

Christ  
and  
Bahá'u'lláh

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# Christ's "Quickening Power" and Bahá'u'lláh's "Quickeners of Mankind"

*Comparing Syriac Christian & Bahá'í Paradigms  
of Salvation, with Special Reference to Theōsis*

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Bahá'í Explorations

Bahá'í Faith in Clearwater Florida

**Christ's "Quickening Power" and Bahá'u'lláh's "Quickeners of Mankind"**

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**Bahá'u'lláh's "Glowing Tribute" to Christ**



## Bahá'u'lláh's Christology: Theory of Civilization

- ❖ Bahá'u'lláh's eulogy of Jesus Christ may be the single most important Bahá'í appreciation of the "person and work" (as systematic theology puts it) of Christ.
- ❖ Bahá'u'lláh's Christology "**introduces a new theory of civilization**" (Dr. Firuz Kazemzadeh).
- ❖ A close study of this text is important for dialogue with Christians, as well as for the "3-D" approach of "Deepening, Devotion, Discourse."





**“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.”**

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**Bahá'u'lláh** Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh  
[www.bahai.org/r/934614208](http://www.bahai.org/r/934614208)



**“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.”**

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**Bahá'u'lláh** Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh  
[www.bahai.org/r/934614208](http://www.bahai.org/r/934614208)



**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.”**

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**Bahá'u'lláh** Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh  
[www.bahai.org/r/934614208](http://www.bahai.org/r/934614208)



**“Leprosy may be interpreted as any veil that interveneth between man and the recognition of the Lord, his God. Whoso alloweth himself to be shut out from Him is indeed a leper, who shall not be remembered in the Kingdom of God, the Mighty, the All-Praised.”**

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**Bahá'u'lláh** Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh  
[www.bahai.org/r/934614208](http://www.bahai.org/r/934614208)



“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.”

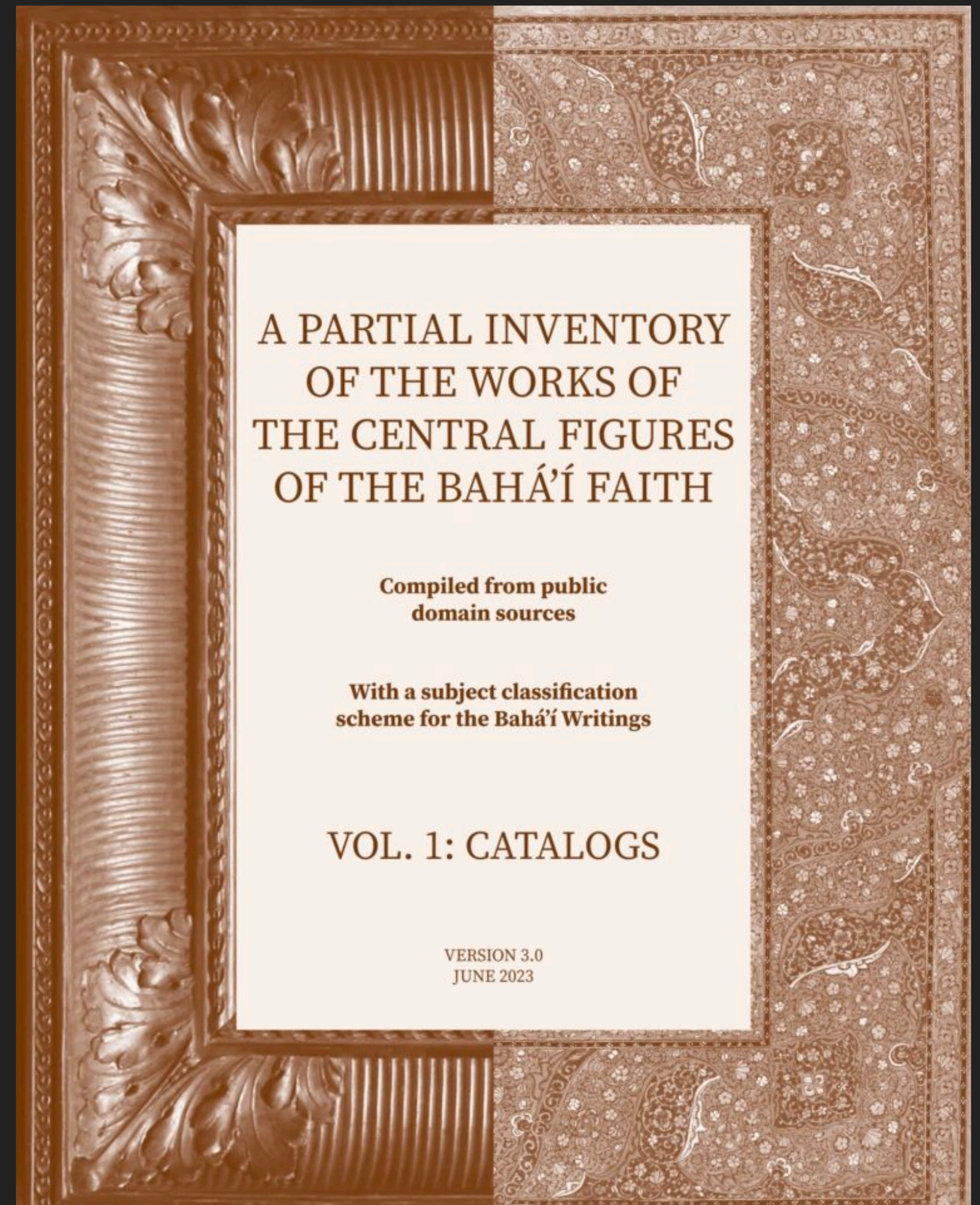
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**Bahá'u'lláh** Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh  
[www.bahai.org/r/934614208](http://www.bahai.org/r/934614208)



## Suriy-i-Asma' (= Lawh-i-lbn?)

- ❖ **BH00112**. Suriy-i-Asma' (=Lawh-i-lbn?). 3990 words, mixed.
- ❖ Arabic Text (quoted in Persian Tablet): <https://www.bahai.org/fa/library/authoritative-texts/bahaullah/additional-tablets-bahaullah/583992612/1#573279965>
- ❖ See Phelps' Partial Inventory (**BH00112**): [https://blog.loomofreality.org/?page\\_id=252](https://blog.loomofreality.org/?page_id=252)





## Bahá'í Public Discourse on Christianity / 1

As to the position of Christianity, let it be stated without any hesitation or equivocation that its divine origin is unconditionally acknowledged, that the Sonship and Divinity of Jesus Christ are fearlessly asserted, that the divine inspiration of the Gospel is fully recognized ... The Founder of the Christian Faith is designated by Bahá'u'lláh as the "Spirit of God," ... and is ... eulogized as a "station which hath been exalted above the imaginings of all that dwell on earth ..." ... **"Know thou,"** Bahá'u'lláh has moreover testified, **"that when the Son of Man yielded up His breath to God, the whole creation wept with a great weeping. ..."**

Shoghi Effendi  
The Promised Day Is Come, [www.bahai.org/r/058329751](http://www.bahai.org/r/058329751)



## Bahá'í Public Discourse on Christianity / 2

For the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh—if we would faithfully appraise it—can never, and in no aspect of its teachings, be at variance, much less conflict, with the purpose animating, or the authority invested in, the Faith of Jesus Christ. This glowing tribute which Bahá'u'lláh Himself has been moved to pay to the Author of the Christian Religion stands as sufficient testimony to the truth of this central principle of Bahá'í belief:—  
“... The deepest wisdom which the sages have uttered, the profoundest learning which any mind hath unfolded, ... are but manifestations of the **quickenings power** released by His transcendent, His all-pervasive and resplendent Spirit.

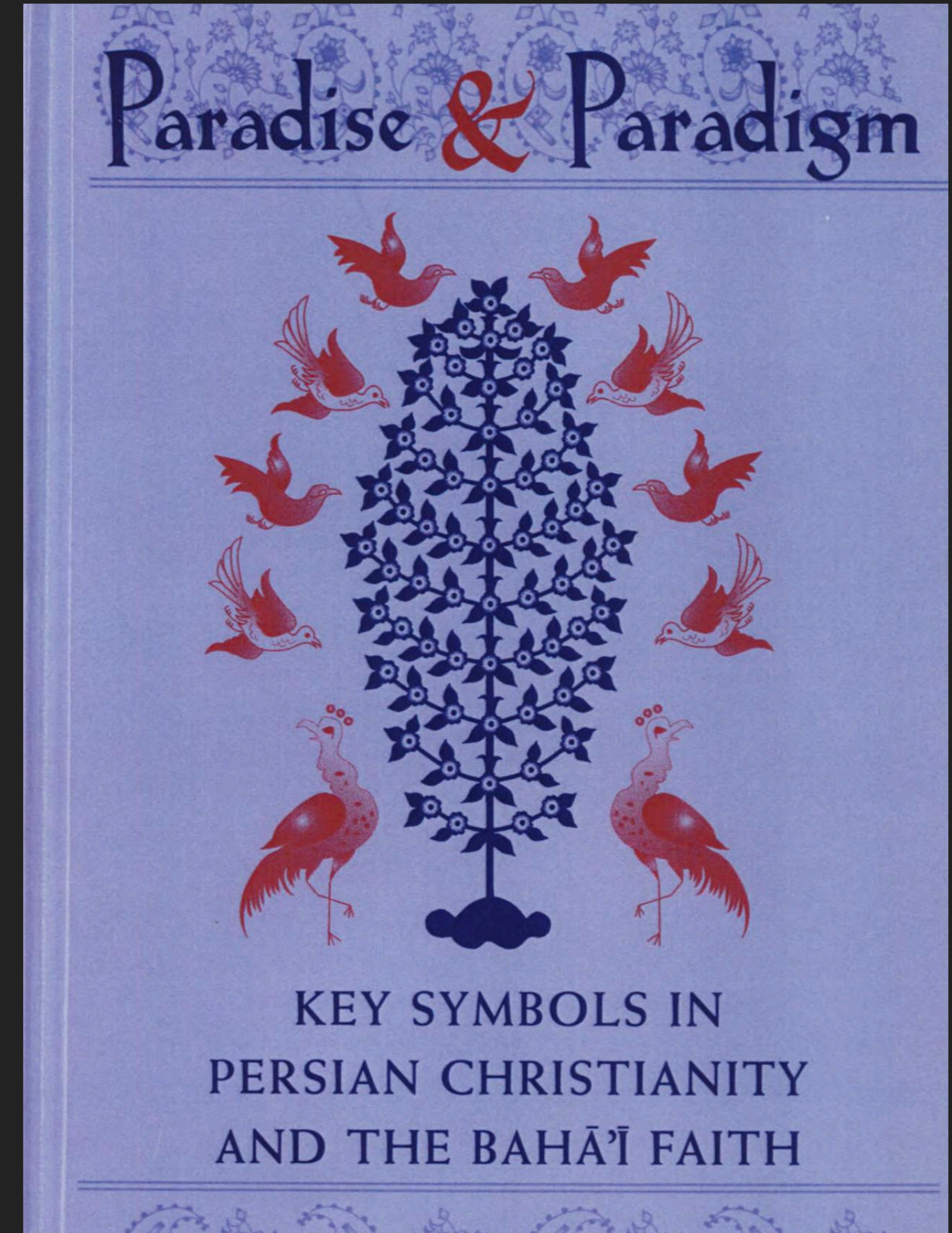
Shoghi Effendi

The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, [www.bahai.org/r/585612927](http://www.bahai.org/r/585612927)



## Paradise & Paradigm (Commentary)

- ❖ Buck, Christopher. *Paradise and Paradigm: Key Symbols in Persian Christianity and the Bahá'í Faith*. New York: SUNY Press (State University of New York Press), 1999.
- ❖ Distributed by Kalimát Press. Series: Studies in the Bábí and Bahá'í Religions, Volume 10.
- ❖ First formal (academic) comparison of the Bahá'í Faith and Christianity, notwithstanding a wealth of apologetic literature on this topic.
- ❖ Online: [https://bahai-library.com/buck\\_paradise\\_paradigm](https://bahai-library.com/buck_paradise_paradigm) (proofed 2012).





## Paradise & Paradigm / Commentary / 1

The text which follows is perhaps Bahā'u'llāh's most important statement as to the station of Jesus Christ. Expressed as a eulogy, written in response to several questions posed to Bahā'u'llāh by a Christian priest in Constantinople, the death of Christ, in Bahā'u'llāh's perspective, takes on a significance that surpasses the traditional Christian understanding of it. For Christ's sacrifice is presented within the context not only of sin and salvation, but of civilization as well. The passage is an Arabic excerpt from an otherwise lost Tablet (which might be referred to as a Lawḥ-i Qassīs), quoted in Bahā'u'llāh's lengthiest Tablet to Fath-i A'zam (in Persian). Adib Taherzadeh (RB 3:244) states that the recipient of this Tablet was a Christian bishop. The identity of this bishop is not known.

Christopher Buck Paradise & Paradigm  
(p. 230) <https://www.academia.edu>



## Paradise & Paradigm / Commentary / 2

Given its Islamic milieu, this passage is remarkable for its superlative glorification of Christ. In orthodox Christianity, the "Work of Christ" is bound up with man's relationship to God, and this aspect of "functional Christology" is by no means passed over by Bahā'u'llāh. Abandoning the speculative, ontological "substance Christology" of the classical period, Bahā'u'llāh describes the "quickenings power" (*ta'yīd*) unleashed by Christ's sacrifice and its impact on civilization, bears witness that "the soul of the sinner" has been "sanctified" (*tazakkat*—PED 299, s.v. *tazakkī*) and acknowledges that the world has been purified by Christ, the Purifier of the world (*muṭahhir al-ālam*—PED 1259, s.v. *muṭahhir*). Three aspects of salvation effected by Christ are singled out in Bahā'u'llāh's Tablet to the priest of Constantinople: quickening, sanctifying, purifying.

Christopher Buck Paradise & Paradigm  
(pp. 230–31) <https://www.academia.edu>



## Paradise & Paradigm / Commentary / 3

The healing motif is associated with the last two. It is tempting to try to read into the text what theology calls the "order of salvation" (a doctrine of Lutheran orthodoxy, but the meaningful aspects of the idea are quite widespread [Weber 1981, 2:193–209]). But there appears to be no sequential progression of spiritual states developed in this Tablet. However, as this text focuses on what systematic theology terms the "effects" of the work of Jesus Christ, it appears to extend the "order of salvation" as it were, to civilization itself.

Christopher Buck Paradise & Paradigm  
(p. 231) <https://www.academia.edu>



## Paradise & Paradigm / Commentary / 4

Bahā'u'llāh sees Christ's sacrifice as having an impact not only on the human soul but on the whole panorama of human events. Not only has the individual sinner been saved, but civilization has been quickened as well (on v.n. *isti'dād*—"fresh capacity"—cf. AED 595 and PED 53). To salvation therefore is added a dimension of the work of Christ which Bahā'u'llāh identifies as "quickenning power" (*ta'yīd*)—often rendered in the Bahā'ī writings as "divine assistance." Steingass glosses *ta'yīd* as "strengthening, infusing fresh vigour" with the attendant notion of "divine assistance" (PED 278; cf. Wehr 1973, 37). In one of Bahā'u'llāh's prayers, Jesus is described as having been sent "for the edification of Thy people, infusing thereby the spirit of life into the hearts of the sincere among Thy servants and the faithful among Thy creatures" (PM 37).

Christopher Buck Paradise & Paradigm  
(p. 231) <https://www.academia.edu>



## Paradise & Paradigm / Commentary / 5

Bahā'u'llāh seems to be saying that the pervasive power of Christ's influence lent a cultural vigor to the West, contributing to its masterpieces of art, its discoveries of science, its human values and even its temporal power, resulting in the ascendancy of the "Great Powers" of nineteenth-century Europe. Thus it is clear that, in Bahā'ī doctrine, the work of Christ is extended to civilization itself, spiritually contributing to its social evolution. Identifying Christ with civilization was, historically, a gradual process, in which secular time was merged with sacred time. Weber (1981, 2:166, n. 2) notes that the first Christian calendar, which saw events in history as tied to the Christ event, originated with Dionysius Exiguus (c. 500–550 C.E.)—a practice permanently established by the Venerable Bede (c. 673–735 C.E.).

Christopher Buck Paradise & Paradigm  
(p. 231) <https://www.academia.edu>



## Paradise & Paradigm / Commentary / 6

There is a decidedly "Christian" dimension in the symbol of the Promised One. Christology reaches its fulfillment in the Parousia, the return of Christ, and Bahā'u'llāh makes that claim. One Bahā'ī "proof" of Christ's "return" has a kind of Syrian Christian logic. In his Commentary on the Diatessaron 3:10, Ephrem glosses John the Baptist's denial of being Elijah redivivus (John 1:19–21) and Jesus' affirmation that indeed he was (Matt. 11:14; 17:12–13): "The Jews sent to John and said to him, Who are you? He confessed and said, I am not the Messiah. They said to him, Are you Elijah? He said, But our Lord called him Elijah, as Scripture attests. However, when they interrogated him, he said, 'I am not Elijah.' But Scripture does not say that John came in the body of Elijah, but, In the power and the spirit of Elijah" [Luke 1:17] (SEC 78–79).

Christopher Buck Paradise & Paradigm  
(pp. 231–32) <https://www.academia.edu>



## Paradise & Paradigm / Commentary / 7

In a similar fashion, in *Some Answered Questions*, 'Abdu'l-Bahā resolves this apparent contradiction of scripture on a higher plane of understanding. He does so in order to elucidate the biblical meaning of "return"—specifically in regard to the "return of Christ" as a feature of traditional Christian eschatology, and as a warrant of the plausibility of Bahā'u'llāh's claim. 'Abdu'l-Bahā states: "Therefore, when Christ said, 'This is Elias,' He meant: this person is a manifestation of the bounty, the perfections, the character, the qualities and the virtues of Elias. John the Baptist said, 'I am not Elias.' Christ considered the qualities, the perfections, the character and the virtues of both, and John regarded his substance and individuality" (SAQ 134). Suffice it to say that the Syriac symbol of the Way points to Christ as the penultimate event of salvation-history. Bahā'u'llāh's symbol of the Promised One points to the ultimate event of salvation-history, seen as the advent of Bahā'u'llāh himself.

Christopher Buck Paradise & Paradigm  
(p. 232) <https://www.academia.edu>



**Christ's "Quickening Power" and Bahá'u'lláh's "Quickeners of Mankind"**

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**Christ's "Quickening Power"**



## What Christ's "Quickening Power" Means

Everything that the Prophets foretold came to pass, but they were all allegories. Literal meanings were not intended, inasmuch as the Words of God are symbolic; they are mysteries. ... He further says, "He that eateth of this bread shall live forever" [John 6:58], meaning that whoever draws on these divine perfections will certainly be **quickened**. ... Hence, the mysteries of this Holy Book must be understood, and the meanings of the Torah and the Gospel comprehended, for they are all allegories and mysteries.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, Talk Given by Abdu'l-Baha at the Home of Lady Blomfield on 22 December 1912, Provisional translation by Adib Masumian, <https://adibmasumian.com/translations/abu0421/>.



## Christ as Unifier

The main point is that Christ accomplished what all the kings of the earth were powerless to achieve. He united differing nations and changed ancient customs. Consider what great differences existed between Romans, Greeks, Syrians, Egyptians, Phoenicians, and Israelites, as well as other peoples of Europe. Christ abolished these differences and became the cause of concord among these peoples. Although after a long while the governments disrupted this unity, Christ had indeed accomplished His task.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Some Answered Questions [www.bahai.org/r/372616395](http://www.bahai.org/r/372616395)



**Christ's "Quickening Power" and Bahá'u'lláh's "Quickeners of Mankind"**

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**From "Fishers of Men" to "Quickeners of Mankind"**



## Widening the Scope of Christ's Mission

- ❖ In His Tablet to Pope Pius IX, Bahá'u'lláh widens the scope of Christ's mission.
- ❖ Bahá'u'lláh establishes a dynamic, reciprocal relationship between Christ's "person and work" and Bahá'u'lláh's station and mission.
- ❖ As Bahá'u'lláh told Prof. E. G. Browne: "**Is not this that which Christ foretold?**" (Peace, [www.bahai.org/r/348999505](http://www.bahai.org/r/348999505)).





“Direct yourselves towards Him [Bahá’u’lláh]. Your All-Glorious Lord hath blessed His lands with His footsteps. Thus do We make plain unto you the path of Him Whom the Spirit [Jesus Christ] prophesied. I, verily, bear witness unto Him, even as He hath borne witness unto Me.”

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**Bahá’u’lláh The Summons of the Lord of Hosts**

[www.bahai.org/r/472085581](http://www.bahai.org/r/472085581)



**“Verily, He [Jesus Christ] said: “Come ye after Me, and I will make you to become fishers of men.” In this day, however, We [Bahá’u’lláh] say: “Come ye after Me, that We may make you to become the quickeners of mankind.” Thus hath the decree been inscribed in this Tablet by the Pen of Revelation.”**

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**Bahá’u’lláh The Summons of the Lord of Hosts**

[www.bahai.org/r/472085581](http://www.bahai.org/r/472085581)



## Christ's Focus on Individual Transformation / 1

The Revelation associated with the Faith of Jesus Christ focused attention primarily on the redemption of the individual and the molding of his conduct, and stressed, as its central theme, the necessity of inculcating a high standard of morality and discipline into man, as the fundamental unit in human society. Nowhere in the Gospels do we find any reference to the unity of nations or the unification of mankind as a whole. When Jesus spoke to those around Him, He addressed them primarily as individuals rather than as component parts of one universal, indivisible entity.

Shoghi Effendi

The Promised Day Is Come [www.bahai.org/r/774554129](http://www.bahai.org/r/774554129)



## Christ's Focus on Individual Transformation / 2

What other interpretation can be given to these words, addressed specifically by Bahá'u'lláh to the followers of the Gospel, in which the fundamental distinction between the Mission of Jesus Christ, concerning primarily the individual, and His own Message, directed more particularly to mankind as a whole, has been definitely established: "Verily, He [Jesus] said: 'Come ye after Me, and I will make you to become fishers of men.' In this day, however, We say: '**Come ye after Me, that We may make you to become the quickeners of mankind.**'"

Shoghi Effendi

The Promised Day Is Come [www.bahai.org/r/774554129](http://www.bahai.org/r/774554129)



**Christ's "Quickening Power" and Bahá'u'lláh's "Quickeners of Mankind"**

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**Theōsis in Persian (Syriac) Christianity**



**“It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing. The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.”**

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**Jesus Christ John 6:63 (KJ21)**

<https://www.biblegateway.com/verse/en/John%206:63>



**“And so it is written: ‘The first man Adam was made a living soul.’ The last Adam was made a quickening Spirit.”**

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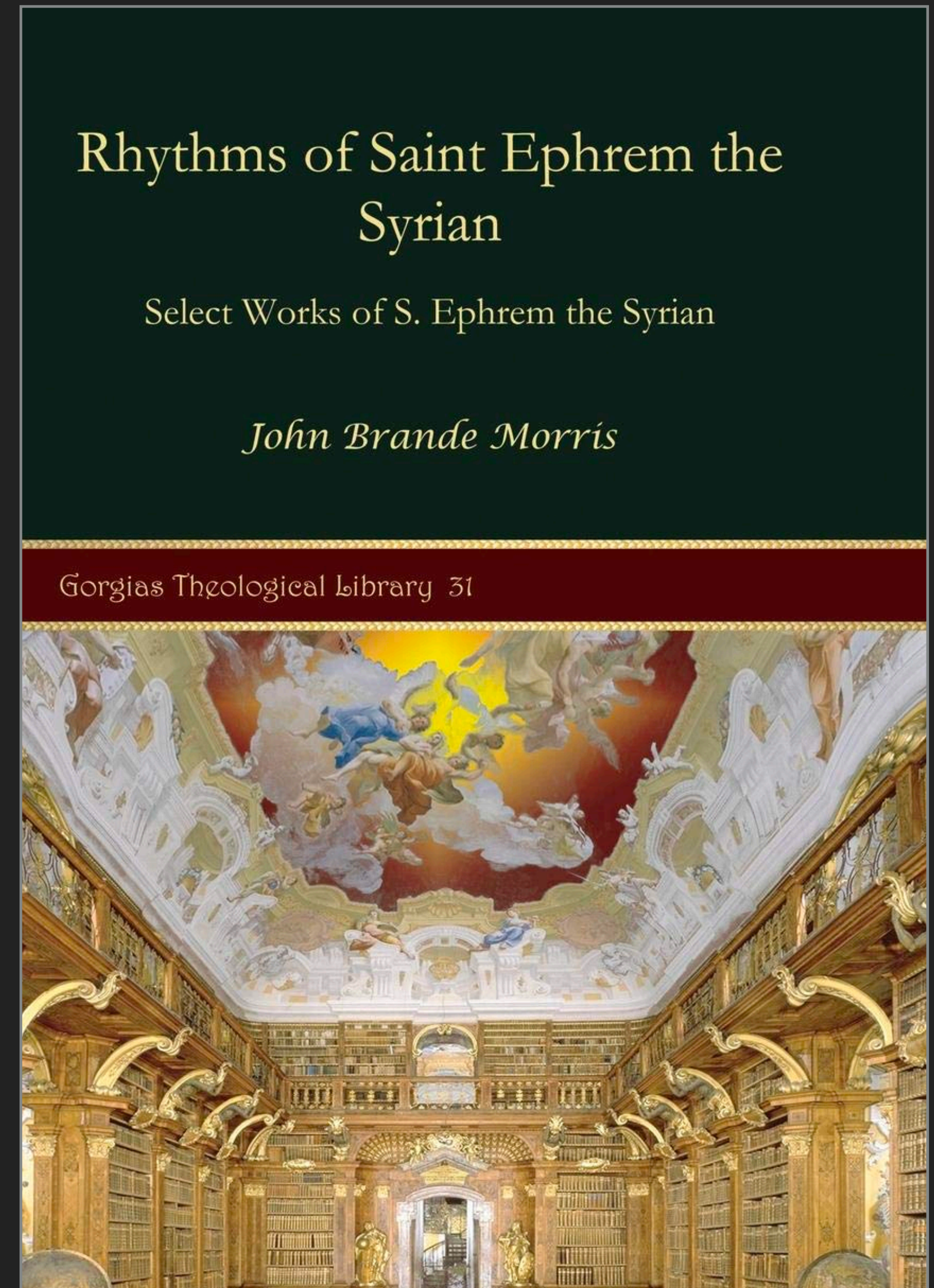
**St. Paul 1 Corinthians 15:45 (KJ21)**

<https://www.biblegateway.com/verse/en/1%20Corinthians%2015%3A45>



## St. Ephrem the Syrian: Hymns ("Rhythms")

- ❖ *Rhythms of Saint Ephrem the Syrian: Select Works of S. Ephrem the Syrian.*
- ❖ Translated Out of the Original Syriac with Notes and Indices.
- ❖ By the Rev. J. B. [John Brande] Morris, M.A. [Late] Fellow of Exeter College, Oxford.
- ❖ (Oxford: J. H. Parker; London: P. and J. Rivington; Oxford: Baxter, Printer, 1847).





**“Glory to Thy coming,  
which quickened the sons of men !”**

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**Ephrem the Syrian** Rhythms of Saint Ephrem the Syrian (p. 83)  
[Archive.org](http://archive.org)



**“To-day fulfilled was her vow, since from her  
[Ruth’s] seed arose the Quickener of all.”**

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**Ephrem the Syrian Rhythms of Saint Ephrem the Syrian (p. 65)**

[Archive.org](http://archive.org)



**“INQUIRE and hearken discriminatingly that faith is a second soul; and as the body standeth by the soul, the life of the soul also hangeth on faith, and if it deny it or be divided, it becometh a corpse.”**

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**Ephrem the Syrian** Rhythms of Saint Ephrem the Syrian (p. 361)  
[Archive.org](http://archive.org)



“That mortal body then dependeth upon the soul, and the soul is dependent upon faith, and faith also itself dependeth upon the Godhead; for from the Father Himself by the Son the Truth descendeth which quickeneth all of them in the Spirit.”

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Ephrem the Syrian Rhythms of Saint Ephrem the Syrian (p. 361)  
[Archive.org](http://www.archive.org)



“For by this Truth it is that man can link his soul with those above: by the soul he liveth, and by means of the body he seeth and heareth: by Faith and Love and Wisdom he is blended also with the Godhead, and hath His Image formed in him.”

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Ephrem the Syrian Rhythms of Saint Ephrem the Syrian (p. 361)  
[Archive.org](http://archive.org)



**“Let us not then loosen this wondrous fabric,  
nor let the faith become void in our souls, lest  
we should become dead invisibly, whereof the  
Living One said, ‘Let the dead bury their dead!’”**

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**Ephrem the Syrian** Rhythms of Saint Ephrem the Syrian (p. 361)  
[Archive.org](https://www.archive.org)



**“This air is a soul which without living breath quickeneth the body, and whoso ventureth to cut himself off from it, his life floweth away, and he is visibly a dead man; and whoso cutteth off himself from the Word of Truth, his soul is invisibly a corpse.”**

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**Ephrem the Syrian** Rhythms of Saint Ephrem the Syrian (p. 361)  
[Archive.org](http://archive.org)



## Paradise & Paradigm / Commentary / 1

**For Ephrem, and for Eastern and Oriental Christian traditions generally, salvation is typically not expressed in terms of forensic, juridical, or pecuniary metaphors so dominant in the Western patristic and especially Anselmian tradition. Sanctification may be defined as "the synergistic notion of interaction between the divine grace of God and the human will" (Fr. Andrew Morbey, Ottawa, p.c. 15 Feb. 1996). The goal is "divinization" (*theōsis*), a term that expresses communion with God. For Ephrem, there is no "Fall" in the sense of Original Sin.**

**Christopher Buck Paradise & Paradigm  
(p. 132) <https://www.academia.edu>**



## Paradise & Paradigm / Commentary / 2

**Rather, the "Fall" (a term he does not use) in Syriac Christian theology was the mortality that is the human condition, which came about when Adam forfeited immortality through the separation of his will from that of God's. It was not God's wrath that needed to be placated or appeased, but humanity's own imperilment that had to be addressed. It is deifying grace that transforms the true Christian, not vicarious atonement.**

**Christopher Buck Paradise & Paradigm  
(pp. 131–32) <https://www.academia.edu>**



## Paradise & Paradigm / Commentary / 3

For Ephrem, Christ was "the Purifier of all" (Virg. XV.1, McV 326). The mystic investment of the "Robe of Glory" at baptism was a purification by grace. Ephrem epitomizes the work of Christ so: "His birth gives us purification,/His baptism gives us forgiveness,/His death is life to us,/His ascension is our exaltation" (Res. I.16, Harp 29). This practically reads like an "order of salvation." In Ephrem's thought, salvation is a means, not an ultimate goal. Salvation, by way of atonement, is the necessary precondition for sanctification.

Christopher Buck Paradise & Paradigm  
(p. 132) <https://www.academia.edu>



**Christ's "Quickening Power" and Bahá'u'lláh's "Quickeners of Mankind"**

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**Bahá'u'lláh's "Quickeners of Mankind"**



**“All men have been created to carry forward  
an ever-advancing civilization.”**

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**Bahá'u'lláh Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, CIX**  
[www.bahai.org/r/994085186](http://www.bahai.org/r/994085186)



**“Say: This Youth hath come to quicken the world and unite all its peoples.”**

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**Bahá'u'lláh The Summons of the Lord of Hosts**

[www.bahai.org/r/380045638](http://www.bahai.org/r/380045638)



**“In these days, the operation of two divine names may be witnessed with the utmost clarity, to wit, the names of “Quickener” and “Destroyer”.**

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**Bahá'u'lláh Additional Tablets and Extracts**  
[www.bahai.org/r/596698565](http://www.bahai.org/r/596698565)



**“These cause on the one hand death, and on the other, life. The one taketh life away from those that turn away from God; the other conferreth everlasting life upon those that turn towards Him.”**

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**Bahá'u'lláh Additional Tablets and Extracts**  
[www.bahai.org/r/596698565](http://www.bahai.org/r/596698565)



**“How great the power of Him Who at a single time hath made two seasons to appear: spring and autumn!”**

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**Bahá'u'lláh Additional Tablets and Extracts**

[www.bahai.org/r/596698565](http://www.bahai.org/r/596698565)



**“Fix your gaze upon Him Who is the Temple of God amongst men. He, in truth, hath offered up His life as a ransom for the redemption of the world.**

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**Bahá'u'lláh** Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh  
[www.bahai.org/r/576176748](http://www.bahai.org/r/576176748)



**“We further beseech God, exalted be He, to gather all mankind around the Gulf of the Most Great Ocean, an ocean every drop of which proclaimeth that He is the Harbinger of joy unto the world and the Quickener of all its peoples.”**

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**Bahá'u'lláh The Summons of the Lord of Hosts**

[www.bahai.org/r/493525343](http://www.bahai.org/r/493525343)



**“This day, it behooveth whoso hath quaffed the Mystic Wine of everlasting life from the Hands of the loving-kindness of the Lord his God, the Merciful, to pulsate even as the throbbing artery in the body of mankind, that through him may be quickened the world and every crumbling bone.”**

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**Bahá'u'lláh The Kitáb-i-Aqdas**  
[www.bahai.org/r/980078767](http://www.bahai.org/r/980078767)



## Quickening Christian Self-Understanding

- ❖ Bahá'u'lláh's tribute to Christ's "Quickening Power" serves as a bridge to Bahá'u'lláh's "Quickeners of Mankind."
- ❖ Quickening Christian self-understanding about the true purpose of Christ's person and work – then and now – may benefit from experimenting with Bahá'u'lláh's approach in His tribute to Christ and in His Tablet to Pope Pius IX.





**Christ's "Quickening Power" and Bahá'u'lláh's "Quickeners of Mankind"**

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**Discussion (Questions?)**