

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE
DEPARTMENT OF THE SECRETARIAT

1 August 1994

[To an individual]

Dear Bahá'í Friend,

Your letter of 18 July 1994 has been received by the Universal House of Justice, which has asked us to send the following reply...

You have asked how you can “overcome [your] view of the Faith as flawed.” Your comment correctly locates the difficulty, which inheres not in the Faith, in itself perfect, but in the inability of the finite human mind to fully grasp the import and perfection of the Teachings. Given the tremendous variety of culture and individual type, it should be clear upon reflection to any fair-minded observer that the Revelation of God cannot accord with all of the theories, whims and desiderata of mankind, which are in a constant state of flux and are the product of limited human aspirations, very often corrupted by selfish motives. Nor could it possibly be true that the Revelation as a whole would necessarily appear to a given observer to be in every way a perfect tapestry, according with one's subjective concepts of beauty, elegance, coherence, order, rationality, etc.

Thus, it would not be surprising if, during the course of one's life and as one's understanding and perspective evolves, from time to time one finds aspects of the Faith that seem in conflict with one's best understanding, particularly insofar as that understanding is informed by the broader society or culture around oneself. How one responds to such episodes is of critical importance to the maintenance of one's faith. The task is to seek a larger context in which to understand the issue which is disturbing and to seek to prayerfully accept what one cannot for the time being understand. This is different from adopting an antirational or romantic posture whereby one believes in all sorts of nonsense. Quite to the contrary, what one is doing in such a case is accepting the Teachings of One whose authority is acknowledged to be from God. This is the light of faith which enables a believer to weather difficult situations in which he cannot see his way clearly by the light of reason alone. It is an attitude which flows from a recognition of the finite nature of one's own mind and the inevitable limitations of one's experience. Bahá'u'lláh Himself urges us in the Hidden Words to “Pass beyond the baser stages of doubt and rise to the exalted heights of certainty.”

Consider, when one looks about at the world and at the condition into which its peoples have fallen and the untold agony of human suffering, what could have caused such a lamentable state of affairs? Is it not a fair assumption that the reigning materialist worldview, with its inordinate emphasis on individual liberty and its discounting of ordering norms and mores, is at least partly to blame? Again, in *Gleanings*, Bahá'u'lláh writes: “Regard men as a flock of sheep that need a shepherd for their protection.” He also admonishes us:

Regard the world as the human body which, though at its creation whole and perfect, hath been afflicted, through various causes, with grave disorders and maladies. Not for one day did it gain ease, nay its sickness waxed more severe, as it fell under the treatment of ignorant physicians, who gave full rein to their personal desires, and have erred grievously. And if, at one time, through the care of an able physician, a member of that body was healed, the rest remained afflicted as before. Thus informeth you the All-Knowing, the All-Wise.

If one extends this line of thinking yet a little further, is it not conceivable that many, if not most, of those who mould public opinion on issues such as sexuality are themselves steeped in a

climate of thinking which influences and biases their reading of scientific evidence? To what degree then, one might ask, does this climate of opinion color the way one perceives the Revelation itself? This argument is suggested to you as a stimulus to your thinking as you grapple with the problem referred to in your letter. The intent is not to cast general aspersions on the entire scientific community or to suggest that there are not many reliable and clear-thinking leaders of public opinion.

A few things which one encounters in the Teachings do not lend themselves to rational analysis at all, but must be accepted in a spirit of deep faith. The ineligibility of women for service on the Universal House of Justice is one such instance. However, here again, the important thing is to view this fact within the larger context of what our Teachings actually say about the role of women and the role of men.

As you strive to acquire a fuller understanding of the Teachings, be assured of the loving prayers of the House of Justice in the Holy Shrines on your behalf.

With loving Bahá'í greetings,

Department of the Secretariat