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## God Passes By

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## SECOND PERIOD: THE MINISTRY OF BAHÁ'U'LLÁH 1853–1892

### *Chapter VI: The Birth of The Bahá'í Revelation*

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The train of dire events that followed in swift succession the calamitous attempt on the life of Násiri'd-Dín Sháh mark, as already observed, the termination of the Bábí Dispensation and the closing of the initial, the darkest and bloodiest chapter of the history of the first Bahá'í century. A phase of measureless tribulation had been ushered in by these events, in the course of which the fortunes of the Faith proclaimed by the Báb sank to their lowest ebb. Indeed ever since its inception trials and vexations, setbacks and disappointments, denunciations, betrayals and massacres had, in a steadily rising crescendo, contributed to the decimation of the ranks of its followers, strained to the utmost the loyalty of its stoutest upholders, and all but succeeded in disrupting the foundations on which it rested.

From its birth, government, clergy and people had risen as one man against it and vowed eternal enmity to its cause. Muhammad Sháh, weak alike in mind and will, had, under pressure, rejected the overtures made to him by the Báb Himself, had declined to meet Him face to face, and even refused Him admittance to the capital. The youthful Násiri'd-Dín Sháh, of a cruel and imperious nature, had, both as crown prince and as reigning sovereign, increasingly evinced the bitter hostility which, at a later stage in his reign, was to blaze forth in all its dark and ruthless savagery. The powerful and sagacious Mu'tamíd, the one solitary figure who could have extended Him the support and protection He so sorely needed, was taken from Him by a sudden death. The Sherif of Mecca, who through the mediation of Quddús had been made acquainted with the new Revelation on the occasion of the Báb's pilgrimage to Mecca, had turned a deaf ear to the Divine Message, and received His messenger with curt indifference. The prearranged gathering that was to have taken place in the holy city of Karbilá, in the course of the Báb's return journey from Hijáz, had, to the disappointment of His followers who had been eagerly awaiting

His arrival, to be definitely abandoned. The eighteen Letters of the Living, the principal bastions that buttressed the infant strength of the Faith, had for the most part fallen. The “Mirrors,” the “Guides,” the “Witnesses”<sup>90</sup> comprising the Bábí hierarchy had either been put to the sword, or hounded from their native soil, or bludgeoned into silence. The program, whose essentials had been communicated to the foremost among them, had, owing to their excessive zeal, remained for the most part unfulfilled. The attempts which two of those disciples had made to establish the Faith in Turkey and India had signally failed at the very outset of their mission. The tempests that had swept Mázindarán, Nayríz and Zanján had, in addition to blasting to their roots the promising careers of the venerated Quddús, the lion-hearted Mullá Husayn, the erudite Vahíd, and the indomitable Hujjat, cut short the lives of an alarmingly large number of the most resourceful and most valiant of their fellow-disciples. The hideous outrages associated with the death of the Seven Martyrs of Tíhrán had been responsible for the extinction of yet another living symbol of the Faith, who, by reason of his close kinship to, and intimate association with, the Báb, no less than by virtue of his inherent qualities, would if spared have decisively contributed to the protection and furtherance of a struggling Cause.

The storm which subsequently burst, with unexampled violence, on a community already beaten to its knees, had, moreover, robbed it of its greatest heroine, the incomparable Táhirih, still in the full tide of her victories, had sealed the doom of Siyyid Husayn, the Báb's trusted amanuensis and chosen repository of His last wishes, had laid low Mullá ‘Abdu’l-Karím-i-Qazvíní, admittedly one of the very few who could claim to possess a profound knowledge of the origins of the Faith, and had plunged into a dungeon Bahá’u’lláh, the sole survivor among the towering figures of the new Dispensation. The Báb—the Fountainhead from whence the vitalizing energies of a newborn Revelation had flowed—had Himself, ere the outburst of that hurricane, succumbed, in harrowing circumstances, to the volleys of a firing squad leaving behind, as titular head of a well-nigh disrupted community, a mere figurehead, timid in the extreme, good-natured yet susceptible to the slightest influence, devoid of any outstanding qualities, who now (loosed from the controlling hand of Bahá’u’lláh, the real Leader) was seeking, in the guise of a dervish, the protection afforded by the hills of his native Mázindarán against the threatened assaults of a deadly enemy. The voluminous writings of the Founder of the Faith—in manuscript, dispersed, unclassified, poorly transcribed and ill-preserved, were in part, owing to the fever and tumult of the times, either deliberately destroyed, confiscated, or hurriedly dispatched to places of safety beyond the confines of the land in<sup>91</sup> which they were revealed. Powerful adversaries, among whom towered the figure of the inordinately ambitious and hypocritical Hájí Mírzá Karím Khán, who at the special request of the Sháh had in a treatise viciously attacked the new Faith and its doctrines, had now raised their heads, and, emboldened by the reverses it had sustained, were heaping abuse and

calumnies upon it. Furthermore, under the stress of intolerable circumstances, a few of the Bábís were constrained to recant their faith, while others went so far as to apostatize and join the ranks of the enemy. And now to the sum of these dire misfortunes a monstrous calumny, arising from the outrage perpetrated by a handful of irresponsible enthusiasts, was added, branding a holy and innocent Faith with an infamy that seemed indelible, and which threatened to loosen it from its foundations.

And yet the Fire which the Hand of Omnipotence had lighted, though smothered by this torrent of tribulations let loose upon it, was not quenched. The flame which for nine years had burned with such brilliant intensity was indeed momentarily extinguished, but the embers which that great conflagration had left behind still glowed, destined, at no distant date, to blaze forth once again, through the reviving breezes of an incomparably greater Revelation, and to shed an illumination that would not only dissipate the surrounding darkness but project its radiance as far as the extremities of both the Eastern and Western Hemispheres. Just as the enforced captivity and isolation of the Báb had, on the one hand, afforded Him the opportunity of formulating His doctrine, of unfolding the full implications of His Revelation, of formally and publicly declaring His station and of establishing His Covenant, and, on the other hand, had been instrumental in the proclamation of the laws of His Dispensation through the voice of His disciples assembled in Badasht, so did the crisis of unprecedented magnitude, culminating in the execution of the Báb and the imprisonment of Bahá'u'lláh, prove to be the prelude of a revival which, through the quickening power of a far mightier Revelation, was to immortalize the fame, and fix on a still more enduring foundation, far beyond the confines of His native land, the original Message of the Prophet of Shíráz.

At a time when the Cause of the Báb seemed to be hovering on the brink of extinction, when the hopes and ambitions which animated it had, to all human seeming, been frustrated, when the colossal sacrifices of its unnumbered lovers appeared to have been made in vain, the Divine Promise enshrined within it was about to be suddenly redeemed, and its final perfection mysteriously manifested.

<sup>92</sup> The Bábí Dispensation was being brought to its close (not prematurely but in its own appointed time), and was yielding its destined fruit and revealing its ultimate purpose—the birth of the Mission of Bahá'u'lláh. In this most dark and dreadful hour a New Light was about to break in glory on Persia's somber horizon. As a result of what was in fact an evolving, ripening process, the most momentous if not the most spectacular stage in the Heroic Age of the Faith was now about to open.

During nine years, as foretold by the Báb Himself, swiftly, mysteriously and irresistibly the embryonic Faith conceived by Him had been developing until, at the fixed hour, the burden of the promised Cause of God was cast amidst the gloom and agony of the Síyáh-Chál of Tíhrán. "Behold," Bahá'u'lláh Himself, years later, testified, in refutation of the claims of those who had rejected the validity of His

mission following so closely upon that of the Báb, “how immediately upon the completion of the ninth year of this wondrous, this most holy and merciful Dispensation, the requisite number of pure, of wholly consecrated and sanctified souls has been most secretly consummated.” “That so brief an interval,” He, moreover has asserted, “should have separated this most mighty and wondrous Revelation from Mine own previous Manifestation is a secret that no man can unravel, and a mystery such as no mind can fathom. Its duration had been foreordained.”

St. John the Divine had himself, with reference to these two successive Revelations, clearly prophesied: “The second woe is past; and, behold the third woe cometh quickly.” “This third woe,” ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, commenting upon this verse, has explained, “is the day of the Manifestation of Bahá’u’lláh, the Day of God, and it is near to the day of the appearance of the Báb.” “All the peoples of the world,” He moreover has asserted, “are awaiting two Manifestations, Who must be contemporaneous; all wait for the fulfillment of this promise.” And again: “The essential fact is that all are promised two Manifestations, Who will come one following on the other.” Shaykh Ahmad-i-Ahsá’í, that luminous star of Divine guidance who had so clearly perceived, before the year sixty, the approaching glory of Bahá’u’lláh, and laid stress upon “the twin Revelations which are to follow each other in rapid succession,” had, on his part, made this significant statement regarding the approaching hour of that supreme Revelation, in an epistle addressed in his own hand to Siyyid Kázim: “The mystery of this Cause must needs be made manifest, and the secret of this Message must needs be divulged. I can say no more.

<sup>93</sup> I can appoint no time. His Cause will be made known after Hin (68).”

The circumstances in which the Vehicle of this newborn Revelation, following with such swiftness that of the Báb, received the first intimations of His sublime mission recall, and indeed surpass in poignancy the soul-shaking experience of Moses when confronted by the Burning Bush in the wilderness of Sinai; of Zoroaster when awakened to His mission by a succession of seven visions; of Jesus when coming out of the waters of the Jordan He saw the heavens opened and the Holy Ghost descend like a dove and light upon Him; of Muhammad when in the Cave of Hira, outside of the holy city of Mecca, the voice of Gabriel bade Him “cry in the name of Thy Lord”; and of the Báb when in a dream He approached the bleeding head of the Imám Husayn, and, quaffing the blood that dripped from his lacerated throat, awoke to find Himself the chosen recipient of the outpouring grace of the Almighty.

What, we may well inquire at this juncture, were the nature and implications of that Revelation which, manifesting itself so soon after the Declaration of the Báb, abolished, at one stroke, the Dispensation which that Faith had so newly proclaimed, and upheld, with such vehemence and force, the Divine authority of its Author? What, we may well pause to consider, were the claims of Him Who, Himself a disciple of the Báb, had, at such an early stage, regarded Himself as

empowered to abrogate the Law identified with His beloved Master? What, we may further reflect, could be the relationship between the religious Systems established before Him and His own Revelation—a Revelation which, flowing out, in that extremely perilous hour, from His travailing soul, pierced the gloom that had settled upon that pestilential pit, and, bursting through its walls, and propagating itself as far as the ends of the earth, infused into the entire body of mankind its boundless potentialities, and is now under our very eyes, shaping the course of human society?

He Who in such dramatic circumstances was made to sustain the overpowering weight of so glorious a Mission was none other than the One Whom posterity will acclaim, and Whom innumerable followers already recognize, as the Judge, the Lawgiver and Redeemer of all mankind, as the Organizer of the entire planet, as the Unifier of the children of men, as the Inaugurator of the long-awaited millennium, as the Originator of a new “Universal Cycle,” as the Establisher of the Most Great Peace, as the Fountain of the Most Great Justice, as the Proclaimer of the coming of age of the entire <sup>94</sup> human race, as the Creator of a new World Order, and as the Inspirer and Founder of a world civilization.

To Israel He was neither more nor less than the incarnation of the “Everlasting Father,” the “Lord of Hosts” come down “with ten thousands of saints”; to Christendom Christ returned “in the glory of the Father,” to Shí’ah Islám the return of the Imám Husayn; to Sunní Islám the descent of the “Spirit of God” (Jesus Christ); to the Zoroastrians the promised Sháh-Bahrám; to the Hindus the reincarnation of Krishna; to the Buddhists the fifth Buddha.

In the name He bore He combined those of the Imám Husayn, the most illustrious of the successors of the Apostle of God—the brightest “star” shining in the “crown” mentioned in the Revelation of St. John—and of the Imám ‘Alí, the Commander of the Faithful, the second of the two “witnesses” extolled in that same Book. He was formally designated Bahá’u’lláh, an appellation specifically recorded in the Persian Bayán, signifying at once the glory, the light and the splendor of God, and was styled the “Lord of Lords,” the “Most Great Name,” the “Ancient Beauty,” the “Pen of the Most High,” the “Hidden Name,” the “Preserved Treasure,” “He Whom God will make manifest,” the “Most Great Light,” the “All-Highest Horizon,” the “Most Great Ocean,” the “Supreme Heaven,” the “Pre-Existent Root,” the “Self-Subsistent,” the “Day-Star of the Universe,” the “Great Announcement,” the “Speaker on Sinai,” the “Sifter of Men,” the “Wronged One of the World,” the “Desire of the Nations,” the “Lord of the Covenant,” the “Tree beyond which there is no passing.” He derived His descent, on the one hand, from Abraham (the Father of the Faithful) through his wife Katurah, and on the other from Zoroaster, as well as from Yazdigird, the last king of the Sásáníyán dynasty. He was moreover a descendant of Jesse, and belonged, through His father, Mírzá Abbás, better known as Mírzá Buzurg—a nobleman closely associated with the ministerial circles of the Court of Fath-‘Alí Sháh—to one of the most ancient and renowned families of

## Mázindarán.

To Him Isaiah, the greatest of the Jewish prophets, had alluded as the “Glory of the Lord,” the “Everlasting Father,” the “Prince of Peace,” the “Wonderful,” the “Counsellor,” the “Rod come forth out of the stem of Jesse” and the “Branch grown out of His roots,” Who “shall be established upon the throne of David,” Who “will come with strong hand,” Who “shall judge among the nations,” Who “shall smite the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips slay the wicked,” and Who “shall assemble the 95 outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.” Of Him David had sung in his Psalms, acclaiming Him as the “Lord of Hosts” and the “King of Glory.” To Him Haggai had referred as the “Desire of all nations,” and Zachariah as the “Branch” Who “shall grow up out of His place,” and “shall build the Temple of the Lord.” Ezekiel had extolled Him as the “Lord” Who “shall be king over all the earth,” while to His day Joel and Zephaniah had both referred as the “day of Jehovah,” the latter describing it as “a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness, a day of the trumpet and alarm against the fenced cities, and against the high towers.” His Day Ezekiel and Daniel had, moreover, both acclaimed as the “day of the Lord,” and Malachi described as “the great and dreadful day of the Lord” when “the Sun of Righteousness” will “arise, with healing in His wings,” whilst Daniel had pronounced His advent as signaling the end of the “abomination that maketh desolate.”

To His Dispensation the sacred books of the followers of Zoroaster had referred as that in which the sun must needs be brought to a standstill for no less than one whole month. To Him Zoroaster must have alluded when, according to tradition, He foretold that a period of three thousand years of conflict and contention must needs precede the advent of the World-Savior Sháh-Bahrám, Who would triumph over Ahriman and usher in an era of blessedness and peace.

He alone is meant by the prophecy attributed to Gautama Buddha Himself, that “a Buddha named Maitreya, the Buddha of universal fellowship” should, in the fullness of time, arise and reveal “His boundless glory.” To Him the Bhagavad-Gita of the Hindus had referred as the “Most Great Spirit,” the “Tenth Avatar,” the “Immaculate Manifestation of Krishna.”

To Him Jesus Christ had referred as the “Prince of this world,” as the “Comforter” Who will “reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment,” as the “Spirit of Truth” Who “will guide you into all truth,” Who “shall not speak of Himself, but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak,” as the “Lord of the Vineyard,” and as the “Son of Man” Who “shall come in the glory of His Father” “in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory,” with “all the holy angels” about Him, and “all nations” gathered before His throne. To Him the Author of the Apocalypse had alluded as the “Glory of God,” as “Alpha and Omega,” “the Beginning and the End,” “the First and the Last.” Identifying His Revelation

with <sup>96</sup> the “third woe,” he, moreover, had extolled His Law as “a new heaven and a new earth,” as the “Tabernacle of God,” as the “Holy City,” as the “New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.” To His Day Jesus Christ Himself had referred as “the regeneration when the Son of Man shall sit in the throne of His glory.” To the hour of His advent St. Paul had alluded as the hour of the “last trump,” the “trump of God,” whilst St. Peter had spoken of it as the “Day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat.” His Day he, furthermore, had described as “the times of refreshing,” “the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy Prophets since the world began.”

To Him Muhammad, the Apostle of God, had alluded in His Book as the “Great Announcement,” and declared His Day to be the Day whereon “God” will “come down” “overshadowed with clouds,” the Day whereon “thy Lord shall come and the angels rank on rank,” and “The Spirit shall arise and the angels shall be ranged in order.” His advent He, in that Book, in a sūrih said to have been termed by Him “the heart of the Qur’án,” had foreshadowed as that of the “third” Messenger, sent down to “strengthen” the two who preceded Him. To His Day He, in the pages of that same Book, had paid a glowing tribute, glorifying it as the “Great Day,” the “Last Day,” the “Day of God,” the “Day of Judgment,” the “Day of Reckoning,” the “Day of Mutual Deceit,” the “Day of Severing,” the “Day of Sighing,” the “Day of Meeting,” the Day “when the Decree shall be accomplished,” the Day whereon the second “Trumpet blast” will be sounded, the “Day when mankind shall stand before the Lord of the world,” and “all shall come to Him in humble guise,” the Day when “thou shalt see the mountains, which thou thinkest so firm, pass away with the passing of a cloud,” the Day “wherein account shall be taken,” “the approaching Day, when men’s hearts shall rise up, choking them, into their throats,” the Day when “all that are in the heavens and all that are on the earth shall be terror-stricken, save him whom God pleaseth to deliver,” the Day whereon “every suckling woman shall forsake her sucking babe, and every woman that hath a burden in her womb shall cast her burden,” the Day “when the earth shall shine with the light of her Lord, and the Book shall be set, and the Prophets shall be brought up, and the witnesses; and judgment shall be given between them with equity; and none shall be wronged.” <sup>97</sup>

The plenitude of His glory the Apostle of God had, moreover, as attested by Bahá’u’lláh Himself, compared to the “full moon on its fourteenth night.” His station the Imám ‘Alí, the Commander of the Faithful, had, according to the same testimony, identified with “Him Who conversed with Moses from the Burning Bush on Sinai.” To the transcendent character of His mission the Imám Husayn had, again according to Bahá’u’lláh, borne witness as a “Revelation whose Revealer will be He Who revealed” the Apostle of God Himself.

About Him Shaykh Ahmad-i-Ahsá'í, the herald of the Bábí Dispensation, who had foreshadowed the “strange happenings” that would transpire “between the years sixty and sixty-seven,” and had categorically affirmed the inevitability of His Revelation had, as previously mentioned, written the following: “The Mystery of this Cause must needs be made manifest, and the Secret of this Message must needs be divulged. I can say no more, I can appoint no time. His Cause will be made known after Hin (68)” (i.e., after a while).

Siyid Kázim-i-Rashtí, Shaykh Ahmad's disciple and successor, had likewise written: “The Qá'im must needs be put to death. After He has been slain the world will have attained the age of eighteen.” In his Sharh-i-Qásidiy-i-Lámíyyih he had even alluded to the name “Bahá.” Furthermore, to his disciples, as his days drew to a close, he had significantly declared: “Verily, I say, after the Qá'im the Qayyúm will be made manifest. For when the star of the former has set the sun of the beauty of Husayn will rise and illuminate the whole world. Then will be unfolded in all its glory the ‘Mystery’ and the ‘Secret’ spoken of by Shaykh Ahmad.... To have attained unto that Day of Days is to have attained unto the crowning glory of past generations, and one goodly deed performed in that age is equal to the pious worship of countless centuries.”

The Báb had no less significantly extolled Him as the “Essence of Being,” as the “Remnant of God,” as the “Omnipotent Master,” as the “Crimson, all-encompassing Light,” as “Lord of the visible and invisible,” as the “sole Object of all previous Revelations, including The Revelation of the Qá'im Himself.” He had formally designated Him as “He Whom God shall make manifest,” had alluded to Him as the “Abhá Horizon” wherein He Himself lived and dwelt, had specifically recorded His title, and eulogized His “Order” in His best-known work, the Persian Bayán, had disclosed His name through His allusion to the “Son of 'Alí, a true and undoubted Leader of men,” had, repeatedly, orally and in writing, fixed, beyond the shadow of a doubt, the time of His Revelation, and warned His 98 followers lest “the Bayán and all that hath been revealed therein” should “shut them out as by a veil” from Him. He had, moreover, declared that He was the “first servant to believe in Him,” that He bore Him allegiance “before all things were created,” that “no allusion” of His “could allude unto Him,” that “the year-old germ that holdeth within itself the potentialities of the Revelation that is to come is endowed with a potency superior to the combined forces of the whole of the Bayán.” He had, moreover, clearly asserted that He had “covenanted with all created things” concerning Him Whom God shall make manifest ere the covenant concerning His own mission had been established. He had readily acknowledged that He was but “a letter” of that “Most Mighty Book,” “a dew-drop” from that “Limitless Ocean,” that His Revelation was “only a leaf amongst the leaves of His Paradise,” that “all that hath been exalted in the Bayán” was but “a ring” upon His own hand, and He Himself “a ring upon the hand of Him Whom God shall make manifest,” Who, “turneth it as He pleaseth, for whatsoever He pleaseth, and through whatsoever He

pleaseth.” He had unmistakably declared that He had “sacrificed” Himself “wholly” for Him, that He had “consented to be cursed” for His sake, and to have “yearned for naught but martyrdom” in the path of His love. Finally, He had unequivocally prophesied: “Today the Bayán is in the stage of seed; at the beginning of the manifestation of Him Whom God shall make manifest its ultimate perfection will become apparent.” “Ere nine will have elapsed from the inception of this Cause the realities of the created things will not be made manifest. All that thou hast as yet seen is but the stage from the moist-germ until We clothed it with flesh. Be patient until thou beholdest a new creation. Say: Blessed, therefore, be God, the Most Excellent of Makers!”

“He around Whom the Point of the Bayán (Báb) hath revolved is come” is Bahá'u'lláh's confirmatory testimony to the inconceivable greatness and preeminent character of His own Revelation. “If all who are in heaven and on earth,” He moreover affirms, “be invested in this day with the powers and attributes destined for the Letters of the Bayán, whose station is ten thousand times more glorious than that of the Letters of the Qur'anic Dispensation, and if they one and all should, swift as the twinkling of an eye, hesitate to recognize My Revelation, they shall be accounted, in the sight of God, of those that have gone astray, and regarded as ‘Letters of Negation.’” “Powerful is He, the King of Divine might,” He, alluding to Himself in the Kitáb-i-Íqán, asserts, “to extinguish with one letter of His wondrous  
 99 words, the breath of life in the whole of the Bayán and the people thereof, and with one letter bestow upon them a new and everlasting life, and cause them to arise and speed out of the sepulchers of their vain and selfish desires.” “This,” He furthermore declares, “is the king of days,” the “Day of God Himself,” the “Day which shall never be followed by night,” the “Springtime which autumn will never overtake,” “the eye to past ages and centuries,” for which “the soul of every Prophet of God, of every Divine Messenger, hath thirsted,” for which “all the divers kindreds of the earth have yearned,” through which “God hath proved the hearts of the entire company of His Messengers and Prophets, and beyond them those that stand guard over His sacred and inviolable Sanctuary, the inmates of the Celestial Pavilion and dwellers of the Tabernacle of Glory.” “In this most mighty Revelation,” He moreover, states, “all the Dispensations of the past have attained their highest, their final consummation.” And again: “None among the Manifestations of old, except to a prescribed degree, hath ever completely apprehended the nature of this Revelation.” Referring to His own station He declares: “But for Him no Divine Messenger would have been invested with the Robe of Prophethood, nor would any of the sacred Scriptures have been revealed.”

And last but not least is ‘Abdu'l-Bahá's own tribute to the transcendent character of the Revelation identified with His Father: “Centuries, nay ages, must pass away, ere the Day-Star of Truth shineth again in its mid-summer splendor, or appeareth once more in the radiance of its vernal glory.” “The mere contemplation of the Dispensation inaugurated by the Blessed Beauty,” He furthermore affirms, “would

have sufficed to overwhelm the saints of bygone ages—saints who longed to partake for one moment of its great glory.” “Concerning the Manifestations that will come down in the future ‘in the shadows of the clouds,’ know verily,” is His significant statement, “that in so far as their relation to the source of their inspiration is concerned they are under the shadow of the Ancient Beauty. In their relation, however, to the age in which they appear, each and every one of them ‘doeth whatsoever He willeth.’” And finally stands this, His illuminating explanation, setting forth conclusively the true relationship between the Revelation of Bahá’u’lláh and that of the Báb: “The Revelation of the Báb may be likened to the sun, its station corresponding to the first sign of the Zodiac—the sign Aries—which the sun enters at the vernal equinox. The station of Bahá’u’lláh’s Revelation, on the other hand, is represented by the sign Leo, the sun’s mid-summer and highest station. By this is meant that this <sup>100</sup> holy Dispensation is illumined with the light of the Sun of Truth shining from its most exalted station, and in the plenitude of its resplendency, its heat and glory.”

To attempt an exhaustive survey of the prophetic references to Bahá’u’lláh’s Revelation would indeed be an impossible task. To this the pen of Bahá’u’lláh Himself bears witness: “All the Divine Books and Scriptures have predicted and announced unto men the advent of the Most Great Revelation. None can adequately recount the verses recorded in the Books of former ages which forecast this supreme Bounty, this most mighty Bestowal.”

In conclusion of this theme, I feel, it should be stated that the Revelation identified with Bahá’u’lláh abrogates unconditionally all the Dispensations gone before it, upholds uncompromisingly the eternal verities they enshrine, recognizes firmly and absolutely the Divine origin of their Authors, preserves inviolate the sanctity of their authentic Scriptures, disclaims any intention of lowering the status of their Founders or of abating the spiritual ideals they inculcate, clarifies and correlates their functions, reaffirms their common, their unchangeable and fundamental purpose, reconciles their seemingly divergent claims and doctrines, readily and gratefully recognizes their respective contributions to the gradual unfoldment of one Divine Revelation, unhesitatingly acknowledges itself to be but one link in the chain of continually progressive Revelations, supplements their teachings with such laws and ordinances as conform to the imperative needs, and are dictated by the growing receptivity, of a fast evolving and constantly changing society, and proclaims its readiness and ability to fuse and incorporate the contending sects and factions into which they have fallen into a universal Fellowship, functioning within the framework, and in accordance with the precepts, of a divinely conceived, a world-unifying, a world-redeeming Order.

A Revelation, hailed as the promise and crowning glory of past ages and centuries, as the consummation of all the Dispensations within the Adamic Cycle, inaugurating an era of at least a thousand years’ duration, and a cycle destined to last no less than five thousand centuries, signaling the end of the Prophetic Era

and the beginning of the Era of Fulfillment, unsurpassed alike in the duration of its Author's ministry and the fecundity and splendor of His mission—such a Revelation was, as already noted, born amidst the darkness of a subterranean dungeon in Tihrán—an abominable pit that had once served as a reservoir of water for one of the public baths of the city. <sup>101</sup> Wrapped in its stygian gloom, breathing its fetid air, numbed by its humid and icy atmosphere, His feet in stocks, His neck weighed down by a mighty chain, surrounded by criminals and miscreants of the worst order, oppressed by the consciousness of the terrible blot that had stained the fair name of His beloved Faith, painfully aware of the dire distress that had overtaken its champions, and of the grave dangers that faced the remnant of its followers—at so critical an hour and under such appalling circumstances the “Most Great Spirit,” as designated by Himself, and symbolized in the Zoroastrian, the Mosaic, the Christian, and Muhammadan Dispensations by the Sacred Fire, the Burning Bush, the Dove and the Angel Gabriel respectively, descended upon, and revealed itself, personated by a “Maiden,” to the agonized soul of Bahá'u'lláh.

“One night in a dream,” He Himself, calling to mind, in the evening of His life, the first stirrings of God's Revelation within His soul, has written, “these exalted words were heard on every side: ‘Verily, We shall render Thee victorious by Thyself and by Thy pen. Grieve Thou not for that which hath befallen Thee, neither be Thou afraid, for Thou art in safety. Ere long will God raise up the treasures of the earth—men who will aid Thee through Thyself and through Thy Name, wherewith God hath revived the hearts of such as have recognized Him.’” In another passage He describes, briefly and graphically, the impact of the onrushing force of the Divine Summons upon His entire being—an experience vividly recalling the vision of God that caused Moses to fall in a swoon, and the voice of Gabriel which plunged Muhammad into such consternation that, hurrying to the shelter of His home, He bade His wife, *Khadíjih*, envelop Him in His mantle. “During the days I lay in the prison of Tihrán,” are His own memorable words, “though the galling weight of the chains and the stench-filled air allowed Me but little sleep, still in those infrequent moments of slumber I felt as if something flowed from the crown of My head over My breast, even as a mighty torrent that precipitateth itself upon the earth from the summit of a lofty mountain. Every limb of My body would, as a result, be set afire. At such moments My tongue recited what no man could bear to hear.”

In His *Súratu'l-Haykal* (the *Súrih* of the Temple) He thus describes those breathless moments when the Maiden, symbolizing the “Most Great Spirit” proclaimed His mission to the entire creation: “While engulfed in tribulations I heard a most wondrous, a most sweet voice, calling above My head. Turning My face, I beheld a Maiden—the embodiment of the remembrance of the name of My Lord—suspended <sup>102</sup> in the air before Me. So rejoiced was she in her very soul that her countenance shone with the ornament of the good-pleasure of God, and her cheeks glowed with the brightness of the All-Merciful. Betwixt earth and heaven she was raising a call which captivated the hearts and minds of men. She was imparting

to both My inward and outer being tidings which rejoiced My soul, and the souls of God's honored servants. Pointing with her finger unto My head, she addressed all who are in heaven and all who are on earth, saying: 'By God! This is the Best-Beloved of the worlds, and yet ye comprehend not. This is the Beauty of God amongst you, and the power of His sovereignty within you, could ye but understand. This is the Mystery of God and His Treasure, the Cause of God and His glory unto all who are in the kingdoms of Revelation and of creation, if ye be of them that perceive.'"

In His Epistle to Násiri'd-Dín Sháh, His royal adversary, revealed at the height of the proclamation of His Message, occur these passages which shed further light on the Divine origin of His mission: "O King! I was but a man like others, asleep upon My couch, when lo, the breezes of the All-Glorious were wafted over Me, and taught Me the knowledge of all that hath been. This thing is not from Me, but from One Who is Almighty and All-Knowing. And he bade Me lift up My voice between earth and heaven, and for this there befell Me what hath caused the tears of every man of understanding to flow.... This is but a leaf which the winds of the will of Thy Lord, the Almighty, the All-Praised, have stirred.... His all-compelling summons hath reached Me, and caused Me to speak His praise amidst all people. I was indeed as one dead when His behest was uttered. The hand of the will of Thy Lord, the Compassionate, the Merciful, transformed Me." "By My Life!" He asserts in another Tablet, "Not of Mine own volition have I revealed Myself, but God, of His own choosing, hath manifested Me." And again: "Whenever I chose to hold My peace and be still, lo, the Voice of the Holy Spirit, standing on My right hand, aroused Me, and the Most Great Spirit appeared before My face, and Gabriel overshadowed Me, and the Spirit of Glory stirred within My bosom, bidding Me arise and break My silence."

Such were the circumstances in which the Sun of Truth arose in the city of Tíhrán—a city which, by reason of so rare a privilege conferred upon it, had been glorified by the Báb as the "Holy Land," and surnamed by Bahá'u'lláh "the Mother of the world," the "Day-spring of Light," the "Dawning-Place of the signs of the Lord," the "Source of the joy of all mankind." The first dawnings of that Light<sup>103</sup> of peerless splendor had, as already described, broken in the city of Shíráz. The rim of that Orb had now appeared above the horizon of the Síyáh-Chál of Tíhrán. Its rays were to burst forth, a decade later, in Baghdád, piercing the clouds which immediately after its rise in those somber surroundings obscured its splendor. It was destined to mount to its zenith in the far-away city of Adrianople, and ultimately to set in the immediate vicinity of the fortress-town of 'Akká.

The process whereby the effulgence of so dazzling a Revelation was unfolded to the eyes of men was of necessity slow and gradual. The first intimation which its Bearer received did not synchronize with, nor was it followed immediately by, a disclosure of its character to either His own companions or His kindred. A period of no less than ten years had to elapse ere its far-reaching implications could be

directly divulged to even those who had been intimately associated with Him—a period of great spiritual ferment, during which the Recipient of so weighty a Message restlessly anticipated the hour at which He could unburden His heavily laden soul, so replete with the potent energies released by God's nascent Revelation. All He did, in the course of this pre-ordained interval, was to hint, in veiled and allegorical language, in epistles, commentaries, prayers and treatises, which He was moved to reveal, that the Báb's promise had already been fulfilled, and that He Himself was the One Who had been chosen to redeem it. A few of His fellow-disciples, distinguished by their sagacity, and their personal attachment and devotion to Him, perceived the radiance of the as yet unrevealed glory that had flooded His soul, and would have, but for His restraining influence, divulged His secret and proclaimed it far and wide.

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## The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh

Author: Shoghi Effendi    Source: US Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1991 first pocket-size edition    Pages: 206

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## THE DISPENSATION OF BAHÁ'U'LLÁH

### *The Dispensation of Bahá'u'lláh*

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To the beloved of God and the handmaids of the Merciful throughout the West.

Fellow-laborers in the Divine Vineyard:

On the 23rd of May of this auspicious year the Bahá'í world will celebrate the 90th anniversary of the founding of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh. We, who at this hour find ourselves standing on the threshold of the last decade of the first century of the Bahá'í era, might well pause to reflect upon the mysterious dispensations of so august, so momentous a Revelation. How vast, how entrancing the panorama which the revolution of four score years and ten unrolls before our eyes! Its towering grandeur well-nigh overwhelms us. To merely contemplate this unique spectacle, to visualize, however dimly, the circumstances attending the birth and gradual unfoldment of this supreme Theophany, to recall even in their barest outline the woeful struggles that proclaimed its rise and accelerated its march, will suffice to convince every unbiased observer of those eternal truths that motivate its life and which must continue to impel it forward until it achieves its destined ascendancy.

Dominating the entire range of this fascinating spectacle towers the incomparable figure of Bahá'u'lláh, transcendental in His majesty, serene, awe-inspiring, unapproachably glorious. Allied, though subordinate in rank, and invested with the authority of presiding with Him over the destinies of this supreme Dispensation, there shines upon this mental picture the youthful glory of the Báb, infinite in His tenderness, irresistible in His charm, unsurpassed in His heroism, matchless in the dramatic circumstances of His short yet eventful life. And finally there emerges, though on a plane of its own and in a category entirely apart from the one occupied by the twin Figures that preceded Him, the vibrant, the magnetic personality of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, reflecting to a degree that no man, however

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exalted his station, can hope to rival, the glory and power with which They who are the Manifestations of God are alone endowed.

With 'Abdu'l-Bahá's ascension, and more particularly with the passing of His well-beloved and illustrious sister the Most Exalted Leaf—the last survivor of a glorious and heroic age—there draws to a close the first and most moving chapter of Bahá'í history, marking the conclusion of the Primitive, the Apostolic Age of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh. It was 'Abdu'l-Bahá Who, through the provisions of His weighty Will and Testament, has forged the vital link which must for ever connect the age that has just expired with the one we now live in—the Transitional and Formative period of the Faith—a stage that must in the fullness of time reach its blossom and yield its fruit in the exploits and triumphs that are to herald the Golden Age of the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh.

Dearly-beloved friends! The onrushing forces so miraculously released through the agency of two independent and swiftly successive Manifestations are now under our very eyes and through the care of the chosen stewards of a far-flung Faith being gradually mustered and disciplined. They are slowly crystallizing into institutions that will come to be regarded as the hall-mark and glory of the age we are called upon to establish and by our deeds immortalize. For upon our present-day efforts, and above all upon the extent to which we strive to remodel our lives after the pattern of sublime heroism associated with those gone before us, must depend the efficacy of the instruments we now fashion—instruments that must erect the structure of that blissful Commonwealth which must signalize the Golden Age of our Faith.

It is not my purpose, as I look back upon these crowded years of heroic deeds, to attempt even a cursory review of the mighty events that have transpired since 1844 until the present day. Nor have I any intention to undertake an analysis of the forces that have precipitated them, or to evaluate their influence upon peoples and institutions in almost every continent of the globe. The authentic record of the lives of the first believers of the primitive period of our Faith, together with the assiduous research which competent Bahá'í historians will in the future undertake, will combine to transmit to posterity such masterly exposition of the history of that age as my own efforts can never hope to accomplish. My chief concern at this challenging period of Bahá'í history is rather to call the attention of those who are destined to be the champion-builders of the Administrative Order of Bahá'u'lláh to certain fundamental 99 verities the elucidation of which must tremendously assist them in the effective prosecution of their mighty enterprise.

The international status which the Religion of God has thus far achieved, moreover, imperatively demands that its root principles be now definitely clarified. The unprecedented impetus which the illustrious deeds of the American believers have lent to the onward march of the Faith; the intense interest which the first Mashriqu'l-Adhkár of the West is fast awakening among divers races and nations; the rise and steady consolidation of Bahá'í institutions in no less than forty of the

most advanced countries of the world; the dissemination of Bahá'í literature in no fewer than twenty-five of the most widely-spoken languages; the success that has recently attended the nation-wide efforts of the Persian believers in the preliminary steps they have taken for the establishment, in the outskirts of the capital-city of their native land, of the third Mashriqu'l-Adhkár of the Bahá'í world; the measures that are being taken for the immediate formation of their first National Spiritual Assembly representing the interests of the overwhelming majority of Bahá'í adherents; the projected erection of yet another pillar of the Universal House of Justice, the first of its kind, in the Southern Hemisphere; the testimonies, both verbal and written, that a struggling Faith has obtained from Royalty, from governmental institutions, international tribunals, and ecclesiastical dignitaries; the publicity it has received from the charges which unrelenting enemies, both new and old, have hurled against it; the formal enfranchisement of a section of its followers from the fetters of Muslim orthodoxy in a country that may be regarded as the most enlightened among Islamic nations—these afford ample proof of the growing momentum with which the invincible community of the Most Great Name is marching forward to ultimate victory.

Dearly-beloved friends! I feel it incumbent upon me, by virtue of the obligations and responsibilities which as Guardian of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh I am called upon to discharge, to lay special stress, at a time when the light of publicity is being increasingly focussed upon us, upon certain truths which lie at the basis of our Faith and the integrity of which it is our first duty to safeguard. These verities, if valiantly upheld and properly assimilated, will, I am convinced, powerfully reinforce the vigor of our spiritual life <sup>100</sup> and greatly assist in counteracting the machinations of an implacable and vigilant enemy.

To strive to obtain a more adequate understanding of the significance of Bahá'u'lláh's stupendous Revelation must, it is my unalterable conviction, remain the first obligation and the object of the constant endeavor of each one of its loyal adherents. An exact and thorough comprehension of so vast a system, so sublime a revelation, so sacred a trust, is for obvious reasons beyond the reach and ken of our finite minds. We can, however, and it is our bounden duty to seek to derive fresh inspiration and added sustenance as we labor for the propagation of His Faith through a clearer apprehension of the truths it enshrines and the principles on which it is based.

In a communication addressed to the American believers I have in the course of my explanation of the station of the Báb made a passing reference to the incomparable greatness of the Revelation of which He considered Himself to be the humble Precursor. He Whom Bahá'u'lláh has acclaimed in the Kitáb-i-Íqán as that promised Qá'im Who has manifested no less than twenty-five out of the twenty-seven letters which all the Prophets were destined to reveal—so great a Revealer has Himself testified to the préeminence of that superior Revelation that was soon to supersede His own. "The germ," the Báb asserts in the Persian Bayán,

“that holds within itself the potentialities of the Revelation that is to come is endowed with a potency superior to the combined forces of all those who follow me.” “Of all the tributes,” He again affirms, “I have paid to Him Who is to come after Me, the greatest is this, My written confession, that no words of Mine can adequately describe Him, nor can any reference to Him in My Book, the Bayán, do justice to His Cause.” “The Bayán,” He in that same Book categorically declares, “and whosoever is therein revolve round the saying of ‘Him Whom God shall make manifest,’ even as the Alif (the Gospel) and whosoever was therein revolved round the saying of Muḥammad, the Apostle of God.” “A thousand perusals of the Bayán,” He further remarks, “cannot equal the perusal of a single verse to be revealed by ‘Him Whom God shall make manifest.’... Today the Bayán is in the stage of seed; at the beginning of the manifestation of ‘Him Whom God shall make manifest’ its ultimate perfection will become apparent.... The Bayán and such as are believers therein yearn more ardently after Him than the yearning of any lover after his beloved.... The Bayán deriveth all its glory from 101 ‘Him Whom God shall make manifest.’ All blessing be upon him who believeth in Him and woe betide him that rejecteth His truth.”

Addressing Siyyid Yahyáy-i-Darábí surnamed Vahíd, the most learned, the most eloquent and influential among His followers, the Báb utters this warning: “By the righteousness of Him Whose power causeth the seed to germinate and Who breatheth the spirit of life into all things, were I to be assured that in the day of His manifestation thou wilt deny Him, I would unhesitatingly disown thee and repudiate thy faith.... If, on the other hand, I be told that a Christian, who beareth no allegiance to My Faith, will believe in Him, the same will I regard as the apple of Mine Eye.”

In one of His prayers He thus communes with Bahá'u'lláh: “Exalted art Thou, O my Lord the Omnipotent! How puny and contemptible my word and all that pertaineth unto me appear unless they be related to Thy great glory. Grant that through the assistance of Thy grace whatsoever pertaineth unto me may be acceptable in Thy sight.”

In the Qayyúmu'l-Asmá—the Báb’s commentary on the Súrih of Joseph—characterized by the Author of the Íqán as “the first, the greatest and mightiest” of the books revealed by the Báb, we read the following references to Bahá'u'lláh: “Out of utter nothingness, O great and omnipotent Master, Thou hast, through the celestial potency of Thy might, brought me forth and raised me up to proclaim this Revelation. I have made none other but Thee my trust; I have clung to no will but Thy will... O Thou Remnant of God! I have sacrificed myself wholly for Thee: I have accepted curses for Thy sake, and have yearned for naught but martyrdom in the path of Thy love. Sufficient witness unto me is God, the Exalted, the Protector, the Ancient of Days.” “And when the appointed hour hath struck,” He again addresses Bahá'u'lláh in that same commentary, “do Thou, by the leave of God, the All-Wise, reveal from the heights of the Most Lofty and Mystic Mount a faint, an infinitesimal

glimmer of Thy impenetrable Mystery, that they who have recognized the radiance of the Sinaic Splendor may faint away and die as they catch a lightening glimpse of the fierce and crimson Light that envelops Thy Revelation.”

As a further testimony to the greatness of the Revelation identified with Bahá'u'lláh may be cited the following extracts from a Tablet addressed by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá to an eminent Zoroastrian follower of the Faith: “Thou hadst written that in the sacred books of the followers of Zoroaster it is written that in the latter days, in <sup>102</sup> three separate Dispensations, the sun must needs be brought to a standstill. In the first Dispensation, it is predicted, the sun will remain motionless for ten days; in the second for twice that time; in the third for no less than one whole month. The interpretation of this prophecy is this: the first Dispensation to which it refers is the Muḥammadan Dispensation during which the Sun of Truth stood still for ten days. Each day is reckoned as one century. The Muḥammadan Dispensation must have, therefore, lasted no less than one thousand years, which is precisely the period that has elapsed from the setting of the Star of the Imamate to the advent of the Dispensation proclaimed by the Báb. The second Dispensation referred to in this prophecy is the one inaugurated by the Báb Himself, which began in the year 1260 A.H. and was brought to a close in the year 1280 A.H. As to the third Dispensation—the Revelation proclaimed by Bahá'u'lláh—inasmuch as the Sun of Truth when attaining that station shineth in the plenitude of its meridian splendor its duration hath been fixed for a period of one whole month, which is the maximum time taken by the sun to pass through a sign of the Zodiac. From this thou canst imagine the magnitude of the Bahá'í cycle—a cycle that must extend over a period of at least five hundred thousand years.”

From the text of this explicit and authoritative interpretation of so ancient a prophecy it is evident how necessary it is for every faithful follower of the Faith to accept the divine origin and uphold the independent status of the Muḥammadan Dispensation. The validity of the Imamate is, moreover, implicitly recognized in these same passages—that divinely-appointed institution of whose most distinguished member the Báb Himself was a lineal descendant, and which continued for a period of no less than two hundred and sixty years to be the chosen recipient of the guidance of the Almighty and the repository of one of the two most precious legacies of Islám.

This same prophecy, we must furthermore recognize, attests the independent character of the Bábí Dispensation and corroborates indirectly the truth that in accordance with the principle of progressive revelation every Manifestation of God must needs vouchsafe to the peoples of His day a measure of divine guidance ampler than any which a preceding and less receptive age could have received or appreciated. For this reason, and not for any superior merit which the Bahá'í Faith may be said to inherently possess, does this prophecy bear witness to the unrivaled power and glory with which the Dispensation of Bahá'u'lláh has been invested—a Dispensation the <sup>103</sup> potentialities of which we are but beginning to perceive

and the full range of which we can never determine.

The Faith of Bahá'u'lláh should indeed be regarded, if we wish to be faithful to the tremendous implications of its message, as the culmination of a cycle, the final stage in a series of successive, of preliminary and progressive revelations. These, beginning with Adam and ending with the Báb, have paved the way and anticipated with an ever-increasing emphasis the advent of that Day of Days in which He Who is the Promise of All Ages should be made manifest.

To this truth the utterances of Bahá'u'lláh abundantly testify. A mere reference to the claims which, in vehement language and with compelling power, He Himself has repeatedly advanced cannot but fully demonstrate the character of the Revelation of which He was the chosen bearer. To the words that have streamed from His pen—the fountainhead of so impetuous a Revelation—we should, therefore, direct our attention if we wish to obtain a clearer understanding of its importance and meaning. Whether in His assertion of the unprecedented claim He has advanced, or in His allusions to the mysterious forces He has released, whether in such passages as extol the glories of His long-awaited Day, or magnify the station which they who have recognized its hidden virtues will attain, Bahá'u'lláh and, to an almost equal extent, the Báb and 'Abdu'l-Bahá, have bequeathed to posterity mines of such inestimable wealth as none of us who belong to this generation can befittingly estimate. Such testimonies bearing on this theme are impregnated with such power and reveal such beauty as only those who are versed in the languages in which they were originally revealed can claim to have sufficiently appreciated. So numerous are these testimonies that a whole volume would be required to be written in order to compile the most outstanding among them. All I can venture to attempt at present is to share with you only such passages as I have been able to glean from His voluminous writings.

“I testify before God,” proclaims Bahá'u'lláh, “to the greatness, the inconceivable greatness of this Revelation. Again and again have We in most of Our Tablets borne witness to this truth, that mankind may be roused from its heedlessness.” “In this most mighty Revelation,” He unequivocally announces, “all the Dispensations of the past have attained their highest, their final consummation.” “That which hath been made manifest in this préminent, this most exalted Revelation, stands unparalleled in the annals of the past, nor <sup>104</sup> will future ages witness its like.” “He it is,” referring to Himself He further proclaims, “Who in the Old Testament hath been named Jehovah, Who in the Gospel hath been designated as the Spirit of Truth, and in the Qur'án acclaimed as the Great Announcement.” “But for Him no Divine Messenger would have been invested with the robe of prophethood, nor would any of the sacred scriptures have been revealed. To this bear witness all created things.” “The word which the one true God uttereth in this day, though that word be the most familiar and commonplace of terms, is invested with supreme, with unique distinction.” “The generality of mankind is still immature. Had it acquired sufficient capacity We would have bestowed upon it so great a measure of

Our knowledge that all who dwell on earth and in heaven would have found themselves, by virtue of the grace streaming from Our pen, completely independent of all knowledge save the knowledge of God, and would have been securely established upon the throne of abiding tranquillity.” “The Pen of Holiness, I solemnly affirm before God, hath writ upon My snow-white brow and in characters of effulgent glory these glowing, these musk-scented and holy words: ‘Behold ye that dwell on earth, and ye denizens of heaven, bear witness, He in truth is your Well-Beloved. He it is Whose like the world of creation hath not seen, He Whose ravishing beauty hath delighted the eye of God, the Ordainer, the All-Powerful, the Incomparable!’”

“Followers of the Gospel,” Bahá'u'lláh addressing the whole of Christendom exclaims, “behold the gates of heaven are flung open. He that had ascended unto it is now come. Give ear to His voice calling aloud over land and sea, announcing to all mankind the advent of this Revelation—a Revelation through the agency of which the Tongue of Grandeur is now proclaiming: ‘Lo, the sacred Pledge hath been fulfilled, for He, the Promised One, is come!’” “The voice of the Son of Man is calling aloud from the sacred vale: ‘Here am I, here am I, O God my God!’ ... whilst from the Burning Bush breaketh forth the cry: ‘Lo, the Desire of the world is made manifest in His transcendent glory!’ The Father hath come. That which ye were promised in the Kingdom of God is fulfilled. This is the Word which the Son veiled when He said to those around Him that at that time they could not bear it... Verily the Spirit of Truth is come to guide you unto all truth... He is the One Who glorified the Son and exalted His Cause...” “The Comforter Whose advent all the scriptures have promised is now come that He <sup>105</sup> may reveal unto you all knowledge and wisdom. Seek Him over the entire surface of the earth, haply ye may find Him.”

“Call out to Zion, O Carmel,” writes Bahá'u'lláh, “and announce the joyful tidings: ‘He that was hidden from mortal eyes is come! His all-conquering sovereignty is manifest; His all-encompassing splendor is revealed... Hasten forth and circumambulate the City of God that hath descended from heaven—the celestial Kaaba round which have circled in adoration the favored of God, the pure in heart and the company of the most exalted angels.’” “I am the One,” He in another connection affirms, “Whom the tongue of Isaiah hath extolled, the One with Whose name both the Torah and the Evangel were adorned.” “The glory of Sinai hath hastened to circle round the Day-Spring of this Revelation, while from the heights of the Kingdom the voice of the Son of God is heard proclaiming: ‘Bestir yourselves, ye proud ones of the earth, and hasten ye towards Him.’ Carmel hath in this day hastened in longing adoration to attain His court, whilst from the heart of Zion there cometh the cry: ‘The promise of all ages is now fulfilled. That which had been announced in the holy writ of God, the Beloved, the Most High, is made manifest.’” “Hijáz is astir by the breeze announcing the tidings of joyous reunion. ‘Praise be to Thee,’ We hear her exclaim, ‘O my Lord, the Most High. I was dead through my separation from Thee; the breeze laden with the fragrance of Thy presence hath

brought me back to life. Happy is he that turneth unto Thee, and woe betide the erring.” “By the one true God, Elijah hath hastened unto My court and hath circumambulated in the day-time and in the night-season My throne of glory.” “Solomon in all his majesty circles in adoration around Me in this day, uttering this most exalted word: ‘I have turned my face towards Thy face, O Thou omnipotent Ruler of the world! I am wholly detached from all things pertaining unto me, and yearn for that which Thou dost possess.’” “Had Muḥammad, the Apostle of God, attained this Day,” Bahá'u'lláh writes in a Tablet revealed on the eve of His banishment to the penal colony of ‘Akká, “He would have exclaimed: ‘I have truly recognized Thee, O Thou the Desire of the Divine Messengers!’ Had Abraham attained it, He too, falling prostrate upon the ground, and in the utmost lowliness before the Lord thy God, would have cried: ‘Mine heart is filled with peace, O Thou Lord of all that is in heaven and on earth! I testify that Thou hast unveiled before mine eyes all the glory of Thy power and the full majesty of Thy law!’ ... Had Moses Himself attained it, He, likewise, would have raised His voice <sup>106</sup> saying: ‘All praise be to Thee for having lifted upon me the light of Thy countenance and enrolled me among them that have been privileged to behold Thy face!’” “North and South both vibrate to the call announcing the advent of our Revelation. We can hear the voice of Mecca acclaiming: ‘All praise be to Thee, O Lord my God, the All-Glorious, for having wafted over me the breath redolent with the fragrance of Thy presence!’ Jerusalem, likewise, is calling aloud: ‘Lauded and magnified art Thou, O Beloved of earth and heaven, for having turned the agony of my separation from Thee into the joy of a life-giving reunion!’”

“By the righteousness of God,” Bahá'u'lláh wishing to reveal the full potency of His invincible power asserts, “should a man, all alone, arise in the name of Bahá and put on the armor of His love, him will the Almighty cause to be victorious, though the forces of earth and heaven be arrayed against him.” “By God besides Whom is none other God! Should any one arise for the triumph of our Cause, him will God render victorious though tens of thousands of enemies be leagued against him. And if his love for Me wax stronger, God will establish his ascendancy over all the powers of earth and heaven. Thus have We breathed the spirit of power into all regions.”

“This is the King of Days,” He thus extols the age that has witnessed the advent of His Revelation, “the Day that hath seen the coming of the Best-beloved, Him Who through all eternity hath been acclaimed the Desire of the World.” “The world of being shineth in this Day with the resplendency of this Divine Revelation. All created things extol its saving grace and sing its praises. The universe is wrapt in an ecstasy of joy and gladness. The Scriptures of past Dispensations celebrate the great jubilee that must needs greet this most great Day of God. Well is it with him that hath lived to see this Day and hath recognized its station.” “Were mankind to give heed in a befitting manner to no more than one word of such a praise it would be so filled with delight as to be overpowered and lost in wonder. Entranced, it would then

shine forth resplendent above the horizon of true understanding.”

“Be fair, ye peoples of the world;” He thus appeals to mankind, “is it meet and seemly for you to question the authority of one Whose presence ‘He Who conversed with God’ (Moses) hath longed to attain, the beauty of Whose countenance ‘God’s Well-beloved’ (Muhammad) had yearned to behold, through the potency of Whose love the ‘Spirit of God’ (Jesus) ascended to heaven, for Whose sake <sup>107</sup> the ‘Primal Point’ (the Báb) offered up His life?” “Seize your chance,” He admonishes His followers, “inasmuch as a fleeting moment in this Day excelleth centuries of a bygone age... Neither sun nor moon hath witnessed a day such as this... It is evident that every age in which a Manifestation of God hath lived is divinely ordained and may, in a sense, be characterized as God’s appointed Day. This Day, however, is unique and is to be distinguished from those that have preceded it. The designation ‘Seal of the Prophets’ fully reveals and demonstrates its high station.”

Expatiating on the forces latent in His Revelation Bahá'u'lláh reveals the following: “Through the movement of Our Pen of glory We have, at the bidding of the omnipotent Ordainer, breathed a new life into every human frame and instilled into every word a fresh potency. All created things proclaim the evidences of this world-wide regeneration.” “This is,” He adds, “the most great, the most joyful tidings imparted by the pen of this wronged One to mankind.” “How great,” He in another passage exclaims, “is the Cause! How staggering the weight of its message! This is the Day of which it hath been said: ‘O my son! verily God will bring everything to light though it were but the weight of a grain of mustard seed, and hidden in a rock, or in the heavens or in the earth; for God is subtile, informed of all.’” “By the righteousness of the one true God! If one speck of a jewel be lost and buried beneath a mountain of stones, and lie hidden beyond the seven seas, the Hand of Omnipotence will assuredly reveal it in this day, pure and cleansed from dross.” “He that partaketh of the waters of My Revelation will taste all the incorruptible delights ordained by God from the beginning that hath no beginning to the end that hath no end.” “Every single letter proceeding from Our mouth is endowed with such regenerative power as to enable it to bring into existence a new creation—a creation the magnitude of which is inscrutable to all save God. He verily hath knowledge of all things.” “It is in Our power, should We wish it, to enable a speck of floating dust to generate, in less than the twinkling of an eye, suns of infinite, of unimaginable splendor, to cause a dewdrop to develop into vast and numberless oceans, to infuse into every letter such a force as to empower it to unfold all the knowledge of past and future ages.” “We are possessed of such power which, if brought to light, will transmute the most deadly of poisons into a panacea of unailing efficacy.” <sup>108</sup>

Estimating the station of the true believer He remarks: “By the sorrows which afflict the beauty of the All-Glorious! Such is the station ordained for the true believer that if to an extent smaller than a needle’s eye the glory of that station were to be unveiled to mankind, every beholder would be consumed away in his longing

to attain it. For this reason it hath been decreed that in this earthly life the full measure of the glory of his own station should remain concealed from the eyes of such a believer.” “If the veil be lifted,” He similarly affirms, “and the full glory of the station of those who have turned wholly towards God, and in their love for Him renounced the world, be made manifest, the entire creation would be dumbfounded.”

Stressing the superlative character of His Revelation as compared with the Dispensation preceding it, Bahá'u'lláh makes the following affirmation: “If all the peoples of the world be invested with the powers and attributes destined for the Letters of the Living, the Báb's chosen disciples, whose station is ten thousand times more glorious than any which the apostles of old have attained, and if they, one and all, should, swift as the twinkling of an eye, hesitate to recognize the light of My Revelation, their faith shall be of no avail and they shall be accounted among the infidels.” “So tremendous is the outpouring of Divine grace in this Dispensation that if mortal hands could be swift enough to record them, within the space of a single day and night there would stream verses of such number as to be equivalent to the whole of the Persian Bayán.”

“Give heed to my warning, ye people of Persia,” He thus addresses His countrymen, “If I be slain at your hands, God will assuredly raise up one who will fill the seat made vacant through my death; for such is God's method carried into effect of old, and no change can ye find in God's mode of dealing.” “Should they attempt to conceal His light on the continent, He will assuredly rear His head in the midmost heart of the ocean and, raising His voice, proclaim: ‘I am the lifegiver of the world!’... And if they cast Him into a darksome pit, they will find Him seated on earth's loftiest heights calling aloud to all mankind: ‘Lo, the Desire of the world is come in His majesty, His sovereignty, His transcendent dominion!’ And if He be buried beneath the depths of the earth, His Spirit soaring to the apex of heaven shall peal the summons: ‘Behold ye the coming of the Glory; witness ye the Kingdom of God, the most Holy, the Gracious, the All-Powerful!’” “Within the throat of this Youth,” is yet another astounding statement, “there lie 109 prisoned accents which, if revealed to mankind to an extent smaller than a needle's eye, would suffice to cause every mountain to crumble, the leaves of the trees to be discolored and their fruits to fall; would compel every head to bow down in worship and every face to turn in adoration towards this omnipotent Ruler Who, at sundry times and in diverse manners, appeareth as a devouring flame, as a billowing ocean, as a radiant light, as the tree which, rooted in the soil of holiness, lifteth its branches and spreadeth out its limbs as far as and beyond the throne of deathless glory.”

Anticipating the System which the irresistible power of His Law was destined to unfold in a later age, He writes: “The world's equilibrium hath been upset through the vibrating influence of this most great, this new World Order. Mankind's ordered life hath been revolutionized through the agency of this unique, this wondrous System—the like of which mortal eyes have never witnessed.” “The Hand of

Omnipotence hath established His Revelation upon an unassailable, an enduring foundation. Storms of human strife are powerless to undermine its basis, nor will men's fanciful theories succeed in damaging its structure."

In the *Súratu'l-Haykal*, one of the most challenging works of Bahá'u'lláh, the following verses, each of which testifies to the resistless power infused into the Revelation proclaimed by its Author, have been recorded: "Naught is seen in My temple but the Temple of God, and in My beauty but His Beauty, and in My being but His Being, and in My self but His Self, and in My movement but His Movement, and in My acquiescence but His Acquiescence, and in My pen but His Pen, the Mighty, the All-Praised. There hath not been in My soul but the Truth, and in Myself naught could be seen but God." "The Holy Spirit Itself hath been generated through the agency of a single letter revealed by this Most Great Spirit, if ye be of them that comprehend..." "Within the treasury of Our Wisdom there lies unrevealed a knowledge, one word of which, if we chose to divulge it to mankind, would cause every human being to recognize the Manifestation of God and to acknowledge His omniscience, would enable every one to discover the secrets of all the sciences, and to attain so high a station as to find himself wholly independent of all past and future learning. Other knowledges We do as well possess, not a single letter of which We can disclose, nor do We find humanity able to hear even the barest reference to their meaning. Thus have We informed you of the knowledge of God, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise." "The day is approaching <sup>110</sup> when God will have, by an act of His Will, raised up a race of men the nature of which is inscrutable to all save God, the All-Powerful, the Self-Subsisting." "He will, ere long, out of the Bosom of Power draw forth the Hands of Ascendancy and Might—Hands who will arise to win victory for this Youth and who will purge mankind from the defilement of the outcast and the ungodly. These Hands will gird up their loins to champion the Faith of God, and will, in My name the self-subsistent, the mighty, subdue the peoples and kindreds of the earth. They will enter the cities and will inspire with fear the hearts of all their inhabitants. Such are the evidences of the might of God; how fearful, how vehement is His might!"

Such is, dearly-beloved friends, Bahá'u'lláh's own written testimony to the nature of His Revelation. To the affirmations of the Báb, each of which reinforces the strength, and confirms the truth, of these remarkable statements, I have already referred. What remains for me to consider in this connection are such passages in the writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, the appointed Interpreter of these same utterances, as throw further light upon and amplify various features of this enthralling theme. The tone of His language is indeed as emphatic and His tribute no less glowing than that of either Bahá'u'lláh or the Báb.

"Centuries, nay ages, must pass away," He affirms in one of His earliest Tablets, "ere the Day-Star of Truth shineth again in its mid-summer splendor, or appeareth once more in the radiance of its vernal glory... How thankful must we be for having been made in this Day the recipients of so overwhelming a favor! Would that we had

ten thousand lives that we might lay them down in thanksgiving for so rare a privilege, so high an attainment, so priceless a bounty!" "The mere contemplation," He adds, "of the Dispensation inaugurated by the Blessed Beauty would have sufficed to overwhelm the saints of bygone ages—saints who longed to partake for one moment of its great glory." "The holy ones of past ages and centuries have, each and all, yearned with tearful eyes to live, though for one moment, in the Day of God. Their longings unsatisfied, they repaired to the Great Beyond. How great, therefore, is the bounty of the Abhá Beauty Who, notwithstanding our utter unworthiness, hath through His grace and mercy breathed into us in this divinely-illuminated century the spirit of life, hath gathered us beneath the standard of the Beloved of the world, and chosen to confer upon us a bounty for which the mighty ones of bygone ages had craved in vain." "The souls of the well-favored among the concourse  
 111 on high," He likewise affirms, "the sacred dwellers of the most exalted Paradise, are in this day filled with burning desire to return unto this world, that they may render such service as lieth in their power to the threshold of the Abhá Beauty."

"The effulgence of God's splendid mercy," He, in a passage alluding to the growth and future development of the Faith, declares, "hath enveloped the peoples and kindreds of the earth, and the whole world is bathed in its shining glory... The day will soon come when the light of Divine unity will have so permeated the East and the West that no man dare any longer ignore it." "Now in the world of being the Hand of divine power hath firmly laid the foundations of this all-highest bounty and this wondrous gift. Whatsoever is latent in the innermost of this holy cycle shall gradually appear and be made manifest, for now is but the beginning of its growth and the dayspring of the revelation of its signs. Ere the close of this century and of this age, it shall be made clear and evident how wondrous was that springtide and how heavenly was that gift!"

In confirmation of the exalted rank of the true believer, referred to by Bahá'u'lláh, He reveals the following: "The station which he who hath truly recognized this Revelation will attain is the same as the one ordained for such prophets of the house of Israel as are not regarded as Manifestations 'endowed with constancy.'"

In connection with the Manifestations destined to follow the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh, 'Abdu'l-Bahá makes this definite and weighty declaration: "Concerning the Manifestations that will come down in the future 'in the shadows of the clouds,' know verily that in so far as their relation to the source of their inspiration is concerned they are under the shadow of the Ancient Beauty. In their relation, however, to the age in which they appear, each and every one of them 'doeth whatsoever He willeth.'"

"O my friend!" He thus addresses in one of His Tablets a man of recognized authority and standing, "The undying Fire which the Lord of the Kingdom hath kindled in the midst of the holy Tree is burning fiercely in the midmost heart of the

world. The conflagration it will provoke will envelop the whole earth. Its blazing flames will illuminate its peoples and kindreds. All the signs have been revealed; every prophetic allusion hath been manifested. Whatever hath been enshrined in all the Scriptures of the past hath been made evident. To doubt or hesitate is no more possible... Time is pressing. The Divine Charger is impatient, and can tarry no longer. <sup>112</sup> Ours is the duty to rush forward and, ere it is too late, win the victory.” And finally, is this most stirring passage which He, in one of His moments of exultation, was moved to address to one of His most trusted and eminent followers in the earliest days of His ministry: “What more shall I say? What else can my pen recount? So loud is the call that reverberates from the Abhá Kingdom that mortal ears are well-nigh deafened with its vibrations. The whole creation, methinks, is being disrupted and is bursting asunder through the shattering influence of the Divine summons issued from the throne of glory. More than this I cannot write.”

Dearly-beloved friends! Enough has been said, and the quoted excerpts from the writings of the Báb, of Bahá'u'lláh and of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá are sufficiently numerous and varied, to convince the conscientious reader of the sublimity of this unique cycle in the world’s religious history. It would be utterly impossible to over-exaggerate its significance or to overrate the influence it has exerted and which it must increasingly exert as its great system unfolds itself amidst the welter of a collapsing civilization.

To whoever may read these pages a word of warning seems, however, advisable before I proceed further with the development of my argument. Let no one meditating, in the light of the afore-quoted passages, on the nature of the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh, mistake its character or misconstrue the intent of its Author. The divinity attributed to so great a Being and the complete incarnation of the names and attributes of God in so exalted a Person should, under no circumstances, be misconceived or misinterpreted. The human temple that has been made the vehicle of so overpowering a Revelation must, if we be faithful to the tenets of our Faith, ever remain entirely distinguished from that “innermost Spirit of Spirits” and “eternal Essence of Essences”—that invisible yet rational God Who, however much we extol the divinity of His Manifestations on earth, can in no wise incarnate His infinite, His unknowable, His incorruptible and all-embracing Reality in the concrete and limited frame of a mortal being. Indeed, the God Who could so incarnate His own reality would, in the light of the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh, cease immediately to be God. So crude and fantastic a theory of Divine incarnation is as removed from, and incompatible with, the essentials of Bahá'í belief as are the no less inadmissible pantheistic and anthropomorphic conceptions of God— <sup>113</sup> both of which the utterances of Bahá'u'lláh emphatically repudiate and the fallacy of which they expose.

He Who in unnumbered passages claimed His utterance to be the “Voice of Divinity, the Call of God Himself” thus solemnly affirms in the Kitáb-i-Íqán: “To

every discerning and illumined heart it is evident that God, the unknowable Essence, the Divine Being, is immeasurably exalted beyond every human attribute such as corporeal existence, ascent and descent, egress and regress... He is, and hath ever been, veiled in the ancient eternity of His Essence, and will remain in His Reality everlastingly hidden from the sight of men... He standeth exalted beyond and above all separation and union, all proximity and remoteness... 'God was alone; there was none else beside Him' is a sure testimony of this truth."

"From time immemorial," Bahá'u'lláh, speaking of God, explains, "He, the Divine Being, hath been veiled in the ineffable sanctity of His exalted Self, and will everlastingly continue to be wrapt in the impenetrable mystery of His unknowable Essence... Ten thousand Prophets, each a Moses, are thunderstruck upon the Sinai of their search at God's forbidding voice, 'Thou shalt never behold Me!'; whilst a myriad Messengers, each as great as Jesus, stand dismayed upon their heavenly thrones by the interdiction 'Mine Essence thou shalt never apprehend!'" "How bewildering to me, insignificant as I am," Bahá'u'lláh in His communion with God affirms, "is the attempt to fathom the sacred depths of Thy knowledge! How futile my efforts to visualize the magnitude of the power inherent in Thine handiwork—the revelation of Thy creative power!" "When I contemplate, O my God, the relationship that bindeth me to Thee," He, in yet another prayer revealed in His own handwriting, testifies, "I am moved to proclaim to all created things 'verily I am God!'; and when I consider my own self, lo, I find it coarser than clay!"

"The door of the knowledge of the Ancient of Days," Bahá'u'lláh further states in the Kitáb-i-Íqán, "being thus closed in the face of all beings, He, the Source of infinite grace ... hath caused those luminous Gems of Holiness to appear out of the realm of the spirit, in the noble form of the human temple, and be made manifest unto all men, that they may impart unto the world the mysteries of the unchangeable Being and tell of the subtleties of His imperishable Essence... All the Prophets of God, His well-favored, His holy and chosen Messengers are, without exception, the bearers of <sup>114</sup> His names and the embodiments of His attributes... These Tabernacles of Holiness, these primal Mirrors which reflect the Light of unfading glory, are but expressions of Him Who is the Invisible of the Invisibles."

That Bahá'u'lláh should, notwithstanding the overwhelming intensity of His Revelation, be regarded as essentially one of these Manifestations of God, never to be identified with that invisible Reality, the Essence of Divinity itself, is one of the major beliefs of our Faith—a belief which should never be obscured and the integrity of which no one of its followers should allow to be compromised.

Nor does the Bahá'í Revelation, claiming as it does to be the culmination of a prophetic cycle and the fulfillment of the promise of all ages, attempt, under any circumstances, to invalidate those first and everlasting principles that animate and underlie the religions that have preceded it. The God-given authority, vested in each one of them, it admits and establishes as its firmest and ultimate basis. It regards

them in no other light except as different stages in the eternal history and constant evolution of one religion, Divine and indivisible, of which it itself forms but an integral part. It neither seeks to obscure their Divine origin, nor to dwarf the admitted magnitude of their colossal achievements. It can countenance no attempt that seeks to distort their features or to stultify the truths which they instill. Its teachings do not deviate a hairbreadth from the verities they enshrine, nor does the weight of its message detract one jot or one tittle from the influence they exert or the loyalty they inspire. Far from aiming at the overthrow of the spiritual foundation of the world's religious systems, its avowed, its unalterable purpose is to widen their basis, to restate their fundamentals, to reconcile their aims, to reinvigorate their life, to demonstrate their oneness, to restore the pristine purity of their teachings, to coordinate their functions and to assist in the realization of their highest aspirations. These divinely-revealed religions, as a close observer has graphically expressed it, "are doomed not to die, but to be reborn... 'Does not the child succumb in the youth and the youth in the man; yet neither child nor youth perishes?'"

"They Who are the Luminaries of Truth and the Mirrors reflecting the light of Divine Unity," Bahá'u'lláh explains in the Kitáb-i-Íqán, "in whatever age and cycle they are sent down from their invisible habitations of ancient glory unto this world to educate the souls of men and endue with grace all created things, are invariably  
 115 endowed with an all-compelling power and invested with invincible sovereignty... These sanctified Mirrors, these Day-Springs of ancient glory are one and all the exponents on earth of Him Who is the central Orb of the universe, its essence and ultimate purpose. From Him proceed their knowledge and power; from Him is derived their sovereignty. The beauty of their countenance is but a reflection of His image, and their revelation a sign of His deathless glory... Through them is transmitted a grace that is infinite, and by them is revealed the light that can never fade... Human tongue can never befittingly sing their praise, and human speech can never unfold their mystery." "Inasmuch as these Birds of the celestial Throne," He adds, "are all sent down from the heaven of the Will of God, and as they all arise to proclaim His irresistible Faith, they therefore are regarded as one soul and the same person... They all abide in the same tabernacle, soar in the same heaven, are seated upon the same throne, utter the same speech, and proclaim the same Faith... They only differ in the intensity of their revelation and the comparative potency of their light... That a certain attribute of God hath not been outwardly manifested by these Essences of Detachment doth in no wise imply that they Who are the Day-Springs of God's attributes and the Treasuries of His holy names did not actually possess it."

It should also be borne in mind that, great as is the power manifested by this Revelation and however vast the range of the Dispensation its Author has inaugurated, it emphatically repudiates the claim to be regarded as the final revelation of God's will and purpose for mankind. To hold such a conception of its character and functions would be tantamount to a betrayal of its cause and a denial

of its truth. It must necessarily conflict with the fundamental principle which constitutes the bedrock of Bahá'í belief, the principle that religious truth is not absolute but relative, that Divine Revelation is orderly, continuous and progressive and not spasmodic or final. Indeed, the categorical rejection by the followers of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh of the claim to finality which any religious system inaugurated by the Prophets of the past may advance is as clear and emphatic as their own refusal to claim that same finality for the Revelation with which they stand identified. "To believe that all revelation is ended, that the portals of Divine mercy are closed, that from the daysprings of eternal holiness no sun shall rise again, that the ocean of everlasting bounty is forever stilled, and that out of the tabernacle of ancient glory the Messengers of God <sup>116</sup> have ceased to be made manifest" must constitute in the eyes of every follower of the Faith a grave, an inexcusable departure from one of its most cherished and fundamental principles.

A reference to some of the already quoted utterances of Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá will surely suffice to establish, beyond the shadow of a doubt, the truth of this cardinal principle. Might not the following passage of the Hidden Words be, likewise, construed as an allegorical allusion to the progressiveness of Divine Revelation and an admission by its Author that the Message with which He has been entrusted is not the final and ultimate expression of the will and guidance of the Almighty? "O Son of Justice! In the night-season the beauty of the immortal Being hath repaired from the emerald height of fidelity unto the Sadratu'l-Muntahá, and wept with such a weeping that the concourse on high and the dwellers of the realms above wailed at His lamenting. Whereupon there was asked, Why the wailing and weeping? He made reply: As bidden I waited expectant upon the hill of faithfulness, yet inhaled not from them that dwell on earth the fragrance of fidelity. Then summoned to return I beheld, and lo! certain doves of holiness were sore tried within the claws of the dogs of earth. Thereupon the Maid of heaven hastened forth unveiled and resplendent from Her mystic mansion, and asked of their names, and all were told but one. And when urged, the first letter thereof was uttered, whereupon the dwellers of the celestial chambers rushed forth out of their habitation of glory. And whilst the second letter was pronounced they fell down, one and all, upon the dust. At that moment a voice was heard from the inmost shrine: 'Thus far and no farther.' Verily We bear witness to that which they have done and now are doing."

In a more explicit language Bahá'u'lláh testifies to this truth in one of His Tablets revealed in Adrianople: "Know verily that the veil hiding Our countenance hath not been completely lifted. We have revealed Our Self to a degree corresponding to the capacity of the people of Our age. Should the Ancient Beauty be unveiled in the fullness of His glory mortal eyes would be blinded by the dazzling intensity of His revelation."

In the Súriy-i-Şabr, revealed as far back as the year 1863, on the very first day of His arrival in the garden of Riḍván, He thus affirms: "God hath sent down His

Messengers to succeed to Moses and Jesus, and He will continue to do so till 'the end that hath no end'; so that His grace may, from the heaven of Divine bounty, be continually vouchsafed to mankind." 117

"I am not apprehensive for My own self," Bahá'u'lláh still more explicitly declares, "My fears are for Him Who will be sent down unto you after Me—Him Who will be invested with great sovereignty and mighty dominion." And again He writes in the *Súratu'l-Haykal*: "By those words which I have revealed, Myself is not intended, but rather He Who will come after Me. To it is witness God, the All-Knowing." "Deal not with Him," He adds, "as ye have dealt with Me."

In a more circumstantial passage the Báb upholds the same truth in His writings. "It is clear and evident," He writes in the Persian *Bayán*, "that the object of all preceding Dispensations hath been to pave the way for the advent of Muḥammad, the Apostle of God. These, including the Muḥammadan Dispensation, have had, in their turn, as their objective the Revelation proclaimed by the Qá'im. The purpose underlying this Revelation, as well as those that preceded it, has, in like manner, been to announce the advent of the Faith of Him Whom God will make manifest. And this Faith—the Faith of Him Whom God will make manifest—in its turn, together with all the Revelations gone before it, have as their object the Manifestation destined to succeed it. And the latter, no less than all the Revelations preceding it, prepare the way for the Revelation which is yet to follow. The process of the rise and setting of the Sun of Truth will thus indefinitely continue—a process that hath had no beginning and will have no end."

"Know of a certainty," Bahá'u'lláh explains in this connection, "that in every Dispensation the light of Divine Revelation hath been vouchsafed to men in direct proportion to their spiritual capacity. Consider the sun. How feeble its rays the moment it appeareth above the horizon. How gradually its warmth and potency increase as it approacheth its zenith, enabling meanwhile all created things to adapt themselves to the growing intensity of its light. How steadily it declineth until it reacheth its setting point. Were it all of a sudden to manifest the energies latent within it, it would no doubt cause injury to all created things... In like manner, if the Sun of Truth were suddenly to reveal, at the earliest stages of its manifestation, the full measure of the potencies which the providence of the Almighty hath bestowed upon it, the earth of human understanding would waste away and be consumed; for men's hearts would neither sustain the intensity of its revelation, nor be able to mirror forth the radiance of its light. Dismayed and overpowered, they would cease to exist." 118

In the light of these clear and conclusive statements it is our clear duty to make it indubitably evident to every seeker after truth that from "the beginning that hath no beginning" the Prophets of the one, the unknowable God, including Bahá'u'lláh Himself, have all, as the channels of God's grace, as the exponents of His unity, as the mirrors of His light and the revealers of His purpose, been commissioned to unfold to mankind an ever-increasing measure of His truth, of His inscrutable will

and Divine guidance, and will continue to “the end that hath no end” to vouchsafe still fuller and mightier revelations of His limitless power and glory.

We might well ponder in our hearts the following passages from a prayer revealed by Bahá'u'lláh which strikingly affirm, and are a further evidence of, the reality of the great and essential truth lying at the very core of His Message to mankind: “Praise be to Thee, O Lord my God, for the wondrous revelations of Thine inscrutable decree and the manifold woes and trials Thou hast destined for myself. At one time Thou didst deliver me into the hands of Nimrod; at another Thou hast allowed Pharaoh's rod to persecute me. Thou alone canst estimate, through Thine all-encompassing knowledge and the operation of Thy Will, the incalculable afflictions I have suffered at their hands. Again Thou didst cast me into the prison-cell of the ungodly for no reason except that I was moved to whisper into the ears of the well-favored denizens of Thy kingdom an intimation of the vision with which Thou hadst, through Thy knowledge, inspired me and revealed to me its meaning through the potency of Thy might. And again Thou didst decree that I be beheaded by the sword of the infidel. Again I was crucified for having unveiled to men's eyes the hidden gems of Thy glorious unity, for having revealed to them the wondrous signs of Thy sovereign and everlasting power. How bitter the humiliations heaped upon me, in a subsequent age, on the plain of Karbilá! How lonely did I feel amidst Thy people; to what state of helplessness I was reduced in that land! Unsatisfied with such indignities, my persecutors decapitated me and carrying aloft my head from land to land paraded it before the gaze of the unbelieving multitude and deposited it on the seats of the perverse and faithless. In a later age I was suspended and my breast was made a target to the darts of the malicious cruelty of my foes. My limbs were riddled with bullets and my body was torn asunder. Finally, behold how in this day my treacherous enemies have leagued themselves against me, and are continually plotting to instill the venom of hate and malice into the  
<sup>119</sup> souls of Thy servants. With all their might they are scheming to accomplish their purpose... Grievous as is my plight, O God, my Well-beloved, I render thanks unto Thee, and my spirit is grateful for whatsoever hath befallen me in the path of Thy good-pleasure. I am well pleased with that which Thou didst ordain for me, and welcome, however calamitous, the pains and sorrows I am made to suffer.” <sup>120</sup>

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