

How Do Bahá'ís Reconcile Religion and Science?

If religious beliefs and opinions are found contrary to the standards of science, they are mere superstitions ...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.¹ 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Science reveals the truths and mysteries of the physical world; religion those of the spiritual. Each concerns itself with a separate but interdependent dimension of the universe. Seldom do the sacred Scriptures address scientific issues. Exceptions are few. For instance, a Qur'anic verse declares that the sun is a flowing and stationary body (Qur'án 36:37-38; see also *Some Answered Questions*, Chapter 7). This knowledge contradicted the prevailing view of the time. Scientists also, as a rule, avoid involvement in religious issues.

Why, then, does conflict occur? It occurs mostly from mistaking metaphoric messages for literal. Aside from their teachings, the sacred Scriptures are masterpieces of literature. They contain an abundance of "figures of speech."

Understanding the symbolism behind literary figures requires imagination and openness. Dogmatic believers, who often present themselves as the only model of true faith and understanding, are quite literal-minded.

This *seemingly* harmless and trivial handicap leads to devastating consequences. First, it causes a rift between religion and science and thereby destroys religion's dignity in the eyes of enlightened believers and seekers of truth; and second, it prevents people from understanding the symbolic meaning of prophecies, which in turn leads to the denial of divine Messengers. Once again we see the role of dogmatic believers in creating misconceptions and stifling truth and understanding on a vast scale.

Religion is like a glass of pure water. Conflicting theological theories have filled it with so many pollutants that the water has become a source of disease. Bahá'u'lláh gives us a fresh glass of water.

Theology, as practiced, is the art of turning simple ideas into obscure theories. "And Jesus said, 'Who do you say I am?' And a theologian answered, 'You are the eschatological manifestation of the ground of our being, the kerygma in which we found the ultimate meaning of our life.' And Jesus said, 'What?'"

In His *Book of Certitude*, Bahá'u'lláh quotes this passage:

Knowledge is one point, which the foolish have multiplied.²

1. *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 181.
2. *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 184.



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