractors to the essential Christian doctrine of Jesus' (God's Only Begotten Son) vicarious atonement in His blood on the cross as payment in full for the punishment of the sins of mankind. The BWF joins this list which also includes: the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, Christian Science, Unity School of Christianity, the Theosophical Society, and the Christadelphians.

In spite of this dismissal of Jesus Christ's vicarious atonement, the BWF attempts to appeal to Christians by professing an acceptance of the divinity and role of Jesus Christ, but then *spiritualizes, allegorizes, redefines, and minimizes* them, actually diminishing Jesus' uniqueness.

The BWF also alters, revises or changes the meaning of nearly every term in the Christian lexicon having to do with the nature of the triune God and of Jesus Christ as the one-of-a-kind Only Begotten Son of God with a uniquely distinctive salvific/redemptive/sacrificial role. Jesus Christ's bodily resurrection from the dead, physical ascension into heaven, mediatorial role for His believers in heaven at the throne of God, and the Second Coming and rapture of the church are also redefined and reinterpreted by the BWF. Concepts of Adam's fall, sin, Satan, the afterlife (including heaven and hell), God's Kingdom and Throne on earth in the New Jerusalem, and even the site of this future city are also redefined or reclassified.

The BWF has turned the Bible, including the words of Jesus and His disciples, into nothing more than symbolic, allegorical or figurative pictures, which only the BWF can rightly interpret. Jesus' parables and the meanings of other biblical Scriptures require a key to discernment only the BWF possesses. Bahá'ís claim Jesus Christ as one of their nine to twelve or more (depending on which author one reads) Manifestations of God, no more or less important than any of the others who have appeared throughout history, yet totally inferior to their founder.

The BWF wants us to believe Jesus of Nazareth was simply a Manifestation of the "Christ-spirit" for His *dispensation* or time period. To the BWF this *Christ-spirit* has returned three

different times since the death of Jesus in the persons of (1) *Muhammad*, Islam’s founder, (2) Siyyid (title for a descendant of Muhammad) ‘Alí-Muhammad Shirazi (the *Báb*, Arabic for “The Gate”), (3) Mírzá Husayn-‘Alí-i-Núrí (hereafter Mírzá Husayn-‘Alí; known as *Bahá’u’lláh*, Arabic for “Glory of Allah [God]”). The latter, prophet/founder of the BWF, claims to exclusively possess the ability to interpret the Judeo-Christian scriptures and those of all the other major religions according to God’s original meaning and intention.

The BWF’s postmodern (see footnote 23), pluralistic, tolerant, “all religions agree” view is unbiblical and antithetical toward orthodox, exclusivistic, historic Judeo-Christianity. Its call for a universal language and theocratic/political unity outside the Messianic person of Jesus Christ and His millennial reign is directly heedless of the Bible’s warnings against a One World Order. God warns against a universal language in Genesis 11, and against a mankind-run one-world government, economy, and religion such as the BWF advocates (Revelation 13:4–18).

The BWF seemingly envisions previous religions and their founders, including Christianity and Jesus of Nazareth, as caterpillar-like in their undeveloped, embryonic, archaic, and primitive forms, slowly, gradually, methodically morphing over the millennia into the beautiful butterfly of the BWF and its founder Mírzá Husayn-‘Alí, now the greatest and supreme over all others.

ABBREVIATIONS FOR BIBLES CITED

<i>OT</i>	Old Testament Hebrew Scriptures
<i>NT</i>	New Testament
<i>NKJV</i>	All Scriptural citations are from the New King James Version unless otherwise specified.
<i>Beck</i>	William F. Beck Translation
<i>CDV</i>	Catholic Douay Version
<i>ESV</i>	English Standard Version
<i>GNT</i>	Goodspeed New Testament
<i>ISV</i>	International Standard Version
<i>JB</i>	Jerusalem Bible
<i>JPS</i>	Jewish Publication Society Old Testament
<i>KJV</i>	Authorized King James Version
<i>LXX</i>	Septuagint Version of the Old Testament
<i>NASV</i>	New American Standard Version
<i>NEB</i>	New English Bible
<i>NIV</i>	New International Version
<i>Pesh</i>	Peshitta
<i>PME</i>	Phillips Modern English
<i>RSV</i>	Revised Standard Version

AUTHOR’S NOTE:

The author is fully aware that current scholarship uses B.C.E and C.E. for date renderings, but is choosing to reclaim the historical calendar notations of B.C. and A.D. in honor of Jesus Christ whose walk on this earth in human flesh divided history.