

Discourse on Christianity

Introduction

Discourse between people with different religious beliefs can be difficult. Bahá'ís sometimes do not feel they know enough about Christianity and the Bible to talk to Christians. There might also be fear that cherished beliefs will not be respected, or that the discussion could cause bad feeling or that responses to Christian concerns and questions will be inadequate.

This weekend course is designed so that participants can develop:

- A deeper love for Jesus Christ, and understanding of His life and teachings.
- A basic knowledge of the Bible, its structure, how it was written and how it is regarded by scholars and in the Bahá'í Writings.
- A simple understanding of fundamental Christian beliefs, and Bahá'í perspectives on those beliefs, including a brief introduction to prophecy.
- Awareness of major divisions of Christianity (Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox and Protestant), the liberal/conservative divide, and some burning issues affecting Christians in Australia today.
- Skills and attitudes for constructive engagement with any kind of Christian, with emphasis on: responding to common objections to the Bahá'í Faith; dialogue; listening; teaching; addressing fears and working together with other Faith groups.
- A good understanding of certain "exclusivist" Bible texts that Christians often use to dismiss or attack the claims of Bahá'u'lláh.
- Familiarity with some key concepts in the *Message to the World's Religious Leaders and One Common Faith*.

- A change in mindset that gives confidence in talking to Christians and building spiritual relationships in most circumstances, including Bahá'í Intensive Programs of Growth and in connection with the core activities of the Faith.

Focus of the Weekend

The focus will be on knowledge, attitudes and skills that facilitate constructive and enjoyable discourse with Christians. In a compact weekend the aim is simplicity and clarity in regard to basic Christian beliefs and Bahá'í perspectives, and a basic awareness of the key divisions and issues to be encountered among Christians in Australia. The success of Bahá'í-Christian dialogue, even at the most informal level, also depends on a profound appreciation by Bahá'ís of the Christian Faith, and a feeling of spiritual connection when meeting with followers of Jesus. Furthermore when a Bahá'í is aware of what concerns and fears Christians may initially have about the claims of Bahá'u'lláh, and knows how to respond to such concerns, his or her skills will assist in quickly moving the discussion to the oneness of humanity and the proofs of Bahá'u'lláh.

Structure of the Course

The content of the course will be delivered through a combination of presentations, focussed discussion, individual research and group activities, singing and video. Christian music will give participants a sense of the powerful and uplifting spirit that motivates and inspires our Christian friends.

Tuition Fee

The tuition fee of the program is set to \$110 which covers the cost of overnight accommodation, full board including 3 meals and 3 refreshments per day, and the course handouts.



Social Discourse Series

The Weekend Timetable

Session	Session	Topic
Friday	Evening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Orientation • Introduction
Saturday	Morning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jesus, the Bible and Christianity • Bahá'í Perspectives • Variety in Christianity • <i>Message to the World's Religious Leaders and One Common Faith</i>
	Afternoon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dialogue Skills • Addressing specific Christian concerns about the Bahá'í Faith • Exclusivist texts in the Bible • Mini research project
	Evening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Special presentation
Sunday	Morning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Answering Questions and introducing Bahá'u'lláh • Group and individual research
	Afternoon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Projects presentations

Course Facilitator

Mr. Colin Dibdin has made study of the Bahá'í view of the Bible, and responding to Christian questions, his hobbies since spending two years during the 1970s in a Catholic-run university residence which also happened to be an evangelical Protestant stronghold. Under



the umbrella of the Association for Bahá'í Studies – Australia - he facilitated a lively electronic discussion between Baha'is and Christians in the 1990s, and established a Baha'i-Christian Dialogue web-site. He has taught introductory classes on Christianity at Yerrinbool for several years. Mr Dibdin has a Bachelor of Arts majoring in Political Science and Philosophy, worked in Air Traffic Services for 22 years, and is currently an administrative officer at the National Baha'i Centre. His other passions are the core Baha'i activities, his family and occasional private flying.



Application Form– Discourse on Christianity

(You can enroll on line at <http://www.ybcl.org/>)



Surname: First Name: Date of Birth:

Current study/work:

Address:

State. Post Code:Tel: Home:..... Mobile:.....

E-mail:

Please tick your method of payment:

Cheque Money order Credit Card Course Fee : \$

Payable to: “Yerrinbool Bahá'í Centre of Learning”

Please debit my: Bankcard Mastercard Visa Card

Number: Expiry Date:

Name on the Card: Signature:

Please send the completed form to Programs Administrator: 27 Sierra Street, Yerrinbool, NSW 2575.

Tel: 02 48839462, Fax: 02 48839552, Mobile: 0411879028, E-mail: admin@ybcl.org,

Web sit: <http://www.ybcl.org/>

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5– 7 June 2009



Yerrinbool College
Social Discourse Series