

### *What Are the Two Most Critical Questions Every Seeker of Truth Should Ask?*

God gave us the gift of reason to *find* the truth and the energizing force of feelings to *fall in love* with the truth. Both must be used. We can neither find the truth with feelings nor fall in love with the truth by reason alone.

Among the most serious distortions in religion is the use of emotions, personal needs, and desires in place of proof and evidence. When it comes to religion, many act as rationally as a 3-year-old girl named Jan who visited her grandparents. Later three other children joined her. There were altogether four children and twelve cookies. The hostess said, "There are only three cookies for each of you. Please take no more." But Jan took four and started eating one of them. "You can't do that!" said the hostess. "Please put the fourth one back." "I can't!" exclaimed Jan. "I ate the fourth one first."

Since we have been exposed to religious sects whose prime mission is to impose beliefs with no regard for reason, we have been forced to build defenses to protect our souls against zealous intruders. We have become skeptical of all groups without making any distinctions. A person who is

robbed, or whose house has been broken into, avoids and builds walls against all strangers, even perhaps suspecting honored guests. This is unfortunate, for suspicion has caused avoidance and an epidemic of intellectual and spiritual apathy and indifference. To restore people's confidence and love for truth and knowledge, we need to infuse religion with reason. Reason never fears the truth. It is always emotions that escape or build protective shields against the truth.

In recognizing or testing the truth of a religion, we should begin with two questions:

- Why have the overwhelming majority of people always rejected God's Messengers?
- What makes *my* religion true?

By clarifying or resolving these two questions, *we open new doors that will lead us to an objective knowledge of truth*. When we realize that most of those who met Noah, Abraham, Moses, or Jesus failed to recognize their greatness, we become more humble. A mountain climber who knows that many others have tried and failed to conquer the crest of a mountain will not be complacent about victory. He or she will examine every evidence, will follow every lead, will investigate every clue that might explain why other climbers could not make it, and how he or she might overcome the obstacles.

Similarly, when we examine the reasons why we believe in our own religion, or what makes our religion true for us, we descend from the hazy realm of mystery, supposition, and assumption to the firm facts of reality. We learn to become more objective in judging our beliefs. Our lives are so rushed, we seldom stop to think and meditate. A moment of pondering is worth more than a thousand years of wandering.

Bahá'u'lláh often asks the followers of all religions to compare the proofs they have for their own faith with those He presents for His Faith:

Repeat the gaze, O people, and consider the testimony of God and His proof which are in your possession, and compare them unto the Revelation sent down unto you in this Day, that the truth, the infallible truth, may be indubitably manifested unto you.<sup>1</sup>

If you follow a given religion, take a few minutes and respond to these questions:

- Have you ever seriously contemplated or investigated the reasons for which you believe in your own faith? If not, why?
- If you have, what reasons did you find?

- How would you respond if someone asked you, “Why do you believe in your own faith?”

- If you do not believe in any religion, list the proofs that would convince you that a person speaks not his own word, but the Word of God.

Please do respond in writing to the preceding four questions. The purpose of writing is to make you as objective as possible. Few people look for reasons behind their beliefs. Any effort that will diminish emotional and subjective responses and increase thoughtful objectivity is worthwhile.

To enhance your motivation, ask yourself these questions:

- Is it wise to go through my life without knowing why I have adopted my beliefs?
- Choosing a spiritual path is the most important decision in my life.

Should I not give it my most serious thoughts?

- When I choose a spouse, a career, or a college, I investigate to find the best choice. Even when I buy a house, a car, or a suit, I spend time and effort to find the best. Is my religion less significant than a house, a car, or a suit?
- I may never have thought about these questions, but should I continue to ignore them all my life?
- If I do not think about them now, when will I?

The blank space after each of the four questions is provided to show you the enormous significance of this project. You will gain enormous benefits from responding to these seemingly simple but supremely significant questions. Now go back to the questions and write your responses, if you have not done so already.

52. *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 146.



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