

Revelation and Reason

الوحي والعقل

Revelation is the prerogative of the Manifestation of God. Baha'u'llah states this emphatically in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, His Book of Laws, which was translated by the Guardian and published in The Dispensation of Baha'u'llah, and in Gleanings (CLXVI):

“Whoso layeth claim to a Revelation direct from God,” is the express warning uttered in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, ***“ere the expiration of a full thousand years, such a man is assuredly a lying imposter. We pray God that He may graciously assist him to retract and repudiate such claim. Should he repent, God will no doubt forgive him. If, however, he persists in his error, God will assuredly send down one who will deal mercilessly with him. Terrible indeed is God in punishing!”*** ***“Whosoever,”*** He adds as a further emphasis, ***“interpreteth this verse otherwise than its obvious meaning is deprived of the Spirit of God and of His mercy which encompasseth all created things.”*** (Kitáb-i-Aqdas, #35; Gleanings, CLXVI; The Dispensation of Baha'u'llah)

Baha'u'llah enunciated this principle in another Tablet, also cited by the Guardian in The Dispensation of Baha'u'llah:

“Should a man appear,” is yet another conclusive statement, ***“ere the lapse of a full thousand years—each year consisting of twelve months according to the Qur’án, and of nineteen months of nineteen days each, according to the Bayán—and if such a man reveal to your eyes all the signs of God, unhesitatingly reject him!”***

In a third Tablet, Baha'u'llah declared on the first day of His declaration of His prophetic station to a small group of His followers, this principle of His Faith was included:

On the first day that the Ancient Beauty ascended His Most Great Throne in the garden named Ridván, the Tongue of Glory gave utterance to three blessed words. First, that in this Revelation the law of the sword hath been annulled. Second, that ere the expiration of one thousand years whosoever advanceth a prophetic claim is false. By “year” a full year is intended, and no exegesis or interpretation is permitted in this matter. And

third, that at that very hour God, exalted be His Glory, shed the full splendour of all His names upon all creation. The following verse was revealed subsequently, but He indicated that it should occupy the same station as the other three: that when the name of anyone, whether living or dead, is mentioned in His presence, that soul hath verily attained to the mention of the pre-existent King. Blessed are they that attain thereto! (Baha'u'llah, Days of Remembrance, #9)

In His Will & Testament, 'Abdu'l-Baha reiterated this principle, without referring to the one thousand years:

This is the foundation of the belief of the people of Bahá (may my life be offered up for them): **“His Holiness, the Exalted One (the Báb), is the Manifestation of the Unity and Oneness of God and the Forerunner of the Ancient Beauty. His Holiness the Abhá Beauty (may my life be a sacrifice for His steadfast friends) is the Supreme Manifestation of God and the Dayspring of His Most Divine Essence. All others are servants unto Him and do His bidding.”**

Also in His Will & Testament, 'Abdu'l-Baha wrote of the violation of this sacred principle by His half-brother, Muhammad 'Ali:

*What deviation can be more grievous than decreeing the death of the Center of the Covenant, supported by the holy verse:—“**He that layeth a claim ere the passing of a thousand years...**,” whilst he (Muhammad 'Alí) without shame in the days of the Blessed Beauty had advanced such a claim as this and been confuted by Him in the aforementioned manner, the text of his claim being still extant in his own handwriting and bearing his own seal.*

The Guardian also referred to the one thousand years that must precede the advent of the next Manifestation of God, in “The Dispensation of Baha'u'llah”, published in The World Order of Baha'u'llah:

With the ascension of Bahá'u'lláh the Day-Star of Divine guidance which, as foretold by Shaykh Ahmad and Siyyid Kázim, had risen in Shíráz, and, while pursuing its westward course, had mounted its zenith in Adrianople, had finally sunk below the horizon of 'Akká, never to rise again ere the complete revolution of one thousand

years. The setting of so effulgent an Orb brought to a definite termination the period of Divine Revelation—the initial and most vitalizing stage in the Bahá'í era...

That 'Abdu'l-Bahá is not a Manifestation of God, that, though the successor of His Father, He does not occupy a cognate station, that **no one else except the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh can ever lay claim to such a station before the expiration of a full thousand years**—are verities which lie embedded in the specific utterances of both the Founder of our Faith and the Interpreter of His teachings... (dated February 8, 1934)

In God Passes By, the Guardian wrote:

A Revelation, hailed as the promise and crowning glory of past ages and centuries, as the consummation of all the Dispensations within the Adamic Cycle, inaugurating an era of at least a thousand years' duration, and a cycle destined to last no less than five thousand centuries... (published in 1944)

And the Guardian also referred to this declaration in The Citadel of Faith:

...a Dispensation which, as the Author of the Faith has Himself categorically asserted, must extend over a period of no less than one thousand years, and which will constitute the first stage in a series of Dispensations, to be established by future Manifestations, all deriving their inspiration from the Author of the Bahá'í Revelation, and destined to last, in their aggregate, no less than five thousand centuries. (dated June 5, 1947)

Of course there are many verses authored by Baha'u'llah, by 'Abdu'l-Baha and the Guardian which elaborate upon the nature of Revelation, but to cite more of them would make this presentation into a book and would take a month to recite, and I have only an hour to speak to you today.

It is imperative that we understand this other statement by Baha'u'llah regarding the Revelation of God, which He calls “the City of God”, in the Kitab-i-Iqan:

That City is none other than the Word of God revealed in every age and dispensation. In the days of Moses it was the Pentateuch; in the days of Jesus the Gospel; in the days of Muhammad the Messenger of God the Qur'an; in this day the Bayán; and in the

dispensation of Him Whom God will make manifest His own Book—the Book unto which all the Books of former Dispensations must needs be referred, the Book which standeth amongst them all transcendent and supreme.

It is imperative that humanity as a whole clearly understand the claims of Baha'u'llah, and that He did not validate the appearance of divine Revelation for a thousand years from the time of His declaration, in Ridvan 1863. This is an unalterable doctrine of the Baha'i religion.

Now we turn to Reason, there are over one hundred references to human reason in the translated writings of Baha'u'llah, hundreds more in the translated writings and utterances of 'Abdu'l-Baha, and no less than sixty-nine in the writings of the Guardian. Once more, we do not have time to recite a book so we must limit ourselves to a few from among the many.

In Some Answered Questions, and a number of other talks, as well as in the Tablet of the Innermost Heart, 'Abdu'l-Baha describes multiple criteria which human beings have relied upon to acquire knowledge and differentiate that knowledge from mere opinion, imagination or delusion:

“There are only four accepted criteria of comprehension, that is, four criteria whereby the realities of things are understood...

“Know, therefore, that what the people possess and believe to be true is liable to error. For if in proving or disproving a thing a proof drawn from the evidence of the senses is advanced, this criterion is clearly imperfect; if a rational proof is adduced, the same holds true; and likewise if a traditional proof is given. Thus it is clear that man does not possess any criterion of knowledge that can be relied upon.

“But the grace of the Holy Spirit is the true criterion regarding which there is no doubt or uncertainty. That grace consists in the confirmations of the Holy Spirit which are vouchsafed to man and through which certitude is attained.” (Mufavadat-i-'Abdu'l-Bahá, Chapter LXXXIII; Some Answered Questions, Chapter LXXXIII)

Reason is described second in 'Abdu'l-Baha's discussions of the criteria of human comprehension, after the senses, and before tradition and intuition.

'Abdu'l-Bahá indicates that reason [ʿaql] is the distinctive attribute of the human being, which sets him apart from the animal kingdom:

"The human spirit [ammá rúh insáni], which distinguishes man from the animal [keh mábeh al-amtayáz insán az hayawánist], is the rational soul [hamán nafs náTaqeh ast], and these two terms—the human spirit and the rational soul [rúh insáni va nafs náTaqeh]—designate one and the same thing. This spirit, which in the terminology of the philosophers [hukamá] is called the rational soul [nafs náTaqeh], encompasses all things and as far as human capacity permits, discovers their realities and becomes aware of the properties and effects, the characteristics and conditions of earthly things. But the human spirit, unless it be assisted by the spirit of faith [rúh ímáni], cannot become acquainted with the divine mysteries [asrár iláhiyyeh] and the heavenly realities [haqá'iq lahútiyyeh]. It is like a mirror which, although clear, bright, and polished, is still in need of light. Not until a sunbeam falls upon it can it discover the divine mysteries.

"As for the mind [ammá 'aql], it is the power of the human spirit [quvveh rúh insáni ast]. The spirit is as the lamp [rúh bemanzaleh saráj ast], and the mind as the light that shines from it ['aql bemanzaleh anvár keh az saráj sáTe' ast]. The spirit is as the tree [rúh bemanzaleh shakhrast], and the mind as the fruit [va 'aql bemathábeh shmar]. The mind is the perfection of the spirit ['aql kamál rúh ast] and a necessary attribute thereof [va Safat matlázemeh á nast], even as the rays of the sun are an essential requirement of the sun itself." ("Mufavadat 'Abdu'l-Bahá," p. 159; "Some Answered Questions," LV)

"The foremost degree [avvaliyyeh] of comprehension in the world of nature [dar 'álam Tabi'at] is that of the rational soul [idarákát nafs-i-náTiqeh]. This power and comprehension is shared in common by all men, whether they be heedless or aware, wayward or faithful. In the creation of God, the rational soul of man encompasses and is distinguished above all other created things: It is by virtue of its nobility and distinction that it encompasses them all. Through the power of the rational soul, man can discover the realities of things, comprehend their properties, and penetrate the mysteries of existence. All the sciences, branches of learning, arts, inventions, institutions, undertakings, and discoveries have resulted from the comprehension of the rational soul. These were once impenetrable secrets, hidden mysteries, and unknown realities, and the rational soul gradually discovered them and brought them out of the invisible plane into the realm of the visible. This is the greatest power of

comprehension [ín a'zham quvveh idarák] in the world of nature [dar 'álam Tabí'at ast], and the uttermost limit of its flight is to comprehend the realities [haqá'iq], signs [áthár], and properties [khavás] of contingent things [muhudát amakániyyeh]...The spiritual power associated with the world of nature [quvái ma'núyyeh 'álam Tabiyy'at] is the power of investigation, and it is through investigation [quvái matajasseh ast] that it discovers the realities and properties of things." ("Mufavadat 'Abdu'l-Bahá," p. 165; "Some Answered Questions," LVIII)

"Man [insán] is distinguished above the animals [hayawán] through his reason ['aql]. The perceptions [idarákát] of man [insán] are of two [dú] kinds [qasim]: tangible, or sensible [mahissús], and reasonable [mi'aqúl], whereas the animal [hayawán] perceptions are limited to the senses [ahsását], the tangible only. The tangible perceptions may be likened to this candle, the reasonable perceptions [mi'aqúl] to the light. Calculations of mathematical problems and determining the spherical form of the earth are through the reasonable perceptions [mi'aqúl]. The center of gravity is a hypothesis of reason. Reason itself is not tangible, perceptible to the senses. Reason ['aql] is an intellectual verity or reality [haqíqat]. All [jami'a] qualities [Safát] are ideal verities [haqá'iq], not tangible realities [mehissús níst]. For instance, we say this man is a scholarly man. Knowledge ['ilm] is an ideal attainment [haqíqat me'aqúleh ast] not perceptible to the senses. When you see this scholarly man, your eye does not see his knowledge, your ear cannot hear his science, nor can you sense it by taste. It is not a tangible verity. Science ['ilm] itself is an ideal verity [haqíqat me'aqúleh ast]. It is evident, therefore, that the perceptions idarákát] of man [insán] are twofold [dú nú' ast]: the reasonable [me'aqúleh] and the tangible, or sensible [mehisúseh]...

"Virtue, or perfection, belongs to man [insán], who possesses both the capacity of the senses [idarák mehisúsát] and ideal perception [idarák me'aqúlát]. For instance, astronomical discoveries are man's accomplishments. He has not gained this knowledge through his senses. The greater part of it has been attained through intellect, through the ideal senses. Man's inventions have appeared through the avenue of his reasonable faculties. All his scientific attainments [jami'a ín 'ulúm] have come through the faculty of reason [quwwat 'aqliyyat]. Briefly, the evidences of intellect or reason ['aql] are manifest [zháhir] in man [insán]. By them he is differentiated from the animal. Therefore, the animal kingdom ['álam hayawán] is distinct and inferior to the human kingdom ['álam insán]. ('Abdu'l-Bahá at the Open Forum, San Francisco, notes by Mahmud-i-Zarqani (Persian) and Bijou Straun

(English), 10 October 1912; "Khitábát 'Abdu'l-Bahá," pp. 601-603,604; "The Promulgation of Universal Peace," pp. 356-358 passim.)

"On the other hand, it is evident and true, though most astounding, that in man there is present this supernatural force or faculty which discovers the realities of things and which possesses the power of idealization or intellection. It is capable of discovering scientific laws, and science we know is not a tangible reality. Science [ilm] exists in the mind of man as an ideal reality. The mind itself, reason [nafs 'aql] itself, is an ideal reality [haqíqat me'aqúleh ast] and not tangible [mehisúseh nist]." (Ibid., p. 609; Ibid., p. 360)

"Proofs are of four kinds...second, through the reasoning faculty." ('Abdu'l-Bahá at Green Acre, Eliot, Maine, on 16 August 1912, notes by Edna McKinney; "The Promulgation of Universal Peace," p. 253)

"God has bestowed the gift of mind upon man in order that he may weigh every fact or truth presented to him and adjudge whether it be reasonable. That which conforms to his reason he may accept as true, while that which reason and science cannot sanction may be discarded as imagination and superstition, as a phantom and not reality. Inasmuch as the blind imitations or dogmatic interpretations current among men do not coincide with the postulates of reason, and the mind and scientific investigation cannot acquiesce thereto, many souls in the human world today shun and deny religion. That is to say, imitations, when weighed in the scales of reason, will not conform to its standard and requirement. Therefore, these souls deny religion and become irreligious, whereas if the reality of the divine religions becomes manifest to them and the foundation of the heavenly teachings is revealed coinciding with facts and evident truths, reconciling with scientific knowledge and reasonable proof, all will acknowledge them, and irreligion will cease to exist. In this way all mankind may be brought to the foundation of religion, for religion is true reason and science, while all that is not conformable thereto is mere superstition..." ('Abdu'l-Bahá at Hotel Sacramento, California, 25 October 1912, notes by Bijou Straun; "The Promulgation of Universal Peace," p. 374)

'Abdu'l-Bahá identifies this second method of attaining to knowledge as that of the ancient philosophers:

"As for the second balance, which the Illuminati and the peripatetics rely upon, it is the balance of reason [al-mízánu'l-`aql]. In like manner, the other schools of the first philosophers in the ancient and middle centuries depended upon it. They said that that which is judged by reason is firmly established, clear and indubitable, and that there is no doubt or defect either in its foundations or its outcomes." (‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Tablet on the Inmost Heart)

"It is as thou hast written, not philosophers in general but narrow-minded materialists that are meant. As to deistic philosophers, such as Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, they are indeed worthy of esteem and of the highest praise, for they have rendered distinguished services to mankind..."We regard knowledge and wisdom as the foundation of the progress of mankind, and extol philosophers that are endowed with broad vision..." (Tablet to Dr. Forel, in "Star of the West," XIV:4, p. 102)

"Now concerning philosophers, they are of two schools. Thus Socrates the wise believed in the unity of God and the existence of the soul after death; as his opinion was contrary to that of the narrow-minded people of his time, that divine sage was poisoned by them. All divine philosophers and men of wisdom and understanding, when observing these endless beings, have considered that in this great and infinite universe all things end in the mineral kingdom, that the outcome of the mineral kingdom is the vegetable kingdom, the outcome of the vegetable kingdom is the animal kingdom and the outcome of the animal kingdom the world of man. The consummation of this limitless universe with all its grandeur and glory hath been man himself, who in this world of being toileth and suffereth for a time, with diverse ills and pains, and ultimately disintegrates, having no trace and no fruit after him. Were it so, there is no doubt that this infinite universe with all its perfections has ended in sham and delusion with no result, no fruit, no permanence and no effect. It would be utterly without meaning. They (the philosophers) were thus convinced that such is not the case, that this Great Workshop with all its power, its bewildering magnificence and endless perfections, cannot eventually come to naught. That still another life should exist is thus certain, and, just as the vegetable kingdom is unaware of the world of man, so we, too, know not of the Great Life hereafter that followeth the life of man here below. Our non-comprehension of that life, however, is no proof of its non-existence. The mineral world, for instance, is utterly unaware of the world of man and cannot comprehend it, but the ignorance of a thing is no proof of its

non-existence. Numerous and conclusive proofs exist that go to show that this infinite world cannot end with this human life." (Ibid., p. 104)

"The second criterion is that of the intellect [mízán 'aql], which was the principal criterion of comprehension for those pillars of wisdom [hikmat], the ancient philosophers. They deduced things through the power of the mind [mízán be-aql] and relied on rational arguments [be-dalá'il 'aqliyyeh]: All their arguments are based upon reason ['aqlíast]." ("Mufavadat 'Abdu'l-Bahá," p. 219; "Some Answered Questions," Chapter LXXXIII)

"In the estimation of the philosophers [falásafeh] of the Orient [sharq], especially those of Greece [yunán] and Persia [írán], the standard of judgment [mízán adarák] is the intellect ['aql]...

"The philosophers of the East consider the perfect criterion [mízán] to be reason or intellect ['aql], and according to that standard [mízán 'aql] the realities of all objects [haqíqat har shay'i] can be proved; for, they say, the standard [mízán] of reason and intellect ['aql] is perfect, and everything provable through reason [mi-'aql] is veritable [haqíqat]. Therefore, those philosophers consider all philosophical deductions to be correct when weighed according to the standard [mízán] of reason ['aql], and they state that the senses [hiss] are the assistants and instruments of reason ['aql], and that although the investigation [taharrí] of realities [haqá'iq] may be conducted through the senses [hiss], the standard [mízán] of knowing and judgment is reason ['aql] itself. In this way the philosophers of the East and West differ and disagree. The materialistic philosophers [falásafeh] of the West [gharb] declare that man [insán] belongs to the animal [haywán] kingdom, whereas the philosophers [falásafeh] of the East [sharq]--such as Plato [afláTún], Aristotle [arisTú] and the Persians [falásafeh írán]--divide the world ['álam] of existence [wujud] or phenomena of life into two general categories or kingdoms ['álam]: one [yekí] the animal kingdom ['álam hayawání], or world ['álam] of nature [Tabí'at], the other the human kingdom ['álam insání], or world ['álam] of reason ['aql]." ('Abdu'l-Bahá at the Open Forum, San Francisco, 10 October 1912, notes by Mahmud-i-Zarqani (Persian) and Bijou Straun (English); "Khitábát 'Abdu'l-Bahá," pp. 601-603; "The Promulgation of Universal Peace," pp. 356-357)

"Among the Greeks and Romans the criterion of knowledge was reason--that whatever is provable and acceptable by reason must necessarily be admitted as true." ('Abdu'l-Bahá at Hotel Ansonia, New York, 17 April 1912, notes by Howard MacNutt; "The Promulgation of Universal Peace," p. 20)

"The second criterion is that of the intellect. The ancient philosophers in particular considered the intellect to be the most important agency of judgment. Among the wise men of Greece,

Rome, Persia and Egypt the criterion of true proof was reason. They held that every matter submitted to the reasoning faculty could be proved true or false and must be accepted or rejected accordingly." ('Abdu'l-Bahá at Green Acre, Eliot, Maine, 16 August 1912, notes by Edna McKinney; "The Promulgation of Universal Peace," p. 254)

"God has created man and endowed him with the power of reason whereby he may arrive at valid conclusions. Therefore, man must endeavor in all things to investigate the fundamental reality. If he does not independently investigate, he has failed to utilize the talent God has bestowed upon him. I am pleased with the American people because, as a rule, they are independent seekers of the truth; their minds are actively employed instead of remaining idle and unproductive. This is most praiseworthy..." ('Abdu'l-Bahá at St. James Methodist Church, Montreal, Canada, 5 September 1912, notes by anonymous; "The Promulgation of Universal Peace," pp. 312-313)

"Among the ancient philosophers the infallible way to knowledge was through logic. The different schools of logic weighed everything in the scales of cold scholasticism." ('Abdu'l-Bahá, "Abdul Baha on Divine Philosophy," p. 93)

"The Greeks (Plato, Aristotle, etc.) believe in the second way of measuring, viz., by the mind...

"The old Greeks and Persians judged everything by the measure of the intellect." ('Abdu'l-Bahá to pilgrims, 30 November 1900, notes of Miss Alma Albertson, Rabb B6, National Bahá'í Archives, Wilmette, Illinois)

"Plato and Aristotle believed in the second, the mind or understanding...As to the measure of the intellect, the old Greek and Persians judged everything by this

measure..." ('Abdu'l-Bahá to pilgrims, 30 November 1900, notes of Corinne True, True B9, National Bahá'í Archives, Wilmette, Illinois)

"Second, the way by [of] argument and reasoning and all philosophers have taught that it was [is] possible to reach the knowledge of [all] Truth by this method...

"The ancient philosophers have also taught that by the Intellect (the second method of argument and reasoning) accurate and absolute knowledge of everything can be obtained.' They said that they could prove the existence of God by the existence of forces and motion, that is to say the mover and the thing moved. They explained that motion is impossible without one who causes movement." ('Abdu'l-Bahá to Miss Ethel Rosenberg, February-March 1901, Rabb B7, National Bahá'í Archives, Wilmette, Illinois; published with changes in brackets and in quotation marks, "Star of the West," VÍI:9, p. 114)

'Abdu'l-Baha differentiated reason from intuition in this talk:

In one of His talks, 'Abdu'l-Bahá described knowledge as two-fold, and He noted that one of the forms of objective knowledge [ilm-i-Súri] is what He called "reason" [aql] in other sources:

"Knowledge is of two kinds: existential knowledge [ilm-i-wujudi] and formal knowledge [ilm-i-Súri], that is, intuitive knowledge and conceptual knowledge [ilm-i-taSSúri].

"The knowledge that people generally have of things consists in conceptualization and observation; that is, either the object is conceived through the rational faculty [bi-quwwat-i-'aqliyyih], or through its observation a form is produced [taSSúr án shay namáyand masháhand shay Súratí] in the mirror of the heart [dar marát-i-qalb]. The scope of this knowledge is quite limited, as it is conditioned upon acquisition and attainment." ("Mufavadat-i-'Abdu'l-Bahá," XL, p. 118; "Some Answered Questions," XL)

LIMITATIONS OF THE SECOND CRITERION

While Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha acknowledge the importance of reason as an approach to the investigation of reality, they also point out some of its blind spots and fault lines, as well as its ultimate insufficiency in the investigation of metaphysical reality. Bahá'u'lláh indicates some of its limitations:

"Intellect hath various degrees. As a discussion of the pronouncements made by the philosophers in this connection would pass beyond the scope of our discourse, we have refrained from mentioning them. It is nonetheless indisputably clear and evident that the minds of men have never been, nor shall they ever be, of equal capacity."
(Bahá'u'lláh, Tabernacle of Unity)

"God, the Most High, hath placed these signs in men so that veiled minds [muhaqiqín] might not deny the mysteries of the life beyond, nor belittle that which hath been promised them. For some hold fast to reason [aql] and deny whatever reason comprehendeth not, and yet feeble minds [aqUl-i-Da'ífih] can never grasp the reality of the stages that we have related: The universal divine Intellect [aql kulli rabbAni] alone can comprehend them."

(Bahá'u'lláh, Haft Vadí, online at: <https://oceanoflights.org/bahauallah-st-006-fa>; Seven Valleys, online in new translation at: <https://www.bahai.org/library/authoritative-texts/bahauallah/call-divine-beloved/4#893325872>)

‘Abdu’l-Bahá confirms the above statements of Bahá'u'lláh:

"All of these schools, by virtue of their reliance upon the balance of reason, have differed on all questions [al-masá'il] and their opinions are divided on all truths [al-Haqá'iq]. If the balance of reason is a just, accurate, and firm balance, then they should not differ in truths and questions, and the opinions of the former and latter generations should not diverge. Because of their conflict and their differences, therefore, it is established that the balance of reason is imperfect. Verily, if we were to conceive of a perfect balance and if thou wert to assess the weight of a hundred thousand souls with it, there would be no difference among them. Their lack of consensus, however, is sufficient and irrefutable proof of the deficiency of the balance of reason." (‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Tablet on the Inmost Heart, provisional translation by Steven Phelps and William McCants, March 2000; Persian text in "Min Makatib ‘Abdu’l-Bahá," pp. 83-86)

"The scope of this knowledge is quite limited, as it is conditioned upon acquisition and attainment." (‘Abdu’l-Bahá, "Mufavadat ‘Abdu’l-Bahá," p. 118; "Some Answered Questions," XL)

"But despite this, they diverged greatly in their opinions. They would even change their own views: For twenty years they would deduce the existence of something through rational arguments [be-dalá'il 'aqliyyeh], and then afterwards they would disprove the same, again through rational arguments. Even Plato at first proved through rational arguments [be-dalá'il 'aqliyyeh] the immobility of the earth and the movement of the sun, and then subsequently established, again through rational arguments [be-'aqliyyeh], the centrality of the sun and the movement of the earth. Then the Ptolemaic theory became widespread, and Plato's theory was entirely forgotten until a modern astronomer revived it. Thus have the mathematicians disagreed among themselves, even though they all relied on rational arguments [be-dalá'il 'aqliyyeh].

"Likewise, at one time they would establish a thing by rational arguments and disprove it at another, again by rational arguments. So a philosopher would firmly uphold a view for a time and adduce a range of proofs and arguments to support it [be-dalá'il 'aqliyyeh], and afterwards he would change his mind and contradict his former position by rational arguments [be-dalíl 'aqlí].

"It is therefore evident that the criterion of reason is imperfect, as proven by the disagreements existing between the ancient philosophers as well as by their want of consistency and their propensity to change their own views. For if the criterion of intellect were perfect, all should have been united in their thoughts and agreed in their opinions." (‘Abdu’l-Bahá, "Mufavadat ‘Abdu’l-Bahá," pp. 219-220; "Some Answered Questions," Chapter LXXXIII)

"They observed the heavens and the motion of the chief planets, which they conceived to be caused by the movement of eight successive crystalline spheres enclosed within a ninth and outer one, which, by its action caused the others to move. But later philosophers have said that these crystalline spheres are non-existent, and that the planets are suspended by the force of gravitation, attraction, etc., thus utterly contradicting ancient theories. These ancient philosophers also said that as they could observe no movement or change in the heavens, they were therefore pre-existent and eternal. All these statements have been refuted. It is therefore evident that we cannot rely on this second method of obtaining knowledge, to ensure absolute accuracy. 'Successive philosophers are always contradicting each other, and propounding diverse theories. If absolute knowledge were to be obtained by this means, the wisest philosophers would agree in saying the same things.'" (‘Abdu’l-Bahá to Miss Ethel

Rosenberg, Rabb B7, National Bahá'í Archives, Wilmette, original capitalizations and wording not found in published version [in brackets]; "Star of the West," VII:9, pp. 114-115)

"As to the second criterion--reason--this likewise is unreliable and not to be depended upon. This human world is an ocean of varying opinions. If reason is the perfect standard and criterion of knowledge, why are opinions at variance and why do philosophers disagree so completely with each other? This is a clear proof that human reason is not to be relied upon as an infallible criterion. For instance, great discoveries and announcements of former centuries are continually upset and discarded by the wise men of today. Mathematicians, astronomers, chemical scientists continually disprove and reject the conclusions of the ancients; nothing is fixed, nothing final; everything is continually changing because human reason is progressing along new roads of investigation and arriving at new conclusions every day. In the future much that is announced and accepted as true now will be rejected and disproved. And so it will continue ad infinitum." (‘Abdu’l-Bahá at Hotel Ansonia, New York, 17 April 1912, notes by Howard MacNutt; "The Promulgation of Universal Peace," p. 21)

"But in the estimation of the people of insight this criterion is likewise defective and unreliable, for these same philosophers who held to reason or intellect as the standard of human judgment have differed widely among themselves upon every subject of investigation. The statements of the Greek philosophers are contradictory to the conclusions of the Persian sages. Even among the Greek philosophers themselves there is continual variance and lack of agreement upon any given subject. Great difference of thought also prevailed between the wise men of Greece and Rome. Therefore, if the criterion of reason or intellect constituted a correct and infallible standard of judgment, those who tested and applied it should have arrived at the same conclusions. As they differ and are contradictory in conclusions, it is an evidence that the method and standard of test must have been faulty and insufficient." (‘Abdu’l-Bahá at Green Acre, Eliot, Maine, 16 August 1912, notes by Edna McKinney; "The Promulgation of Universal Peace," p. 254)

"While they were thinking they became of different opinions. Discord and differences only show the measure of intellect to be untrue, for they all had the same intellect, and were this the true standard they would never have disagreed. Another reason which disproves this is that the philosopher first agreed that the atom could not be divided,

but now it is believed that it can be divided. At first it was believed that the firmament was divided into spheres, and that all the stars moved together, but now it is believed that each has its own orbit. The proof of today is that the theory of the ancient philosophers was based on an incorrect foundation. One of the disproofs is that it was formerly believed that the sun revolved around the earth and caused day and night, but now it is believed that the earth revolves around the sun. Both have judged this by their intellect; consequently this proves the measure of intellect to be incorrect." (‘Abdu’l-Bahá to pilgrims, November 1900, notes of Miss Alma Albertson, National Bahá’í Archives, Wilmette, Illinois)

"As to the measure of intellect, the old Greek and Persians judged everything by this measure and while they are thinking that this is the only way, they themselves begin to differ and disagree, and this fact only shows that the measure of intellect is not true, for they all have the same intellect, and were this the true standard they would have never disagreed. Another reason which disproves this is that the philosophers first agreed that the atoms could not be divided; now it is believed they can be divided. At first it was believed the firmament was divided into spheres, and is that it was formerly believed that the sun revolved around the earth to cause the day, but now that the earth revolves around the sun. While all the philosophers have intellect for their standard, the change of their opinions and basis proves that it is not the true one to go by." (‘Abdu’l-Bahá to pilgrims, 30 November 1900, notes of Corinne True, National Bahá’í Archives, Wilmette, Illinois)

To reiterate and summarize, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá plainly states that reason, the special faculty of the rational soul or human spirit, is fallible, and leads to disagreement instead of unanimity:

"Therefore it is evident that the method of reason is not perfect; for the differences of the ancient philosophers, the want of stability and the variations of their opinions, prove this. For if it were perfect, all ought to be united in their ideas and agreed in their opinions." (‘Abdu’l-Bahá, "Mufavadat ‘Abdu’l-Bahá," p. 220; "Some Answered Questions," Chapter LXXXIII)

"If reason is the perfect standard and criterion of knowledge, why are opinions at variance and why do philosophers disagree so completely with each other? This is a clear proof that human reason is not to be relied upon as an infallible criterion."

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá at Hotel Ansonia, New York, 17 April 1912, notes by Howard MacNutt; "The Promulgation of Universal Peace," p. 21)

"Therefore, if the criterion of reason or intellect constituted a correct and infallible standard of judgment, those who tested and applied it should have arrived at the same conclusions. As they differ and are contradictory in conclusions, it is evidence that the method and standard of the test must have been faulty and insufficient." (‘Abdu’l-Bahá at Green Acre, Eliot, Maine, 16 August 1912, notes by Edna McKinney; "The Promulgation of Universal Peace," p. 254)

"The proof of today is that the theory of the ancient philosophers was based on an incorrect foundation...consequently this proves the measure of intellect to be incorrect." (‘Abdu’l-Bahá to pilgrims, 30 November 1900, notes of Miss Alma Albertson, National Bahá’í Archives, Wilmette, Illinois)

"The proof of today is that the ancient philosophy was based on an incorrect foundation...While all the philosophers have intellect for their standard, the change of their opinions and basis proves that it is not the true one to go by." (‘Abdu’l-Bahá to pilgrims, 30 November 1900, notes of Corinne True, National Bahá’í Archives, Wilmette, Illinois)

"All these statements have been refuted. [But] It is therefore [omitted in publication] evident that we cannot rely on this second method of obtaining knowledge, to ensure absolute accuracy." (‘Abdu’l-Bahá to Miss Ethel Rosenberg, February–March 1901, Rabb B7, National Bahá’í Archives, Wilmette, Illinois)

COMMENTARY ON THE SECOND CRITERION

Why should the conclusions of the philosophers, the logicians, the mathematicians, the theoretical physicists agree? Because there is only one reality--reality is created by God not constructed by human beings. Reality has an objectivity that has been called into question, because of the subjectivity that comes naturally to human beings, and which has resulted in so many variations in the truths that are recognized and firmly adhered to.

A brief comment may be in order. As discussed in reference to the first criterion, one of the teachings of Bahá’u’lláh is that science and religion are and should be in

harmony with one another. It has already been suggested that "science" in this context may not refer exclusively to the methodologies and hypotheses of the physical and social sciences as they are currently constructed, based upon materialistic assumptions and principles. It was pointed out that the science which is entirely in harmony with religion is that which is called divine philosophy [hikmat ilahi] in the Bahá'í Writings. Divine philosophy does not eschew an appeal to or utilization of the human faculty of reason. Nor does it divorce itself from the experience of the senses, from the riches of human tradition, or from the insights afforded by intuition. However, it acknowledges that for reliable depictions of the spiritual worlds we turn to the Masters of that subject, the Ones Who know of those worlds from Their own experience or because They have been informed of its attributes by the Holy Spirit. The innumerable alleged spiritual adepts, be they Sufis or sadhus, seers or psychics, shaykh or saint, whatever their denomination, whatever their religious affiliation, are not infallible authorities about such things. Like all human beings, they may be inspired by the Holy Spirit, but it is just as likely that they are inspired by the animal appetite for acquisition and self-aggrandizement converted by the human genius for imagination and self-delusion into the semblance of spiritual knowledge.

Bahá'u'lláh distinguishes between two varieties of intellect/reason which inform our consciousness -- one of which is not only fallible but an insufficient instrument for the investigation of the metaphysical, while the other is the ideal means for accomplishing that search, albeit always within the limitations of individual and collective human capacity:

"We entreat the learned men of the Bayan not to follow in such ways, not to inflict, at the time of Mustaghath, upon Him Who is the divine Essence, the heavenly Light, the absolute Eternity, the Beginning and the End of the Manifestations of the Invisible, that which hath been inflicted in this day. We beg them not to depend upon their intellect, their comprehension and learning, nor to contend with the Revealer of celestial and infinite knowledge." (Bahá'u'lláh, "Kitab-i-Iqan," English translation, p. 248)

"God, the Most High, hath placed these signs in men so that veiled minds [muhaqiqín] might not deny the mysteries of the life beyond, nor belittle that which hath been promised them. For some hold fast to reason [‘aql] and deny whatever reason comprehendeth not, and yet feeble minds [‘aql-i-Da’ífih] can never grasp the reality

of the stages that we have related: The universal divine Intellect [‘aql kulli rabb’Ani] alone can comprehend them.

"How can feeble reason [‘aql jaz’i] embrace the Qur’án

"Or the spider snare a phoenix in its web?"

(Bahá’u’lláh, Haft Vadi, Persian text in "Athar-i-Qalam-i-A’la," volume II, pp. 126-127, and online at: <https://oceanoflights.org/bahauallah-st-006-fa>;

Seven Valleys, online in new translation at: <https://www.bahai.org/library/authoritative-texts/bahauallah/call-divine-beloved/4#893325872>)

"If the wayfarers be among them that dwell in THE COURT OF THE ALL-PRAISED, this is the station of the Intellect, which is known as the messenger of the realm of the body and the most great pillar. That which is intended, however, is the universal divine Intellect, whose sovereignty fostereth the growth of all things, and not every vain and feeble mind. Thus hath the wise Saná’í written:

"How can meager reason comprehend the Book,

"Or the spider trap a phoenix in its web?"

"Wouldst thou that the mind not hold thee in its snare?"

"Seize it and enroll it in the school of God instead!"

(Bahá’u’lláh, "Chahar Vadi," Persian text in "Athar-i-Qalam-i-A’la," volume II, pp. 144-145) and online at: <https://oceanoflights.org/bahauallah-st-007-fa>; new English translation online at: <https://www.bahai.org/library/authoritative-texts/bahauallah/call-divine-beloved/9#671704558>)

‘Abdu’l-Bahá reiterated and explained this teaching of Bahá’u’lláh:

"But the universal divine Intellect [ammá 'aql kulli iláhi], which transcends nature [keh mávara' Tabbi'at ast], is the outpouring grace of the pre-existent Power. It encompasses all existing realities and receives its share of the lights and mysteries of

God. It is an all-knowing power [án quvveh 'álameh ast], not a power of investigation and sensing [nah quvveh majajasseh matahasseh]. The spiritual power associated with the world of nature is the power of investigation, and it is through investigation that it discovers the realities and properties of things. But the heavenly intellectual power [ammá quvveh 'áqleh malakútiyyeh], which is beyond nature [keh mávará' Tabiyy'at ast], encompasses, knows, and comprehends all things; is aware of the divine mysteries, truths, and inner meanings; and discovers the hidden verities of the Kingdom. This divine intellectual power [ín quvveh 'aqliyyeh iláhiyyeh] is confined to the holy Manifestations and the Daysprings of prophethood [makhSúS bemazháhar meqaddaseh va maTále' nubuvvat ast]. A ray of this light [partuvi azin anvár] falls upon the mirrors of the hearts of the righteous [bar maráyái qulúb abrár zand], that they may also receive, through the holy Manifestations, a share and benefit of this power [keh naSib va bahreh azin quvveh nuvásTeh mazháhar muqaddaseh baran]." ("Mufavadat 'Abdu'l-Bahá," p. 165; "Some Answered Questions," LVIII)

One of the most ubiquitous limitations of the faculty of reason is that it is not independent of other attributes of the human soul. The rational faculty of an individual person may function very well, but if the person is inclined to egotism, to narcissism, to any other distortion of spiritual nature, his intellect may be devoted to the wrong ends, and in the defense of wrong ideas. For example, one of the greatest mathematicians and philosophers of the 20th century was Bertrand Russell, and he was a lifelong and adamant atheist. [Richard Dawkins](#), [Daniel Dennett](#), [Christopher Hitchens](#) and [Sam Harris](#) are among the best-known atheists of the early 21st century, two of them scientists, one philosopher and one social commentator, all of them highly intelligent people...and wrong. The intellect does not lead inexorably to God. And when other factors of human personality influence the thinking of even the greatest of intellectuals, they may deny the existence not only of God, but of Manifestations of God, of the Holy Spirit, of all things metaphysical. Likewise, those sciences which are primarily intellectual rather than empirical, which includes most of those characterized as social sciences, share the limitations of philosophy because of the limits of reason.

How then are we to understand the Baha'i principle, taught in the Western hemisphere since 1912, and one of the most ardently promulgated teachings of Baha'u'llah, that religion must be in harmony with reason, if reason is of such limited capacity, and so often wrong about metaphysical realities in particular?

The Guardian seems to have sidestepped this issue altogether, by completely omitting any reference to the agreement of religion with reason, from the list of principles that ‘Abdu’l-Baha talked about in North America in 1912:

It was in the course of these epoch-making journeys and before large and representative audiences, at times exceeding a thousand people, that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá expounded, with brilliant simplicity, with persuasiveness and force, and for the first time in His ministry, those basic and distinguishing principles of His Father’s Faith, which together with the laws and ordinances revealed in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas constitute the bed-rock of God’s latest Revelation to mankind. The independent search after truth, unfettered by superstition or tradition; the oneness of the entire human race, the pivotal principle and fundamental doctrine of the Faith; the basic unity of all religions; the condemnation of all forms of prejudice, whether religious, racial, class or national; **the harmony which must exist between religion and science**; the equality of men and women, the two wings on which the bird of human kind is able to soar; the introduction of compulsory education; the adoption of a universal auxiliary language; the abolition of the extremes of wealth and poverty; the institution of a world tribunal for the adjudication of disputes between nations; the exaltation of work, performed in the spirit of service, to the rank of worship; the glorification of justice as the ruling principle in human society, and of religion as a bulwark for the protection of all peoples and nations; and the establishment of a permanent and universal peace as the supreme goal of all mankind—these stand out as the essential elements of that Divine polity which He proclaimed to leaders of public thought as well as to the masses at large in the course of these missionary journeys. (God Passes By, 1944)

In one of the Tablets of ‘Abdu’l-Baha, He makes a very similar statement to that of the Guardian:

For every era hath a spirit; the spirit of this illumined era lieth in the teachings of Bahá’u’lláh. For these lay the foundation of the oneness of the world of humanity and promulgate universal brotherhood. **They are founded upon the unity of science and religion and upon investigation of truth.** (Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Baha, #71)

This is a principle that could have many meanings. The meaning that is most often associated with this statement is found in the first Tablet of 'Abdu'l-Baha to The Hague (Executive Committee of the Central Organization for a Durable Peace, dated December 17, 1919), in which He wrote:

And among the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh is that **religion must be in conformity with science and reason**, so that it may influence the hearts of men. The foundation must be solid and must not consist of imitations. (Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha, #227)

Three talks of 'Abdu'l-Baha were included in The Promulgation of Universal Peace which affirmed that religion must be in agreement with science and reason or it is superstition:

The third teaching or principle of Bahá'u'lláh is that religion and science are in complete agreement. Every religion which is not in accordance with established science is superstition. Religion must be reasonable. If it does not square with reason, it is superstition and without foundation. It is like a mirage, which deceives man by leading him to think it is a body of water. **God has endowed man with reason that he may perceive what is true. If we insist that such and such a subject is not to be reasoned out and tested according to the established logical modes of the intellect, what is the use of the reason which God has given man?** The eye is the organ of sense by which we view the world of outer phenomena; hearing is the faculty for distinguishing sounds; taste senses the properties of objects, such as bitter, sweet; smell detects and differentiates odors; touch reveals attributes of matter and perfects our communication with the outer world; yet after all, the circle and range of perception by the five senses is exceedingly limited. But the intellectual faculty of man is unlimited in its sphere of action. The eye views details perhaps a mile, but the intellect can perceive the far East and West. The ear may hear tone modulations at one thousand feet, but the mind of man can detect the harmonies of the heavenly spheres as they swing in their courses. Mind makes geological discoveries in subterranean depths and determines the processes of creation in the earth's lowest strata. The sciences and arts, all inventions, crafts, trades and their products have come forth from the intellect of man. **It is evident that within the human organism the intellect occupies the supreme station. Therefore, if religious belief, principle or creed is not**

in accordance with the intellect and the power of reason, it is surely superstition.
(April 25, 1912)

The fourth teaching of Bahá'u'lláh is the agreement of religion and science. **God has endowed man with intelligence and reason whereby he is required to determine the verity of questions and propositions.** If religious beliefs and opinions are found contrary to the standards of science, they are mere superstitions and imaginations; for the antithesis of knowledge is ignorance, and the child of ignorance is superstition. Unquestionably there must be agreement between true religion and science. **If a question be found contrary to reason, faith and belief in it are impossible, and there is no outcome but wavering and vacillation.** (June 9, 1912)

If the religious beliefs of mankind are contrary to science and opposed to reason, they are none other than superstitions and without divine authority, for the Lord God has endowed man with the faculty of reason in order that through its exercise he may arrive at the verities of existence. **Reason is the discoverer of the realities of things, and that which conflicts with its conclusions is the product of human fancy and imagination.** (December 5, 1912)

While these two statements seem to be in agreement with the affirmation of principle found in the first Tablet to The Hague, how would we reconcile them with this bold affirmation in another Tablet:

O thou son of the Kingdom! All things are beneficial if joined with the love of God; and without His love all things are harmful, and act as a veil between man and the Lord of the Kingdom. When His love is there, every bitterness turneth sweet, and every bounty rendereth a wholesome pleasure. For example, a melody, sweet to the ear, bringeth the very spirit of life to a heart in love with God, yet staineth with lust a soul engrossed in sensual desires. **And every branch of learning, conjoined with the love of God, is approved and worthy of praise; but bereft of His love, learning is barren—indeed, it bringeth on madness.** Every kind of knowledge, every science, is as a tree: if the fruit of it be the love of God, then is it a blessed tree, but if not, that tree is but dried-up wood, and shall only feed the fire.

O thou loyal servant of God and thou spiritual healer of man! **Whensoever thou dost attend a patient, turn thy face toward the Lord of the heavenly Kingdom, ask the Holy**

Spirit to come to thine aid, then heal thou the sickness. (Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Baha, #154)

To return to the three talks of ‘Abdu’l-Baha that were cited above, there is no Persian transcript of either of these talks. It is hence impossible to compare what ‘Abdu’l-Baha said in Persian with how the translator rendered His words, and how the transcriber recorded them. The utterances of ‘Abdu’l-Baha, unless corroborated by written statements that have been authenticated and accurately translated, are not canonical sources for Baha’i doctrine. So these three statements, if they are contrary to canonical statements, could be cast aside. This primacy and authority of the original text is attested in many statements by the Guardian, including these:

Bahá’u’lláh has made it clear enough that only those things that have been revealed in the form of Tablets have a binding power over the Friends. Hearsays may be matters of interest but can in no way claim authority. This basic teaching of Bahá’u’lláh was to preserve the Faith from being corrupted like Islam which attributes binding authority to all the reported sayings of Muhammad. (Shoghi Effendi, Principles of Bahá’í Administration, p. 33)

Nothing can be considered Scripture, for which we do not have an original text. (Shoghi Effendi, Principles of Bahá’í Administration, p. 34)

However, there is a sense in which it is true that religion that is in conflict with science and reason is superstition. ‘Abdu’l-Baha and the Guardian distinguished the true, original, authentic teachings of religion, those revealed by the Manifestations of God, from the distorted, added, inauthentic teachings of religion. Indeed, it is inherently unreasonable and unscientific to adhere to religious teachings which are not revealed by the Manifestations and are not in agreement with their revealed teachings.

This is one of the predominant themes of the Kitab-i-Iqan, wherein Baha’u’llah insists that the Scriptures were not falsified and do not contain errors, but that the interpretations of the Scriptural verses were often divergent from the intentions of the Manifestations of God Who revealed them.

Perhaps His most emphatic explanation of this principle is found in this passage:

*Verily by “perverting” the text is not meant that which these foolish and abject souls have fancied, even as some maintain that Jewish and Christian divines have effaced from the Book such verses as extol and magnify the countenance of Muḥammad, and instead thereof have inserted the contrary. How utterly vain and false are these words! Can a man who believeth in a book, and deemeth it to be inspired by God, mutilate it? Moreover, the Pentateuch had been spread over the surface of the earth, and was not confined to Mecca and Medina, so that they could privily corrupt and pervert its text. **Nay, rather, by corruption of the text is meant that in which all Muslim divines are engaged today, that is the interpretation of God’s holy Book in accordance with their idle imaginings and vain desires.** And as the Jews, in the time of Muḥammad, interpreted those verses of the Pentateuch that referred to His Manifestation after their own fancy, and refused to be satisfied with His holy utterance, the charge of “perverting” the text was therefore pronounced against them. **Likewise, it is clear, how in this day, the people of the Qur’án have perverted the text of God’s holy Book, concerning the signs of the expected Manifestation, and interpreted it according to their inclination and desires.***
(Baha’u’llah, Kitab-i-Iqan)

‘Abdu’l-Baha takes up this theme in a number of His Tablets, including these:

"O People of Persia! Open your eyes! Pay heed! **Release yourselves from this blind following of the bigots, this senseless imitation which is the principal reason why men fall away into paths of ignorance and degradation.** See the true state of things."
(‘Abdu’l-Baha, The Secret of Divine Civilization, p. 104)

"And the breeding-ground of all these tragedies is prejudice: prejudice of race and nation, of religion, of political opinion; and **the root cause of prejudice is blind imitation of the past—imitation in religion, in racial attitudes, in national bias, in politics.** So long as this aping of the past persisteth, just so long will the foundations of the social order be blown to the four winds, just so long will humanity be continually exposed to direst peril...**blind imitation of the past will stunt the mind. But once every soul inquireth into truth, society will be freed from the darkness of continually repeating the past.**" (Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Baha, #202)

Many of 'Abdu'l-Baha's talks in the West addressed this theme, and were severely critical of religious tradition because of its imitative practice and man-made doctrines.

The Guardian reiterated this criticism in at least one of his letters:

The Faith standing identified with the name of Baha'u'llah disclaims any intention to belittle any of the Prophets gone before Him, to whittle down any of their teachings, to obscure, however slightly, the radiance of their Revelations, to oust them from the hearts of their followers, to abrogate the fundamentals of their doctrines, to discard any of their revealed Books, or to suppress the legitimate aspirations of their adherents. Repudiating the claim of any religion to be the final revelation of God to man, disclaiming finality for His own Revelation, Baha'u'llah inculcates the basic principle of the relativity of religious truth, the continuity of Divine Revelation, the progressiveness of religious experience. His aim is to widen the basis of all revealed religions and to unravel the mysteries of their scriptures. He insists on the unqualified recognition of the unity of their purpose, restates the eternal verities they enshrine, co-ordinates their functions, **distinguishes the essential and the authentic from the non-essential and spurious in their teachings, separates the God-given truths from the priest-prompted superstitions**, and on this as a basis proclaims the possibility, and even prophesies the inevitability, of their unification, and the consummation of their highest hopes. (Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 28 March, 1941, entitled, "The Promised Day is Come," p. 112; reprinted in GTT:118)

This protects the Baha'is from affirming what would be contradictory to their first principles. It is Revelation, not Reason wherein can be found the Remedy for all human difficulties and divisions. If Baha'is were to subject their Scriptures to the examination of and evaluation of secular and material scientists, they would soon find themselves espousing some sort of neo-Marxist doctrine rather than the authentic teachings of Baha'u'llah. They would feel compelled to believe that humanity evolved from elemental substances and was not created by God; that wine is good for health; that cannabis is not harmful to human health; that sexual liberty is natural and inevitable and that sexual discipline is unnatural and oppressive; that homosexuality and other non-binary sexual identities and behaviors are normal and moral; that skin color determines racial attitudes; that women and men are identical; that abortion is a form of contraception and benefits the life of the mother of an unborn fetus; that

uniformity is the way to unity, not the appreciation of diversity; that the only good speech is speech that conforms to societal norms; that all traditions are contrary to human betterment; that light skinned men are responsible for most of the evil in the world of humanity; that big narratives are oppressive and must be abandoned; that laws were created by oppressors and so they should be replaced with whatever benefits the oppressed; that property should belong to those who need it the most, not those who work for it the hardest; and other peculiar attitudes that are now espoused by many scientists and philosophers.

Reason is in agreement with Revelation if and when it is illumined by inspiration from the Holy Spirit, if it is reborn in the Spirit, if it trusts in the divine Reason of the Manifestations of God, and does not worship an idol of its own imagining, be that the human senses, human tradition or human intuition. Unlimited are the paths to confusion and error, while the path to truth is one. Reason and Science will eventually come to recognize that Revelation is objective, and that seeing through the eyes of the Manifestation of God enables us to know what *is* rather than what *seems to be*. There is a great deal of scientific and philosophical exploration that leads nowhere that is of value to humanity, and which does not bring us closer to fulfilling our created purpose. As the Baha'i Revelation penetrates and transforms human consciousness, Reason and Science will become the servants of humanity, rather than its aspiring masters. And rational thinking and scientific method will become the servants of human investigation of reality.