# A Forum: Concerning Saint Paul

FROM TIME TO TIME we publish articles and reviews that evoke an extraordinary response from our readers. William S. Hatcher's review of Udo Schaefer's *The Light Shineth in Darkness,* printed in our Summer 1978 issue, is one such review. Ordinarily, we publish letters to the editor in a column called Interchange. Because of the length of the comments we have received, we are departing from our usual format and are publishing the responses as a forum.

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R. GREGORY SHAW, Mayaguez, Puerto Rico: Though I had eagerly anticipated William Hatcher's review of [Udo] Schaefer's *The Light Shineth in Darkness,* I was dismayed to find the reviewer had failed to discover that an entire section of that otherwise fine book appears to be at complete variance with a Bahá'í viewpoint. Not only did Mr. Hatcher fail to disclose the error, he attempted to support it. I refer to the several pages devoted to an attack upon St. Paul. The author states that St. Paul introduced into Christianity ideas of philosophy foreign to Christ's teaching, permanently distorting the religion. He goes on to imply that Paul ("a usurper") had never truly experienced a vision of Christ, was not correctly listed among the Apostles, and, in truth, was the arch-heretic of that Dispensation. I do not see how this denigrating evaluation of the Christian saint can be reconciled with references made in other more authoritative Bahá'í sources.

In *'Abdu'l-Bahá* (H. M. Balyuzi, George Ronald, 1971), the Center of Bahá'u'lláh's Covenant ['Abdu'l-Bahá] calls Paul " 'the great Apostle' " (p. 148), a " 'celestial' " bird, a " 'divine Philosopher,' " and a " 'heavenly' " doctor among the Jews, who suffered for the Cause of God (p. 354). The divine inspiration of Paul's word is proven by the fulfillment of his prophecy in 2 Thess. 2, as explained by Shoghi Effendi (*Esplandor del Día Prometido,* Mehrabkhani, Editorial Baha'i de España, 1974, p. 169). 'Abdu'l-Bahá even confirms the necessity of some of the changes Paul introduced into the Christian community (*Some Answered Questions* [Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1964], pp. 107–08). In *The Bahái Proofs* (Abul-Fazl, New York: Baha'i Publishing Society, 1914)—a book prepared at the specific bidding of 'Abdu'l-Bahá by the foremost scholar of the Faith, Mírzá Abul-Fazl—second-century converts to Christianity are blamed for the major distortions introduced into the religion (pp. 96–97). St. Paul, on the other hand, is extolled as "that upright saint and eloquent orator" whose power came from the Word of God (pp. 171–72); "that elect Apostle" who attempted to protect the young community from the "mistaken reasoning" of idle philosophy and turn its orientation to "the Divine Word received from the blessed Beauty of Christ" (pp. 278–79).

In sum, I believe a great injustice has been done to the memory of a martyred saint, an inspired genius—quoted by Bahá'u'lláh in His *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*—who, correctly viewed, proclaimed the emancipation of Christianity from Judaism as Ṭáhirih would later proclaim the emancipation of the Báb's followers from Islam. Furthermore, it appears obvious that an incorrect theological position that Christian readers could rightly condemn has been connected to the Bahá'í Faith. I trust that your magazine

will not allow the error to stand uncorrected.

WILLIBALD DUERSCHMID, Traunreut, West Germany: Concerning the review of Udo Schaefer's *The Light Shineth in Darkness* . . . I agree with William S. Hatcher except to Paul's theology.

In the Writings of the Bahá'í Revelation I do not know a passage indicating that Paul usurped the authority of Peter. Mr. Hatcher asserts (footnote 5, p. 37) that . . . in *The Promised Day Is Come* Shoghi Effendi states explicitly that in the Bahá'í Faith " 'the primacy of Peter, the Prince of the Apostles, is upheld and defended.' " But in *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh* (Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1965, pp. 21, 145) Shoghi Effendi clearly demonstrates that the primacy of Peter and his successors who are the Successors of Christ is the foundation of the unity of the Church. In a Tablet (*Star of the West,* 10 [June 5, 1919], 95) 'Abdu'l-Bahá states explicitly that Arius was a Covenant-breaker. Three hundred years after Christ Arius had separated himself from the Church the foundation of the unity of which was the primacy of Peter.

Udo Schaefer opposes Paul's notion of redemption through blood atonement. But Bahá'u'lláh confirms this doctrine (*Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh* [Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1976], Chapter XXXII). . . . It is an essential part of the Religion of God that the Prophets and martyrs atone for the sins of men. There are many mysteries in such acts of atonement (*The Kitáb-i-Íqán: The Book of Certitude* [Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1974], p. 129). In *Gleamings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh sections* XXXII and XXXIX indicate that it is an essential quality of the preexistent Word of God to atone for the sins of the world. In the history of mankind all these acts of atonement are but reflections of that essential quality of the Word of God, and the substitutional sacrificial atonement by Jesus is especially important because first Jesus has revealed Himself as the preexistent Word of God. As Christ is the Word and has revealed this essential quality of the Word, all these acts of atonement are reflections of the substitutional sacrificial atonement by Jesus Christ. Consequently, Paul's doctrine of the single redemptive act of Jesus' death on the cross is confirmed by the Bahá'í Revelation. 'Abdu'l-Bahá does not reject this doctrine of the Apostle Paul, but in *Some Answered Questions,* Chapter XXX, He refuses to accept a subsequent doctrine devised by Christians.

In my opinion, the resurrection of Christ is the principal subject in Paul's theology. The resurrection of Christ signifies that the preexistent Word of God is the quickening Spirit and the cause of spiritual life in all mankind. Adam is the cause of physical life; Christ is the cause of spiritual life. This doctrine is confirmed by the Bahá'í Revelation, too. 'Abdu'l-Bahá speaks of it in *Some Answered Questions,* Chapter XXIX.

In a Tablet 'Abdu'l-Bahá writes: "There were many Doctors amongst the Jews, but they were all earthly, but St. Paul became heavenly because he could fly upwards. In his own time no one duly recognized him; nay, rather, he spent his days amidst difficulties and contempt. Afterwards it became known that he was not an earthly bird, he was a celestial one; he was not a natural philosopher, but a divine philosopher." (H. M. Balyuzi, *'Abdu'l-Bahá* [Oxford: George Ronald, 1972], pp. 353–54).

Though 'Abdu'l-Bahá esteems St. Paul to such a high degree, remarkably, in contrast, there are many Bahá'ís asserting that Paul had much deformed the character of the Revelation of Christ. I see a contradiction in this. These Bahá'ís run the risk of thinking only the so-called Nazarenes to be the genuine Christians as Udo

Schaefer thinks logically according to his suppositions. But in *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh* (p. 57) Shoghi Effendi condemns the Nazarenes because they persevered in the practice of the Mosaic Law which Christ and His Apostles including Paul had abrogated, as 'Abdu'l-Bahá explains in *Some Answered Questions,* Chapter XX.

CHRISTOPHER BUCK, Bellingham, Washington: In response to William S. Hatcher's review of *The Light Shineth in Darkness,* it might prove worthwhile to enlarge upon an overlooked, but crucial aspect of Udo Schaefer's perspective on Christianity.

First, Schaefer originally "became acquainted with the founder of the Christian religion through H. J. Schoeps' *Theologie Und Geschichte Des Judenchristentums*" and "was deeply impressed" (p. 87). Moreover, Schaefer positively links the Bahá'í Faith with Ebionite Christianity. The author expressly commends to Bahá'ís the fruits of research into this major, perhaps most original form of early Oriental Christianity (pp. 83–84). Neither Schaefer nor his translators knew, evidently, of a particular work of Hans-Joachim Schoeps in English which could prove the most useful scholarly resource for American Bahá'ís: . . . *Jewish Christianity: Factional Disputes in the Early Church* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969). . . .

The typical polemic against Paul, as so fascinatingly formulated by Nazarene-Ebionite Christianity, was taken up by Islamic theologians. For instance, Edward Granville Browne ("A Parallel to the Story in the *Mathnaví* of Jalálu'd-Dín Rúmí, of the Jewish King Who Persecuted the Christians," *Islamica,* II [1926], 129–34) shows how "the Persian *Qur'án* (as the *Mathnaví* is often styled) preserves a tradition relating the perversion of Christianity to Paul. Other outstanding champions of Islám, who sought to vindicate true Christianity (Islám) through exposing the corruptions of orthodox Christianity, are the former Nestorian Christian 'Alí b. Rabban al-Tabari *(Refutation of the Christians),* as well as Ibn Hazm *(Kitáb al-Faṣl fi'l Milal wa'l Ahwá' wa'l Niḥal)* and others. . . . But probably the most captivating work is the discovery in 1966 of a Nazarene-Ebionite source preserved in Arabic and "rather maladroitly and carelessly adapted by 'Abd al-Jabbar" (Shlomo Pines, *The Jewish Christians of the Early Centuries of Christianity According to a New Source,* published as *Proceedings of the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities,* Vol. II, No. 13).

Dr. Hatcher . . . is correct in arguing for the distinction between the Qur'anic term for Evangel *(al-injíl)* and the books of Paul, often referred to throughout Islamic literature as *kutub Búlus.*

With this background, the Bahá'í Faith having its most immediate spiritual roots in Islám, it becomes apparent how Mr. Schaefer could well concur with Mawláná Sayyid Amir 'Alí's famous statement: "The Moslem belief probably is in accord with that of the primitive Christians—of the Ebionites, 'the sect of the poor,' to whom Jesus had preached and among whom he had lived. It has nothing in common with Pauline Christianity" ("Christianity from the Islamic Standpoint," in *Hibbert Journal* [1906], p. 247).

. . . Bahá'u'lláh (*Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh,* p. 173) appears to have known that the earliest Christian scriptures were set forth in Hebrew, and the Báb (*Selections from the Writings of the Báb,* p. 137) represents mainstream, Pauline Christianity as having lost access to genuine apostolic direction.

'Abdu'l-Bahá (*Star of the West,* 8 [June 24, 1917], 60) attributes superstitious ascetism to Paul. In *Some Answered Questions,* 'Abdu'l-Bahá observes how Paul violated the pact of the Jerusalem Conference. . . . However, Paul's moral fibre, eloquence, and surpassing zeal all find 'Abdu'l-Bahá's praise and thus warrant a

corresponding respect on the part of all Bahá'ís.

Probably the most striking specimen text in this vein appears on pages 223–24 of *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá,* where 'Abdu'l-Bahá extols the conduct of Paul, and champions the faith of Peter. It is extremely revealing that in this particular statement, 'Abdu'l-Bahá is careful to single out Paul's finest virtue, yet does not endorse Paul's own special interpretation of Christ's religion! Such endorsement is reserved solely for Peter. Otherwise, were this not so, 'Abdu'l-Bahá would have praised the faith of *both* Peter and Paul. Apparently, 'Abdu'l-Bahá was aware of the discord that broke out in both the Apostolic and sub-Apostolic Ages of Christianity (*Ten Days in the Light of 'Akká,* p. 41). Udo Schaefer might well identify 'Abdu'l-Bahá's endorsement of Peter's faith as being an oblique endorsement of Ebionite beliefs, which are distinctively Petrine. Various pilgrims' records (such as those of Ted Cardell [date unknown], Mrs. Margery McCormick [1937], Mrs. May Maxwell and Mary Maxwell [1937], Jessie and Ethel Revell [1953], and Amy Raubitschek [1955]) show that Shoghi Effendi felt that Paul was both an usurper and an heresiarch. . . . This representation of Shoghi Effendi is strengthened by suggestive observations in *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh* (notably, pp. 56–57, 74, 145, and 184–85). Although appeal to pilgrimage accounts is confessedly weak, yet in this context both the consistency as well as recurrence of those reports are astonishing.

If Udo Schaefer's linking of the Bahá'í Faith to Nazarene-Ebionite Christianity finds favor in the Bahá'í world, it will become necessary to distinguish various kinds of Nazarenes and Ebionites, partly because history demands this, and partly on account of the fact that not all Nazarenes were praiseworthy. For instance, Shoghi Effendi (*The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh,* p. 57) rightly castigates those Nazarenes who sought to petrify Christianity in the prevailing Pharisaic practices. . . .

As to "the precise Bahá'í understanding" Hatcher . . . conceives, no adequate discussion of Bahá'u'lláh's doctrine of Manifestation in relation to the physical temple can afford to ignore the Tablet of the Manifestation found in *Bahá'í Scriptures.* It is not quite clear why Dr. Hatcher stresses . . . " 'the *substance of God.*' " Dr. Hatcher, moreover, confuses . . . preëxistence of the Manifestation with Jesus. Disbelief in the preëxistence of Jesus *can* be a legitimate Bahá'í view, since *Christ* (who preëxists) is distinct from *Jesus.*

Last, Dr. Hatcher represents atonement through blood sacrifice as a salient feature of prevailing mystery cults. . . . While there is truth to this, it would serve us well to remember that Paul was steeped in the prevailing *Jewish* sanguinary cult. Which leads us to the very adventurous question: Did Moses command blood sacrifice? Since various reform movements within the religious spectrum of Mosaism, such as the little-known Rechabites and the pre-Christian "Nazaraioi," contested the Pharisaic claim, since the Ebionite Jesus condemns the sanguinary cult centralized in the Jerusalem Temple, and since later St. Stephen was stoned to death for advancing similar criticisms, the question is far from preposterous.

If indeed Jeremiah 7:21–23 is "a slap in the face of the priestly code," as M. Weinfeld has put it, then we must review our Bahá'í views on *taḥríf.* Although Bahá'u'lláh stresses that "perversion of the text" was principally interpretative, should this rule out the strong possibility that, just as in the case of Paul, corrupt interpretations of the Religion later came to be regarded as scripture?

The Ebionites had a great deal to offer toward a solution to this problem. Perhaps Udo Schaefer's most memorable and outstanding contribution to Bahá'í thought in relation to the Christian universe is to recognize and proclaim Ebionite Chris-

tianity as the historical foundation upon which a Bahá'í perspective on Christ and Christianity can rest. Schaefer shows that what comes closest to a scientific approach in theological exploration is historical validation. If Paul is truly a usurper and heresiarch, it must be shown that, historically, those who were amongst the most original followers of Christ thought so—and had good reason to.

Finally, perhaps the weightiest endorsement of Schaefer's "discovery" of Ebionite Christianity comes from some of the world's most preëminent scholars. Together with Harris Hirschberg, Hans-Joachim Schoeps, Shlomo Pines, David Flusser, James Dunn, Cardinal Danielou, and others, Professor Gilles Quispel can safely state: "the Jewish Christians or Ebionites were the legitimate heirs of primitive Christianity, whereas the New Testament to a large extent reflects the views of Gentile Christianity as defended by St. Paul and his fellows. *This is the present state of scholarship*" (*Eranos-Jahrbuch,* 1969).

MARZIEH GAIL, Keene, New Hampshire: The Primacy of Peter is undeniable, but should we forget the wonderful services rendered by Paul—or these words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá: "Judas Iscariot was for a long time favored in the holy court of His Holiness Christ, yet he was entirely . . . remote; while Paul, the apostle, was in close embrace with His Holiness" (*Tablets of Abdul-Baha Abbas,* III, 720).

WILLIAM S. HATCHER, Quebec, Canada: I have read the several letters whose principal concern seems to be that Udo Schaefer (in his essay [*The Light Shineth in Darkness*]) and I (in my review of same) have contributed to propagating a distorted and unfair picture of Paul, and one that is manifestly at variance with Bahá'í teaching. Upon reflection, I feel that these reactions are based primarily on an imprecise understanding of the thesis put forth in Schaefer's book. There are at least four logically independent questions involved in this controversy, and it is of paramount importance to recognize them and to state each explicitly. These are: (1) The question concerning what doctrines have been originated and taught by Paul, (2) the question of the authenticity of Paul's doctrines from various viewpoints (i.e., the degree of harmony between Paul's doctrines and Christ's teachings or between Paul's doctrines and Bahá'u'lláh's teachings), (3) the question concerning the degree of influence of Pauline doctrines on the development of Christianity and on the de facto theology of various contemporary branches of it, and (4) the question of value judgments about Paul the man (his sincerity, loyalty, devotion, spirituality, etc.).

In particular, with reference to the last point, the fact that 'Abdu'l-Bahá has praised Paul the man cannot be taken alone as evidence that the Bahá'í Faith accepts all of the ideas and teachings of Paul as true. If one were to follow this logic, one would expect to see in the Bahá'í Writings praise only of those possessed of infallibility. In the light of well-known Bahá'í teachings on this subject, praise would be restricted uniquely to the Manifestations of God and their explicitly authorized interpreters. Yet we know that Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá have heaped praise on such figures as Plato and Aristotle, who taught many doctrines at variance with Bahá'í teaching.[1]

The conditions of earthly existence, especially in past ages, have been such that it seems already a significant achievement if a person is able to influence the world more for good than for ill. If he influences the world considerably more for good than ill, this ranks as a very great achievement. A faith as universal as the

1. Plato, for instance, taught that all men have had a prior life from which they remember certain ideas.

Bahá'í Faith could hardly fail to give credit wherever credit is due; and this, or so it appears to me, is what the Authors and Interpreters of our Faith have done again and again. Their spirit has been that of seeing the good and overlooking the shortcomings, especially when they judge that the intention was sincere.[2] When they must be negative, it is usually toward false ideas, not specific individuals (though there are, as we know, some notable and necessary exceptions). . . .

Looking, now, at the other three points, Schaefer has put forth essentially the following thesis: Paul's teaching is focused almost entirely on a redemption doctrine (with an attendant of Christology) that he has himself synthesized out of Greek, Jewish, and Pagan elements.[3] With respect to Jesus' teachings this represents a significant change from Jesus' focus on ethical conduct and individual spiritual development to a focus on mystic and occult doctrines concerning Jesus Himself and a salvation through an essentially passive act of acceptance and belief in Jesus as Risen Lord.[4] With regard to Baha'i teachings

2. Moreover, in assessing the deeper meaning of comments by Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá on the relative merit of various individual figures, it seems to me that one must pay some attention to exactly what is being praised. In the case of Paul most of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's comments praising Paul appear to me to be directed primarily at his conduct, devotion, and spirit of sacrifice rather than at his teachings. Typical is the following comment contained in *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá* (comp. Research Department of the Universal House of Justice, trans. Committee at Bahá'í World Center and Marzieh Gail [Haifa: Bahá'í World Center, 1978]), pp. 223–24: "One's conduct must be like the conduct of Paul, and one's faith similar to that of Peter."

Similarly, the statement in 'Abdu'l-Bahá's letter to T. K. Cheyne (quoted in Balyuzi, *'Abdu'l-Bahá* [London: George Ronald, 1971], pp. 353–54) seems to me to be making a clear analogy between Cheyne, a Christian Doctor of Theology, and Paul, a Jewish "Doctor" (because he studied at the feet of the greatest Rabbis): Just as Paul overcame Jewish prejudice against Christ to become an ardent defender of Christianity, so ('Abdu'l-Bahá seems to be gently suggesting) Professor Cheyne can overcome similar Christian prejudice against Bahá'u'lláh. Even though Paul was not appreciated in his lifetime, but suffered for his defense of Christ, so Professor Cheyne may suffer if he defends the Bahá'í Faith; but if he does, he will, in the future, be looked upon as a "divine philosopher" and distinguish himself from the majority of his colleagues, as did Paul before him. Here, again, we see no approval of the specific content of any Pauline doctrines.

However, those insistent on seeing some specific criticism of Pauline thought in the Bahá'í Writings are referred to 'Abdu'l-Bahá's clear statement in *Star of the West,* 8 (June 24, 1917), 60, where Paul's ascetic views on marriage are specifically condemned, and their negative influence on later Christian practice acknowledged.

3. Given the fact that we have Paul's writings, and given our knowledge about the cultural milieu at the time, there can be virtually no doubt as to the genesis and main thrust of Paul's doctrines. In his brilliant study, *The First Christian* (New York: Mentor Books, 1957), E. Powell Davies sums up the influences acting on Paul in the following way:

> To Paul, as we have already suggested, all these redeemer-concepts, salvation dramas, sacraments and rituals, while unacceptable in themselves to one of Judaic faith, nevertheless *prefigured* the one true Christ. What the salvation cults set forth as myth and drama Jesus, as Paul saw it, had *lived into history.* Attis was an effigy nailed to a tree, Jesus was the Son of God nailed to a cross. What Judaism had prophesied plainly and paganism had previsaged darkly, God had actually brought to pass and Jesus was Lord and Savior!
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> We need not suppose that this perception came only vaguely to Paul or that he was not fully aware of its import. . . . It was to him a complete *gnosis* of human destiny. . . .
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> And thus began the great synthesis. (p. 129.)

4. It is this shift in focus that constitutes a displacement of Peter by Paul, and it is to this that I referred in speaking of a "usurpation." This does not imply that Paul consciously set out to undermine Peter's authority, only that Paul was sincerely and strongly convinced of

several of Paul's doctrines (e.g., original sin and the bodily resurrection of Jesus) are explicitly denied. Others (e.g., the substitutional atonement) are given spiritual meaning through radical reinterpretation, but a meaning quite different from that understood by Paul or by Christians down through the ages.[5] That these Pauline doctrines have substantially influenced Christian thought through the centuries is reflected in the numerous creeds, practices, and writings of Church figures many of which exhibit Pauline influence both explicitly and implicitly.

Viewed in this way (which is the way I viewed it when writing my critique of Schaefer's work), there is very little that any Bahá'í can quarrel with in Schaefer's discussion of Paul. Certainly his essay is not vulnerable to the criticisms contained in the present letters, most of which are non sequitur extensions and extrapolations from Schaefer's carefully worded discussion. For example, to say that Paul's doctrines shifted the focus of early Christianity does not mean that everything Paul taught was wrong or that everything taught by his ideological opponents was right. Similarly, rejecting Paul's polemic against the law is not logically the same thing as affirming that the early Christians should have continued to follow Jewish law in all respects.[6] Moreover, Schaefer has nowhere said that all of the extraneous ideas injected into Christianity are due to Paul, and it is clear that such doctrines as the trinity are much later.

I agree with the judgment of Juan Ricardo Cole (cf. his letter in WORLD ORDER, Winter 1978–79) that the positive statements about Paul in the Bahá'í Writings seem definitely to exclude considering Paul as anything like a covenant-breaker or an "antichrist." Also, the exact nature and limits of the authority conferred on Peter are not clear. We do, however, have the definite statements of Sho-

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his position. Though Schaefer accurately reports that some have held extremely negative views of Paul, he scrupulously avoids making any such judgments himself.

5. In particular, the passages in *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh* (trans. Shoghi Effendi, 2d rev. ed. [Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1976]) and elsewhere in the Bahá'í Writings discussing the spiritual meaning of atonement and sacrifice present us with an understanding significantly different from that found in Paul's writings. For Paul the salvation drama was a transcendental, once-and-for-all affair, not a *principle* of sacrifice to be continually renewed with the coming of each new Manifestation and even with His martyred followers (cf. *Gleanings*, XXXII). Also, for Paul, one was saved from original sin, whereas Bahá'ís do not even believe in this latter concept.

More fundamentally, Paul makes of his redemption idea the central, and indeed, exclusive, meaning of the Christian Faith, whereas for Bahá'ís, the notion of atonement and sacrifice is only one part of the total spiritual significance of Divine Revelation. By making the significance of Jesus' life reside entirely in His death and resurrection, one thereby neglects too many other important aspects of Jesus' life, and in particular His ethical teachings (as well as the ethical example of Jesus' behavior in various moral situations). Thus it is not so much the falsity of Paul's salvation doctrine that has caused the shift in focus in early Christianity but rather Paul's insistence that his salvation doctrine is *all* that really matters about Jesus. Had Paul's doctrine, even with the errors it contained, assumed only a relative role in the total focus of Christian thought, we might say that it contained more truth than falsity and that the false part could be overlooked as being relatively insignificant. But we are prevented from making such a benign assessment of Paul's influence because of the exclusiveness that Paul and his ideological successors have attached to his redemption doctrine. This is the main point that Schaefer makes in his essay; and I, for one, feel he has made it extremely well.

6. Indeed, Paul himself had to deal with problems in the churches created by his strong statements about the law, for many of the new converts were only too glad to assume that, having been saved by their belief in Jesus as Risen Lord, they were no longer subject to any moral constraints at all. Professor Davies

ghi Effendi that no previous religious system had a clearly defined line of authority like that of the Baha'i Faith.

Again, I feel that Schaefer is not open to criticism on this count since he does not engage in name calling and vilification of Paul but only reports that certain other persons have held such extremely negative views of him. Of course, it would be a shame if some readers were to use Schaefer's discussion as a basis for an emotional vilification of the work and life of Paul. It appears to me that such a reaction would be highly unlikely on the part of any thoughtful reader. But even if such an unfortunate and misguided reaction were forthcoming on the part of some readers, that in itself would not invalidate the logical points made in Schaefer's discussion.

Somewhat more controversial, perhaps, are Schaefer's positive judgments about so-called Nazarene Christianity. One can realize the distortions wrought by the influence of Paul's doctrines without necessarily believing that truer doctrines were preserved elsewhere. It was not just differences with Paul with which Peter had to contend, but all of the natural inertia of the traditional attachments of the new Jewish Christians to their past. It is logically possible, and may, in fact, be the case that there was no group whatever that represented an absolutely pure expression of Jesus' Revelation.

Perhaps Paul's influence was useful in detaching nascent Christianity from an overreliance on Judaism. Certainly the idea of the independence of the new Revelation of Jesus from the traditional Jewish forms ("you cannot put new wine in old wineskins") is logically independent of Paul's redemption doctrine. Had he championed the former without the latter it would no doubt have been better. Yet we know what Christianity became with Paul. What it would have been without him we can only speculate.

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sums up Paul's dilemma in the following passage:

> What Paul wants is good behavior not because the Law demands it but because the spirit of Jesus impels it. But it was not an easy principle to maintain. If the Jews had become hair-splitters in interpreting their Law, Christians were likely to have so fluid an ethic that there would be no definite standards at all. What was there to go by if you had no moral code? The Jews were never slow to point out immorality among Christians and attributed it, quite naturally, to abandoning the Law. What Paul wanted —free and spontaneous goodness through the prompting of the spirit of Jesus—was a lot to ask of ordinary people. (p. 145.)

Yet, as statements of Shoghi Effendi (see *The World Order of Baha'u'llah,* 2d rev. ed. [Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1974], p. 57) clearly indicate, the reluctance of early Jewish Christians to abandon nonessential and outmoded aspects of the Mosaic Law was a hindrance to the proper development of Christianity.

In this connection, it is perhaps helpful to point out that 'Abdu'l-Bahá, in speaking approvingly of certain changes in Jewish Law made in early Christianity, speaks of these changes as having been made by four disciples including *Peter and* Paul (see *Some Answered Questions,* comp. and trans. Laura Clifford Barney, rev. ed. [Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1964], Chapter XX).

suddenly the real underlying cause of the disease becomes, if not apparent, yet dimly visible.

For a Bahá'í, who is always encouraged by his fellow Bahá'ís to be radiant and happy, there may on certain occasions be comfort in the knowledge that there *are* some reasons around for individuals being unhappy—be they Bahá'í individuals or other. Only when clearly understood can hidden sources of unhappiness lose their power over us. And as Horace Holley points out, there may be reasons which are connected with the relation of the individual to society—i.e. with types of individuals in a given society of a given era—thus bringing in historical implications as well.

This may seem a somewhat idiosyncratic approach to what Horace Holley wrote. I mainly wanted to convey that I found his article stimulating, thought provoking, and highly relevant.

I was at first wondering why Horace Holley had not listed the teacher, the educator, as a distinct human type playing a necessary role under all circumstances. In the meantime I think I have found the answer: The qualities needed for teaching and educating are not the qualities of any one distinct human type at all —educating is part of human life just as breathing and speaking. So all the types can be and should be educators, each in his way and each in his field.

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## A WORD ABOUT PAUL

Professor Hatcher's review of Udo Schaefer's *The Light Shineth in Darkness* (Summer 1978) was lucid, fair, and insightful—no mean accomplishment when dealing with so complicated and potentially controversial a subject. His helpful suggestions for the improvement of Herr Schaefer's presentation of Bahá'í Christology were detailed and highly germane, and his defense of the Gospel of John quite in order. Several years ago, when I was studying the New Testament at Northwestern with Edmund Perry, the latter pointed out that the Gospel according to John has stylistic affinities with some of the Qumrán literature. The reasons given for dating John late have always been that it exhibits Greek influence, and Professor Perry argued that if these supposedly Greek motifs are in fact Jewish, and can be documented in Jewish literature for two hundred years before Christ, then there is no reason to suppose that the Gospel according to John is any later than the Synoptic gospels. The common presumption among modern biblical scholars of the greater age and the superior authenticity of Mark's Gospel might thus be wholly unwarranted.

On pages 37–38 and note 5, Prof. Hatcher discusses the Bahá'í attitude toward Paul and his writings. I personally think that Bahá'ís should avoid taking too simplistic an approach to this matter. There is a considerable body of Jewish and Muslim polemical literature against Paul, in which he is charged with irreparably ruining Christianity by introducing such doctrines as the divinity of Christ, the redemption, the necessity for blood-sacrifice, and the Trinity. Mr. Schaefer, I believe, draws rather too heavily on this literature, much of which is based on doctrinal assumptions at variance with those of the Bahá'í Faith. If one remembers that no such concept as "the three persons of the Trinity" can be found in Paul's writings, and that the Letter to the Hebrews, with its emphasis on blood sacrifice (e.g., 9:22), is not attributable to Paul, some of the traditional charges against him are weakened. The doctrine of sacrificial redemption is scriptural (John 4:16), and if dissociated from the Augustinian doctrine of original sin is wholly

in accord with Bahá'í teachings. Paul's views on the divinity and Sonship of Christ are easier for Bahá'ís to accept than Jews and Sunní Muslims, and it is clear that Paul only thought of Christ as theomorphic, but not in any sense identical or equal to God (Phil. 2:6).

I am not arguing that Paul should be taken as a scriptural authority for Bahá'ís, merely that he should be respected as a great mystic and early Christian theologian. 'Abdu'l-Bahá Himself has written that "One's conduct must be like the conduct of Paul and one's faith similar to that of Peter." *(Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá* [Haifa, 1978], pp. 223-24). Bahá'u'lláh refers to Paul as 'Ḥaḍrat-i-Búlus-i-Qadís' (His Holiness Saint Paul) in the *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf* (Wilmette, 1971, p. 91), and quotes Romans 13:1-2 to Shaykh Muḥammad Taqíy-i-Najafí as though it bore some authority. This passage is also quoted by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in His *Risáliy-i-Siyásiyyih* (Ṭihrán, 91 B.E., p. 16), and the latter often quoted or paraphrased Pauline verses when addressing Western audiences.

In short, while Bahá'ís may not believe that everything Paul wrote was inspired by Christ, we can be sure that any Pauline verses referred to in Bahá'í Writings were so inspired. Some Bahá'ís have suggested to me that Paul was a covenant-breaker in the same way that Muḥammad 'Alí, 'Abdu'l-Bahá's half-brother, was. I think the references to him in Bahá'í scripture are such as to make this suggestion entirely untenable. These references also cast serious doubt on the charges made by Prof. Hatcher and Mr. Schaefer that Paul was a "usurper" who undermined Peter's authority. If Paul's own testimony is reliable, his "mission to the gentiles" was blessed by Peter, as well as James and John (Gal. 2:9). Paul no doubt showed little tact in his dispute with Peter about the permissibility of associating with uncircumcised Gentiles, and the need to observe Jewish food laws; but in the long run, Peter came round to Paul's way of thinking on all but a few points (Acts 10, 15). It is anachronistic for Bahá'ís to project back into Peter and Paul's day the idea of a strict covenant with its attendant implications of unquestionable authority. To assert the primacy of Peter is not to assert that he always acted correctly (John 18:25–27) or that he had an infallible authority which should never have been challenged. On the question of circumcision and the food laws, he obviously took a wrong position for a time.

Incidentally, I commend WORLD ORDER for another excellent issue, with essays of high quality on the philosophy of religion, theology, the history of early journalism on the Bahá'í Faith, in addition to a memoir of Gibran and poetry. Where else could we find such a banquet?

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