

# Some Answered Questions, Rational Proofs and Traditional Arguments from the Sacred Scriptures

'Abdu'l-Bahá

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## Rational Proofs and Traditional Arguments from the Sacred Scriptures

Today at table let us speak a little of proofs. Had you come to this blessed spot in the days of the manifestation of that most resplendent Light, entered the court of His presence, and beheld His luminous countenance, you would have recognized that His utterance and His beauty were in want of no further proof. How numerous the souls who, upon attaining His presence, became at once confirmed believers, dispensing with any further proof ! Even those who were steeped in the deepest hatred and denial would, upon meeting Bahá'u'lláh, testify to His greatness, saying, "This is indeed a distinguished man, but how regrettable that he makes such a claim! For whatever else he might say would be acceptable."

Now, since that Luminary of truth has set, all stand in need of proofs, and so we have been occupied with providing rational proofs. Let us mention another, and this undeniable proof should alone suffice any fair-minded soul: It is that this illustrious Being advanced His Cause from within the Most Great Prison, whence His light shone forth, His fame encircled the globe, and the word of His glory reached both East and West. To this day such a thing has never come to pass, if the matter be examined with fairness. But there are certain souls who, even if they were to hear every proof in the world, would not judge fairly! Governments and peoples with all their might failed to resist Him, while He, alone and single-handed, wronged and imprisoned, accomplished whatsoever He had purposed.

I will not mention the miracles of Bahá'u'lláh, for the hearer might say that these are merely traditions which may or may not be true. Such, too, is the case with the Gospel, where the accounts of the miracles of Christ come down to us from the Apostles and not from other observers, and are denied by the Jews. Were I nonetheless to mention the supernatural feats of Bahá'u'lláh, they are numerous and unequivocally acknowledged in the East, even by some of the non-believers. But these accounts cannot be a decisive proof and testimony for all, since the hearer might say that they are not factually true, as the followers of other denominations also recount miracles from their leaders. For instance, Hindus recount certain miracles of Brahma. How can we know that those are false and that these are true? If these are reported accounts, so too are those; if these are widely attested, then the same holds true of those. Thus such accounts do not constitute a sufficient proof. Of course, a miracle may be a proof for the eyewitness, but even then he might not be sure whether what he beheld was a true miracle or mere sorcery. Indeed, extraordinary feats have also been attributed to certain magicians.



TRANSLATION

In brief, our meaning is that many marvellous things appeared from Bahá'u'lláh, but we do not recount them, for not only do they not constitute a proof and testimony for all mankind, but they are not even a decisive proof for those who witnessed them and who may ascribe them to magic.

Moreover, most of the miracles attributed to the Prophets have an inner meaning. For instance, it is recorded in the Gospel that upon the martyrdom of Christ darkness fell, the earth shook, the veil of the Temple was rent in twain, and the dead arose from their graves. If this had outwardly come to pass, it would have been a stupendous thing. Such an event would have undoubtedly been recorded in the chronicles of the time and would have seized with dismay the hearts of men. At the very least the soldiers would have removed Christ from the cross or would have fled. But as these events have not been recorded in any history, it is evident that they are not to be understood literally but according to their inner meaning. Our purpose is not to deny, but merely to say that these accounts do not constitute a decisive proof, and that they have an inner meaning—nothing more.

Accordingly, today at table we will refer to explanations of traditional arguments drawn from the Sacred Scriptures, for all that we have spoken of thus far have been rational arguments.

Since this is the station of searching after truth and seeking the knowledge of the real—that station wherein the sore athirst longs for the water of life and the struggling fish reaches the sea, wherein the ailing soul seeks the true physician and partakes of divine healing, wherein the lost caravan finds the path of truth and the aimless and wandering ship attains the shore of salvation—the seeker must therefore be endowed with certain attributes. First, he must be fair-minded and detached from all save God. His heart must be entirely directed towards the Supreme Horizon and freed from the bondage of vain and selfish desires, for these are obstacles on the path. Furthermore, he must endure every tribulation, embody the utmost purity and sanctity, and renounce the love or hatred of all the peoples of the world, lest his love for one thing hinder him from investigating another, or his hatred for something prevent him from discerning its truth. This is the station of search, and the seeker must be endowed with these qualities and attributes—that is, until he attains this station it will be impossible for him to gain the knowledge of the Sun of Truth.

Let us return to our theme. All the peoples of the world are awaiting two Manifestations, Who must be contemporaneous. This is what they all have been promised. In the Torah, the Jews are promised the Lord of Hosts and the Messiah. In the Gospel, the return of Christ and Elijah is foretold. In the religion of Muḥammad, there is the promise of the Mahdi and the Messiah. The same holds true of the Zoroastrians and others, but to belabour this matter would prolong our discourse. Our meaning is that all have been promised the advent of two successive Manifestations. It has been prophesied that, through these twin Manifestations, the earth will become another earth; all existence will be renewed; the contingent world will be clothed with the robe of a new life; justice and righteousness will encompass the globe; hatred and enmity will disappear; whatever is the cause of division among peoples, races, and nations will be obliterated; and that which ensures unity, harmony, and concord will be promoted. The heedless will arise from their slumber; the blind will see; the deaf will hear; the dumb will speak; the sick will be healed; the dead will be quickened; and war will give way to peace. Enmity will be transmuted into love; the root causes of contention and strife will be eliminated; mankind will

attain true felicity; this world will mirror forth the heavenly Kingdom; and the earth below will become the throne of the realm above. All nations will become one nation; all religions will become one religion; all mankind will become one family and one kindred; all the regions of the earth will become as one; racial, national, personal, linguistic, and political prejudices will be effaced and extinguished; and all will attain everlasting life under the shadow of the Lord of Hosts.

Now, one must prove the advent of these twin Manifestations by reference to the Sacred Scriptures and by inference from the sayings of the Prophets. For our intention now is to provide arguments drawn from the Sacred Scriptures, since rational arguments establishing the truth of these two Manifestations were presented at table a few days ago.

The Book of Daniel fixes the period between the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the martyrdom of Christ at seventy weeks, for it is through the martyrdom of Christ that the sacrifice is ended and the altar destroyed. This prophecy thus refers to the advent of Christ.

These seventy weeks begin with the restoration and rebuilding of Jerusalem, concerning which four edicts were issued by three kings. The first was by Cyrus in 536 B.C., and this is recorded in the first chapter of the Book of Ezra. The second edict regarding the rebuilding of Jerusalem was issued by Darius of Persia in 519 B.C., and this is recorded in the sixth chapter of Ezra. The third was issued by Artaxerxes in the seventh year of his reign, that is, in 457 B.C., and this is recorded in the seventh chapter of Ezra. The fourth edict was issued by Artaxerxes in 444 B.C., and this is recorded in the second chapter of Nehemiah.

What Daniel intended is the third edict, which was issued in 457 B.C. Seventy weeks makes 490 days. Each day, according to the text of the Bible, is one year, for in the Torah it is said: "The day of the Lord is one year." Therefore, 490 days is 490 years. The third edict of Artaxerxes was issued 457 years before the birth of Christ, and Christ was thirty-three years old at the time of His martyrdom and ascension. Thirty-three added to 457 is 490, which is the time announced by Daniel for the advent of Christ.

But in Daniel 9:25 this is expressed in another manner, that is, as seven weeks and sixty-two weeks, which outwardly differs from the first statement. Many have been at a loss to reconcile these two statements. How can reference be made to seventy weeks in one place and to sixty-two weeks and seven weeks in another? These two statements do not accord.

In reality Daniel is referring to two different dates. One begins with the edict Artaxerxes issued to Ezra to rebuild Jerusalem, and corresponds to the seventy weeks which came to an end with the ascension of Christ, when sacrifice and oblation were ended through His martyrdom. The second begins after the completion of the rebuilding of Jerusalem, which is sixty-two weeks until the ascension of Christ. The rebuilding of Jerusalem took seven weeks, which is equivalent to forty-nine years. Seven weeks added to sixty-two weeks makes sixty-nine weeks, and in the last week the ascension of Christ took place. This completes the seventy weeks, and no contradiction remains.

Now that the advent of Christ has been proven through the prophecies of Daniel, let us establish the advent of Bahá'u'lláh and of the Báb. So far we have only provided rational arguments; let us now turn to traditional ones.

In Daniel 8:13 it is said: "Then I heard one saint speaking, and another saint said unto that certain saint which spake, How long shall be the vision concerning the daily sacrifice, and the transgression of desolation, to give both the sanctuary and the host to be trodden under foot? And he said unto me, Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed", until it says: "at the time of the end shall be the vision". That is to say, how long shall this misfortune, this ruin, this abasement and degradation endure? Or, when will the morn of Revelation dawn? Then he said, "two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed". Briefly, the point is that he fixes a period of 2,300 years, for according to the text of the Torah each day is one year. Therefore, from the date of the edict of Artaxerxes to rebuild Jerusalem until the day of the birth of Christ there are 456 years, and from the birth of Christ until the day of the advent of the Báb there are 1,844 years, and if 456 years are added to this number it makes 2,300 years. That is to say, the fulfilment of the vision of Daniel took place in A.D. 1844, and this is the year of the advent of the Báb. Examine the text of the Book of Daniel and observe how clearly he fixes the year of His advent! There could indeed be no clearer prophecy for a Manifestation than this.

In Matthew 24:3 Christ clearly says that what Daniel meant by this prophecy was the date of the advent, and this is the verse: "As He sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto Him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of Thy coming, and of the end of the world?" Among the words He uttered in reply were the following: "When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand)." Thus He referred them to the eighth chapter of the Book of Daniel, implying that whoever reads it should grasp when that time shall be. Consider how clearly the advent of the Báb has been specified in the Torah and the Gospel!

Let us now establish the date of the advent of Bahá'u'lláh from the Torah. This date is calculated in lunar years from the revelation of the mission and the emigration of Muḥammad. For in the religion of Muḥammad the lunar calendar is used, and all the ordinances regarding religious observances have been expressed in terms of that calendar.

In Daniel 12:6 it is said: "And one said to the man clothed in linen, which was upon the waters of the river, How long shall it be to the end of these wonders? And I heard the man clothed in linen, which was upon the waters of the river, when he held up his right hand and his left hand unto heaven, and sware by Him that liveth for ever that it shall be for a time, times, and an half; and when He shall have accomplished to scatter the power of the holy people, all these things shall be finished."

As I have already explained the meaning of "day", no further explanation is needed, but let me briefly say that each day of the Father is equivalent to one year, and each year consists of twelve months. Thus three and a half years makes forty-two months, and forty-two months is 1,260 days, and each day in the Bible is equivalent to one year. And it is in the very year 1260 from the emigration of Muḥammad, according to the Muslim calendar, that the Báb, the Herald of Bahá'u'lláh, revealed His mission.

Afterwards, in verses 11 and 12, it is said: "And from the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate be set up, there shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days. Blessed is he that waiteth, and cometh to the thousand three hundred and five and thirty days."

The commencement of this lunar reckoning is from the day of the proclamation of the prophethood of Muḥammad in the land of Hijáz; and that was three years after the revelation of His mission, because in the beginning the prophethood of Muḥammad was concealed, and no one knew of it save Khadījih and Ibn-i-Nawfal, until it was publicly announced three years later. And it was in the year 1290 from the proclamation of the mission of Muḥammad that Bahá'u'lláh announced His Revelation.